



Useful to the Lord - Part 7

Undeterred

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During my recent vehicle acquisition that I so transparently let you in on my car negotiations. I was in the midst of those hours, those stressful, classically stressful hours that all of us despise, haggling and negotiating and then in the middle of it all, there came that minute when I threw out like my final number, like this is it. And when the salesman responded with that classic response, and he was about to get up to go to the man behind the curtain who really makes all the decisions. And he says, "If I can get you that number do we have a deal?" If I can get you that number, do we have a deal?

That kind of snapped me back into reality, like, I'm not just here winning a debate or haggling for, you know, negotiation's sake, I'm not just playing or arguing. This is like, this is going to cost me money every month and this is about a car. I'm either going to drive home with a new car today, or I'm going to drive home with my old car. It got really real at that moment. "Calling for the question" many people call it. You have to make a decision, are you in or are you out? Is this a "yes" or is this a "no?" Are you going to get it or you're not going to get it? If we can get these terms right here, are you going to do it?

I know that a lot of people don't like that and being, you know, compared in any way illustratively to a car salesman does not feel good in church. But you got to realize that that's the reason cars get sold. That's how people, you know, acquire new homes. That's how people end up with new insurance policies. That's how surgeries are scheduled. When someone finally says, "I'm deciding to do it," and someone says to you, "Are you in or are you out?" It's that moment of decision. I've served on enough boards to know that line from Robert's Rules "calling for the question," which basically means we're done with all the discussion. We've had plenty of time to look at the facts. We've seen the pros. We've seen the cons. Everyone has weighed in. Now let's make a decision.

And to think of that as some kind of pressure tactic from a salesman, if that bothers you to think that through as anything I would ever want to see as a positive, then I just want to warn you, you're not going to like this sermon today. You're not going to like the passage that we're going to study. You're not going to like this part of God's word, which I guess is no, you know, no different than a lot of days when I open the Bible and I see things that really grate against my sensibilities. I don't like it, but I'm not God. I didn't write it. I don't make the rules. This is his universe. I just happen to live in it. And so if this is what God says is right, I guess I'm going to have to recognize its right. Matter of fact, in that classic passage we looked at last week that's kind of been the underlying motif of this whole series, being his ambassadors, it talks about the fact that we are there for his ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us be reconciled to God.

We like to use phrases like gospel conversations. Well, I didn't go into the car sales dealership to have a car conversation, right? "You just sit around and talk about cars. Let's talk about this car." We didn't have a car conversation. He was a salesman, and he's trying to



get me to buy that car. We were trying to figure out what the terms were. We were trying to get to a bottom line and we were going to make a decision and his goal was to get me to buy that car that day. That was the goal. And I recognize that when you see that as some kind of a distasteful thing, and most of us feel like it's a distasteful thing, it's hard for us to negotiate through those things and we don't like the pressure.

But if you don't like that pressure, then in Acts Chapter 13, when Paul gets to the end of his evangelistic presentation, he doesn't say, "Well, that was a nice gospel conversation." He's about to lean in and not only call for the question like, we're done with the facts, we're done with the teaching, we're done with the talking, we're done with all of the interacting on these facts. Now what are you going to do about it? If you don't like that, then you're not going to like the way he leans in at the beginning of our passage in verse 40 and then leans over and goes, "And beware if you don't take this deal." Can you imagine that? You buy a car and like, "If we can get this number do we have a deal?" And I say, "Yeah." "Well, you better have a deal because if you don't, beware to you." You know, it's like we're going to send Guido out to your house and be like..." "No, it's just like, I don't like that at all."

And if you don't like that at all, because that sounds like if we try to apply it to evangelism, some kind of high pressure "turn or burn" evangelism, again, I'm sorry. All I'm telling you is that I have a great template of a useful ambassador to the Lord, the Apostle Paul, who is doing what we see laid out in Scripture, and that is making an appeal to people to be reconciled to God. He's not just messing around, he's not just talking the talk. He's not just trying to win an argument. He's trying to win people to Christ. He's trying to, as we saw last week in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, persuade people because he knows the fear of God.

He knows the fear of God so much so that he's going to enlist Habakkuk. If you know your Bible, the book of Habakkuk. This is where God is about to send the Babylonians into wipe out Judah, his own people. And here is this very difficult prophet dealing with a very difficult topic of if the people don't repent, you're in big trouble. You're about to be destroyed, you're going to perish. So let's look at this passage and be at least open to the fact that we should be doing evangelism in our generation the way that God says we ought to be doing evangelism. The way he set up people in Scripture. And I think Paul does it five times, saying, "Follow me, follow the pattern you've seen in me, follow the example of my life. Follow me as I follow Christ." Christ did the same by the way. He called people to the question, he called people to decision.

So take a look at this text with me. It's in the end of this evangelistic presentation in Acts Chapter 13, we're going to look at verses 40 through 45 in this section of Scripture, a very important section. It leads us right up to the edge of where now he's going to have to respond in the rejection that he's going to get. There's rejection, there's acceptance, there's the middle ground. We'll see all of that in a second. But this is really the culmination of everything he's been saying. He's talked about, you might remember, these "imperfect previews." We've had a lot of deliverance, like out of slavery in Egypt. We've had a lot of deliverance through all of these foreign armies that came against Israel during the period of the judges. We saw Saul, we saw David be a deliverer out of a lot of geopolitical and military threats. But there's one



that's ultimate that's coming. There's one that can free us from things that are eternal, we looked at that last week, the ultimate realities prepared for eternity. I just summarize the last four sermons there.

And now he says, you know what? If you think back to verse 39, this one, if you believe, you trust in him, will free you from everything that the law of Moses couldn't free you from. This is real, ultimate salvation. Verse 40. I'll read for you from the English Standard Version, I'll read six verses here this morning. It says, "Beware, therefore, lest what is said in the Prophets should come about." And we don't want this quoting Habakkuk Chapter 1 verse 5, "Look, you scoffers." In other words, here's the warning, "Beware that you don't scoff at this." It's like him handing me a deal and saying, "Hey, beware that you don't scoff at this deal I'm about to give you." Now that's edgy. That's leaning into this hard. "Look, you scoffers, be astounded and perish; for I'm doing a work in your days, a work that you will not believe, even if one tells you."

He goes on to talk about the "Chaldeans," or the Babylonians, "being raised up, that bitter," I just read the next verse, "and hasty nation, who march through the breadth of the earth, to seize dwellings that are not their own. They're dreaded and fearsome; their justice and dignity go forth from themselves." They are a law to themselves. They do whatever they think is right and they're going to come in and they're about to destroy you. So here is Paul saying, I've got an offer of ultimate deliverance that you and your sins should condemn you eternally, but there is a deliverer named Christ who's come to live in your place, die in your place, solve the problem. You can be exonerated of your sins. You can be completely forgiven. That's a good deal. You'd better take it. You better take it and beware if you don't.

There's a lot in that. That's huge. Here's the responses, verses 42 to 45, three different responses. "As they went out, the people begged them," here's group number one. "that these things might be told them the next Sabbath." Remember he's in the synagogue, the city in Antioch, southern Galacia. And it says we'd like to hear it next week. And then there's a different group, verse 43, "After the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews," so now we're talking about Saturday afternoon, "and devout converts to Judaism," which reminds us that's literally the word in Greek "proselytes" so these are the Gentile proselytes who we're worshiping in the Jewish temple and they are all, you know, converted to Judaism. Now they're about to convert to Christianity, because here's the next word they "followed Paul and Barnabas. "To follow Paul and Barnabas. To follow Paul as he follows Christ.

This is a leaving behind of their non-messianic Judaism. They are now about to become messianic Jews. They're about to put their trust in the real Messiah. And I know that because of the way that Paul and Barnabas are going to instruct them. "Who," Paul and Barnabas, "as they spoke to them." What did they do? "They urged them to continue in the grace of God." So it's not like hey, step into the grace of God and become a Christian. But now that you're Christian, continue in the grace of God. So he's got some who want to hear more. He's got some now who say, we embrace it, and he's got an answer to that, to continue in the grace of God. And then we get the crowd from verse 42, bringing their neighbors and friends the next



week in verse 44 saying, "The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord."

I mean, hyperbole, obviously, rhetorical hyperbole. But like, almost everyone showed up. And who knows, maybe it was everyone. It was like packed. Everyone was there in the synagogue standing outside. Everyone came to hear it. So we had a lot of inquisitive people who wanted to know more about this gospel thing, about Christ. Then there's another group, a third group, verse 45, "When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy." This is not a characterization of all the Jews in the synagogue, but a certain group of Jews. We assume these are the leaders of the Jewish synagogue. They would be jealous because now I've got a guy who was a guest speaker last week and now everyone who comes back to hear them, they've got double the attendance, triple the attendance. And it's like, they don't like that, jealousy.

Which, by the way, it's a different sermon. But you underestimate how much sin is motivated by jealousy and envy. Tons. We don't give that half the play that we should give it. Huge motivation for sin, in this case, for the rejection of the gospel, the ultimate sin. "And they began to contradict what was spoken about Paul." So they didn't like his message. There were some who embraced it, some who wanted more answers. And then we had some that contradicted it, "contradicted what was spoken about by Paul," and they were then degenerating into ad hominem arguments. You know what ad hominem means, right? Attacking the person instead of the arguments. They argued about what he said. And then they started saying, "Well, you're an idiot" or whatever they said, I don't know what they called him, but they called him names and "they reviled him" as a person.

Now you see the subtitle of the message this week. "Undeterred." Undeterred. To be undeterred is to keep going. And that's what happens. And I guess we got to borrow just a tiny bit in the next passage here in verse 46, when it says, "And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly." Now we're going to look at what happens when they do that and the decisions that are made. The title of next week is doing "Whatever Comes Next" and they're going to do whatever comes next when they are useful servants of the Lord and the change of plans they ought to adopt and embrace, and they did full wholeheartedly. We'll deal with that next week. But this week we just want to know they're undeterred. They're undeterred in the response.

The first thing they're doing faithfully and committedly is they're bringing answers about what they should do in response to the gospel. In other words they're saying, "You need to do this, you need to take this deal and beware if you don't." That's hard. That's the most extreme example of calling the question, right? We've had enough time to consider the facts. It's time to decide. So that verse 41 and that verse 42, those two verses, in saying beware and then quoting Habakkuk, which is if you don't, there's a penalty to pay, is a reminder to us, if we're going to be useful to the Lord, because Paul was doing this all throughout the book of Acts as a good example for us, as a good ambassador does representing his king and the kingdom. He's trying to get people to respond. And so I think we need to start with that. If I'm going to be undeterred, I got to start with this. I'm not going to be deterred by just having gospel



conversations. I'm going to call people to the question when I'm done conversing about Christ.

Number one, we need to "Faithfully Call for a Response." If you're going to be representing Christ at some point, you're going to say, "Hey friend, what are you going to do about Christ? Hey, what are you going to do about what I just told you? Hey, are you going to respond to this? If you're not going to respond to this, tell me why you would not respond to this today." You don't just have gospel conversations. You lean in at the end and you say, "Listen, I would like you to respond to this, and here's how I'd like you to respond to this." It's not like, "Do we have a deal?" It's like, "You need to make this deal and beware if you don't make this deal." I mean, that really is what the Scripture would teach us that we should have is that Second Corinthians Chapter 5, "Knowing the fear of God, therefore, we persuade men." We're trying to do our best to get people to rightly respond to the gospel.

And again, that's foreign to today, we're ever so polite and genteel, and just want to converse and talk. And then it's like, I feel like... I go home, I dropped the gospel bomb because I had gospel facts. And then I think, "Well, I did my duty." You need to call them to the decision. What are you going to do? And they're going to have responses. You call for response, you're going to get responses, and we'll look at that in a minute, but I just want you to not have a theology that somehow eclipses that reaction of a good evangelist asking people to respond to what they just said. Because I think there are people in this room right now who have climbed so high up into their ivory tower, their theological ivory tower, they're up there in the clouds that they never can really think about this making any theological sense to them.

And here's what I'll say again for the third time in this series. You can have good theology, right theology that will lead you to do the wrong unbiblical thing. Biblical theology that unfortunately will be misapplied to make you do the wrong biblical thing. And I know it because I've been up there having lunch with the people in the ivory towers who have the right theology, theology I would affirm. But they say, because I believe this theology, I would never be calling people to decisions. Matter of fact, they have a pejorative word for that, they call it "decisionism." Right? There's a kind of evangelicalism that has us believe in decisionism. Because I know what the Bible says. I've read Romans 8, 9, 10 and 11, which all deal with the fact that God's regenerative work is all the work of God. And that's what I called the series when I preach through, particularly chapters 9, 10 and 11, I call it God's work in evangelism. Is God at work in evangelism? 100% Do I agree with that? Yes, 100% have lunch with you in your ivory tower.

But when we're done with lunch, we climb down the stairs, we go into the streets and we call people to decision. That's what the Bible teaches. By the way, the only way I know how the guy who is used by God to write that theology about all this lofty high view of God's sovereignty and salvation, the only way I know how he works that out in the practicum of his life is to open the book of Acts and see how he responded to people. So I know this: Paul believes in all the things that God used him to write in the Bible. I believe that he believes those things 100%. Well, when he's in practice, what does he do? Calls people to decision. He does. We see it all over the place. We see it all throughout the Bible.



I will, in your small groups, take you back to two classic Old Testament examples. Joshua at the end of the book, they're now settled in the land at the end of Joshua, Joshua 24. And he says, listen, it's time for you to make a decision about what you're going to do. And you know these famous words, "choose you this day who you'll serve, whether it's the gods of your forefathers across the River, you want to get the gods of the Ammonites." Go do that, fine, but decide today what you're going to do, right? If it's the Lord, well, you ought to serve him. And by the way, I'm going to tell you what I've done. You might have this plaque hanging on your wall. The next verse says, "But as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord." We're making a decision, but today make a decision.

"Well, that's Old Testament, Pastor Mike." But it's all over the New Testament too. Paul himself in Second Corinthians says this. I'll just quote it for you in Second Corinthians Chapter 6 verse 2. He talks about responding to the grace of God, and he quotes the Old Testament text about in Isaiah 49, "In a favorable time I listen to you, in the day of salvation I helped you." And then he turns to them, the Corinthians, "Behold, now is the favorable time. Today is the day of salvation," respond now. Do you want more New Testament? How about the book of Hebrews, over and over again? Today, if hear his voice, today, "do not harden your heart today." Respond. Well, I understand that God is the one who is at work in people's hearts. I understand and I believe 100% in the monogenism, if you know these words, of salvation. I get that, I 100% get that. But what I've got to do as an evangelist is call people to make a decision to respond to Christ. 100%. It's all over the text of Scripture.

Speaking of a beautifully stated way to put this with the character that I hope we can get in line, I hope I get in line and get a chance to meet in the new earth. His name is Elijah in the Old Testament. Remember when he had the showdown with the prophets of Baal and they're all dancing around there trying to get him to answer and he starts mocking them. What a character. Maybe he's in the bathroom, literally. I mean, that's not how it's translated, but maybe your god's in the bathroom, maybe Baal's, you know, sitting on a can. I mean, that's literally what... I mean that's the idiom that he gives in Hebrew. And then he says this, and it's a play on words because the Hebrew word that he uses "limping" is the word that is used later to describe how they're dancing around the altar, trying to get fire to come down out of heaven, how Baal responds.

And he says this, "How long will you limp between two decisions?" This is another great passage. Let me quote this. It's First Kings Chapter 18 verse 21, "Elijah came near to the people and said, 'How long will you go limping between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if it's Baal, then follow him.'" I just think it's everywhere in Scripture that you've got to make a decision. Actually, Paul plays this out in Acts Chapter 26. In Acts Chapter 26 he says before King Agrippa, great-grandson of Herod the Great, and he in Acts 26 is dealing with the truths of the gospel, and Agrippa starts to feel convicted. And he says, "In a short time would you persuade me to become a Christian?" It's almost like you're not trying to talk me into becoming a Christian are you? And Paul says, Whether a short time or a long time, I would to God that not only you but everyone who hears my voice might become as I am."



I mean that just like... he's just like, "Yes, I want you to make this decision. Yes, I'm calling your volition to be engaged in responding to Christ by repentance and faith and putting your trust in him. Yes! If you believe the prophet, you ought to do this. God has spoken. You ought to respond to it and you ought to respond now." And I'm just telling you, a lot of people in this room have said, "Well, maybe since the beginning of this series in the book of Acts, I need to talk more about Christianity with my friends and neighbors and extended family." And you've done it. But you haven't persevered in that to the place of saying now, what are you do about it? What are you going to do? Now I know that that's going to be seen as irritating for a lot of people. I get that. But God didn't say do what I do, unless it makes you irritating to your friends, right? It might be irritating. You might be looked at as a "turn or burn" kind of evangelical Christian. A kind of a car salesman who's trying to sign the deal, finish the deal, shake my hand. Do we have a deal? I get it. But I don't care. Right?

Because ultimately, we have to do what God has asked us to do and what he asks us to do is to appeal to people as though God were making his appeal through us, "Hey be reconciled to God. Today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. Today is a day of salvation. Today is the favorable time. Choose you this day who are you going to serve, the prophets of Baal, the gods of the Amorites? Do it, but make a decision."

And by the way, just so you don't forget what the cost of all of this is, I just remind you of Luke Chapter 14 verse 33. The Greek word here that reminds me of my interaction with the car salesman the other week, where he's trying to separate me from my money, at least part of it, every month. That's what he's doing. He's trying to have me part with this and I don't want to part with it. Not as much as he wants me to part with it. So he's going to give me this new car. I'm going to give him my money. And so he's trying to negotiate this deal and I'm finally going get the deal when I throw out a final number. And he says, "Hey, if I can get that deal, do we have a deal. If I get that number do we have a deal?" That idea, which is a classic like closing the deal kind of narrative, he's trying to see if I'm willing to give up this much money for driving home in that new car.

As I go to tell people to follow Christ, some of you because you wrongly take the doctrine of grace and drive this into a place where you have a complete misunderstanding of the cost of Christianity, you think we can have gospel conversations and talk about the free gift of eternal life and never talk about what it's going to cost you. You know, Jesus was so clear on this. "No one sits down to build a tower unless he first calculates the cost to see if he has enough to build it. But if he doesn't and he starts building, everyone ridicules him because he has no money to finish it." It's like me going to the Lamborghini dealer in Newport Beach and going, "Oh, let's talk about it. Yeah, right? \$3,500 a month. Let's do that." And then they go, "Great, what's your Social Security number?" And they look me up and say, "Dude. You can't afford this. Get out of here." You say, "OK, I'll come back. I'll go to a Honda dealer now." I mean, that is the ridicule that you deserve if you're there negotiating but don't have the money to do it.

What does it cost? I'm glad you asked. Here it is. Luke Chapter 14 verse 33, and it's a great word "Apotasso." It's a compound word. Apotasso. The only reason I like to talk about Greek



words is usually when they're compound words like that, compounded with a preposition. And I've said that many times, but here's another one. It's a great picture "Apo" "away from," "Tasso" "to release" "let go of" "to relinquish." Here's a picture of separating you from something. Well, how much are you separating? And I don't even want to talk about how much the dealer separated me from my monthly payment. I mean, it ain't a Ferrari, but it was too much. So he got me to deal to separate with my money so I can drive home with that car. Think about this now. What am I trying to have them relinquish? "Well, salvation is free." What does that mean? What decision is there to make? Well, there is a decision to make and don't disparagingly call that decisionism, because that's exactly how people with a high view of God's sovereignty respond to people in evangelism.

Well, what is the negotiation. Negotiation is this. I'll quote the passage. Here's what Jesus said. None of you can be my disciple unless you apotasso, you let go of everything, right? So what does it cost? Everything. Now that would be a different kind of negotiation. That better be some car that I'm buying. That's exactly what Jesus used to say in parable after parable. This is what it's like. You stumble across a treasure in a field. You see what value it is. You go home, you sell everything you have, you come back and buy that treasure, the field in which the treasure is found. You're a merchant looking for the best pearls you can find and you find the pearl of great value and you go away and you sell everything you have so you can acquire it. That's what this passage says. "So therefore, not any of you can be my disciple unless you," here's how it's translated in the English Standard Version, unless you "renounce all that you have." If you don't renounce all you have, you "can't be my disciple."

And don't throw a flag on the play and say, "Well, that's varsity Christianity." There is no varsity Christianity. There are various levels of fruit. You can bear fruit, 30, 60, 100-fold, but everyone has to come to Christ at the same place, which is my life for his life. You cease to be a slave of sin and you become a slave of God, everyone. And the only way you're a slave of God is if you really understand the previous illustration, which is there's a king coming at you with 20,000, you have 10,000. You want to send a delegation and ask for terms of peace. And the only way you can ask for terms of peace when they have a bigger army than yours is you surrender. I don't want a fight because I can't fight. I can't win. So I surrender.

What does that mean? It means that when you're in some big conglomerate and you're part of the acquisitions team and you go and buy a business, right? All of a sudden now that whole business doesn't belong to whoever it belonged to before, it now belongs to your company. And your company now can decide, well, it had 18 middle managers. We're going to knock that down to nine. Right? It had six senior executives, we are going to make that four. They had 122 employees. We're going to turn that into a hundred eighty employees. They can do whatever they want. We don't like the manufacturing or we don't like the packaging or we don't like the equipment. So we're going to change it out. I got a friend who manufactures this, so we're going to put that kind of equipment in your facility.

That kind of acquisitions and mergers, that department of thinking about how this company is now functioning under new management is exactly the picture that Jesus tries to present with that ancient warfare analogy of you've got to surrender. They're coming after you in the



modern day with more money, more lawyers, whatever it is, more capital and so you just have to surrender. Then what happens? Well, then your business is no longer yours. Oh, you still might be a manager there. You might still be the senior executive there. But you work for someone else now. Someone else is signing your checks. So I'm trying to negotiate with someone about becoming a Christian, and it feels a little bit like the car salesmanship because I'm saying to them, "Hey, you want Christ's forgiveness, you want eternity with him? Here's the deal. It's free because you can't purchase it. Grace is something you cannot earn, but here's what you have to become because you cannot earn it.

That's why this picture in the Old Testament is there repeatedly when the slave cannot, when the person cannot pay back their debt. Well, then they become enslaved to the master. And the good news is we are becoming enslaved to the most benevolent master of the universe who sent his Son to die to pay the payment so I could be freed from the penalty of my sin. So it is a negotiation because people have to sit down and calculate the cost. So I'm just saying this: you call them to the question, and it's not them saying, "Hey, I like all that stuff you just shared with me. Yeah, I believe there's a God. I believe Jesus lived. I believe Jesus died. I'd even like to think he died for me because I'm kind of nifty." Well, that's not evangelism, right? You've got to get to the place where you understand you're exchanging your life for his. You want the righteousness of Christ, right? Then you put your life in his hands. Decision? Absolutely.

Romans Chapter 6, it is me being committed to this form of teaching to which I've been entrusted. This is it. You've said this. Now I need to commit myself to what you're saying. And what you're saying is that Christ died and lived in my place. Now I'm becoming his follower. So I'm just asking us to be a little bit more clear with the people we interact with that when we're done chatting about the gospel, that it's time to say what are you going to do about it. Are you ready? Is there a reason you wouldn't become a Christian today, a reason you wouldn't entrust your life to Christ today? Is there a reason you want to walk away from this conversation with your sin still on your account? Would you like to be forgiven? OK, well then are you ready to lay down your life and become a living sacrifice for God? That's how it works. "You're earning that?" You're not earning that. I understand the theology. I get it. I understand it. Salvation cannot be earned. But you don't get it without exchanging your life for his. Lay down your life as a follower of Jesus Christ.

So many times when Jesus hit people that didn't have that clear, he would say to them, like in Matthew 19, or the guy who thought he had it all right, "I do a lot of good things, just ask my mom, I was a good kid. I've kept all those from my youth." Jesus says, "You just lack in one thing." "What's the one thing?" "Give up everything." "What? I didn't want that deal." He walks away and Jesus says to his disciples, "Sure, it's hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God," because he'd like to hang on to some of his paycheck. All of my paycheck. All of your paycheck. All of your resources. All of your family. Everything. Just restudy that whole passage, beginning in verse 22 of Luke 14 all the way through verse 33 and you will see the picture of what it means to become a surrendered follower of Christ. That's the negotiation I'm trying to work. Is it hard? Yeah, hard, but I got a call for the question. You can't just have



gospel conversations. We got to close the deal. He's doing that with a very stern warning from Habakkuk Chapter 1.

Well, there are some responses. If you call for responses, you're going to get responses and he gets responses, verse 42, "They went out, the people beg that these things might be told the next Sabbath." So you're there at the end of this Sabbath service and they say, "Please come back next week. We want to hear more." So that's the first group and in verse 44, look. The next Sabbath they're there and they're ready to do it. They want to hear. And of course, we assume that Paul and Barnabas are coming because they're there when the leaders of the synagogue are reviling him. So they've come back to answer their questions and deal with it.

You got a second group, verses 43. Right? They have had this past in Judaism, some Gentiles had converted to Judaism. Now they're going to "follow Paul and Barnabas," and that means they're following Christ. And now Paul's going to say, "Hey, continue in the grace of God." You've entered this relationship with Christ, now continue it. And then you've got people who are rejecting, verse 45. The good news about all these is that Paul rightly responds, and so does Barnabas, to the responses. So I want to, number two, let's just give a heading to this and then take those three groups. Let's "Rightly Respond to the Responses." I am going to be undeterred, which means I don't drop the gospel bomb and leave. I'm going to drop the gospel bomb. I'm going to call for a response, faithfully call for a response and then I have to respond to the responses. How do I respond to the responses?

Well, let's learn from this. The first one, verse 42, they're inquisitive. Verse 44, they come back. I'm going to come back and try to answer your questions. So right next to verses 42, 44, these two verses, can you jot this down? Letter "A." Did you get the second point up there? I think we missed that, didn't we? Yeah. There it is. You see it now over my shoulder? Magic. I just did that and it just went up there. Now, we're already to Letter "A." OK? Verse 42. Look, we got to "Keep Answering the Inquisitive." You have a gospel conversation and you go home doing this to yourself, "Yeah, I was I was a good ambassador for Christ today." I'm saying, yes you're almost there. But here's the deal. You got to keep going when they say, "I don't know that I fully buy that." Well, then it's time to keep pushing. It's time to keep answering questions. It's time to say, "What is it that we can talk about next? How can we help you understand this?"

The best kind of evangelistic encounters I've ever had are not the one-off where we sit there and try and have one meeting where this all gets settled in one meeting. I mean, it's a commitment to say, "Hey, can we keep meeting until we get to the place where either you're going to end up in the end of this passage, in verse 45? Or you end up in verse 43?" So I'm going to keep working at this. And so let's keep meeting every week. Let's have lunch every week on Tuesday or whatever it takes until we can get to the place where all of your questions have been answered and we can call for the question and you can give me a definitive yes or no. I mean, I know that seems so sterile, clinical, but that's what it's going to feel like. And the best experiences in converts I've ever had in one-on-one evangelism have been after a series of meetings, and I think it's a good way to go into evangelism. To be



undeterred is not to drop it once, not to have a conversation once, but to continue on in discussing the gospel.

By the way, two things in this, one is if I want to help you as a pastor be prepared for this and not only want you to do the things I tell you all the time, keep reading your Daily Bible Reading, your DBR, keep studying the Bible. We teach you this in the Partner's manual to do the "then always now." We deal with rightly handling the word of truth. You study the Bible, you read the Bible. But we have all these supplemental things that help explain these truths, those are good Christian books. We appended this thing called a bookstore over here that we put good books in. On the back of every worksheet I take pains every week to try and give you good books that might take these truths a little bit further.

If you support Focal Point, for instance, if you're a monthly donor to Focal Point, you help get this stuff that happens here in our service to 800 other radio stations across the country, including XM Satellite, every day gets beamed down from the satellites. If you help us do that every month you get a book. Some people are like, "I'll get another book, I get another book." You get books, put them everywhere. Put them near my reading chair. Put them in the family room, put them by the bedside, put them by the toilet, put them everywhere. Not... I mean for reading. Uh, sorry. I'm thinking of my great aunt. Never mind. So we want to utilize those books in a way that will help parlay that information into something that will help the inquisitive.

And here's one little piece of pastoral information that may help you. And I dare you to do that this week. Hopefully, you all got some books stacked up in places, you sit down and sometimes you only got five minutes to read. I only got seven minutes to read. I only got two minutes to read. Listen, when you grab that book, here's what I dare you to do as you grab the book, I want you to pray this prayer. "God, please take something I'm about to read and utilize it in a conversation today or tomorrow with someone." That's all. Just pray that prayer. I tell you that I have found this to be so true. Matter of fact, I found the pattern of God doing that to where now I start to do it and I don't do it every week. There are certain days of the week when I pick up the books because I have a book stack of books next to where I do my quiet time. I pick up those books and I read them, and as I read them, whether I got 30 minutes or 20 minutes or 10 minutes, I pick up that book. It's not the Bible. It's a book about the Bible. It's a book about theology, it's a book about doctrine, a book about the Christian life. I pick it up and I like to say, certainly on certain days of the week, "God, please give me something in this book that not only edifies me, but let it be parlayed into some conversation that will be useful with someone.

And here's the deal. You're going to find inquisitive people and you're going to see God providentially, watch the answer to these prayers, put those people in your path. And all of a sudden, that stuff that you read this morning or yesterday morning is going to pop in your mind. You going to go, "I just was reading about that," and you're going to find that God will use those things for you to help answer the inquisitive because they have all kinds of questions that aren't just about repentance and faith. They're about creation. They're about propitiation. They're about God's sovereignty. They're about our capacities of being



responsible. All kinds of questions. Just keep reading good Christian books. You ought to be reading good Christian books, and before you read them, just pray the prayer. "God, use some of this to be useful in a conversation with someone who's inquisitive."

Listen. Second thing. Turned to Acts 20:4 real quick. Here's Paul having a person who is inquisitive. His name was Felix. He was the governor of Judea. Now he was, by the way, if you've been with us in this series, he is the equivalent of Paulus Sergius, who he had just won to Christ before he sailed across the Mediterranean, back up to what is modern-day Turkey on the island of Cyprus. Sergius Paulus was the governor sent from Rome and empowered by Rome to be the governor of the island of Cyprus. Well, the governor over here, which would seem even more important because it's the home turf of where Jesus lived. It's where Paul was doing ministry and now he was imprisoned in Caesarea. So the governor of Judea of southern Israel was there, and Paul's being asked in an inquisitive manner about what he has to say.

Now the motives were a little skewed. They were a lot skewed at the end we see, because he was frustrated at what Paul said, but he had a chance to explain further what Felix had already heard. So here's an opportunity that mirrors what this first category of response might be in your life. And that is someone says, "Well, I like to hear more about this." I don't know, maybe they're not begging you, what a great picture this is an Antioch, begging you, but maybe it's got another conversation coming up and you think, good, I got someone here interested in Christ.

Acts Chapter 24, I just want you to make sure that you don't do what I think is a temptation for all of us when someone says I'd like to talk more about Christianity with you. The temptation is, "Oh yeah, I got one on the hook. This is awesome. I'm going to try to see where their concerns are and kind of alleviate those concerns as best I can. I'm going to try to make sure that they get the right things that might help them kind of counterbalance their objections and I'll kind of play up the good things. Well, no, it's not a convertible. Yeah, but it's really cool. It's got a cool hatchback on it. Well, I know it doesn't have the rims you want, but it's got a great interior sound system." You start to do all of this kind of let me compensate for the things you're not liking.

But Paul does none of that with Felix, right? Felix, the governor of Judea. let's look at what happens here, verse 24 of Chapter 24. Acts 24:24. "After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish." I guess that is how it's put here in our text, a female. Right? "And he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ." And here's what Paul did, "As he reasoned about righteousness and self-control in the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, 'Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I'll summon you.'" I just want you to know that none of that has any bite to it if you don't know the historical context. Felix, it's told in secular history, was a governor, of course, an experienced governor at this point. He had been divorced twice, and he went after the young wife, Drusilla, of a Herodian family member, actually a relative. And he goes to try to steal her away. She's probably 19 or 20-years-old at this particular point in her life. And he gets her, woos her away from her husband



and she divorces. And so now he's married to his third wife and she's just out of college, let's say.

And so now Paul's got a chance to deal with the inquisitive, important person. Maybe it'll be another Sergius Paulus experience. Maybe we'll see the governor from Rome this down in this region. Maybe he'll be won to Christ, just like Sergius Paulus was. Paul doesn't try to play up parts that he struggles with. As a matter of fact, he leans into these three topics: righteousness, self-control and the coming judgment. If there are any things I want to avoid with a guy who's stealing people's wives and marrying this young girl, I'm thinking, I don't really want to talk about the standard of righteousness in any detail, and I certainly don't want to talk about something he clearly doesn't have, self-control. And I don't want her to be offended by thinking about the coming judgment for doing the wrong thing, right? It's like, stay away from those topics.

See, when someone complains about the wheels on the car, I don't want you as a like a tactful salesman to say, "Well, don't worry about that part. Let's look at this part. This part's really shiny." What you do is you deal with the objection. You deal with what you know is the problem and you lean into that. Here is the thing. Well, here's why you're having a problem with hell or creation. Let's deal with creation or let's deal with hell. These are realities you have to understand. This is part and parcel of who God is and why he is a just God or a holy God. We have to lean into these topics. And all I'm telling you is your temptation will be to compromise.

Salesman compromise. They try to do this, this little, you know, coconut game, they try to... Is that what is called? Shell game. They try to... Not all of them, right? Not all salesmen are unscrupulous. Some of them. But I want to make sure I'm not doing that kind of stuff. I can't change what it is. You want an SUV and I'm selling a coupe. I can't change that. You want it in red. It's in white. I can't change that. You're going to have to deal with what it is and what it is is Christ is who he is, God is who he is, the Spirit is who he is, salvation is what it is, sin is what it is. We're just going to have to deal with those. So do not with the inquisitive try to somehow compensate for their concerns. Lean into it because when they regenerate, those concerns will become clear that those were sinful.

Secondly, he's got a team that responds well. There's the good news, and I pray that happens to everyone in this room in the near future. And that is, you share Christ as a good ambassador and you have people like this, verse 43. Back to Acts 13. "And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with him, urged them to continue in the grace of God." So they're going to now be exhorted after their conversion by Paul, and this is happening between the Sabbaths. And by the way, I know this is such an ongoing concern to Paul, he has such a concern for these churches and the converts in them, that he carries it around as a great pressure, he says later to the Corinthians, and he sits there in Syria, in Antioch of Syria after he gets home and he has to say, "Well, we got to go back. We got to go back and we have to strengthen the disciples in all these cities."



Because he knows that when evangelism is done and people come to faith in Christ, it's not done. When we make disciples of someone in this nation, that nation, this county or that county, we're not done. Matter of fact, the next thing after they get baptized, which is the culmination in the expression of their conversion, then we're supposed to, next verse, "Teach them to observe all the Christ's commanded." Now I've got to engage in a discipleship relationship. The evangelism we often think is dropping the gospel bomb and walking away. I said in Letter "A" here, verses 42 and 44, that it's an ongoing evangelistic relationship. Then I'm saying once they come to faith in Christ, "You'll go great. I'll send you a new Bible. Welcome to the family. We're done." No, now we engage in discipleship. We engage in building them up. We engage in worrying about sanctification. We do things like it says in this text, here's the verb we "urge them."

Number two, we've got to keep teaching the converted, verse 43. That's the second one. "Keep Teaching the Converted." I am not done if in my work with people when they come to faith in Christ, and I hope you know that. As a matter of fact, it's a privilege. I would think most of you, you win someone to Christ, you're not done. And what complicates it is if it's not someone here in South County, right? We just like it's someone maybe from high school. I met at a reunion and they come to faith in Christ, which would be awesome. And then they fly back to Philadelphia. And then I think, "Well, you know, I hope you find a good church." But you have to start this long-distance kind of discipleship. You have to do all you can to make sure that you as the person who led them to Christ are doing all you can to bring them up and urge them to continue in the grace of God.

Oh, which by the way, can I say this? For those of you so high up in the ivory tower that your doctrines of grace cannot ever get you to think about decisions as a godly thing, you're going to struggle with this one too. Continue. "I will urge you to continue in grace." But you're going to say, "Wait a minute. God is the one who opens blind eyes. I'm not going to call them to decision." And then you're going to say, "Hey, it's God who keeps them. I believe in the perseverance of the saints Pastor Mike, so I know that God is going to keep those who are saved. So I don't need to urge them to continue in the grace of God." Oh, you do.

Matter of fact, if you think that because God has said that in his sovereignty and in his grace, he keeps those who are converted, therefore, I don't ever have to tell them to work to hang on. Right? Then you don't understand the Scripture. And again, we have people quoting theological truths and using those theological truths in unbiblical ways because look at how many times in the Scriptures we see that. Matter of fact, I put a few books on the back that just deal with that topic. We cannot deal with someone who's put their trust in Christ and not urged them to stay with this. Some say, "Well, wait a minute, apostasy. I really don't believe in apostasy because I believe that they're saved. They're going to be saved. They're going to stay saved." But here's the deal. Real Christians do stay in the grace of God. But you have to urge them to do that. You have to teach them to do that. You have to even warn them, read the book of Hebrews, to do that.

Jesus did it. He talked about you, "Hey, you're connected with me. Abide in me. You're the branch. I'm the vine. If the branch abides in the vine you can bear fruit, if you don't, you can't.



And if you don't, you're going to get chopped off and thrown into the fire." What? "Well, guess you can lose your salvation." That's not the point of the passage. The point of the passage is that even though God takes his own, his sheep hear his voice and they follow him, the point is, you have to keep telling them: follow, follow, follow, follow, keep following closely. All throughout the Scriptures, we see it everywhere. First John Chapter 2 verse 9, verse 19, I think of all these passages where you see God telling us to hang in there. "Continue in the grace." "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Oh, but "it's God who works within you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Yes.

It's the difference between, here are two words for you. It's the difference between "passive sanctification" and what we call "aggressive sanctification." Very popular just a few years ago, bestselling books about, "be passive, right? Let go, let God. Just stop worrying about trying to perform for God. If you're saved, you're saved, it's good. Put your feet up, cruise control." And we had to respond to that with a whole Equipped Conference when we were doing local Equipped Conferences, we'd do a whole Equip Conference on this, and we call it "aggressive sanctification." If you haven't been to AggressiveSanctification.com, the legacy of that is we put 11 articles that I wrote on that website and will also link you, I think, to all of the lectures that were done by all of our staff pastors around the campus about this topic. And if you haven't read them, you should read them because we cannot fall to the place where we say, if someone's saved, then we don't urge them to continue in the grace of God.

If that scares you, because you think that must mean we have bad theology, I would challenge you to read those articles that would challenge you to rethink what it means to understand, rightly, the perseverance of the saints, which I completely believe in, I 100% affirm. But I understand that God has called us in the means by which that God does this work is through people like the Apostle Paul and Barnabas, who urged people to continue in the grace of God. You got to "Keep Answering the Inquisitive." You got to "Keep Teaching the Converted." And then you've got to deal with verse 45. We won't spend much time there, but this is going to happen and you go, "I know that's going to happen because it has happened to me."

You call for the question and people don't like it. I get that. The Jews didn't like it. They didn't like it for the reasons that are spelled out here. "They were filled with jealousy and they began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him." I get it. But Paul hung in there. It doesn't say in verse 46, which I know is next week's passage, but it doesn't say, "and Paul and Barnabas started to revile them," right? No, they keep their nerve. "And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly." They kept going. They did exactly what Christ did, and that is when they were reviled they did not revile in return. When they were cursed, they did not curse in return. When someone was pejoratively attacking them with ad hominem arguments, they did not resort to pejoratively attacking them with ad hominem arguments. They didn't do it, right? They kept their nerve. That's the third thing.

With the critics, let's put it this way, verse 45, "Keep Your Nerve With the Critics," right? You have to keep answering the inquisitive. You have to keep teaching the converted. And then there are people who are going to reject it. They're going to contradict what you say and then



they're going to attack you as a person. Just keep your nerve, whether they're a critic of the information you shared, or whether they're a critic of you because you're a narrow-minded bigot who just doesn't want to let people live their true selves. Whatever they call you, you just need to say, "I'm going to keep my nerve. I'm going to do what Jesus did," which it says in First Peter Chapter 2 verses 19 through 23, "When mindful of God, we endure the suffering," that comes like Christ endured, "when he was reviled he did not revile in return, when he suffered, he did not threaten, but he continued entrusting himself to God, who judges justly." You have to have that mindset.

As it says in Romans Chapter 12, "I'm not going to repay evil for evil." I'm not going as it says elsewhere to repay insult with insult. I am going to entrust myself to God and know that he is the one who's going to deal with the people. I'm just going to warn them. And oftentimes that's how the relationship ends when it comes to an evangelistic relationship. Well, I just got to warn you, reject this, there's a lot at stake. Don't think that there's not because there is. But if we're done talking, we're done talking and we see in next week's message, whatever comes next, they have to go on. They have to go on to receptive groups of people. But we're not going to lose our nerve. You have to stay calm.

So much we've taught on that we don't need to elaborate on that. We would like to elaborate on cheetahs for a second. What comes to your mind when I say cheetah? It's like a hard transition, but follow me on this. Fast, right, they're fast, they're really fast. Matter of fact, they go 70, 75, some have been clocked, some websites talk about their speed at 80 miles per hour. Fast. And they get there fast too. Want to use the old metric of zero to 60? They go zero to 60 faster than your Tesla, right? They'll do it in less than three seconds and they will do it in three strides, those cheetahs. Amazing. Unless you have a Tesla Plaid, which I don't think is even out yet that does it under cheetah speed. But your Model 3 ain't going to keep up. And certainly your Lamborghini or Ferrari, Porsche is not going to keep up. These are fast animals.

I remember as a kid watching that Sunday night, whatever, the Wild Kingdom, remember that? I'm an old guy, but remember that? So I watched the cheetahs when it was cheetah episode, right? I'm like, Wow, super fast. The fastest animal on earth. I get it. Amazing. Impressive. So I think they must be fat and happy, those cheetahs, right? Because they're going to catch anything they chase. Well, I may have thought that, but later I learned about the cheetah, it wasn't when I was a kid, but I learned later. they're not very successful, like less than 40% success rate. Now I'm thinking to myself, what in the world,? You're faster than anything out there? You can't catch the gazelle? You can't catch the rabbit? What's wrong with you, right? Well, here's what's wrong with a cheetah. They're fast, but they give up quick. They're quitters. Matter of fact, that's the problem with cheetahs. They're just super-fast but, you know, after about 50 yards, I'm done, tired. I guess I lost that one, right?

It's interesting the burst of speed and then the lack of endurance. A lot of explanations for all that, but whatever. That's the way God made them, quitters. Quitter cats. All I'm telling you is that when it comes to our engagements with people, you may have, even in this series, gone into conversations even as abruptly as I've even suggested at times, just turning the



conversation to Christ and you drop the gospel bomb and you think BAM, look at that. I did it. I did what we're been studying at church. But you have to continue, you have to persevere, you have to keep going. Whether they say no, whether they say yes or they say I need more information. It's an ongoing thing.

I can take that same image and I can put it back historically in your Christian life and even that you burst into evangelism, maybe even with endurance in the early part of your Christian life. But now we look at the term of your Christian life and it's like, yeah, "Not sharing the gospel much." There's so much in Scripture, if you just look it up. We see God having to remind us, you've got to persevere. This is not a sprint, right? This is a long marathon and you got to keep running. And I just exhort you to be undeterred. If you are going to be useful to the Lord, gospel conversations are not enough. Call for the question. Respond to the responses. God will use us in greater ways this week.

Let's pray. God, help us as Christians in the midst of a society where it seems like, though it's not true, that more people are rejecting the gospel today than they ever have, God told me what it was like, Jesus knew was like. And so we shouldn't be deterred by the rejections of the gospel. And we shouldn't even slow down when people say, "I don't get it." We want to redouble our efforts. And even when they say "I do get it," we got to know that we're just into a new phase now of engaging, of helping them understand what it is to pray, to study the Bible, to accomplish an increasing sanctification of holiness in their life, to engage in evangelism. There's so much to teach them, to teach them to observe all that you commanded us. So God, we just got to keep going in this. I know for many of us, we're so busy with our work and our lives and our families. It seems like there's not a lot of time for this, but God, we need to make the time so help us to prioritize to be good ambassadors for you in this generation that shares the truth, shares the message, calls for the question and then respond to those responses in godly ways. Give us that I pray in response to this sermon.

In Jesus name. Amen.