



Wisdom & Maturity – Part 6
Confident in God's Ever-Advancing Gospel
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, I saw a picture of a hippopotamus this week. And I thought to myself, there's a sturdy animal right there. Strong, sturdy, stout, short legs, big round legs, a lot of girth, low center of gravity. They average about 3,500 pounds apiece by the way. So if you've had a little bit of weight, I mean, you feel good about yourself next to a hippopotamus. Now, if I had a couple of those out on the patio and I said, I want you to run over there and tip them over. These are not cows, you understand. You are not going to tip them over. I don't care how much you've worked out this week, you're not going to get one of those, you're not going to push it over. Things that are strong and things that are heavy and things that are weighty and sturdy like that, you just can't knock them over.

And yet there are some things that weigh thousands and thousands of pounds that you can tip over and you can tip them over sometimes with just unexpectedly small things. If you take something like just these little tiny underground twigs that begin so small, so fragile, that a little toddler could dig into the dirt, take them out and crumple them into pieces. But if you leave them there for a long time they will eventually grow so strong that they can knock over tens of thousands of pounds, as is being evidenced as a laboratory experiment right now at my home. I mean, I've got my house the way it is. I got, you know, some fences that are weak and some little dinky, you know, iron things. And then I got one that my neighbor must have put up before I bought the house and it's gigantic and thick. It's like cinderblocks. It's got footings. It's just I mean, huge. It's overkill. I guess the neighbors didn't like each other before I got there. But it seems like an impenetrable wall.

But my neighbor also has a tree in his backyard that is doing its job to tip that thing over. It's like the Leaning Tower of Pisa right now. Every day I watch it getting closer to falling into my yard. And I think about what's doing that. It's just these roots that just keep growing and growing. And they're indomitable. They are persistent. They just keep going until they do whatever it is they want to do. And they're about to cost me a lot of money, or I guess my neighbor a lot of money, right? It's his tree. (audience laughing) I'm thinking that through way past the illustration phase at this point. They need a new fence. It's not a fence. This is like a fortress wall.

Anyway, I want you to get that picture in your mind every time I quote for you, and I often do from the platform, Matthew Chapter 16 verse 18. In Matthew 16, of course, it's where Jesus says, "I will build my Church and the gates," the barriers, the cinder block fortified walls "of hell will not prevail against it." And the picture here, of course, is that just incessant, ongoing, indomitable growth of what he says there to Peter when he makes his great confession about the truth of the gospel, about who he is and he says, "Yeah, I'm going to build my Church, and there's nothing that's going to stand in its way."

Now, it doesn't feel like that, particularly as we look at the strength of a really scary and intimidating culture as we looked at last time we were studying Acts Chapter 19 together and



it feels like the walls of culture are pressing hard against us and it can feel like we're the underdog, which of course the Bible always puts us in the category of being the few and, you know, a little flock, don't be afraid. We ended with that last time, but the idea of our culture pressing in against the Church can make us feel weak. And in a sense we are. But the Church is going to get its job done because God is at work within the Church and the Lord of the Church is going to prevail and do what God has called it to do. And there's no doubt about that.

Even when it looks like the opposite is the case, as it did in Acts Chapter 19, as we get to the last seven verses of this passage. We had to break up this narrative into several pieces. But we finally get to the end of the chapter where the riot has gone on and in verse 34 we ended with that line that they were chanting "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for two hours. You might remember they dragged two of Paul's companions into the theater, which today as they've excavated the theater there in Ephesus, it can seat anywhere from 10,000 to 20,000 people. This is a huge arena and I don't know if it was full that day, but it certainly is where the crowds went to drag in Aristarchus and Gaius, the traveling companions of Paul.

And Paul was even looking to go in to defend himself. But everybody said, no, no, no, don't do it. His friends, the disciples, even these two politicians who stepped in to tell Paul, "You're going to get eaten alive in there. They're going to kill you." So he doesn't venture into the theater, but we get the scene described for us as a riot. And finally in verse 35 things start to mellow out. God does something in this passage, verses 35 through the end of the chapter, verse 41, and he ends this uprising and this riot, not by angels, not by, you know, Paul preaching a sermon, but through another politician who is described here as the town clerk.

So look at this passage with me. And let me remind you that this is a providential work of God to continue the work of the Apostle Paul and Aristarchus and Gaius and Timothy and Luke and Titus and everyone who was going to share the gospel through Asia Minor and across the Aegean Sea there in Greece. God was going to get his job done, and he does it through an interesting means here. And I want to look at this passage with you and read it for you. I'll read from the English Standard Version that begins this way in verse 35. "And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, 'Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper of the great Artemis and the sacred stone that fell from the sky?'"

So we've already been, you know, familiar with this huge city. They estimate 200 to 250,000 people who lived in this city in the first century. It was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world there, the Temple of Artemis, known by the Romans as Diana, the god of fertility, the god of provision, a goddess of provision and goddess of fertility. She's worshiped there and as you see in that strange statement and the sacred stone that fell from the sky. Now, we don't have a linear history of all of that because it happened centuries before Paul gets there. But this particular statement is at least some of the lore, if not fact, about the reality of some meteor or something falling out of the sky. And most people would surmise it was a meteorite that hit there in Ephesus. And whatever they pulled out, the black meteor that they had, some have suggested that maybe it even looked like what ended up being kind of the trademarked



image of Artemis, which was this multi-breasted idol that we saw as a grotesque, weird-looking thing, like a pineapple. I hate to describe it that way, but I don't want you to envision it for very long. Although we have free Wi-Fi if you're already looking at it.

But this weird-looking goddess with, you know, breasts all over her torso. Well, this meteorite perhaps was the inspiration for the shape that this idol took, this goddess took. And anything that fell from the sky, and literally, this is where the etymology of the word comes from, it comes from Zeus in the ancient Greek mythology. And so Zeus had sent this goddess to earth. And this goddess was, of course, going to be the one we defer to and trust in and pray to or whatever we do in showing our reverence for so that there will be provision in our lives. There would be fertility, there'll be produce, there'll be all that we need to get through our lives, at least in this particular area of provision if we trust in Artemis.

And he says, listen, everyone knows our city is on the map because this meteor hit, and mostly now because we have this huge edifice called the Temple of Diana or the Temple of Artemis here. Everyone knows that. And you can see the town clerk is trying to make peace because there's a riot going on. They're yelling and they've dragged these two guys in by the scruff of their neck into the theater and it's like they're thirsty for the blood of these two missionaries. And he says, listen, we can't deny the fact that we're on the map and important and everyone pilgrimages to our city and they're buying our wares and doing what they're doing here because we are important. And "so you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash." All right, let's stop this riot.

"For you have brought these men," verse 37, "here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. If therefore Demetrius..." Remember him? He was the guy who started all of this. Some ringleader of the artisans or the craftsmen, the trade guild there in the marketplace. And they thought, well, we're not making money like we use to. And what if Diana becomes a passé thing because the preaching of the gospel and if Christ is Lord and our gods mean nothing. And so he's concerned. He's got all these people here whipped up into a frenzy and he says, "Listen, if Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, well, the courts are open and there are proconsuls." You can go and hear this out in the courts. Right? That's what you should do. "Let them bring charges against one another." They can go and settle this in court, not by a riot.

Verse 39, "But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly," which historically met three times a month. And you could come there and you could meet in the assembly in the theater there of Ephesus and make your case and bring your complaint, much like we have now in these hearings in city council chambers. You can come and do that. But let's do it right. Let's not do it by a riot. Verse 40, "For we are really in danger here of being charged with rioting today." Charged by whom? The clerk, by the way, may sound like a pedantically simple assignment, but really he was the mayor, the lead administrator of the city. The idea of him being called the clerk is really the Greek word for a scribe. He's the scribe sending all the official materials to Rome because this Roman enclave here in Ephesus was an important city to Rome, certainly was a large economic city, was a large populous city. And Rome was filtering money back to Ephesus. And so his role was trying to be this liaison



between the city. So he's the mayor, he's the chief official. And he's concerned that Rome is going to look at what's going on in Ephesus, because this is the height of what they called the Pax Romana, which means that Rome had settled and "Pax" in Latin is "peace," right? The peace of Rome had settled in across the region. And you don't want to upset that with rioting. We don't want word to get back to Rome that we're just having riots and killing people without trials.

So he says, listen, we're going to get charged with rioting today "since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." How am I supposed to report to Rome what's going on here if you guys just kill these guys? "And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly." Now, this entire passage is a reminder that God is going to keep his promise. God is going to continue to do the work that he started, I guess we could go all the way back to Matthew Chapter 16 verse 18 that I quoted, to build his Church. And to go back to the beginning of the book in Acts Chapter 1, he said, "You guys are going to have the Holy Spirit come upon you. You're going to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria."

Now, the baton had been passed from some of those who were there, the 120 in the Upper Room to people like Paul and Gaius and Aristarchus and Luke and Titus and the rest. But they're all traveling here, bringing the gospel on this third missionary journey to the expanding Roman Empire, going through Asia Minor and heading to Rome eventually. All of that is taking place in keeping with what God said would happen. I'm going to build my Church. You guys are going to take through the concentric circles of the explosion of the gospel in Jerusalem and you're going to take this to the ends of the earth. And that was God's promise. And this whole passage here doesn't end with all the missionaries being executed in Ephesus, and that's the end of the story. Chapter 19 is not the last chapter in the book of Acts. And the story goes on because God now blocks the opposition to Paul and his companions and allows them to keep going.

As a matter of fact, looked at Chapter 20 verse 1. "After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia." That was the plan. So the plan continues. And it's not just the plan of the Apostle Paul, it's the providential plan of God. And I just want you to be assured, as you should be assured, just by looking in the mirror, that you're sitting here in the 21st century singing songs about Jesus on the other side of the planet and we are worshiping God 2,000 years after this all started. God is getting his job done, and the job is to advance the message of the good news of forgiveness that comes in Christ. The qualification that we have to inherit the kingdom that's happening through faith in Christ. And that message is going to prevail.

Number one, if you're taking notes, just look at the whole passage and what it does in playing a role in the whole book of Acts and say this, number one, "Be Assured the Gospel Will Advance." And we're looking at a chapter in the story of the book of Acts and we're saying, "Yep, it keeps on going." It could have ended here, at least for Paul and all of his buddies. It could have been like the gospel goes no further. But it's going to go further because that's what God said would happen. Look at the back of your worksheet. Question number two. I've never had you look up so many passages in one discussion question. At least they're all in



the same book and they go in canonical order. But at some point when you sit down to prepare your questions for your small group discussions, or even if your small group's not meeting here in the summer or whatever, please go through these questions and look up all of those passages, which I hope will be an encouragement to you because it really is hinging on Chapter 1 verse 8 that says that there's going to be this explosion of the gospel, this witness to Christ, that's going to move throughout the book of Acts.

Now, I take this all the way up through Chapter 18, but here we are in Chapter 19. I don't know how I worded it, something about if Aristarchus and Gaius could envision this, like, what would they think about this? I mean, would they think? Well, the riot is very intimidating. It's really scary. But they would think, no, there's a trajectory of the gospel plowing through every barrier up in this point. Of course, it's going to go on. Now, the reason I think this sermon is so important for us to hear is if you were here last week, you might have left feeling a little depressed that, you know, that was a doom and gloom sermon and the walls of culture and it's so hard and, you know, the riotous mobs and we're trying to get it in perspective. But because we articulated so much of it, it felt a little bit like, wow, it is bad.

Matter of fact, some of you don't listen to the news or watch the news or you don't really keep track of what's going on like others do in our church. I mean, maybe it even raised a little bit of awareness of how hard it is in our culture to stand for Christ. And you start listening to podcasts or the news headlines. You think, wow, it's a rough place for us to be Christians. And there's no doubt about that. It is. And there is a pushback and it's a satanic pushback against the gospel. And it feels like the walls of hell are closing in on the Church. And I get all that. But I'm here today to step out of that and say, well, look even what happens next in verses 35 through 41. What we have here is we have God saying that's not done yet. And I want to say to you, in the 21st century in the American Church, things are not moving in a trajectory that looks like we got a lot of religious freedom coming up in the next ten years. But I'll tell you what, God is not done getting his task finished. He's going to do what he promised to do. And that's what we need to remember when we think through some of this.

Particularly because we're part of something much bigger than just a church plant in South Orange County, California. Let me prove that to you by going to Mark Chapter 4 verse 30. Let's start there. Jesus tells a parable that reminds us that even our church that we have here planted in South Orange County and we planted multiple churches and we see the growth of it all. Matter of fact, if you were to look at what I see every week on my report of what's going on, not only at this church but all the churches we planted, you just see the continual growth of people. We see the baptism reports. We see people getting saved. We see people coming into the church and worshiping and being a part of it, going through Partners. We see all of the expansion of all of this. And I just want to say this is not just a Compass thing, this is a Christian thing, and it's all about people bowing their hearts, so to speak, to the Lordship of Christ. That's the King.

The King now is collecting subjects for the kingdom, and we're a part of this on the other side of the planet 2,000 years later. And I just want to think about it in terms of what Jesus says as he illustrates it in verse 30. Mark Chapter 4 verse 30, "And he said, 'With what can we



compare the kingdom of God or what parable," what story, "can we use for it?" How can we illustrate it? Well, verse 31, "It's like a grain of mustard seed, which when it is sown in the ground, is the smallest of all seeds on the earth." That's, I mean, in terms of what they planted back then, that was the smallest of all what they would ever use. "Yet when it's sown and it grows up it becomes larger than all the garden plants and it puts out large branches so that the birds of the air can make its nests in its shade."

So here's the picture of the kingdom. God is going to send out the tentacles of the message of the gospel. And that message is as it's proclaimed as Christ is lifted up not only on a cross but in people's minds as we lift him up in the message of the gospel as being a crucified Christ who paid for your sins, it's going to call all people, attract people to it, and they're going to find their home in the Kingdom of God. And the tentacles have expanded not only around the world, now that we sit on the other side of the planet from Israel, but it's gone through time and the branches have come here and you little birds with me, bird brain, we've all come and found our nest in the Kingdom of God. Christ is Lord to us. Christ is our King. Christ is the leader of our lives. And that to us is where we have found our home.

We've found our home not just in a social sense, but in a soteriological sense. We are saved because we've put our trust in Christ. We've made our home in the kingdom, and one day we will inherit the kingdom. But the branches have gone out around the world, right? Kind of the inverse of my story of the roots, right? This is above ground. The picture of all of these branches going out and all the birds all over the place of all kinds coming in. Jew and Gentile, in our case, largely Gentile, on the other side of the planet, we're finding our place in the Christian family.

That's good, but it's going to end. Matter of fact, we talk about this from Second Peter Chapter 3, but just look up one paragraph and look at what precedes this. The story in verse 26 is about the kingdom and the same idea about growth, growth taking place in the ground and something coming to fruition. And when it does, it ends. Verse 26, "The Kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. He sleeps, he rises night and day," he goes in and waters and tills it and cultivates it, "the seed sprouts and it grows; he knows not how." He's not a botanist. He doesn't know exactly how this was working. But he knows how to farm. He knows how to water it. "The earth produces by itself," down under the ground, pushing it up, it's coming out by itself, "first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe at once he puts in the sickle because the harvest has come." So he's going to come and harvest it all.

Which, by the way, when you see that picture of harvesting, that's a picture Jesus uses repeatedly to describe the end of time. At the end of time there's going to be a harvesting, it's going to take the tares and put them into the furnace and take the wheat and put that into the barn, into the kingdom of God. And so we're going to separate, much like the parable of the shepherd who separates the people, like a shepherd separates sheep from goats. That's the idea of the end of time. It's going to grow until it's ready to be harvested and the harvest of the coming of Christ is going to end this thing. And the picture of the growth of the Church, you



just need to know, has a terminus in God's mind. He is growing this to put it in terms of the current age, "until the fullness of Gentiles comes in," to quote Romans.

The idea of the message of the gospel going out until every last person "appointed to eternal life," to use the words of the book of Acts, is saved, well, then that's when the harvest is. That's when the trumpet of God is sounded and the dead in Christ rise and the Church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air and the picture of the harvest is done. So I'm just saying, if that's the terminus, if that's the goal, if the goal is "if I go away and prepare a place for you, I'm going to come again to receive you unto myself, that where I am, you may be also," if that's the promise, I'm going to come back. The disciples ask in Acts 1, "Is now the time going to restore the Kingdom of Israel?" He says, "It's not for you to know the time." "Just go be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth," to quote Acts 1. If that's the promise...

But then he's going to come back as the angels there said, just like as you saw him go, you're going to see him come back. So if the coming back is based on the fact that the tree is going to spread its tentacles out around the world until the last bird lands in the nest of the kingdom of God, and then we're done, then I know this: that God knows exactly what he's doing. Everything's right on schedule. And the tentacles of the gospel through the growth of the Church and Christians around the world, even in places where it looks like there's not much going on, North Korea, China, Saudi Arabia, whatever you think of in terms of a non-Christian culture, even in our culture, even if our church was to be outlawed, even if we were to go underground, even if we were to lose our status before the government as a 501c3, you know, a church in our country. Listen, here's the deal. God's going to do his work and he's going to accomplish it. You need to be confident in that.

Just like the first 18 chapters of Acts made it clear, you don't doubt it in Chapter 19 when there are riots against Christians. And you don't doubt it now when everything in our culture seems to be pitted against Christians. When we're getting attacked like we haven't ever before in our country, certainly in the last hundred years, we're experiencing a kind of opposition that a lot of us get depressed about. And I'm saying don't get depressed about it because here's the thing. You're on a team that ends up winning and every last person gets into the kingdom that God has appointed to eternal life. We just keep at it. We're excited about the fact that God is going to do his work. "I will build my Church," not you guys will build my Church.

It's not like a coach. Sometimes we can picture Christ on the sidelines as the coach. He's the best college football coach ever. Right? But sometimes you might have a lousy set of recruits. He might have a lousy setup. Maybe for a few years he had no good players. So maybe he's going to have a losing season every now and then. That's not how it works with Christ, right? Christ is the perfect head coach, but he's also sent his Spirit onto the field where every single ligament, every tendon, every muscle fiber of every player is animated by the triune God.

He gets his job done. And in this case, we see everything that was wanting to snuff out the Apostle Paul and his companions, we see it all retracted, at least for a time. At least the door



is cracked open for him to get into Chapter 20 and have the book of Acts continue. And I'm here to tell you God is going to do that in our culture and in our country. Even in crazy, liberal, anti-Christian California. God is going to get it done. We're going to keep on working and keep on moving and the branches are going to continue to grow and people are going to continue to get saved until the Times of the Gentiles are filled and the buzzer goes off and the harvest comes. (audience applauds)

By the way, did you know of anyone this last year who was converted to Artemis? Because that's what they were all afraid of in the first century. They were all shouting for two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." If you feel like, you know, the liberal anti-Christian mob is winning because everyone agrees with them, I just want to know what became of Artemis. Right? Do you want to see the glory of Artemis? Go to London, go to the British Museum. You have to go to the basement, room 77 of the display on the Greco-Roman culture. You'll find a little display about Artemis. There's also some in room 22. You have to get your map out. But you'll get there. But you know what you won't find there? Many people bowing down to Artemis and saying, "I want to be a follower of Artemis."

You see a lot of people getting dragged through the museum, getting bored about that point after all the big displays. Now they're looking at some old statues of Artemis. Or if you want to go to Ephesus on one of our Footsteps of Paul Trip, you'll get there and if you want to see one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient world, as I said, you'll see one column that they've stacked up because it was all busted into pieces. You got one column of the huge impressive that everyone knows about we are the keepers of the goddess of Artemis. No one's excited about going to church around that one pillar. Do you know anybody in the last year who has been converted to Christ? Well, if you've been coming to this church you do. You see them get up on this platform every few months and give their testimonies and they talk about coming to faith in Christ.

Artemis, someone burned the temple down at one point and they did rebuild it. And then there was a flood and they were like, "Oh, forget it." But when it came to the Church. Right? I just want you to know what happened to the church in Ephesus. The Church continued to grow. This is mid-fifties in the first century. So in the middle of the first century, it ends up that Paul drops off Timothy here and makes him the senior preaching pastor of this church. And it continues to thrive. The Apostle John shows up, and most people would surmise it because he was entrusted with the mother of Jesus that Mary went with him. And as the assumption goes, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there, buried there, died there. John was there. And then he got exiled to an island that's 50 miles off the coast of Ephesus there at a place called Patmos. He wrote the last book of the Bible after he wrote the epistles from Ephesus, First, Second and Third John. Paul was writing Scripture from this city. He was writing Scripture back to this city, certainly when he was writing the pastoral epistles to Timothy, the pastor of the church.

Oh, I know you've read what John wrote on the island of Patmos, which was Jesus sending a message to Ephesus, "You've left your first love. Repent." Right? Well, they did repent. And the church began to thrive and thrive and thrive and thrive. So much so that by the fourth



century, when Chrysostom was preaching in what became Constantinople now is Istanbul, guess what he spoke of the church of Ephesus being? A thriving church, a church that had, and here's what he estimated, 100,000 Christians worshiping with the church at Ephesus. So as Artemis continued to decline, the Church continued to advance. Now, I can't say that's going to happen for our country, but I can say that's going to happen for the kingdom of God, whether it's here and we just get a little part of the big picture of the birds coming in the nest of the kingdom, or whether it becomes some, you know, continued growth in other places where the majority of growth of the Church is there. But we're going to see the growth of the Church because God's going to get his job done. And that's what we need to be confident in. Artemis is just an artifact at this point. Christ is still ruling and reigning over hearts just like he did, increasingly so in Ephesus.

Well, how did he get it done? Well, he protected his Church in a very unique way. Back to our passage, Acts Chapter 19 verse 35. "And when the town clerk," and I told you this is the liaison between Rome and Ephesus. I just want you to see these words. It just emphasizes drilling down another level of God getting his work done. How does he get it done? He has to deal with the opponents. "The town clerk quieted the crowd," verse 35. Bottom of verse 41, "And he dismissed the assembly." So all of this in his speech ends up having these people go home so that the uproar ceases, Chapter 20 verse 1. And then Paul goes on with his business. Now, I'm not saying it wasn't a terrible season of time for the Christians in Ephesus as all of this is going on in the riot. But I am saying this: God enlists the town clerk and the town clerk ends up quieting the crowd and when he's done dismisses the crowd and things move on.

God is going to protect his project, which is another way to say what we've been saying. But let me have you write it down that way and I want you to think about the ways that God is going to do that. Number two, "Trust God to Protect His Project," and his project is to build the Church. So I know he's going to build the Church. Just how is he going to do it? Well, he's going to do it through some creative ways, and he's done it through some creative ways throughout Church history and throughout biblical history. He's taken people who you wouldn't expect to be the savior of the Church. In this case, it's a Roman official who was there within Ephesus and this Roman official is saying, listen, "We believe that the city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper of the great Artemis, and," we believe that the sacred stone, "the holy stone fell from the sky, and we see that none of that can be denied." And we're so great and it's so great.

But those words of calming them down, and we know he had a motive. I get it. His ulterior motive was, "I cannot have Rome think this is a riotous mess in Ephesus." So he wants to calm it down. But as he calms it down, we need to see this is not a Christian apologist who gets called in. This is a politician. And the mayor of Ephesus ends up being the tool who God uses to push them back. Jot this down. Isaiah Chapter 46 verse 10 and verse 11. Those two verses are important. Verse 10 says this, and this just reiterates the first point. God says, "My counsel will stand." That's his plans, my council, my plans they will stand. "My purpose will not be thwarted." I will not have my purpose in any way... it will not be stopped. So God is going



to accomplish what he has planned to do. And that's true in the Old Testament and it's true now. The Church is going to be built and the Time of the Gentiles is going to be fulfilled.

The next verse is this, "I call a bird of prey from the east." I can enlist someone to fix any problem that looks really dark. And that person who he's talking about, who he's calling in from the east is the Persian King Cyrus that he's already talked about in the book of Isaiah. He's called in the book of Isaiah the Anointed One, God's anointed one. Now, here's the thing about the Persian king, Cyrus, who over does the Babylonians, who had taken the Israelites captive and destroyed the temple. Right? He's no worshiper of Yahweh. He just ends up being a pawn that God uses as a pagan to open up doors to make sure that the children of God, the Israelites, are not stamped out, they're not exterminated, and he gives them deliverance.

I just want you to think about how many times that happens. The people of God seem like they're backed in a corner, and then all of a sudden God raises someone up, and sometimes it's someone who is a worshiper of God. Right? Moses becomes a deliver for Israel out of Egypt. But there are a lot of times we see God using unexpected means to preserve and protect his project, and who knows how he'll do that. He's done it in some unique ways in pushing a little bit of the door open and cracking the door open even in the past ten years. It's like, wow, really? You're going to use that guy to do this for us. And God does that so we can keep preaching the gospel. We can keep reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. I just need you to trust that God is a sovereign God and everything is under his purview, including Cyrus, including American politicians, including people who will continue to, in God's plan, allow the Church like a mustard tree branch out and become the home to more and more people who put their trust in Christ. The providential project of God will not be thwarted.

Now, let me say this to you. Turn to Jeremiah. As long as we're talking about the Babylonian captivity of the Old Testament. In the sixth century B.C. we have this going on where the Israelites are ransacked by Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king. Cyrus becomes the open door to send them back into the land. But in the meantime, this is a bad generation, a generation where they are, as it's put, hanging their harps on the willow trees, weeping about the fact that Jerusalem has been destroyed. And there are people that are taking advantage of the temperature and the feeling of the Israelites coming in and saying, you know what, it's over for us. And there were preachers, they were called prophets in this passage in Jeremiah 29, and they're telling the people it's over.

Now, when they were in decline, when they were in Israel before Babylon came, they were saying, "Oh, it's all okay. Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Right? Israel was going into judgment. But when they were taken into captivity with guys like Daniel and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, God was going to protect his people. And when they were in a foreign land as exiles God had a message for them. And it wasn't to respond to sermons like the one I preached last week when we feel like we're living in a post-Christian world where everything is against us, for us to go, woe is me, woe is me. I need to dig a hole and just climb in it. And maybe with some freeze-dried food and a bigger caliber gun and I can just somehow, you know, just weather this and you become a prepper because you think it's such an anti-



Christian world and let's run for the hills. That is not what God wants of people who are in an anti-Christian culture. He wants to remind them that he always is going to accomplish his purpose.

Just like Isaiah 46 says. Look at Jeremiah Chapter 29. The message that God gives to people who felt like the walls of hell were pressing against their shoulders. Ready? Verse 4, "Thus says the Lord of hosts," which by the way, what does "hosts" mean, Lord of hosts? That means the armies. You got to remember who has got a plan. It's the plan of the King of the armies of heaven. Right? This is not just some weak person. This is not just an elderly coach on the sidelines hoping that you run the ball down the field as the running back. He's actively involved. He is a God of the armies of heaven. "The God of Israel." You people who I'm talking to, right, Jeremiah? He says the "exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem." Do you know who has sent us into a post-Christian American culture? God has. Right?

Now you can feel bad about that and think, "I wish you had the culture of my great-grandparents. You know, everyone was more amenable to Christianity. It was easier time to be a Christian, easier to do evangelism. And, you know, it wasn't like it is now." I get that. I get it. But the God of the hosts of heaven, the God of the Church, the God of the exiles who he sent from Jerusalem into Babylon, to early America into post-Christian America, here's what you should do. Right? Go buy your freeze-dried food, find a bunker, learn to shoot well. Right? Just sit there and just freak out about it. Which is what some of your reactions to last week's sermon were. That's not the right answer.

Verse 5. "Build houses, live in them." Right? Add on, put a second story on, remodel your kitchen. "Plant gardens." Get some new trees out there. "Eat its produce." Right? Cultivate a different kind of tree. Go plant some strawberries. "Take wives." Some think, "Well, I can't get married, though, it's the end of the world near." "Have sons and daughters." You say, "No, I can't bring kids into the world. You know, it's so bad. Greta Thunberg says it's going to be terrible and I can't do that." The culture wants you to eat bugs and not have kids. I realize that. But the Church, even with the walls of hell collapsing against the Church, here's our mindset, right? Yeah, I'm going to have kids, as many as I can. "Take wives for your sons, give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters." You need some grandkids. That's what you need. "Multiply there, don't decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I've sent you into exile." That is a mind-blowing verse. Think about it. That sentence is just like I can't compute. Where are we? We're in Babylon. We are in exile in a pagan culture. They're all bowing down to Nebuchadnezzar's idols. No, pray for the welfare of the city. Just think about that.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah a.k.a Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego. They were on the front lines as some of the brightest in Israel who were brought into the inner circle, the king's court, and we see them there. And what are they trying to do? Even in their case, I know they were young teenagers, but as they grew and Daniel, we see his whole ministry laid out there in the book of Daniel. He ends up becoming an asset to the country that he's serving. And it isn't Israel. And I'm just saying this: pray for the "welfare of the city that you've been sent into exile, pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you'll find your welfare."



It was weird to end on that passage last week in First Timothy Chapter 2 verses 1 through 5. That idea of us praying for kings and governors and all those in authority. Why? Because we want to live a quiet life so I can remodel my kitchen and have more kids and have grandkids. Right? And plant some produce and go to some nice restaurants. Always about our mission to share the gospel with our generation. But, you know, it's not about freaking out. It's not about running for the hills. It's not about us saying woe is me. It's about us praying that things that God will continue to crack open doors, even with a town clerk who's going to do something to allow us to continue. And that's what we should be praying for, the welfare of our culture, even here in California.

And I know people want to run for economic reasons. I get it. You might need to go to Idaho or Texas. I get that, fine, go to Tennessee. But I'm telling you this. Some of us, as long as we can pay our taxes, we're going to stay here and we're going to say this is our state, it's crazy and pagan as nutty as people think it is, living everywhere else in the culture. We're going to try to continue to take the tentacles of the branches of the kingdom and pull them out there while we remodel our kitchen and have kids. That's what we should do. A smattering of applause for our kitchen. (audience laughs)

Verse 8, "For thus says the" Lord of the armies and "Lord of hosts, the God of Israel," your God, "do not let your prophets or your diviners who are among you, deceive you." Don't let them deceive you. "Do not listen to the dreams they dream." I know they're all really negative. Ichabod, the glory has departed. It's awful. I know it's awful. I get it. You're in exile. God put you in exile. We're in a post-Christian America. I get it. God has put us here. Keep doing what you're doing. Keep praying for the welfare of our state, of our county. "It's a lie that they're prophesying you in my name; I did not send them, declares the Lord. For thus says the Lord; when 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you and I will fulfill to you my promise to bring you back to this place."

And he's going to pick because I already got ahead in an anachronistic quotation of Scripture in Isaiah 46, says he's going to take Cyrus, the Persian king, the son of a Persian princess, and bring the people back. He's going to fund it. He's going to allow it. He's going to sanction it. He's going to write letters and they're going to come back and they're going to rebuild their temple under Zerubbabel. They're going to do it. And he says, I'm going to do that. I'm going to visit you. "I'm going to fulfill a promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare." That's back up in verse 7. That's what I want. I'm praying for the welfare of the city. God has an ultimate plan to bring us good, "not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."

Now, in Acts Chapter 1, they asked, "Is now the time?" Jesus says, "Not for you to know the time." Don't waste your money going to prophesy conferences to tell you when Christ is coming back. Don't listen to the YouTube videos. You're wasting your time, right? Don't do that. We don't know when it's going to be over. They were told 70 years and you're going to come back. You could mark your calendar by it. We don't know when, but we do know this. He's provided for us a promise, a promise for "welfare, not for evil, to give us a future and a



hope." And the future and the hope is he's going to return when the Times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, when the branches go out and the last bird lands in the nest on a branch on the kingdom, he's then going to bring us into the kingdom. That's the promise of God. And you and I need to say I get that.

The provision for the Church's project is going to be protected by God, just like he was going to protect his people here and he was going to do it through not only, I mean, think about Nebuchadnezzar ends up exalting Daniel, a Jewish prophet, to the top position in his leadership. I mean, it seems like he's an outlier. How in the world did he get there? Well, God is doing it. God is using all kinds of crazy means to make sure that we continue to be able to do what we're called to do, which should be to live a peaceable, quiet life while we share the gospel with anyone and everyone we can.

This is a project. I use the word project. I don't know, that's not a very eloquent word, but the project of the Church. I don't mean you as a player. You as a player could be at any time taken off the field. Because I can't preach this sermon, you know, like in Acts Chapter 8 or 9 and preach it to Stephen's wife and have her nod her head through it. Because if she thinks I'm talking about her husband. Right? I'm not. You could at any time be taken out of the game. The pressure and the mounting attacks of the enemy could... we could have more martyrs in the Church, in the Western Church. We got them right now all over the world. People dying for their faith. Paul could have died in the riot in Ephesus and it wouldn't have stopped the flow of the gospel. But the flow of the gospel, we're using this particular period and with this particular set of companions, getting through all this into Chapter 20 as a sign of God's project.

But I can't talk that way about the individuals. Paul was going to die eventually and God was going to take him out. And when he does in the Second Timothy Chapter 4 he says, "Hey, I finished the fight, I finished the race. I fought the good fight. I've kept the faith. I'm now going to go and get my reward." Paul was ready, as Philippians 1 says, at any time to get promoted, and the players are going to get promoted in God's providence, right? James is going to be executed in the book of Acts. Stephen's going to be executed in the book of Acts. People are going to die and people are going to fall to the evil dictates of government, of people who hate Christianity. I get that. But that's not the end of the game.

Here's a verse for you. In First Corinthians Chapter 15 verse 32, Paul says, "I fought wild beasts at Ephesus." I fought wild beasts at Ephesus. He was not wrestling bears in the forest. We're not talking about literal beasts. We're talking about metaphorical beasts and surely this riot is in view in his mind, thinking about how, you know, this is just crazy. I mean, me and my companions, were getting dragged into the forum. He, in this case wasn't. But all the stuff he went through in Ephesus. Do you know the context of First Corinthians 15, do you know what that chapter is about Sunday school grads? It's about the resurrection of the body. And here's what Paul says. "Why would I fight wild beasts in Ephesus if there is no resurrection of the dead? Because if there isn't, let's eat and drink and be married for tomorrow, we die."



And here's what I'm saying. To risk the advancement of the gospel is worth it because we know ultimately it's not about the "here and now." It's about the "then and there," as I often say. It's about the reality that this is not all there is to the existence of Mike Fabarez or you. It's that God is going to promote his players one at a time off the field. The game is going to continue and the progress of the gospel is going to continue. But when Paul says it's my time to leave, hey, for me to stay is fruitful ministry, I'll move the ball down the field. But to die is gain. That's much better, he says. And so it's better for Stephen, who can die with a visage on his face, with a smile on his face, saying the kinds of things that Christ said when he was dying. "Forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." Paul can die willingly, saying, "I know my time of departure has come," but it's fine. "I'm going to go get this crown that was reserved for me, just like it is for all who love his appearing."

And so we know that Christ has come to remove the fear of death, Ephesians Chapter 2. We're not enslaved to it anymore. And so we know whenever it's our time to get off the field, we'll get off the field, and we're fine with that because we're not like the rest of the world. They are afraid of this thing that God has taken away from us, because we know what's been accomplished in Christ. So providentially, God is going to not only protect his project, but he's going to promote his players at the right providential time. And I think we just need to understand that's not the end of anything. Right? When Spurgeon died or Luther died or Chrysostom died or Paul died, it's not the end of the project. And at some point, if Christ doesn't come back in our lifetime, we will die. And that's all a part of God's promotional plan. And I'm not going to lament that.

One more verse we didn't catch, verse 37. We've got the whole passage, we got the first verse, the last verse. Look right in the middle of this. Verse 37, "For you," the town clerk says, "have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious," that's an interesting word, "nor blasphemers of our goddess." Now, if you see that sacrilegious, if you have an English Standard Version, it's got a footnote next to it, which takes you to Romans Chapter 2 verse 22. It's a different form of the word but the same word and it's a compound word, and it's the word "temple" and the word "robber." Robber of the temple. Sacrilegious, I guess, I don't know, really it was translated that way in the Revised Standard Version back at the turn of the 20th century and now at the turn of the 21st century, the English Standard Version translates it the same way with a minority translation, but may lead to the wrong thing in your mind.

Sacrilegious. I don't know what you think of when I say sacrilegious. They weren't sacrilegious. You might think talking bad about something someone else considers holy. No, it's not what it means. Literally. This word is "robber of temples" and I do think that's what literally the town clerk is saying they didn't do. They didn't rob the temples. Now, Demetrius, do you think he's saying well, they kind of did? Well, of course, they preached a message that's taking people's attention off of Diana, off of Artemis, and therefore they're not buying my trinkets or my statues and therefore I'm losing money. Yes. You know what? Paul and Gaius and Aristarchus are taking money out of my pocket. They're robbing the temple keepers, the makers of the temples, but not literally. They didn't go in, and here's a good synonym for the word sacrilegious. They didn't desecrate it. They didn't go in and take the idols or the precious



metals and toppled over and then bring it to into their own, you know, their own treasury to buy, you know, TVs with. That's not what they did. They didn't steal anything.

And I know that's what he has in mind, at least I think I know that's what he has in mind because he says there are courts if they really stole from you. Well they didn't steal from you directly. You feel like they stole from you because you're not making as much money as you did before they rolled into town with this Jesus is Lord message. I get that. But they haven't really been temple robbing. And they haven't really been blasphemers. Now, have you been around any passage where we get to the word blasphemy and you have me define it I often talk about something that's up here and people are talking about it like it's down here. And I'm saying in a sense, were they blasphemers? If I'm just going to think of the basic mechanical definition of the word, well they kind of were. I mean, that's what they were saying is that your gods are not the real God. There's a God of gods, and that's the real God. These gods are nothing. Paul says that to the Corinthians.

Matter of fact, look back up in this passage. Scroll back up to when Demetrius gets this whole riot started. Look at verse 26. Here's what Demetrius says to whip up the crowd at the very beginning of the riot. He says, "You see and hear that not only here in Ephesus but also in almost all of Asia Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people." From what? From worshiping these idols. Why? Because he's "saying that gods made with hands," those are idols, "are not gods." They're not really gods. Now, is that blasphemy? Well, I guess in a technical sense, in a mechanical sense that he's saying your thing that you revere is not the thing that you should revere. But blasphemy? Right? The idea of the degradation, the kind of disrespectful disdain, the mocking and the scorn of their belief system, now there wasn't that.

Matter of fact, do you want to know how he dealt with people who didn't agree with him? Go up further in this passage where he enters the synagogue, verse 8. He enters the synagogue. They don't believe that "Jesus is the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the Father except through him." But that's what Paul believed. And he comes in because that's what Jesus said. "And for three months he was speaking boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God." Those are great words, boldly, reasoning and persuading. Now, you could say in a way you are toppling the preeminence of Artemis. Yeah, I guess I am. But how am I doing that? Not by going into the temple and knocking things over. Just like you and I should not go into places and knock things over. I don't care if you're in a Buddhist temple, don't run up and knock over the Buddha. Right? Don't go into your retail stores and knock over the displays. That's not what we're called to do. Right?

We're called to boldly reason and persuade people. And that's not technically, even this town clerk says, it's not a crime. If it's a crime, take them to court. But that's not a crime. Now, in our day, we're starting to talk about thought crimes. Right? But the reality is that's what we... The weapons of our warfare to quote the Apostle Paul, they're not the weapons of this world, they're not worldly, but "they are for the destruction of," these ideas, "these arguments that raise themselves up against the knowledge of God." So we engage in conversation, we engage in reasoning, we engage in a kind of discussion that does not degenerate into what our opponents do when they're against us. They do blaspheme. They start to denigrate us.



They disrespectfully engage in, as I often say, *ad hominem* arguments. Right? You took the debate class, they are attacking the person. They're just despairing the person, disparaging words. They're tearing us down, they're mocking and scorning us. We're not supposed to do that.

Matter of fact, there's a great word that describes how we are supposed to respond. Right? And I know it's not a powerful word for you bulldog fighters. You want to go fight and knock displays over in stores. That's not what we're called to do. Here's the word and you're not going to like it, but it's the biblical word, "gentleness." It's the biblical word, a great Greek word "Prautés." It's described this way in James Chapter 3 verse 13, when it talks about heavenly wisdom, it says, you're supposed to "show your wisdom in the meekness," the meekness of this kind of "wisdom." It's a mildness. It's being able to have a conversation without yelling at someone or calling them names. It's not about physical force, it's not about brute force. It's about engaging in an argument that starts to win the battles for us.

It's about being bold, we're not going to be timid. Paul didn't want Timothy to be timid as he pastored this church in this city. I mean, he wants him to be bold. He wants him, though, to reason and persuade people. And as he wrote him, when there are people held captive in your town opposing you, correct them with, here's our word, *prautés* in Greek, the great Greek word *prautés*, "mildness" or "gentleness," correcting your opponents with gentleness. Number three, here's the great news about the town clerk. And I believe the town clerk is being accurate. They are not offensive people, not in how they're acting or what they're saying. They're not slandering and they're not being offensive by being criminals. They're not tipping over our idols. Number three, "Never Be an Unnecessary Offense," and you don't have to be when you're on the winning team. I hope you realize that.

In parenting, I often say that, listen, you don't have to yell at your kids. You have all the power, man. You have all the power. Stop yelling at your children. You can... And I won't get into my parenting lectures and screeds, but you don't need to get mad. We are on the winning team. We have Christ as our Lord. He's going to build his Church. I don't care what our culture does. I don't care if we become illegal this afternoon. If the Supreme Court says we are an illegal assembly, we are going to win this thing. God is going to protect the evangelistic advancement of the project called the Church. I don't want to be an unnecessary offense. I want to engage in bold, persuasive argumentation and rational discussion. And when it degenerates on their side, I'm not going to degenerate myself into their lowest common denominator.

I want to be able to see someone who's objectively looking, even though he's got an agenda, which is, "I don't want there to be riots in town. I don't want to lose our municipal treasury from Rome." He still looks at the guys and is able to convince the crowd and dismiss the crowd by convincing them they're not sacrilegious, they're not temple robbers and they are not blasphemers. And they are like, "I guess you're right." I think that's important. You need to do this with a sense of gentleness.



One passage on this, and then we'll come in for a landing here. How about First Peter Chapter 3? Another passage much like Jeremiah 29. I know there's one verse in the middle of this that you all recognize, but get the context of it all. Get the context and know that this is a picture of a Church that's embattled by a culture. And he says something that's a bit remarkable because if you think about all the people who have been martyred for the faith, it's a hard thing for us to process in verse 13. But look at First Peter 3:13. We'll start there and read through verse 17. "Now who is there to harm you if you're zealous for what is good?" Steven was jealous for what is good. And if I read that and Stephen's wife is there or Stephen's mom is there they're going to raise their hand, "I know who. The guy who's throwing rocks. That's who. They can harm you."

Well, as Jesus said, well, they can't really harm you "Even if," verse 14, "you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed." Even the martyrs are blessed. They held them up in the highest esteem. Stephen. James. Paul. These guys were held in high esteem. Why? Because in the end, as Jesus said, they can kill your body. They cannot cast your soul into hell. You are blessed. And in reality, all of that doesn't really matter at the end of the day. "Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts, I want you to honor Christ the Lord as holy." He is the King, he's above all kings. He's above Diana and Artemis. "Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you."

Why aren't you bowing down to Artemis? Why aren't you bowing down to the Buddha? Why don't you respect Muhammad the prophet? Well, here's why. Here's my answer. I'm going to give you a defense. I'm going to clearly, boldly, persuasively reason with you about this. But I have to do it, here's our word, prautés, "yet do it with gentleness," do it with a humility "and respect and keep a good conscience so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ..." I don't like your message. You're making our goddess seem less than she is. They may be "put to shame" because a town clerk may stand up and say, "Really, what did they do? What did they do? Did they push over the display? What did they do?" "Oh, they used words to talk..." "You're really here complaining about that? You're losing business. Maybe your argument for Artemis is not as good as their argument for Christ."

I mean, the reality of it is, just to put it in the most human terms, that's where we need to be and that's exactly what's happening here in Chapter 19. Where it's better, by the way, to be in the middle of a riot and have everybody yelling at you, it's better to suffer for doing good, that should be God's will, sometimes it is, than for doing evil. And I don't want to cascade and descend into the evil, vitriolic, hostile name-calling or any kind of violent behavior. Christians, we don't riot, we don't riot. We don't push over things. We don't topple temples and idols. We sit there in the corner and tell people, "Listen, I know that you're wrong about this, and I get that that's offensive to the modern ears, but I want to persuade you boldly that here's the reason that we sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts."

Cultural leaders are always going to yell and complain about Christian values, about Christ, about the Christ we submit to, about the Bible. I get that. But that's just noise in the background. I just want you to know that. Don't be intimidated by the noise. It's all going to resolve itself into every critic bowing their knee to Christ and the Church being vindicated and



exalted in the last day. That's the reality. You need to know that. And in the early Church you had Demetrius and all the civic leaders until we had one civic leader stand up, the mayor, and push the door back. And that's great. And we've always had. In our day we got Dawkins and we got Hitchens and Dennett and Harris, and we got all the people who are saying Christianity is the problem. That's nothing new. Every generation has had that.

Think about France 300 years ago. Voltaire. Do you know the name Voltaire? Coming out of the Enlightenment, the philosopher, the thinker. And here was a guy with an acerbic vocabulary. He could take people and wrap them into a pretzel just by his words. He was a prolific writer. He wrote all kinds of screeds, speaking of screeds, screeds against Christianity and the Bible. Let me read you a couple. Here's one from 1764. "Christianity is the most ridiculous, most absurd religion to ever infect the world." He said in his book on statements about what he believes coming out of the Enlightenment, "It is impossible that Christianity will survive. It's going to go away." He used to say this, "We were living in the twilight of Christianity." He quoted that in his philosophical dictionary that we're done. The Enlightenment is going to push this out of the way.

About the Bible, here's what he said about the Bible. "The Bible is what fools have written, what imbeciles commend, and what unprincipled people make their children memorize." That's what he said about your book that you believe in. He said in a little treatise called God and Man, he said this, "To believe the message of the Bible is the most extreme of brutal stupidity," if you believe it. In one of his last works is a little work called The Bible Fully Explained. And I know you're leaning forward to hear him explain the Bible fully to us. In 1767 he said this, "The cause is decided." At the end of his book he says, "I've given you my argumentation. The cause is decided for those who are willing to avail themselves to reason." What is it? "People will no longer read this book." They're not going to read the Bible. It's done.

Voltaire died, as they all do. And at the care of his physician, Tronchin, Dr. Tronchin was his name. And Dr. Tronchin was a friend of Voltaire and Voltaire trusted him, he entrusted him with his health to Dr. Tronchin. And he so admired Dr. Tronchin, and he actually willed his estate, at least his home to Dr. Tronchin. And so the Tronchin family became the keepers of the old Voltaire house, which was an expansive place as rich and influential and had a mansion in Geneva. So he goes about his life and he has kids and grandkids and great-grandkids.

And one of those great-grandkids becomes a Christian. I mean, great, great-grandchildren. His name was Henry, Henry Tronchin. Henry Tronchin ends up becoming a Christian, which is ironic because everything about Voltaire and his inner circle, including his doctor, they were all anti-Christian. Well, this guy becomes a Christian. Henry becomes not only a Christian, he becomes an evangelical-style Christian wanting to convert people to Christ. And he's a smart guy and so smart and so influential he becomes the president of the Geneva Evangelical Society, which means they were all about winning people to Christ in France and in Europe. And this was many years, many, many decades after Voltaire. But Henry still had possession, this was Voltaire's mansion, it was still in the family, of Voltaire's home.



And so because he was an ardent evangelist and he was the head of a society that was all about evangelism, they would print Bibles and bring them into his care, and he didn't know where else to put them, but he had a huge mansion, which used to be Voltaire's. So he stacked Bibles and gospel literature and tracts all throughout this house. So the house where Voltaire used to sit and think of ways to defame the Bible and Christians and call them brutally stupid, saying we live in the twilight of Christianity, no one's going to read this book anymore. All you got to do is listen to me and read my stuff and you will definitely be done with Christianity. Now the rooms in which he wrote those things were stacked to the gills with Bibles as they awaited distribution throughout all of Europe.

And it didn't take 100 years. Within 16 years, the place where Voltaire had most of his works printed that were all anti-Christian books, I mean, most of them. At some point he commented on a lot of things but his favorite target was Christianity. That printing press was almost completely dominated by the printing of Scripture 16 years later. This guy, just like Artemis and people who were rioting in the streets of Ephesus kept saying, "This is what's smart." He was in the highest tower of the ivory tower of the academy saying you guys are a bunch of brutally stupid people. It's for imbeciles. And yet, here's what happened. God continued to grow his Church and the tentacles of the gospel of the kingdom went forward and people continued, even in the house in which Voltaire thought of these horrific, sinful, damnable things about us, continued to be overturned one heart at a time, one life at a time, one church plant at a time as Dr. Tronchin's descendants became one of the most vocal adherents not only to Christ but to the evangelistic cause.

I know that the voices in our culture as they sit there on C-SPAN or wherever else you might hear them on their podcast talking about how brutally stupid we are and how we are the minority, the Bible-thumping, you know, ridiculous phobic people. I just want to let you know in the end, just like Artemis becomes an artifact in the basement of the British Museum in time, all the things that people are so afraid to stand up against, I just need you to know it's all going to be nothing. And what's going to matter and what will prevail is the Christ of the gospel. And so you and I, we should stand unashamed, completely unflappable about the reality of our truth. Not being bombastic, not being hostile, but telling people about the truth reasonably, rationally, but boldly. Don't be afraid and don't be dissuaded. Stand with me and let me commission you to a week of standing for Christ. (audience applauds)

Pray with me. God, we stand as a church, as one church in South Orange County in a culture in Southern California and in a state that is notoriously something the rest of the culture says that's a dark place that that pastor and those people are living in. And yet we know this: that whether we're in Babylon or whether we're in Ephesus and there's rioting all around us, we've got to remember that you are the King of heaven, the Lord of hosts. Your Son is our King and the Lord of our hearts. And that we are people who are part of an organization that will continue to grow until it is done growing and the harvest comes. And you know exactly when that last bird will land in that nest and we will be finished. And the fruition of this particular age will be done. And God, we look forward to that when we'll see you face-to-face. You will return. You said you'd go away to prepare a place and you'd come again to receive us unto



yourself. So, God, we look forward to that day with absolute confidence that every promise you've made you've kept, including the one to build your Church. So we trust you today, and we want to reaffirm that with a biblical optimism that we're going to keep moving forward, just like you promised.

In Jesus name, Amen.