



Useful to the Lord – Part 2

Divine Authority

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, of course, living in a modern society there are many voices, many people, many appeals coming at you every single day wanting your attention and your investment and your resources. And sometimes I'm tempted as a preacher to think that I'm just another voice in that cacophony of appeals that are coming at you. But I need to remember what the Bible has to say about the role of preaching and the role of the preacher that I am supposed to somehow articulate God's truth that has been recorded in his word to get to you that should stand out of the 168 hours of your week at this one time, this one hour we spend studying God's word on the weekends is a unique time. It's a unique time to hear a voice that you don't hear the rest of the week, at least not through all the appeals that come into your inbox and that you hear, perhaps from the people that you surround yourself with.

This is an echo actually of John Chapter 10 when Jesus says repeatedly that I know my sheep, my sheep hear my voice and they follow me. There's something about the authority of God's truth that coming to you as it's applied and clearly articulated and expounded should have a response from you that is different than any other appeal that you might hear. You could have a, you know, a counselor or a manager at work or even a family member come to you and say, "Well, here's what I think would be good for you to do." You know, we have all kinds of ads bombarding us, but we should stop and sit back and think, "Now, wait a minute, if I sit and hear God's word, if it's accurately presented and it is requiring of me a response, that is a voice of authority that is coming that is unlike anything else in my week. It is a, I hope, a good and accurate reflection of the voice of Christ in your life. And we need times like this. This is why the central feature of the church is the preaching of his word. It is the way that God imparts clarity to you as you study and ponder and contemplate the word of God as we study it together, in particular as we gather as a church.

I want to think of that in light of what we've seen in the beginning of Acts Chapter 13 as God says to the church, "I want you to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work that I've called them to do." And we started to think, and this is going to be a long series, 12 weeks of trying to think through what does that mean that I've been called to do a particular work? Is it just Saul and Barnabas? And we think, of course not. As we studied last week, God has got a call and a job for all of us as Christians to do. And it may not be a traveling missionary like Saul and Barnabas, but it is a clear calling that God has put forth as he puts together a plan for each of our lives, as he lays out a particular impact and effect that we can have.

To put it in the words of First Corinthians 12, there is a manifestation of the Spirit given to each person within the Church for the common good. As a matter of fact, even the order of that sentence is kind of helpful too, it gives an accurate reflection of it. It says, "To each one has been given a manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." That God is doing something not only within our church, the common good and that's the context of First Corinthians 12, but within the world, Jesus talked about in the Sermon on the Mount, we are salt and light. We are supposed to affect the world restraining evil, proclaiming truth, standing



up for virtue and righteousness even within our homes obviously. If you've been entrusted with a child you have a role as a parent. If you've been part of a covenant marital relationship, you've got a role there to fulfill. God has several things he's equipped you to do to live out that calling in a very submissive way because it's the voice of God calling you to do it. It's not just intuitive and it's not just what you're expected to do by the culture, but God has particularly drawn you to that job and he is equipped you to do it.

"Set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work I've called them to do." Then we said we're going to track for them for 11 weeks, the first missionary journey, that's laid out here in Acts 13 and 14. And I want you to turn in your Bible to verse 6 as we study just a few verses, verses 6 through 12 this morning, to see the first leg of their journey and to keep an eye, as I promised we would, to your calling and your responsibilities as a Christian. That God has called you to certain things and you need to see that that is something, as we'll see erupt here in this passage, it comes with the authority of God. That God is asking you to do these things. It's not your church, it's not your pastor, it's not your family members, it's not your boss, it's not society's expectation. This is what God wants you to do.

I say it erupts in this passage because this is a scene where we see God's authority demonstrated in a miraculous way. Matter of fact, it's the first recorded miracle associated with Paul, right? We call him Saul because that's how he's named at the beginning of this passage. But in the middle of this passage we remember that he's also and from this point on known as Paul, Paul the Apostle.

And as Second Corinthians 12:12 says, one of the markers of the apostles was the ability to do things that were supernatural. This is the mark of true apostleship, the signs and wonders that they do. And we said last week that made sense because they're preaching New Testament truths that could be challenged. Because why are you right about this? Why is this the right application of Old Testament biblical prophecy, for instance? And the answer was because I am able to do something that shows God's imprimatur on my teaching. I can teach a New Testament truth without a New Testament because it hasn't yet been written by this time, and I can show you that's right by the things that God authenticates the message with, and that's the miraculous ability to do signs and wonders. We see that as a foundational strategy of God as Ephesians 2:20 says, the foundation of the apostles and prophets laying down this foundation on which the church is built.

Paul then, as I said, we're going to just cover the first leg of his journey and he comes to turn this around for you, we've got Asia Minor, we have Israel kind of stuck in the middle of it, the armpit of it, if you will, that's not the right way to say it, is Antioch of Syria. And from that corner, they travel across the Mediterranean gap here into the big island of Cyprus. And we're going to track this. They start there on the east side of it and they travel to the west side of it to the port here, Paphos. Paphos is the seat of the Roman government of the island of Cyprus. We meet in that particular scene Paul and Barnabas are brought in before the proconsul he's called. He's basically the representative of Rome governing the island. And this is a great opportunity for Paul and Barnabas to present the truth of the gospel. And of course, the story, if you know it, they're opposed by a false prophet, a Jewish false prophet



who's called a magician, which is a broad term in the New Testament book of Acts to describe someone who is known as maybe making potions or incantations or doing things. Maybe if someone in the governor's family is sick, well then we call on this magician, this guy to fix it somehow.

And because he was identified as a Jewish prophet, clarified here as a false prophet, he's claiming the authority of the Old Testament God. And so Paul and Barnabas have made their way across the island. They've been teaching in the synagogues, they've been preaching the gospel, and we get to this scene that we're going to examine today. And what I want you to do as you look at the outline if you have a worksheet in front of you, either digitally or printed, it's almost as though it's filled with typos, is what you think, because the numbers are scattered all over the place. "This is not sequential expositional preaching, Pastor Mike." I understand that it's not sequential, but it is expositional preaching because what we're going to do is explain this first leg of the missionary journey by kind of working our way through the passage and then doing it a second time with an eye to another level and then a third time with an eye to another principle. And we're going to see in this text, I trust, some of the main things that you ought to keep in mind as you consider God's calling on your life between now and the time you depart from this planet. What is it that God has called you to do?

And the eruption of the power of God seen in Paul's first miracle in the setting that I've just described to you is a great reminder for us, though you are not an apostle bearing the signs and wonders that Paul did. So let's take a look at this text. Let's start in verse 6 and let's read together. I'll read it for you. You just follow along as I read it from the English Standard Version, we'll read to verse 12. Acts 13:6. Follow along, please. It says, "When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos," the seat of the Roman government, "they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet named," ironically enough, "Bar-Jesus." Remember, we talked about the word Barnabas, the name Barnabas and Bar we said the Aramaic word for son, right? And so Barnabas was the son of encouragement, and that was what his name meant. Bar-Jesus simply means son of Yeshua. Think back to the Jewish context in which he was born into, which would not make them think of Jesus of Nazareth. Right? That's a recent figure on the theological scene, but it's that understudy of Moses back in the Old Testament and so it's a very common name, as we said, if you were with us at Christmas Eve, a very common name Yeshua, Joshua. And so he's the son of Joshua. That's kind of his formal name.

He's got a nickname as we're going to learn. But this false prophet named Bar-Jesus, and I say that's ironic because Paul and Barnabas are going through the island and preaching about another Jesus, another Yeshua, another Joshua from Nazareth, the Redeemer, the Christ. Well, this false prophet, this certain magician was with the proconsul, and that's an important phrase because he's a part of that retinue, the inner circle, the cabinet of this Roman official. So here is this Jewish man and many Jews living on Cyprus. And you have a Roman leader and he's ingratiating himself to him as some kind of asset to the inner circle of the Roman leadership of this island. And he's an adviser. Maybe he's a doctor. He's the guy who's there giving counsel. He's got a very favored position in the eyes of the powers that be on this island.

Now, the proconsul he describes is a guy named Sergius Paulus, which it's interesting also because Paulus, that's the Roman name that Saul of Tarsus is known as, and we're going to see in this passage his identification shift from Saul to Paul as we're about to read. And that will be the way he's described in the rest of the book. With a couple of exceptions he's called Paul, and that all changes when he's having an evangelistic encounter with this Sergius Paulus, "a man of intelligence" we're told here by Luke, "who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God."

So we see an evangelistic encounter with a very important man. He's an intelligent man, he's an empowered man, he's an authoritative man and he's sitting there, we assume, in the seat of the Roman government in some kind of posh digs here, municipal building. And he wants to hear about what these guys are preaching, preaching about this Christ of the Old Testament. Well, the proconsul says, "I'm familiar with that. I got a guy here on my staff. His name is son of Yeshua, son of Joshua. And he's told me all about the God of the Old Testament. He's even crediting some of the stuff that he does to the God of the Old Testament. He's a spokesperson for the God of the Old Testament. And so I want to hear what these guys say."

Well, "Elymas, the magician (for that is the meaning of his name.)" That's Bar-Jesus. Right? That's what he's called, Elymas. "He opposed them." Of course, I don't want you to hear what Barnabas and Saul have to say because they're not saying what I'm saying and they're saying something different. "So he was seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith," and we'll learn why in a minute. We'll learn about this guy in a minute and what God has to say about this guy through the mouth of the Apostle Paul. And we learn that he's got something to lose here because he's worked the system to gain an advantage. Being in the inner circle of Sergius Paulus. "Elymas, the magician (for that is the meaning of the name)," Elymas, "he opposed them seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith." I don't want you to hear what they have to say.

"But Saul, who's also called Paul," and will be henceforth, "filled with the Holy Spirit," which some double indications here. One is, of course, that's what we're all called to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We have a relationship with God. And so now we have this sense of being empowered by and motivated by and energized by the God of the universe, the Holy Spirit. And we know what he's about to say is in keeping with truth, right? Because that's going to precede what he says. "He looks intently" at Elymas, Bar-Jesus, and he says, "You're not Bar-Yeshua, right? You are bar-diablos. "You're the son of the devil." That's pretty strong and pretty bold, by the way, if you think about it.

You're sitting there in the seat of the Roman government on the west side of the island of Cyprus. You've been called in because they want to know what you've been teaching all throughout this island and you stand before the powers that be. And he's got a guy in his inner court named Elymas, Bar-Jesus. And all of a sudden now he's trying to dissuade and argue as you're trying to present the gospel to this intelligent leader of the Roman government on the island of Cyprus. And you turn on him and you say in keeping with God's will and in



keeping with God's truth, filled with the Holy Spirit, Hey, Bar-Jesus, you're the son, "you're the son of the devil." That's who you're are. That's bold.

Not only that, he goes on, talk about digging a hole here. "You're an enemy of all righteousness, you're full of deceit and villainy." Maybe you used the word "villainy" in any conversation this week, probably not. This is yes, the translators that I'm taking a small dig at. Villainy. Probably not a word we should have used to translate this word. Villainy, though the Greek word that translates into the English word, the old obscure English word villainy is the word for baiting a hook. Matter of fact, I love the way one of the most authoritative lexicons of the Koine Greek New Testament puts it, this linguist puts it, he actually uses the word. So it's not just my vocabulary. He used the word "con," it's a con, he's a con man. He's full of deceit and conning. He's trying to trick people.

Now that helps us because there are some people teaching the wrong things about the God of the Bible, either Old or New Testament. And they're saying those things, but they believe the things they're saying. You probably know people who have bad doctrine, but they sincerely believe it. Then there are those, and many of them stand on platforms across the country this week in churches, who don't believe what they're teaching, but they teach what they teach because they have some advantage to be gained by teaching it. So here Paul calls him a deceiver, not just one who's deceived and echoing the deception. But he's deceiving others as a con man. He's just doing it so that he can be benefited by that message.

So whatever Elymas is saying to Sergius Paulus, it was for his own advantage. And that's why he's so vehement about saying, "Hey, don't listen, please don't listen to Saul and Barnabas, because I'm going to get cut out of the inner circle here if you believe what they say, because you're going to see that what I'm saying is full of garbage, so you need to not listen to them." So that's the opposition. That's the commentary. And then he says, with a rhetorical question, "Will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?" Now you're familiar with the Old Testament God, Bar-Jesus Elymas. You keep talking about the God of the Old Testament, but you take those passages and instead of using them to rightly lead you to the truth about Jesus of Nazareth, even if you didn't know about it, you would respond favorably because he fulfills all the prophecies of the Old Testament. You're using those Scriptures of the Old Testament to twist them and make them crooked. Also that you can have some advantage in this case in the Roman official's courts on the island of Cyprus.

So you're a con man, you're a deceiver, you're an enemy of righteousness, you're actually the son of, and in league with, the devil because you're opposing the truth. And all of that is you trying to make these clear passages that have a directional hermeneutic interpretational conclusion, and you're using them to conclude other things for your own prosperity and your own advantage.

"Now, behold," verse 11, "the hand of the Lord is upon you." Now, usually we like that phrase, especially back in the Hebrew version of it in Nehemiah and Ezra, it's like a good thing. We've even seen it in the early church in Antioch, "but the hand of the Lord was upon them." That was like a good thing for blessing. But this is the hand of the Lord slapping you in the face, in



particular in the eyeballs. He says, "Behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." So can you imagine this? This is what you call classically a curse. You're having a guy here who is opposing the message of the gospel when you have a receptive, intelligent, authoritative leader asking to hear what you have to say. You're saying it. You've got an opponent and then you say, "Hey. You're bad, you're wrong, you're messed up, you're a liar and a con man. Guess what? You're going to be blind now. The Lord's hand is going to strike you blind. You're going to be blind and not be able to see. Now, it's not going to be permanent, but you're going to be right now blinded," and it says, Luke adds the word, "immediately," as soon as he says it, "mist and darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand."

At some point today you should look up Raphael's sketching of this, the famous artist back in the day, the classical period of Renaissance art, and he sketches out a sketch of Elymas being blinded. I think it's called that, "Elymas the Magician" by Raphael. He sketches it and it becomes a tapestry that's hanging in the Vatican Museum of Elymas, who is a powerful counselor to the Roman official who's now blind. And he looks so bent, hunched over and he's got his hands out and he's trying to find his way out, trying not to stub his toe as Sergius Paulus is standing in all the pomp on his throne in the background. And Paul is there preaching it. It's a great scene. It adds a visual to the fact that here's this man who has to creep around as someone's trying to help him out of the room. It's so humiliating, and it happens because Paul says it.

This is the first miracle of the Apostle Paul. He makes someone blind in an imprecatory, in a cursing and saying, "Listen, you're opposing the truth. God's going to oppose you and you're going to be blind." And then BAM he's blind. The first miracle of the Apostle Paul, a miracle of the power of God authenticating the message that Paul is speaking against the critic who's speaking a different message. And again, if you could say, "Well, I'm preaching the truth, just look at Romans Chapter 6." "Hey, I'm speaking the truth. Just look at Hebrews Chapter 4." He can't go to New Testament truth, so the miraculous sign ends the argument, and it does it in a dramatic way, showing that the God that made the eyeball, the iris, the optic nerve, can shut down eyes any time he wants, and God does that. Paul can't do that. But God can do that because Paul's filled with the Holy Spirit, not only in his commentary about the false prophet, Bar-Jesus, but also about the fact that God is a God who is going to oppose your falsehood.

"Then," verse 12, "the proconsul," Sergius Paulus, "believed." There's our word, the word we're aiming for throughout the book of Acts, someone to trust in Christ, for people to believe in the message of the saving work of Christ on a cross. And we believe this is his conversion. Why? Not just because he was impressed by what he saw, although it was "when he saw what had occurred," the blinding of Bar-Jesus, of Elymas, "but he was astonished," look at the object here, "at the teaching of the Lord." So he'd heard enough, and now he had seen it authenticated and he put his trust in it. That's huge. The first non-God-fearing Gentile, think of it that way. Right? We always think of Cornelius being the first Gentile convert, this Roman centurion. But here is a Roman official governing the island of Cyprus, and he is coming to faith in Christ. His name is Paul, Paulus, Sergius Paulus, and Paul from that point on calls



himself Paul. That's just an interesting shift and move in the book of Acts and something you'd think, wow, what an amazing thing.

The proconsul of the island of Cyprus became a Christian at the end of our missionary tour through the island of Cyprus. It's good, it's positive. It's a great, great first inning of the missionary journey of the Apostle Paul. I mean, there's something up on the scoreboard now. We don't know who was saved in the synagogues, but we do know that at the end of this, a very powerful, intelligent, authoritative leader comes to faith in Christ. Comes to faith in Christ amid opposition. But he comes to faith in Christ amid opposition because God is involved in the equation. And that's the part I want us to start with. Paul is filled with the Spirit, and he's got the God of the universe answering his prayers. He's saying "the hand of God is going to be on you, and you're going to be struck blind," and God intervenes and answers his prayer. That's amazing. That's amazing. And it sure would be neat to be an apostle, wouldn't it?

Well, if you're going to define the neatness of being an apostle by those two things, I just want to tell you, both those things are true of you, right? Here's what the Bible says that every Christian now who becomes a Christian is indwelt by the Spirit. And as you respond rightly to what God asks you to do, then you are by definition filled with the Spirit, which is a way to describe your comportment and your copasetic connection and harmonious response volitionally to doing what God says. You're filled with the Spirit, you're following the lead of the Spirit, you're doing what he says, and he's promised to answer your prayers. "Ask of me, ask. You could ask to move this mountain and throw it in the sea." Right? Now, you're not an apostle, you're not a prophet. I get that. You're not marked by signs and wonders. But God has said, "Listen, I got a job for you to do. Call on me. I'll answer you. Ask anything in my name and I'll do it."

What's the point? God has said all of heaven is going to be positioned behind you as you align yourself with what God wants you to do. And I just want to say, guys, let's just stop and think about that. Last week, I said, if Saul and Barnabas are set apart for the work that God has called them to do, I want YOU to see yourself as set apart for the work that God's called you to do. I want you to stand back and respect the God who has set you apart to do that work. Number one, if you're taking notes, just put it that way. Just based on verses 9, 10 and 11, I want you to respect the Lord. He's the king. He's the boss. I want you to "Respect the Lord Who Wants to Utilize You." He has, according to the Bible, each one of us, the pew warmers at Corinth, to each one he's given a manifestation of the Spirit. Small "s" or capital "S"? Capital "S." What kind of spirit? The Spirit described here? The Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that indwelt the Apostle Paul, the Bible says, indwells you and has said this: He's going to give a "manifestation of the Spirit," according to his will, in your life to accomplish the work that he's called you to do.

Now, I know there are going to be a lot of unanswered questions in this sermon because there are some things that you may not know what it is that you're called to do. I don't want you to think one-dimensionally. There's more than just you being a godly mother. There's more than you just being a good ethical businessman. There are several tiers to this. Even First Corinthians 12, as I said, the context is the Church and the functioning of your role in the



Church. But you have a role in the world, you have a role in the Church, you have a role in your family and all of these things, God says, "I will be with you. I will indwell you. I will empower you. I will answer your prayers." That's just huge. And most of us don't think of it.

If you look at the back of the worksheet or scroll down to the back of the worksheet, you will see that I have had you read, of all places, Job 38, did I not? If you go to small groups this week before you go there be sure to read Job 38. And if you want to just keep reading 39, 40, 41. Just keep reading. This is where after all the chit-chat, if you will, between Job and his three friends, including Job's frustration and irritation and consternation about all that he's hearing, he's talking about God, God, God, Lord, Lord, God, God, Lord Lord. All this stuff about God.

And then God comes on the scene in Chapter 38 and says, "Hey Job." Basically he says this: Mike Fabarez paraphrase, "Do you know who you're talking to? Do you know who you're talking about?" And he said, "Hey, stand up straight." Right? "Steal yourself, gird yourself. Stand up, be ready like a man to hear what I have to say. I just have a few questions for you. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the world? I just want you to think about who you're talking about." If I say to you, the Lord wants to utilize your life. He's got something to do between today and the day you breathe your last breath on this planet, he's got a job for you to do. Matter of fact, he's got a series of jobs in a variety of venues for you to accomplish. You need to figure out what those are and you need to do them. But it's the Lord that's calling you to do this. I just want you to think about who we're talking about here. If I say the Spirit of God wants to manifest himself through you for good in the world, in the Church and in your home, I just want you to think about that for a second. Who's asking you to do that? Who wants to use you like you I do? Who are you allying yourself with to do something in this world to make a difference? God. Who? Read Job 38. Read Job 39.

God keeps saying, "Listen, who is it on the planet that can do anything? Let's talk about you. Can you make the clouds rain? Can you make lightning come out of the sky? I mean, can you take the constellations..." Right? He talks about Orion, talks about The Bear. I mean, if there's any constellation you see when you look up in the sky, it's Orion. It's the only one I can identify when I was a kid. I misidentified it as the Big Dipper for years. But you see Orion's Belt, and if you know anything about constellations, he says, "Hey, can you take it and move it around? Go move the constellations around. Oh, you can't do that? Well, then you're pretty lame." I mean, that's really what God's saying. "Then who are you? You're no one. I think you should worry about me and what I want and what I want, even in this case, you to do and what I want you to think. I want you to recognize who you're talking about." I just want to take that principle of the greatness of God and attach it to this sense of calling, which is what happens for us in Isaiah Chapter 6.

And it's an old, familiar cross-reference. But think about it, when God says, "Who am I going to send? Who's going to go for us?" And we see Isaiah snap to and say, "Here am I, send me." It's all preceded by, can you just think about who we're talking about here? Someone's about to ask, "I got a job to do. Who am I going to send?" Now he knows exactly who is going to send. But he asked the question provocatively. "Who is going to go for us. We've got a job



here in heaven to do. Who is heaven going to get behind to do this?" Well. Isaiah says, "Here am I, send me." But he does that after he sees God high and exalted sitting on a throne, his robe filling the temple. Seraphim flying around singing, "Holy, Holy, Holy. Glory..." We just read this that Paul was filled with the Spirit and I'm saying that's not unique to the Apostle Paul. You today can in this service be filled with a Spirit, go into your week, fulfill the role God has called you to fulfill, do the things that God asks you to do being filled with the Spirit. And not only that, he promises to answer your prayers. He says, "Ask me, I will give to you what you ask. You need to ask me."

It's like Deuteronomy, like, "What other nation has their gods near them the way our God is near us, every time we call on him?" I mean, we just need to realize what we're talking about here. Out of the 168 hours of your week to sit in church and hear that God wants to utilize you, I mean, and you get all this junk in your mail about people who want you to do this and to do that, and your kids want you to help them sell cookies and your mom wants you to do this or your wife wants you to do that or your job and your boss. Listen, I'm just telling you if God says, I want you to do this, I just want you to comparatively see what an amazing, crazy, incredible thing that is. The authority that comes behind it.

It's a power that erupts in the passage by the answer to prayer being a miraculous one. He's struck blind. Well, that'd be great. That would be a useful answer to prayer, right? I'm sitting here arguing with someone about the gospel and I pray an imprecatory psalm and they get struck blind. All I'm telling you is that power and the power of God to back the effectiveness of your work that God has called you to do, if it's his work that he's called you to do so, I want you to see what an amazing power that is. You're so close to that power when you bow your head and pray and you open your Bible and you say, "God, lead me in the path you want me to walk in, what do you want me to do?" We have a power.

I know a power that is strong enough to move billions of pounds of rocks and dirt. It's the geothermal power that's under our feet. Let's talk about your driving. How long did it take you to put 30 miles on your car this week? Some of you put 30 miles on your car yesterday. It's not very far. It's not like getting in your car and going to Chicago. That's a short distance, 30 miles. If you just were able to get in a car and drive for 30 miles straight down from where we're at right here in Alisa Viejo. OK? Guess what you'd run into? Your air conditioning better be working, right? You're going to run into the geothermal energy of the core of our earth. You're going to get past the crust of our earth into the mantle of our planet. Which, by the way, do you know that under our feet they say that there are temperatures within the core of our earth that are as hot as the surface of the sun. I want you to think about that, right?

You go out in the sun too long doing your gardening or whatever and you get sunburned, like, "I shouldn't have been out in the sun." Can you imagine being like, right next to the sun? Well, you don't have to go too far. Just a number of miles, right? 25 miles, 30 miles down under our feet right now, and you will run into an incredible amount of compressed energy. The only time you think about it is when someone sends you a video of some erupting volcano somewhere and you go, "Wow, look at that." Well, where did that all come from? That's existing, that lava, that heat, that power, that force is generated that moves tectonic plates on



our planet that can erupt through these fissures and create these magma flows, this lava flow. We see it erupt and we've seen even civilizations that are destroyed by these eruptions. It's all right there under our feet if you think about it. How close are you to that power and you don't even think about it?

All I'm saying is the power of the universe, the power that created it even, the power that created the eyeball that can make it see or make it blind is the God who is calling you to do something. See, when Moses balked at that, God said, "Who made the mouth? Who makes man seeing or makes him blind? Who makes him walk? Who makes him lame? I do all that. You're going to balk at me asking you to do something as though you can't do it." Turn real quickly to Jeremiah Chapter 1. Jeremiah Chapter 1. Here's another example of a Moses moment when someone is asked to do what God wants them to do, and they balk at it because they think they're not strong enough to do it.

Jeremiah Chapter 1. There are 19, 20-year-olds who are being trained right now and given the keys to \$150 million fighter jets in our national defense, right? Someone capable of flying and trained to fly, you know, an F-22 or an F/A-18 Hornet. And they have missiles attached to them and they were in the morning popping zits on their forehead. They're just kids, right? And I want you to think about that. They're able to take their gloved thumb and move a safety over and put their thumb on a red button as they fly a jet around and they could lock missiles on this building flying at us at Mach speed. Think about this. And I just want you to think if you feel superior to the 21-year-old flying the F/A-18, I just want you to think about the fact that that really doesn't matter how much more life experience I have. It really doesn't matter if he knows how to manage a mortgage. What matters is whose equipment he's flying. What matters is what kind of arsenal he has attached to the wings of that fighter jet. What matters is the powers.

It's like I go to someone's house and knock on the door, and I see this decrepit old 90-year-old lady walking up to the front. I see through the glass and I smile because here is this frail old lady and I feel like the strong, you know, middle-aged man. And oh, look at her. And then I realize she's carrying a 12-gauge shotgun. Now, am I going to cower in front of a 90-year-old? Well, I wouldn't cower in front of a 90-year-old, but I would cower in front of a 90-year-old with a 12-gauge shotgun in her hand. Especially if she racks one in the chamber and turns it toward me. Like, you know, you want me off your porch? I mean, I'm going to submit to that. Why? It isn't because she's strong. She can be as wrinkled and demented as you want. But if she's carrying the weaponry, then I respect the fact that she is aligned with power.

Look at verse 4, Jeremiah Chapter 1. In Jeremiah 1 we have a typical calling of God, and he often does this like he did with Moses, like he did with Gideon, right? He goes and he picks these weak people, it seems. Jeremiah Chapter 1 verse 4, "Now the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.'" You know that word? Same word that we see, it's a Hebrew expression of this, but in the New Testament, when it says, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work I called for them to do." Set them apart. "I set you apart in my plan to have you be



something, Jeremiah. I set you apart before you were even born." And you know, between now and the time you die, I just need you to know all that's true of you as well.

In the New Testaments it's clear. Ephesians Chapter 1, First Corinthians Chapter 12, Romans Chapter 8. There are so many passages to remind me that God has a plan specifically for you. He's called you to do it, and you just need to recognize all this is true of you. It's just that the job description may be different. In this case, it is because you're not a prophet to the Old Testament nation. But before Jeremiah was born, he says, "I appointed you as a prophet to the nations." And then I said, "Oh Lord, it was great. I was just wondering what I was supposed to do in life. I can't wait to do it." No, he says what so many people say. He says I got an excuse. "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, I'm only a youth."

Well, the answer really is in his objection. Look at how he starts it all. "Ah, Lord God!" You even see the way it's put in our English text with all the capital letters, which is supposed to remind us that we're dealing with a compound name of God, the authoritative, proper name of God and the word Elohim with it. The idea is we have here in a text a reminder that we're speaking about the God of universe who just asked us to do something. If you come to any clarity, and again there are a lot of unanswered questions left for you specifically in this sermon. But when you start to see with clarity, here's what God has called me to do in my home, in my community, in my church, you just need to recognize this is the Lord God. And when you say something stupid like Jeremiah says, which is, "I haven't even taken my speech class yet. I haven't matriculated through my homiletics book. I'm just a kid." "But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, "I am only a youth.'""

I don't know what your excuse is, but you've got a job to do that God has called you to do, and some of you are fighting it because you think, "Well, I do this all day long and I have this thing and I'm comfortable with that." It doesn't matter what you're comfortable with. Barnabas and Saul may not have been comfortable getting on a ship and going across the Mediterranean. They didn't say, "Well, let me check with my wife to see if she's OK with this," Barnabas would say. Paul didn't say, "Let me check my calendar. I got a lot planned here for what's going on in Antioch." He goes, "Yes, sir. Here am I. Send me." Why? Because it's the Lord God you're talking to. "Don't say, 'I'm only a youth,' for to all whom I send you, you shall go." That's how you ought to view it. ATAPAT, right? AnyThing, AnyPlace, AnyTime. "Whatever I command you, you're going to speak." Whatever it is. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord." And that is the reminder in all things. When the Spirit of God fills your life, the Lord is with you. You have all that you need to do what God has called you to do.

Is there training? Yes. Is there cultivation of gifts? Yes. We talked about all that last week. But the point here is you need to remember who's calling you to do this. Respect the Lord who wants to utilize you and I wish I could linger longer on that point. But suffice it to say, we don't think about it that way. You might think it's the pastor trying to pitch me to be different at work or to sign up for something at church or kind of fulfill some Christian role in my family. It's way more than that. It's the God of the universe. You should hear the voice of your Good



Shepherd saying, "This is what I want you to do," and then you're supposed to follow him because he's the Lord.

Acts Chapter 13. Of course, the passage is made dramatic because we have an opponent, we have someone opposing Paul. Go back up through the passage now. We got a "certain magician," verse 6, he's "a Jewish false prophet," Bar, son of Yeshua, "Bar-Jesus. Now he is with the proconsul." Now, again, remember what a powerful thing. He is in the cabinet of the leader of this island. Verse 8, "Elymas opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith." And what's Paul's response, verse 10? "You son of the diabolus," you son of the opponent, you son of the one who's trying to stop us, you're the opponent, you're God's opponent. You're not just my opponent, your God's opponent. "You're an enemy of all righteousness," the God of righteousness, the God who makes the rules. You're an enemy of all.

And again, back to our announcement this morning, if you think about the leaders of our country, if you think about the leaders of Canada, if you think about the Supreme Court of our nation, if you think about the assemblymen in our county, if you think about the councilmen in our city, if you think about all these people and you think if they say something is right and God says it's wrong, I just want you to think about this. You might be intimidated by that, but you need to realize who they're representing when they're opposing righteousness. You need to see who they're representing when they oppose what is right and the faith in Christ Jesus. You need to see that.

And who is it? Well, here's what Ephesians 6 says, "You don't wrestle against flesh blood." It's not against politicians you're dealing with. It's not against cultural elites. It's not against professors at the university, really. You're wrestling against "principalities and powers and spiritual forces of darkness." That's what the Bible says. There's a spiritual force, and if you're new to this, you may be like, "Well, that's weird." It may be weird, but it's the truth. There is an opponent of God and he's opposing what is right and he's opposing, let's get very specific, what God has called you to do. And he will utilize people like Elymas to come and make your calling difficult. It'll be hard for you to accomplish what you're called to do, and you're called to share the gospel on the island of Cyprus and in Cyprus at Paphos, there's an official who says, "I want to hear what you have to say." And now there's someone standing between you and them, and they're powerful. They are with the proconsul. They are a key figure in this culture.

And all I'm saying is, Paul goes, "You're wrong." And I'm just saying, "Hey, Christian, you need to know that you're opposed, but recognize the power that opposes you." I know they're telling you you're on the wrong side of history. I know they're telling you, "Who are you? You fundamentalist Bible-thumping, narrow-minded bigot." I get all that. They're saying that to you. But they are wrong because they are empowered, Second Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 4, they're empowered by the enemy of God. And that's what the Bible says. They are, to quote what Paul said to Timothy, "They are held captive by Satan to do his will." They're opposing you. But it's really a spiritual force of darkness.



Number two, you need to "Recognize the Powers That Want to Stop You." But you need to recognize them for what they are and what they are... I know it seems like, well, they're the popular people on the planet. They are the applauded people. They're the praised people. I get that. I get all that. But if they're wrong, then guess what? Then they're part of what the system is in Scripture, which calls it an enemy of righteousness. Here's what Jesus said, "You are a son of your father, the devil." You are speaking lies because Satan speaks lies and when he speaks, he speaks of his native language and you're speaking the language of God's enemy. And guess what? He's already been defeated. Now he's going to make a mess of it until the clock runs out. But because of Christ's death on a cross, he has now been made a mockery of by the death of Christ. Victory has been proclaimed over the enemy. He's not going to win. There's a group of people who have been called out by repentance in faith to trust in his Son. They're the victors, they're the winners. They're the children of God. They will reign with Christ.

Everyone who opposes them is on the losing team, even though they're the majority. The opposition you're going to feel. I put it this way, it's like you playing in a football game where you're supposed to move the ball down the field into the end zone. But you've got 7 guys, they got 22 guys. And that's what the Bible says. A few people are on the right side, going on the right road, going through the right gate. Most people are on the broad road, going through the wide gate. And so it's like we're outnumbered. But the playing field is not even. Here's where Satan has messed with the world. He's taken the gridiron and he's tilted it. Picture that way, like tilted it at 35 degrees. Right? Now, it's like, I want to switch sides. You can't switch sides. We're pushing this ball UP the field. We've got everything working against us. It seems so hard. They throw the ball and it just flies 60 yards. We throw the ball it goes 10 yards. What's wrong with us? We must be on the wrong side. We're not on the wrong side. You're opposed by a spiritual force that tilts everything in its favor.

That spiritual force is not just an "it," it is a "him," and the Bible says he is defeated, though he's going to fight against God and all of his children. And so you're going to get pushback on being the Christian father you're supposed to be. You're going to get pushback about being the Christian ambassador at your job that you're supposed to be. You're going to get pushback about being salt and light that's supposed to preserve our culture from evil. It's supposed to restrain evil in our society and promote and illuminate light. It's supposed to shine bright, righteous truth to our culture. All of that's going to be pushed back as though we're the minority. And not only that we're playing uphill. It's not going to seem fair. Get used to that feeling.

You need to recognize the opposition, but some of you have stopped being the Christian family member you should be, the Christian active minister you should be within the Church of Christ, and the salt and light in the community that you should be because you've gotten some opposition. And so you're on the bench and you got the towel over your head, you're like, "Oh, it's really hard out there on the gridiron." It is. Who said it wasn't going to be hard? You didn't sign up for the chess club, right? You signed up to be a Christian, to be a soldier of Christ. To be someone who is out there fighting the good fight of faith until you die. And I'm just saying, if you're benched because you've had a little opposition, then you don't



understand the fight. It's time for you to get back out there to be the Christian ambassador in your Christian office that you're supposed to be. To be the Christian family member that you're supposed to be. To be the Christian citizen in our society that stands up for what is righteous and true that you're supposed to be. That's your job. They don't like it. I get that. We preach a lot about that.

I don't need to belabor the point I trust from this platform. But you need to know that's the truth and you need to be ready. OK. That's the way it is. I recognize the powers that want to stop me, but I know who those powers are, and I know that the real battle is not with the people, even though I know the people are in league with the enemy, it's the enemy that's constantly trying to shut me down in fulfilling my calling in this world. God wants to utilize me. He's all-powerful. There's a power that's against me, but he's already defeated. But he sure is pressing hard against me. I get that.

Psalm 2 I'm going to make you read, too, if you look at your worksheet there. Before you prep for your small groups read Psalm 2, and when you get to your small groups, read it together in your small group. Have someone read it out loud and everyone look at the words of Psalm 2 before you discuss this point. You need to realize that the world and all of its leaders are raging and plotting against the Lord and his anointed. And that's the way it's always going to be in this fallen world until Christ comes back and sets up his kingdom. So you and I need to know that, and we need to be as bold as the psalmist is in Psalm 2, who says, Hey guys, "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry." I mean, that's where the psalm goes. "Hey, guys, you need to kiss up to Christ lest he gets mad," because that's how it works.

Matter of fact, if you don't think whether it's an Assyria or Babylon or Rome, that these cultures collapsed because of their rebellion against God reflected in his truth and in natural law, then we don't understand how God works. This nation will be cursed. Canada will be cursed. Europe will be cursed. The world will be cursed until we recognize the truth of God and at least play nice with the propositional truth of God. And thankfully, we've had a good respite here in the United States for a while. But our job is to preach clearly, even if we're standing before the proconsul who could kill us and his associate who is standing there in his retinue is telling us that, you know, we're wrong. We need to say, "No, you're wrong." We need to warn them. I mean, that's the warning of Psalm 2. "You need to kiss the Son, lest he be angry." You need to "Serve the Lord with trembling and rejoicing." You need to recognize that we have no hope but to submit ourselves to the will of the Son. And that's all I'm trying to do, right? I'm trying to be utilized by the God of the universe, even though there's power pitted against us.

You still got Acts 13 open? Look at verse 7 and remember this. The whole scene of the showdown between Elymas and Barnabas and Saul, Barnabas and Paul happens because this "Sergius Paulus," verse 7, "this man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas in Saul and sought to hear the word of God." Now do people naturally want to hear the word of God? No. When people want to hear the word of God, here's what Jesus says, "Blessed are the people who have eyes to see, ears to hear." Well, that's the point. God has granted them "eyes to see, and ears to hear." It's been granted to them to understand the parables of the



kingdom. God has been gracious to them. They've opened their minds. Here is a guy saying I want to know more about the gospel. Does that happen all the time? It doesn't happen all the time, but it happens sometimes. When it happens sometimes you need to see that's God at work. God is working to open the eyes of the unbelieving, and here is Paul against opposition, knowing he's called by God, the God of the universe, to do what God has called him to do, in this case, to be a traveling missionary, a foreign missionary. He's going and doing this work. And God is going, "Yeah, here's some victory. Here's some victory. Here's some victory."

And it ends up that way. He didn't just listen and turn away. Verse 12, bottom of the passage, "The proconsul believed." He believed when he saw what had occurred. How Paul power through the opposition. I mean, albeit miraculous. I get that. "For he was astonished," not at the fact that he could do magic tricks that were greater than Elymas. He was astonished at the teaching of the Lord. Some of you here have had the great privilege of leading someone to Christ and you know they became astonished at the teaching of the Lord. It comported with their conscience and with what God's Spirit was doing in their heart. Their eyes were open to see the glory of Christ to keep quoting, by the way, Second Corinthians Chapter 4.

Matter of fact, let's turn it real quick. Second Corinthians Chapter 4. I wasn't going to do this, but let me turn to the Second Corinthians Chapter 4, where we see kind of all of this put all together, the whole passage. All that I'm trying to do by preaching this first leg of the missionary journey with an eye to your calling, I want you to see it all put together in a great, a great statement here in Second Corinthians Chapter 4. Start in verse 3, "Even if our gospel is veiled," Second Corinthians, 4:3, "Even if our gospel is veiled..." OK, some people like in Sergius Paulus' cabinet didn't get it. Certainly, Elymas didn't get it. They were opposing, it was veiled. "It is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world," there's the enemy, "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is in the image of God." Think about that.

"For what we proclaim is not ourselves," right? It's not about us. It's about these servants who are just filled with the Spirit doing the work that God has called them to do. But we're all about proclaiming Jesus Christ as the king, as the Lord. We got to believe it ourselves first. And "Ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." Do you want to hear the gospel? I'm here to serve you to give you the gospel. We need to raise godly offspring. I'm just here as a mom or a dad to raise them in the discipline and admonition to the Lord. That's my... I'm just here to serve what God wants. I'm here as a servant. Christian boss, Christian, businessman, Christian citizen. I'm just here as servants for Christ's sake.

"For God," by the way when we see victory and we will, "who said 'Let light shine out of darkness'" He can create light out of darkness, which is a great image of Elymas going blind. He's walking around in darkness just like John 9 says, they don't get the truth, and it's this image of they don't see it. "Their eyes are blinded," verse 4. But here in verse 6 it says, "The God, who said, 'Let light shine out of the darkness,' has shown in our hearts," to give us we indebtedly with grace and gratitude, we recognize that, "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God has shown in our hearts in the face of Jesus Christ." We've seen the greatness of Christ. We embrace it. We don't reject it.



Well, it's really hard. Yeah, it is hard, guys. "We have this treasure," verse 7, "in jars of clay." Why? "To show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way," I get that. Opposed. I wish we didn't have Elymas in our lives. "But we're not crushed." We're perplexed that the way a guy like Bar-Jesus can sit there and read the Old Testament and not get it. "Perplexed, but not driven to despair." Look at the victories. "Persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed. We're always carrying in the body the death of Jesus." They opposed him, they're opposing us. "So that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies."

People are getting saved through us. We're saved and they're going to be saved. "For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake." We get opposed all the time. Why? "So that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh." So here it is. "Death is at work in us." How hard was it for them to work through that day in front of Sergius Paulus? It was really hard. A lot of opposition. I mean, a guy was even blinded by my prayer, right? But death is at work in us, but life in you." Sergius Paulus and probably his whole family comes to faith in Christ that day. Just a great, I mean, the whole passage is great, we could go on.

But number three, I guess I want you to "Get Motivated by Our Promised Victory." God is going to allow people's eyes to be open through you being a godly parent, through you being a godly employee, through you being a godly citizen, through being a godly leader in our culture. God is going to use you to open people's eyes. Everyone? Not everyone, not in this life. In their case, the perishing, they don't get it and they won't get it. But for those who are being saved, the light bulb is coming on because we're shining the light. And it's hard, right? As Paul says later with this analogy, he says, it's like we're saying to sleepers arise and let Christ shine on you. That's not a good thing. If I come to your house with a flashlight, a very bright flashlight at 3:00 in the morning, it won't be a pleasant, "Oh, good to see a Pastor Mike." You're not going to be happy about it. But if there's a house burning and you need to get out and I shine the light in your eyes and you get it and you see that we need to flee from this corrupt generation and when you are to be saved in Christ, you'll thank me for it.

And there are people who are going to be rocked by you telling them they're sinners and they're lost and going to hell without Christ. And "there's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." They're going to be rocked by that. It's going to be like a floodlight in their face, but they're going to be saved and their lives are going to be changed eternally. They're going to welcome us into their eternal dwellings one day in the kingdom. Get motivated by the promise of our victory and its coming person by person, case by case, discussion by discussion. If God is equipping you to be a biblical counselor, you're going to see fruit in that. You're going to have people having their lives repaired. The crooked ways are going to be made straight. You're going to be like John the Baptist making straight a path for God to come in.

I mean, that's what Elymas was not doing. He was doing just the opposite of that. Isaiah 40. Here was this prediction of a voice crying in the wilderness, saying, "Make straight the way of



the Lord." Malachi, there's going to be this one coming before Christ that was going to make that clear. In Luke Chapter 1 at the very bottom of the chapter, Zachariah, the priest, is filled with the Spirit and he prophesies about his son and his son is John the Baptist. He speaks of him in such potent, powerful ways. Matter of fact, let me read it for you. I wrote it down here somewhere. What a great text. Let me find it. I'm going to find it. I'll just look it up. Zachariah's Prophecy, Luke Chapter 1 verse 76, "And you, child, will be called a prophet of the Most High." I love that. That's the part we forget. That's why I spent so much time on point one. "For you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways."

By the way, every person you talk to, every person you're trying to influence for good, every person trying to say what you're affirming is wrong and it's bad and you'll be condemned, you need to be warned. All of them are going to meet the Lord. All of them. Right? They're all going to bow before Christ. "God has already exalted Christ, given him the name of which is about every name." "So that in the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those in heaven, on earth and under the earth." Everyone's going to have to "bow and every tongue is going to have to confess" that he's right, that he's Lord. That he is all authoritative. And so we're just preparing the way. And hopefully they're going to see that way, they're going to walk in that way. I love this: "To give the knowledge of salvation to his people." Just like Paul said, "I endure everything for the sake of the elect." I'm ready to be a prisoner. "I bear these chains because I'm ready to suffer for those who will be saved."

Even in Acts 13, they're going to go into a city and everyone who was appointed to eternal life believed, they trusted in Christ. Guess who was appointed to eternal life? Sergius Paulus. Guess who's appointed to eternal life in your world in the next month, two months, year? I don't know. God knows. But we're going to walk in that victory and you're "going to give knowledge of salvation to his people and the forgiveness of sins." So good. Why? "Because of the tender mercy of God." I know it feels so militant, but we're doing this because God has sent his Son to die in mercy and kindness and grace to sinners. And we're bringing that message to you, "whereas," I love this, "the sunrise," here's Christ, "shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness." What a contrast. Paul is preaching the light, Elymas is walking around in darkness. "To give the light to those who sit in darkness in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the path of peace." That's so good. I've got to read the last verse of that verse of that, verse 80, "And the child grew," John the Baptist, "and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness until the day of his public appearance to Israel."

Some of you are sitting on the sidelines like you are in the wilderness and it's time to get you out of that and get you going in the public appearance of your ministry being utilized by God to do what is right and what is good. To kind of hone it in, a lot of unanswered questions, but in your life, to find those things that God has called you to do in the home, in the church, in the community, and to do those things. And have God's strong support as his Spirit fills you to do those. Opposition? Sure, you're going to have it. But we're going to be motivated by the fact that there will be victory.

Paul wrote to the Romans, he said, "Don't ever be slothful in your zeal." Don't let your zeal abate, right? "Be fervent in serving the Lord." I want us to serve the Lord, even if you're trying



to figure out what exactly that means in those arenas. Let's start by saying ATAPAT, AnyThing, AnyPlace, AnyTime, because I know it's God who has a job for me to do, and that's bigger than any other appeal I can get throughout the week. This is the word of God, the voice of the shepherd calling his sheep and you saying, "I'll follow him."

Let's pray. God, help us as Christians in the midst of a morass of crazy things happening in our world. The voices that we hear every day and things in my mailbox wanting me to donate and people wanting me to spend time doing this, that and the other, to say the most important voice I need to hear is the voice of your truth, of you speaking clearly about what my calling is and what I'm to do that I might give myself fully to the work that you've called me to do aligned with your Spirit. Seeing the results that you have ordained for whatever usefulness I have in this world, in my job, in my workplace, in my home. And God, that I would do it motivated by the fact that we're not done yet. Clearly, I'm still here, I'm still breathing. I have work to do. And God, there's going to be work to be done until the final trumpet is sounded and this age is ended as the last person comes to repentance, as Second Peter 3 says. So please God, motivate us by that victory. There's still victory yet to be won here in South County and around the country and around the world. So motivate us, God, please. Encourage us with the optimism of the faith that you have promised to give us fruitful, effective Christian lives. And one day we might hear from you, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Keep us moving forward.

In Jesus name. Amen.