



Christians on Trial – Part 1

The Kinds of Opposition to Expect

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So if you were to go to Google and type in the word "bullying" as I did to see if there be any web pages devoted to that topic, I can assure you you'll find a few. As a matter of fact, when I typed in "tell me about bullying," I found 1.2 billion web pages, not million, billion, 1.2 billion with a "B" billion. So I took a few minutes to read all those pages. (audience laughing) And I've got the executive summary for you right now. Are you ready? They're against it. They're against it. Every one of them. They're against it. They're against cyberbullying and bullying at school, they don't want your kids bullied and bullying at work and racial bullying. And there is like disability bullying. And there's every kind of bullying in the world. But I couldn't find any web pages that were for them. They were just totally against it. Just don't do it. I have it on good authority that no matter how many websites there are against bullying it's going to keep on going on. It's going to. And my authority is the risen one. Perhaps you know him. He rose from the dead with all authority he has in heaven and on earth and he said this, John 15 verse 20, he said, if they bullied me, which they did, they're going to bully you.

Now I know that's kind of a free translation of that passage in John 15 verse 20, but it's not an inaccurate one I can assure you of that. The word that's used there is a word that you could replace for what people mean by today's word "bullying." What they mean is like to intimidate, to harass, to belittle. Right? Even physically bully you with their actions to ostracize you, to exclude you, to somehow try to make your life difficult. That's bullying. And certainly Jesus had that in mind when he said, "If they persecuted me, they're going to persecute you," because all the things he says about persecution, it runs the gamut all the way down to just saying bad things about you, saying things behind your back. He talked about how they're going to revile you and exclude you and say all kinds of evil things about you. He says it's going to happen because "no servant is greater than his master." If I'm the top of this pyramid here and I got bullied, oh then you're going to get bullied. Now, I don't care, you can have 1.2 gazillion web pages against it. You wag your finger at everybody and say it's bad, it's bad. You shouldn't do it. It's going to happen. There's going to be bullying in particular against Christians I assure you all the way to the end. I reckon it will go from bad to worse. And so there are no passages in the Bible that you can find that are going to say, here's how to get rid of that. Here's how you stop people from persecuting you. Here's how you stop people from reviling you. Here's how you stop people from bullying you. You won't find those passages, but you'll have a lot of passages that will say, here's the kind of bullying you should expect and here's what you got to do about it. And those are very helpful passages.

And I've called this series for the next eight weeks, I've called it Christians on Trial. And they're always going to be there. There's going to be that sense that, like, you're put on trial, put you under the microscope, they're going to analyze you and they're not going to analyze you fairly because you ally yourself with Christ. Like I stand with him. And because of their ridicule for him and what he said, they're going to do the same to you, Jesus said that's going to happen. And what we're going to study in Chapters 24, 25 and 26 for the next eight weeks, which by the way, is like light speed for the book of Acts. Right? Since we've been in it since I



was 16, we've been studying Acts. (audience laughing) I know, this is fast. But Paul goes through trials and a lot of them are the same. Matter of fact, he repeats a lot of the things in these trials. But he's on trial starting in Chapter 24 before the governor of the whole area of Judea, southern Israel. He's in charge. He's a Roman official sent from Rome across the Mediterranean and he's in charge of this area. And Paul is taken in and he starts a trial. It's the first real, like, serious, like legal trial before the Romans. And so it is a trial and I want to use that terminology but I doubt any of you are going to go before the governor of our state with attorneys and flanked by people, you know, with big briefcases. I don't know that at least you, maybe your kids or grandkids, but you probably won't be on that kind of trial.

But Jesus when he talked about the opposition we're going to receive, it's a kind of bullying work, we're going to have to have a preparation for. We need to know what to expect and what to do about it. And Paul gives a great primer by his life, kind of giving us a template of this is the kind of things you should expect and here's how you should respond. So we want to look at that for the next eight weeks. We're going to start with the first nine verses. And I want you to look at it with me because we're going to find answers to how we should deal with what we're going to deal with. And why we have to attenuate a bit of what he's dealing with because he's literally on trial for his life, this is where this is going to go in the book of Acts. I hope that your bullying is less than that. And I hope that it will be for our lifetime. Perhaps it won't, but whatever. We're going to get ready by looking at this and kind of saying, well, how does this apply to us today? And we'll find some answers in the text today.

So turn there with me. Acts Chapter 24. We've only got time for the first nine verses and we really don't even have time for that. That never stops me. Acts 24. You followed me, I hope, and where we're at and Paul here now is finally taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast. And it says, after he got there and he's there, it says, "After five days," verse 1, "the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus." Okay, down. They're coming from Jerusalem. Everything's down even though it's northwest from Jerusalem. It's still down. And that are directional indicators whenever you come down from Jerusalem because it's an elevated place and the most important city in the mind of the Jewish people, Luke says, coming down. So coming down to the Mediterranean. Who is? Well, Paul got there with a big entourage and a whole protective, you know, service in protective custody all the way to Caesarea. But now we have the high priest. He's the number one guy in religious Judaism of the first century. His name is Ananias and he's coming. And he's got a whole team of the elders, in other words the ruling class of Israel, probably members of the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court of Israel. And a spokesman, an interesting Greek word, probably referring to an unofficial lawyer, like a litigator. He's an orator. He's a rhetorician. He's one who's able to stand up and argue a case before Roman officials. That's probably why Tertullus has the name that's not a Jewish name. So he's retained by the Jewish leaders and he's going to argue his case. Maybe he's done it before. I assume he has. These Jews are smart. They're probably going to get a guy who is experienced. He's going to come and he's going to "lay the case before the governor" named Felix and they're going to put Paul on trial.

Verse 2, "And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him," that's Paul, "saying: 'Since through you,'" talking to Felix now, "we enjoy much peace," the lawyer saying, "and since by your foresight most excellent Felix reforms are being made for this nation in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude. But to detain you no further," we know your time is important, Felix, "I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly." Super sticky sweet there, right? I mean, it's more than like, "if it pleases the court" and "your Honor." This is like he's leaning into this. And now here it comes, verse 5, "For we have found this man a plague," right? Kevin, you're such a disease, right? (audience laughing) This is like you're just laying into this with an ad hominem argument. This guy's a bad guy. He's bad, he's a plague. What does he do? Why? Because "he stirs up riots among ALL the Jews," not just in Israel, I mean, Asia Minor. He's messed up the whole world, this disease, this man named Paul, "throughout the whole world," because he's like the top dog, "he's the ringleader," he's the one whipping up these people "of the sect of the Nazarenes. He's even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him." Speaking on behalf of the Jews here, the leaders. "By examining him yourself," O, amazing Felix, right? You look so good today. Right? "You will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him. And then the Jews," man, they were like, yeah, "they joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so." Maybe it's more like the parliament in England, right? It's like, I don't know, they're like barking up everybody. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Or maybe this is a reference to them bringing in people, whatever. Everyone just joins him. Bad guy. Plague, disease, riot guy, you know, sect ringleader, bad guy, profaning religious, you know, people in Jerusalem. And off they go. Paul starts his defense in verse 10. That's next time. Let's just look at this. The charges.

Now again we have to attenuate a little bit. We have to bring it down from you being on trial with lawyers flanking you and being accused in the, you know, in the witness box. And we're going to think, okay, what kinds of things are happening to Paul? What are they saying about Paul that they might say about you? Because Paul is a follower of Christ. He's a proponent of Christianity. You're a proponent of Christianity, I trust, if you're a Christian, and what are they going to say? What kind of stuff should you expect? So let's give a heading to this, and then let's just analyze the charges and let's just head it this way. "Expect Criticisms Like These..." And for you I'm assuming it's just criticism. It may accelerate to something greater. You might lose a job over it, you might lose a client, you might lose a promotion, you might lose some friends. I don't know. I mean, who knows? You could lose a lot but it starts with the criticism. It's the opposition. Okay. Now what is the opposition? You notice the verses next to this first point take us right to the heart of it in verses 5 and 6. And I want to start with the charges.

Now four things we could say. One of them is kind of a header to it all but it starts with, you know, you're a plague, this guy's a plague. Verse 5, "We found this man a plague," that's what he is, "who stirs up riots among all the Jews, all the Jews throughout the world, ringleader of the sect of the Nazarene. He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him." Okay, that's the charge. Let's start with the first line. Okay. We'll get our Letter "A" from this. "You're a plague." It's not nice, right? You're not nice. You're just bad. You're bad. You're just bad for the world. Okay. Now, you, and all these are plurals that I'm going to have you write down, so, y'all, if you're from the South, right? You need to know, Letter "A" here's what they're going to say about you. Even though you might not go to court, you might not go to jail. They're going



to say the same thing they said about Paul because you're going to stand with Christ, he stood to Christ. Letter "A." They're going to say, "You're Bad for Society." You're all bad for society. You and your church and your group, you're just bad. You're bad for society. Or to put it in the words of a website that I looked up, it just didn't take me long and say, well, what are people saying about Christians these days? Here was the headline: "Christians. They Are a Scourge of Humanity." Like, oh, okay. I cause trouble upsetting everything everywhere.

Now, you know, anyone can get a web page, right? There are 1.2 billion. Clearly, anyone can say anything, I get that. How about bestselling books that have really broken all the records for selling books about religion? And they're not from religious people. They're from atheists. And, you know, you've studied a little bit about the opposition to Christianity in our generation, it really started with these four horsemen of the new militant atheists who have gone after us. And so go back to the turn of the millennia here, beginning of the 2000s, and think of some of the things that were written about us in these books. Okay? Here's Christopher Hitchens in his book, 2008, page 58. "Christians," talking about us now, "they're violent, they're irrational, they're intolerant, they're allied to racism, they're tribal and they're full of bigotry." You could say you're a plague. That's what Christians are. You become a Christian. You're bad for society. That's not good for society, right? That's not good for... Harris and Hitchens, they keep going. You can add Dawkins to it in a minute, but they all keep going. They say, we are, here it comes, "positively immoral." And religion, Christianity in particular, is a false picture of the world to the innocent. People are just out there and then they're hit with the religious, hit with us Christians, right? They're just fine, whether it's in Thessalonica or Colossae or Ephesus or, you know, Orange County or the middle of Phoenix, or in Cleveland, it doesn't matter. Christians come and they start messing it all up. "We are the kind," it says here, "who are promoting this eternal reward or this eternal punishment, this bifurcation of where are you going to go when you die." That's what Christianity is all about. "And they impose impossible tasks and rules upon people."

We start telling people like you shouldn't look at pornography, right? And you shouldn't cheat on your wife and you shouldn't cheat at work, and you should tell the truth. You know, you shouldn't curse, all these things. Impossible. It's impossible. You're saddling us with all this guilt, right? "And they encourage an extreme self-centeredness." Ultimately, they're saying they're just a bunch of self-centered people "and full of conceit." Okay. These are the charges against Sunday school teachers in Nebraska, right? Christian college students in Kentucky. Right? People like us who gather together to read the Bible. This has become, and again, these guys are selling way more books than your pastor will ever sell. More people are reading what they write than me and ten pastors combined. This is an increasing view of how people look at Christianity. And the more our society continues to, quote unquote, progress as they slide off, you know, the table into the garbage can, we're going to continue to have this accusation against us. And that is Letter "A," you're bad for society. You're bad for society. You're not good for... You do not produce goodwill. You are, to put it in the words of First Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 13, you are the "scum of the world."

Matter of fact, let's look at that passage real quick. So important that the Apostle Paul would say that, because he's trying to correct a kind of thinking that is all over Orange County



churches, all over Orange County churches. And that is that you can have an alliance with Christ and not only will he make your life better, but as he makes your life better, and you are healthier and wealthier and your skin is clear and you have more hair on the top of your head, you will ultimately have really the respect and accolades of everyone. They're wondering like how are you not on, you know, bipolar medication? That's amazing. You're great. We want to learn from you. We want to sit at your feet and learn from you, O, Christian, so blessed in your life. Okay. This is the kind of tripe that goes on in a lot of places as they're pushing a Christianity in a culture, by the way, that is pretty well-off, upper-middle-class Orange County. If you've heard me quote the book First Corinthians before, then I'd like you to turn there, First Corinthians Chapter 4, I think you've heard me say this. Corinth in the first century was the Orange County of the ancient world. They were well-to-do. I mean, it wasn't Rome. It wasn't Athens. But they were doing really well. It was not Bel Air, right? But it's Orange County. These guys, they're doing well.

Now Christ comes to Corinth and people start adding Christianity to their portfolio of stuff, you know, along with their bike rides in the morning and their Peloton and their crunches and, you know, they're eating their strange juices and their essential oils. "I got Christ now, this is good. Really good for me" And they start to sense this: "this is a life betterment plan. I mean my books on Christianity they're right there in the self-help section." And Paul just castigates them in this passage. Take a look at it. First Corinthians Chapter 4, the Orange County of the ancient world. Here's what he said. Let's start in verse 8. And by the way, if you read First and Second Corinthians, these two books in the New Testament are dripping with more sarcasm than any other book in the New Testament. Dripping with sarcasm. And Second Corinthians is even worse than First Corinthians, or better, depending on if you like sarcasm. Verse 8, "Already you have all you want!" You have all you want. "Already you've become rich! And without us you've become kings!" We've seen all your graphics for your church sermon series, you're kings and princes and this is awesome. All that sarcasm. That's why maybe our translators in the English Standard Version put exclamation points behind it. Because it's sarcastic. This is what he says, "And would that you did reign." In other words, you're kidding yourself.

Christianity does not make you have all that you want. It does not make you rich and it does not make you influential in society where people are sitting at your feet saying, "tell us how you do it." That's not it. Would that you did have that, would that you were there, "so that we might share the rule with you!" Oh, our theology is going to get us there, but it gets us there when Christ comes back for that kingdom we've been praying for when Christ arrives to get his Church. And he sets up a kingdom on earth and guess what? Then we will reign. But guess what, Corinthians, you're not getting there ahead of me, Paul says, impossible. "For I think that God has exhibited us apostles." Which, by the way, you are there subscribing to this theology of Christianity and you got it from the apostles and the apostles are the leader at the top of the pyramid of knowing and living out Christianity. It is the apostles. And here you are, this church in nice suburban, you know, Corinth.

And all of a sudden now he says, listen, we are the leaders of this movement, and we are like "last of all, like men sentenced to death," like they're dragging us through the streets and want

to kill us. "We have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, to men." Everyone thinks we're just trash. Matter of fact, they think we're dumb. Verse 10, "We're fools for Christ's sake, but you are so wise in Christ," you smarty pants. Right? "We're weak." Look at us. We're weak. We are in prison, we're being hauled out of town after they throw rocks at us, they leave us for dead in the streets of our mission field. "But you're so strong." You got it. "You're held in honor." You're becoming the employee of the month in your companies. But we are in disrepute." They hate us. "To the very present hour," like right now we can't get food. They won't serve us beverages. "We're poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless and we're laboring, working with our own hands." No one's handing us anything. "When reviled," we turn around and live by the Christian principles and, "we bless." But we are reviled. And "when we're persecuted," we just gut it out, "we endure; when slandered," like it's happening in Acts 24, 25, and 26, "we entreat." We're going to have a defense. We're going to respond. "We have become, and still are, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things."

Now you say, dude, you need some medication, a good psychiatrist, you need to slow down. Take a vacation Paul. Scum of the earth? You're not the scum of the earth. You're a nice guy. We've read your books, right? You seem happy. No, we're the refuse, the dung, we're the poop of the world. That's what he said. And you don't see it down on Dayspring cards, right? "Christians. Poop of the world. Scum of the earth." And Paul says, that's what we're experiencing. Oh, but you guys, you got it made. I get absolutely disgusted by some of the preaching that I hear going on on platforms by people who promise things they don't even experience and live. They don't even experience and live the stuff they offer to their congregations as they pass the plate and pretend that Christianity is supposed to make you popular and healthy and no zits, right? And thin waistlines and you'll probably just stand up straighter. It'll be awesome. These guys are influencers. They're not preachers and they're telling you things that are not true. They're ripping people off. They're putting people in a place of hanging on, to biding into false hopes that will do nothing but be disillusioned. And these churches and these pulpits that are proffering this stuff, you just need to know it's a revolving door. They come in, they start to believe what the preachers are saying and then in time they go saying this is disillusion. I don't like this. But that's okay. Somebody else coming right behind him because we're standing on stage and saying, "If you get Christ, everything going to be great. He's so great. He's so awesome. Everyone's going to love you. You're going to be great. Your family, fantastic, right? Your health, good. Your job, you're going to ascend and soar." Nonsense. Here's what I'm telling you. Do you want to ally yourself with Christ and subscribe to biblical Christianity? It's going to get harder. You should expect that they're going to say you're bad for society. Paul says, look, look. I mean, you can just read the passage. This is what it is. This is the answer. It's a priority value expectation adjustment.

"Great sermon after Easter Pastor Mike. I brought friends and everything. (audience laughing) This is not what I wanted." It gets worse. (audience laughing) But here's what I'll say. You may not have had anyone this week say, hey, "You're a Christian? You're bad for society." I'll bet people have thought it if they know you're a Christian. Number two, I guarantee you you've heard this one. Go back to our passage, Letter "B." Here it is, verse 5. What's the second thing they say? "You stir up riots among all the Jews throughout the world." Can you just keep your mouth shut? You coming into town, everyone's mad at you. They don't like



what you're saying. This is bad. Right? And the reason they think it's bad is because we come in and say things they don't like, and then you don't back down because you say this is true. This is right. This particular charge speaks to our epistemology. It speaks to what we think we know and how we think we know it and what is true and our understanding, our philosophy of what truth is. Christians have believed from the very beginning, and Western society was very much built on this idea, that truth is really a statement, an assertion of some comporting with reality. That what I'm saying it comports with something objectively true. Right? Until Oprah came along and said, no, it's about my truth. "My truth, your truth." Okay, classic modernistic way of thinking.

Christianity has said like there is a God. It's the fool who says there is no God. Because you can't say, "Well, I'm an atheist." Well, that's nice, I am a Christian. No, no, no, no, it doesn't work that way. There either is a God or there isn't a God. Well, you believe God made us. "But I watched the Discovery Channel, God didn't make us." Oh, that's nice. That's not how this works. There is either God or there isn't a God. He either created us or didn't create us. Oh, and there was this thing like the movie a long time ago, the Ten Commandments, God gave these rules, right? "Oh, you're saying that? I don't think those are rules are... I don't even believe it. I just think that whole book probably developed from... it was rewritten in there was translation after translation. I don't believe all that." Okay. Well, there is a God or there isn't a God. He either created us or he didn't. He either gave us a set of rules or he didn't. And then all that stuff about he's going to judge us, he's going to call us to account for what we do. He either is or he isn't. Right? It's either true or it isn't.

Christianity gets a bad rap because people are saying this is a statement that corresponds to something that's real, something that is true and if you disagree with it, oh, here it comes, here comes, here comes, you're wrong. dun, dun, dun... You can't do that. You know what that is? That's being judgmental. You are judgmental. Letter "B." You're going to be accused of this, right? "You're judgmental. Especially your pastor. Your church, trust me. JUDGEMENTAL. YOUR CHURCH IS JUDGEMENTAL. You're judgmental." Okay. Just by the way, just point out to the person who says that to you, are YOU being judgmental about the fact that we're judgmental? What do you mean? Are you sure we're judgmental? Are you saying we're absolutely judgmental? Are you saying that we're not not judgmental? Are you saying that we're actually, like, corresponds with truth that we are judgmental? And you're saying that. "No, that's not my truth. We're not judgmental." Well, no, are you sure we're judgmental? You can't have it both ways. The Greek New Testament, the Greek language is so great. So much of our vocabulary comes from Greek. Not that this particular word does. But the word that translates into "judge" which you're not supposed to do because there's a Bible verse about that somewhere. Matthew Chapter 7 verse 1. You're not supposed to do that. More on that in a minute. Is the word "Krinó." Krinó. Which doesn't mean anything when you hear it. Just know that when you hear the word krinó, which is the verb "I judge," it translates "judge" depending on how it's inflected in different ways. Krinó. Judge.

Here's something that's helpful. If you go like you take a one-on-one Greek class across the street you're going to have to learn vocabulary words. Here's a frequently used word you're going to have to learn Apokrinó. Apokrinó is a compound word with a preposition in front of an



"Apo." Right? And here's the translation of the word apokrinó and it's so helpful. The translation of the word apokrinó we're going to have to learn in your new vocabulary list is the word "to answer." I answer, apokrinó, right? To give an answer. Actually, it's not a verb in that sense. Apokrinó is to answer. Here's the answer. Everyone who gives an answer is making a judgment, a judgment. Everyone who is going to respond. What do you think of this? That is a judgment, a judgment. And if you say that your judgment is right, you are now as judgmental as anyone on the planet. Everyone is judgmental. Dennett, Hitchens, Dawkins, all of them are judgmental. And a lot of their books are about how judgmental we are. I get it. I understand it. Because you're trying to make an assertion that corresponds with what you think is true, and so the only way to do that is to get into the squishy Oprah land of saying there is no truth. "There's your truth, my truth, whatever your truth, all roads lead to heaven," which she loves to say, right? Or used to say, I don't know. Oprah's yesterday's news. Whoever the new person is now. And the idea of all this is that we are going to say, listen, I know you think we're judgmental.

Do you know why Paul caused riots when he went into town? He would go into the synagogues and say, here's Isaiah, here's Jeremiah, here's Malachi. You know who it is, Jesus of Nazareth. This is the guy. And they would say, "No, it's not." And he'd say, "Yes, it is." "No it's not." "Yes it is." Why didn't they want that? Because he died on a cross. "I don't believe our Messiah is going to die on the cross. You're wrong." Paul would say, "Oh, but let's look about dying on a cross, Isaiah 53, there are passages in Scripture. How about Moses? Even the idea of the sacrificial lamb? Yes, the Messiah was going to die on a cross. You just weren't reading the Scripture carefully enough. Look at it again." "No. You're wrong. We will not believe that." So riots were caused. The most important person in biblical prophecy is the Christ. And Paul was saying this is the Christ. He just died in Jerusalem and rose from the dead on the third day. "That's too crazy. We don't believe it." Riots. People disagree. Anybody who's going to cause a stir, let's just call it that, where you're judgmental is because you're making statements of truth, assertions about reality, and you're saying you're right to agree with this assertion that corresponds to reality, or you're wrong if you deny it. And I'm just saying we traffic in that, that is the whole point. To share the gospel is to make an assertion about something we think corresponds to reality. You're just going to have to accept that. You should expect that.

And it's funny because they live in a judgmental world all day long when they go to the produce section of the grocery store -- judgment, judgment, judgment, judgment, judgment, right? When they talk to their kids about how they live, judgment, judgment, judging all the time, every answer they give is a judgment. Matthew 7:2. "Do not judge," period. No, that's not what it is. "Do not judge or you're going to be judged," in the same way that you judge and "how you measure it can be measured back." And he says, you know what? Here's the problem. You were trying to make judgments with big old logs in your eye, and you need to take the log out of your eye so that you'll never judge anyone. Sunday school grads, is that how the passage ends? No. "Take the log out so then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Matter of fact, jot this down. People who are getting tired of the accusation that we're judgmental. John Chapter 7 verse 24. Jesus says, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge," this is an imperative now, "judge with right judgment." Judge with



right judgment. Judge appropriately. You can't judge a book by its cover. That's true. Don't judge by mere appearances, right? There can be a tax collector on the Temple Mount, you think he's the scum of the earth. You just look at the external. But look at what he does. Look at what he says. Look at how he goes home contrite, trusting in the Lord's mercy for forgiveness. He's a brother in Christ. Don't judge by mere appearances. Judge with righteous judgment. Everyone's going to judge. Judge right. That's the point.

Expect criticisms like "You're bad for society." "You're such a disease," right? And "You're judgmental." That's going to happen. Back to our passage. Acts Chapter 24 verse 5. Because you know, this guy "is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." He's a Nazarene. Now I grew up down the street from a Nazarene church. I'd ride my bike past it all the time. I didn't think it was a bad word. It's a fine word. Nice cars in the parking lot. Seems like a nice building. The hedges were nicely trimmed. Nazarenes. I know these guys are Nazarenes. I go to a Baptist church, you go to a Nazarene church, whatever. Fine. It wasn't a fine word in the first century. Nazarene. Remember, in John Chapter 1, Nathaniel and Philip have this discussion. I think I found the Christ, the one of the Bible talks about in the Old Testament. And the response was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Nazareth. I'm thinking of a geographical location on the map right now, which I won't say because I get in trouble when I say those cities. You know what cities I'm thinking of. And we have this sense of reputation of a particular place. This to them in Israel and in the snooty areas around Jerusalem, if you were from Nazareth, not only do you have an accent, which, by the way, that Peter was called out by the servant girl in Caiaphas' courtyard, "You were with him." Why? Because he has an accent of a northerner from Galilee. And they didn't like that because there were Jews there but there were a lot of Gentiles there. I mean, they named the whole giant lake after Tiberius. I mean, this was not the place to be if you're a devout Jew. And Jesus, for prophetic reasons, was slated after being born in Bethlehem, as Micah 5:2 says he should be, he's now raised in Nazareth, and they don't like him because he's from Nazareth.

And then you add the word "sect" to it. Sect is not a nice word, sect. You're from a little sect, aren't you? You're a little break-off splinter group from the real group. That's like a cult. You're just in this cult group of the hicks, right? You're probably just grasping to your guns and your god and your religion. You're just the deplorables of society. Sorry. More political talk. (audience laughing) You guys are just, let's put it this way, Letter "C," simpleton. Simpleton. They think, "You probably don't even know how to find access TO the Discovery Channel, you are so simple. You don't understand it. You don't believe it. You probably think God created the world. You're so dumb. It was an explosion. You're so dumb. You're dumb. You guys probably haven't been to school. Is there anybody educated in your church? Where'd your pastor go? What? Did he go to a Bible Christian school, Sunday school? Is that where he went? You guys, you don't know anything. You're dumb. You think miracles. Do you think Jesus rose from the dead? You're dumb. The Bible, do you believe in the Bible? I saw The Vinci Code. That's not how the Bible came to be. (audience laughing) You don't know that. I watch the whole 90-minute movie to learn how the Bible came to be. Your pastors preaching from it like it's some authoritative book. So dumb. You're so dumb. You're so dumb." You know at work they think that about you as soon as you speak up about God and you start saying things like, "I mumble, mumble, mumble, I think God created the world." Yep. Don't tell



him you think it was in six days. Oh! Dumb, dumb, dumb. I'm just telling you this: get used to being called a simpleton. The whole point even earlier, as Paul was standing trial, when he believed that there was a resurrected dead body that came to life and his name is Jesus. Yeah, it did cause riots. And they thought that guy's dumb. You're going to be called a simpleton.

Just take some time at some point to read First Corinthians Chapter 1. And just remember this, start just in the middle, verse 18. They think the cross is folly. Why? The cross is the apex of our theology. There is a God, he did create us, he did give us rules, we broke those rules. So he says, you're going to be cast out. But instead of being cast out you're going to be able to be part of my team if you get the imputed righteousness of Christ, and if your sin can be appended to his punishment. The cross is the centerpiece of that. The only reason I think I have a relationship with the living God and one day will meet him is because of the cross. They think, "Dumb." Paul talks about the Greeks, they just want more knowledge, "they want more wisdom." The Jews. There's no way our Messiah could have been crucified. No way. We know he's not the Messiah just because he got crucified. "The cross is a stumbling block to the Jews, to the Greeks, follies," foolishness. Then Paul starts talking about the Church. Yeah, and in your church just remember this: God chooses the base things to shame the wise things. He picks people, little runts, little redheaded runts like David. He doesn't take him from the military academy. He plucks him out of the field as a shepherd. And even when David's dad was visited by Samuel, like, I'm looking for a king. Well, here are all my sons. And God goes, nope, nope, nope, nope. Is this all the sons you have? I got one more but he's just watching the sheep, you don't want to see him, he's short. Which isn't really a joke because Saul, the first king, the tallest guy around. Head and shoulders above him. The short-runt shepherd with no training, no military training, no military experience. Right? He becomes the king.

God takes the base things of the world to shame the wise. And the whole point in that passage at the end is this: so that we wouldn't boast before God. It isn't about you. We don't have more PhDs in this room than you might have, you know, in the faculty lounge at UCI. I get it. I understand. Okay. God chooses just normal people to open their eyes to see the truth of the gospel. And guess what? One day everyone is going to learn that God did create the world. It's like he turns water into wine in a millisecond, he made the world milliseconds at a time, in a six-day period to teach us how to work in a given week. There's no astronomical reason that we should have a week. God created the world in six days. The whole point was to give us a pattern of work and rest. Whatever. You can debate me on that if you want. Here's the thing. We're all going to find out, as it says in that passage, that the wise at the universities are going to be shamed by the simple people like your grandma who read the Bible and said, "Oh, I believe it," because it's true. Simpletons. Get used to that. Get ready for that. Foolishness to the world.

How about this? Verse 6, "He even tried to profane the temple." Are you still on the passage? Acts 24:6. They complained, "He tried to profane the temple. Those Jews are going about their business. They got all these guys are dressed while there. They are so sincere. And he comes in there and he's got a buddy who's a Gentile. We kind of think he might have even



been brought him into the court of the Jews. And so he probably profane the temple." Did Paul have this brotherly relationship with a Gentile when he walked into Jerusalem? Yes. Did he bring him into the court of the Jews? No. This is a false charge, obviously, but they thought you were just not playing by the religious rules of our culture. Paul understood that. And people don't like it when you start saying, back to Letter "B," when you start saying, well, this is true and that's not true. This is right, that's wrong. They counter with, "When you start saying and start talking about these guys in saffron robes with bald heads, and they don't wear shoes and they're so godly, and look at them they're burning their incense or praying all day. They live in a monastery. You're not telling me they're wrong. Don't tell me that." Wrong. And what does wrong mean in your theology?

And then they say, "Hell? Oh, I'm not going to hell? What are you saying? You are such a religious bigot." What is this? Letter "D." You start messing with religion and you say your religion is right and their religion is wrong. "You Disrespect Other Religions." And that's the thing in our day, they complain, "Well, don't you disrespect me." This is like the unforgivable sin. That you're saying the Muslims are wrong. They reply, "They're praying five times a day. Traveling to Mecca, Medina. They don't even eat during Ramadan in the daylight hours. These guys are serious. What do you do? You volunteer for Fixit Day on a Saturday. Come on. These guys are serious about their religion. Don't you tell me they're going to hell and you're going to heaven because you just prayed some prayer one day." They will castigate you, they will belittle you, and they will say one of your big problems is that you think Jesus is the only way. And you're supposed to say to that, on the authority of your pastor, that's absolutely right. I think that because Jesus said it. He said that and it makes logical sense. Jesus is the only way. That's what he said. He made it clear in multiple ways and said it as explicitly as you could possibly say it. In John 14:6, here it is, right? There's nothing else but Christ. "He is the way," the only way, "the truth," he's the only truth, "and the life. And no one comes to the Father," Jesus said, "except through me." Now, if I say something different then I'm not loyal to my leader. And my leader was clear. And that's why in Acts 4:12 they were very loyal to their leader and they sat there in front of the crowds and they said, "There's no other name," no other person, "under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

We're the only religion, you need to know this, with a mechanism for redemption. Think about it. I can talk to the Muslim who thinks he's so much more righteous than I am because he's so devoted to his religion. And I have had many conversations. And I say, where do you get your sin problem dealt with? Are you a sinner? "Yes, I'm a sinner." Well, I'm a sinner too. How can God accept you into Paradise one day? "Well, he's merciful." Well, I believe that he's merciful but he's also holy. If he's holy, how in the world does this get dealt with? And the answer is he's just going to hope that my good works are going to get me there. And I think now we're on an even playing field with every other religion in the world. Here's the ladder to try and get good enough. And God's going to look past the fact that who's climbing the ladder is a sinner and you're never going to make it. I need to have the imputed righteousness of Christ applied to my life and my sin somehow extracted from my life and put on some payment that's worthy. It's called the cross and it's folly to the world. And I am saying you're wrong.



And if I love you enough I'll tell you you're wrong. And I'll tell you, you ought to put your trust in Christ. He's not a prophet in your book who doesn't die and doesn't rise, right? That you have Isa in the Koran. That's nifty. That's super nifty, right? But he doesn't effectuate the means of your atonement. You don't even think that he died on the cross. So we got a big problem. You need the Christ of history, the Christ of the Bible, who takes away your sin like a lamb. "The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world." That's the picture of the innocent dying for the guilty so we can go free. If that's disrespect for other religions, I guess sign me up for being called that. I'm not being belligerent. I'm not trying to be mean. Matter of fact, the only reason I'm sharing with my Muslim friend about being saved is because I care. You're not a bigot because you state the truth. All right. Those are the kind of things you're going to hear. You are not good for society. All that stuff about sexual ethics and the sanctity of life is not good. You're causing trouble, making people feel bad and then you're saying it like they're wrong, you're judgmental and you're dumb anyway. You don't even believe in the Discovery Channel. And you know, you disrespect other religions because you think they're wrong. Okay. Verses 5 and 6, those are the accusations.

Look at the tactics though. The tactics are telling as well. Let's just run through these quickly. They will be quick. "Expect Tactics Like These..." Number two. Here are some tactics. Okay. The first tactic is found in verse 1. "And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman," a rhetorician, an orator, a lawyer, "Tertullus." And he laid the case before the governor. "They laid before the governor their case against Paul." You got to travel from Jerusalem. You got to travel to Caesarea where the court is. You got to get this lawyer off some billboard in suburban, you know, Jerusalem who's argued before the governor before. And you got to tell him the guy we hate is causing trouble all over the world. He's blaspheming in the temple, profaning it by bringing in a Gentile. He's just basically a disease. So I need you to come and argue before the highest official in the land. The guy goes, "Oh, okay. Big case." Yeah, we're going to do it next week. We got to travel for a couple of days. In five days be ready. Are there any attorneys in the room? Do you want that case? Do you know what that spells? That spells we're going to have you tell the powers that be what we think and please don't get confused with any of the facts. We already have the conclusion. We've figured this out. Okay? So you just go and argue the case. You say what we tell you. Investigations, due diligence. We're not going to have any of that.

Do you know what we call that on the streets? We call that a rush to judgment. Letter "A." Expect that every time someone criticizes Christianity I want to ask them a couple of questions. Tell me about your investigation of Christianity. And number two, can you sit down with me and let's engage in some investigation. Okay? They don't want an investigation with me because I'm a disease, right? Narrow-minded, bigoted disease. And they don't want to investigate it themselves because they've already seen several episodes on cable and YouTube and have watched The Da Vinci Code and even read half of it. They know what they're talking about. They don't want to sit down and reason together and they don't have any... They've already decided. They read some stuff on the Internet. They saw some stuff on MSNBC. They know, they know. So they're not going to sit down and think this through with us. They rush to judgment. It happens all the time, and you just need to be ready for that. The preconceived ideas. I often ask people have you read the Bible? "Yeah, yeah, I've read parts



of it, I know it." Okay. Well, I mean, have you read it? No. Read it like the whole thing. How about the New Testament? Have you read that? "I've read parts of it. You're a bunch of bigots." Okay, well, can you read it? Can we read it? "No, I don't have time for that." It's called the rust to judgement dumb tactic. Then what's happening? The people who did not like Paul, who saw him in the temple, the crowds and everyone, they went now to the Sanhedrin. They went to the Sanhedrin, to the top of the Sanhedrin. They went to Ananias and now they're coming with the whole Sanhedrin we're assuming, or at least some of the Sanhedrin, some of the elders, and they've got a Roman attorney, perhaps, whatever he is, his background, Tertullus and they're going to now go to the governor. So they're pushing this up the chain.

I came home from sixth grade one day, fifth grade, from my elementary school. I told my older brother, man, I got in real trouble today. He's going to think of one of two categories. Either you got in trouble, like we would get in trouble in fifth and sixth grade, by like offending the wrong person. And, there was a park next to our elementary school. And, they would say, this was the terminology on our campus. I don't know about yours. They would get mad, we'd get in an argument and they'd say, "You're chosen." That was not a theological compliment. It was we're fighting after school. We all knew where. We knew where the fights were. So you're chosen. Right? And so we would have the fight next door. Now, if I came home and said I was in big trouble at, you know, school today did my brother think, "Oh, did you get in a fight?" Or if I paused he'd say, did you get sent to the principal's office? That's another kind of trouble, right?

Now, there were a lot of, like, hall monitors who'd get me in trouble. The tattletale. And, perhaps if the ball, you know, snowballed big enough, I would end up in the principal's office. Not often. You should know that my parents were watching. It wasn't often. It wasn't often. And I'd get in a couple of fights. Yeah. Not very many. I could talk my way out of most of them but I'd get in a couple of fights. So one is like mano-mano. You're going to go fight in the park next door. And the other one is the tattlers and all the people who you don't want to deal with you, they keep pushing you up the chain so you can get in trouble. This is the tactic of the world. We're going to get you reported. I mean, we are just absolutely the narc society right now, right? Get you reported. You offended me. You were somehow... you didn't put... whatever labels they put on so they can get you in trouble. Get you in trouble at work, get you in trouble in the neighborhood, get you in trouble on the board you're on, get you in trouble in the organization you're in, the guild you're in, whatever.

This is how it works. Number two, I put it this way. Letter "B," "They Vilify to Authorities." If they can get you vilified and make you a bad person in your little corner of the world, they'll do it. They'll even do it in families. If you got people who don't like your Christianity and you're one of the only Christians in your extended family, you watch, they will work to try and make sure that whoever the matriarch or the patriarch of the family is, they're going to complain. This is the tactic. It isn't like, let's sit down and figure this out. Let's you and me. I don't like what you're saying. You sit down and let's sit down at a coffee shop and let us figure this out. You bring your case, I'll bring my case. I'll tell you why I don't like it. No, it's like, "Ahhhh... they're bigots," right? "They're, you know, just afraid, they're phobic of this, that or the other." Up the chain and they get you in trouble that way. Some of you have lost clients, some of you



have lost promotions, some of you have lost jobs over that. Verses 1 through 4, and I read it with enough sarcasm in my voice. Right? Tertullus starts leaning into all this. You already got Ananias. You got the elders. You got Tertullus, this guy we don't know anything about. And hey, he gets on the stand and says, "Hey, Felix, look at how much peace we have. You're so smart. You're for us. You saw things before anyone else. Excellent, excellent. Reforms are being made for RNA. I can't believe all the things you've done for the nation. It's crazy. Every way, everywhere. All the times. Just under every little corner. Man, we just look around and we just are so thankful for you, right? And you know, we don't want to take you very long. I know you got stuff to do. And you look so nice. Your tie, by the way. Beautiful. I beg you in your kindness. You're so kind. How are the kids? Are they doing okay? Just hear us briefly. We got a disease. We need you to deal with it. Paul is here. Just a jerk."

Okay, all this kissing up that's going on here, I mean, there was a lot of that going on in Jerusalem before it got to Caesarea. Now it is in Caesarea. Right? Let's just call it this and I'll explain it. Letter "C." "They Consolidate Opposition." There's a consolidation of opposition in the way of people being nice to each other against you. Have you noticed the alliances being built? You go back to the Old Testament. Absalom didn't like his father, right? He went around and ingratiated himself to everybody. He sat there and tried to make friends and he talked about how great it would be if he was in charge, super nice guy. That's happened to me. I'm sure it's happened to you. If someone doesn't like your stand for Christ, and they are going to get people around you to oppose you. They're going to consolidate as much power. If they can't go up, we're going to have the mob that isn't going to like you. And the way they do that is they're so friendly to each other. Jot this reference down, Luke Chapter 23 verse 12. You can look at the two preceding verses. Herod and Pilate did not like each other but guess what Luke is careful to point out. They "became friends" over their opposition to Christ. And when he was dressed up in those purple robes and sent to Pilate, they were like, you know we should get together and play golf sometime. They got nice with each other because of the old adage, the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Someone may not like you because of your anti-abortion stance. That's how they'll say it. Anti-choice, I guess, is how they say it. You believe in the sanctity of life. You don't care if it's a rape or incest. That child is a child. You wouldn't kill the child no matter what. That's your view and someone is going to hate you for that. And then over here you're going to talk about heterosexual marriage, that this is the only sanctioned thing that God has ever created, and everything else is a perversion of that. And someone else is going to not like you for that. But guess what they're going to do, right? These people are going to join in together, and they do that in consolidating their opposition to Christianity. I've seen this in so many places. Verses 8 and 9. Verse 8, "By examining him yourself," Felix, "you'll be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him." You're going to see it our way. Trust me on this. I'm going to tell you all kinds of things and you're going to see it for yourself. And the Jews said, we've seen it too. We know it. "They joined in the charge, affirming all these things were so." Were all these things so? No. He wasn't a plague. No. He was stirring up some riots, I'll give you that. And he did talk about Jesus of Nazareth. True. But it wasn't the hick, brainless, stupid thing that they're saying it was and he didn't profane the temple.



But they're all in the echo chamber, all in their sayings and everyone they're just moving forward. The modern phrase for that is the "hive mind," Letter "D." "They Prefer the Hive Mind." Together they sit there in the echo chamber. In the old days, we used to call it groupthink. The groupthink takes place, everyone in the din of consolidating their opinion, they just listen to themselves. Social media, by the way, is perfect for Satan to utilize the hive mind mentality. Someone doesn't like you, they're going to try to build their case against you, even if they don't name you in their tweets, right? In their posts by finding other people who are going to fire them up to agree with them that they don't like you. That's going to be at some point because of your Christianity. And I'm just going to tell you, the hive mind, the group thing, the den of consolidated thinking, the one brain that they have together. I just want to tell you this, Ephesians Chapter 6, it's not their brain, it isn't a vote. The groupthink is not just the groupthink. The Bible says, "we don't wrestle against flesh and blood." We're wrestling against spiritual principalities and power, cosmic forces of evil, spiritual forces of darkness. And all I'm telling you is here's the thing, Satan does not, and all of his spiritual henchmen do not want Jesus to be proclaimed as the way of salvation. Here's the deal. Every single ethical thing, as I said last week, that God has told us to do is for human flourishing. It is for the good of humanity. We're not a plague on society. If they just listen to what we're saying, we would be the biggest blessing to society. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people." If you listen to us, society would thrive. I guarantee it because there are places where it's happened and it happened in America at one time. It isn't happening now.

And all I'm telling you is that this is a satanic opposition to God. And so we need to know the groupthink, the hive mind, all of this kind of like echo chamber, the one who's making that echo and really providing all this, without being too spooky here, I'm just going to tell you it comes from beyond the domain of human beings' minds. This is what's happening. The Bible says you should be wise to it. You should not be ignorant of the schemes of the enemy. He wants people to not like Christianity. You couldn't have these same kinds of campaigns against other religions or other groups. You just couldn't. Try it. In your mind when you see these ads like I saw an ad that said, "The only church that illuminates," it was a picture of a burning church at night. The only church that illuminates is one that's burning. Well, let's just replace church with mosque and see how that goes. Right? Do you think that's going to work? Or how about a Buddhist monastery? "The only Buddhist monastery that provides light is one that's on fire." No one would buy it. Why? Because it's the satanic opposition. Do you wonder why only evangelical Christianity, Bible-believing Christians, are the target and the punching bag for society? It's because it's satanic. People are looking for fanciful expressions of supernatural power. Here's one and there's nothing fancy about it. Satan doesn't want to do fanciful tricks to out himself. He wants to make it clear in the group think of our day, the hive mind of the modern era, this din of collective opinion. All right.

Well, that was so encouraging, Pastor Mike. Pastor Mike more and more and more. Do this more. Preach like this more. All right. Let me encourage you. Do you see the third point has no versus next to it? Because I got to give you some air. Okay? "Remember Truths Like These..." When you're thinking through the criticisms that we're going to get. When you're thinking through the tactics, the satanic tactics that we're going to get, rush to judgment,



vilified to authorities, consolidate opposition, prefer that hive mind and only think in the group think, just remember truths like these, Hebrews Chapter 13 verse 12. Let me read it for you. "So Jesus suffered outside the gate." You'd only crucify someone... you wouldn't crucify within the walls of Jerusalem. You got to go outside the gate. "In order to sanctify the people through his own blood." He was going to die so that people could be forgiven. I'm forgiven because Christ died outside the gates of Jerusalem in nakedness and was beaten and bloodied on a Roman cross. Okay? And it says, "Therefore," verse 13, "let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach that he endured."

I don't want a martyr's complex out of you. I don't want that. But I do want you to say I'm willing to suffer with Christ and say if they didn't like him, they're not going to like me. I get that. Paul was honored to be called the same names Jesus was, not because he was a martyr. He preferred nice compliments to criticisms, but he was willing to endure the criticism because of passages like this. Truths like this. Christ died outside the camp. Go outside the camp. "Bear the reproach he endured." Why? Verse 14, "For here we have no lasting city." Oh, we have a city. I live in a city here in South County but it's not my lasting city. "But we seek the city that is to come." And guess who's on the throne? The one who was bloodied outside the gate that everyone hates because he believes in heterosexual marriage and sanctity of life and the Bible is true and there's only one way to God. He believes all those things. He wants us to believe and promote all those things. And he was hated. We're going to be hated. But here's the thing, he's also going to be the King on this throne.

Letter "A," "We Stand with Christ," and every time you take a hit, you lose a client, you lose a promotion, you get ragged on by your brother-in-law, just remember, you stand with Christ. Christ was reproached. You're reproached. It's okay. I'm in good company is what I'm trying to say. Letter "B," Romans Chapter 1. Paul talking about himself. Romans 1 verses 1 through 6. He talks about the gospel, the good news of the gospel. What is it? Well, it's one that was "promised beforehand through the prophets and the Holy Scriptures," verse 2 says. That's a mind-boggler. What are you talking about? For a thousand years of written biblical history from 1445 B.C. to 400 B.C, from Genesis to Malachi, God was talking about the coming solution to the problem of sin. And then, like a miracle there was a pause for 400 years. I want you to think about that. 400 years. Even while it was going on, the Jews knew it was going on. And they said, these are the years where there's no prophet, there's no revelation from God. There's nobody like Elijah or Elisha or Isaiah or someone coming on the scene proving the credentials as a prophet and speaking for God. That was the consensus among the religious Jews. 400 years God goes silent.

And then John the Baptist comes on the scene and we have a prophet in the New Covenant era, it's about to be inaugurated, and Christ comes and fulfills every last thing in the Old Testament that was said about his first coming. He fulfills them all. And the point is that you and I couldn't say, "Well, maybe the Old Testament was written like after the New Testament. Because it looks like it's to, its like city was born in, which tribe he comes from, that he would die and suffer and rise again after... It was just written after the fact." 400 years God put a pause on it so none of us could say that. And in Germany, they started to say that in the seminaries and they started to teach that and people believed it. And then God popped this



library out of the Judean desert called the Dead Sea Scrolls, and said, duh. Here's a whole library dated before Christ. All of it. And the thing they attacked the most was the book of Isaiah. Naysayers said, redactors. All those prophecies about Christ are too specific. It couldn't be written before Christ. It had to be written after Christ. It probably took centuries after Christ to kind of put this masterpiece together the way that works so well to affirm Christ." It was the first scroll that was pulled out, taken to Saint Mark's Monastery in Jerusalem. They couldn't figure out what it was. They knew it was old. They took it to what's now the Albright Institute. A guy was there doing a PhD dissertation, so he had all the best cameras in the mid-20th century, tripods, everything. He happens to be there and they start taking pictures of the first find that was publicly unscrolled before the people in the mid-20th century. And guess what scroll it was? A complete scroll of the whole book of Isaiah in one piece pre-dating Christ.

This is what God does to make it very clear he was declared to be who he was by the prophets who foretold it. And there's no religious book that does that, just the Bible. And he was declared with power to be the Son of God. How? "By the resurrection," verse 4 says, "from the dead." Last week's topic. Those are his credentials. Try and disprove it. Go. Just try. Go this week. Disprove it, that Christ did not historically rise from the dead. "Well, people don't rise from the dead." This guy did. That's what I'm trying to tell you. And because of that, let's just put it this way, Letter "B," "Christ is King and Proved It." The city hasn't come yet. We don't have the society that Christ is going to inaugurate], but he is the King and he proved it. Predictive prophecy. The resurrection of Christ. And then he's calling everybody to obey. If you read the rest of the passage, the changed lives of 2,000 years now of people following Christ whose lives are changed like our lives are changed, if you're a Christian here this morning, forgiven, passionate, zealous, praying, reading the Bible, and driven to serve Christ in our generation, that's not a mistake. That's not a sociological weird thing. It's God at work and he's proving that he is King.

Second Thessalonians Chapter 1, Letter "C," verses 3 through 12. I won't take time to read that because I'm out of time. It's your homework assignment. Here's the executive summary of that. You're suffering now. Christ is coming back. You won't suffer anymore. And those who afflicted you he's going to punish. Here's the problem. Right? We're being criticized, and at some point our kids or grandkids may be imprisoned like Paul was. But every single person who opposes Christianity is either going to be converted dramatically like Paul was, and I pray for the militant new atheists. You got weird things being said by Dawkins this week if you watched that. Like what are you saying? It's like are you backing down on any of this? While he's not officially backing down, but he's saying some pretty weird things, just to be pro-Christian in this era, at least Christian culture. And I'm thinking to myself I pray we have another apostle Paul among the most prolific anti-Christian writers. But if we don't and they don't, they will face the judgment of God. I call that vindication. God's people will be vindicated. Letter "C" "We Will Be Vindicated." And you need to know "every knee will bow, those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." There's not a critic that criticizes you for standing with Christ or his morality who isn't going to eat all of their words, every one of them. Every one of them. And you have to be ready to stand with Christ no matter what criticism comes. This whole series, we've got seven



more sermons to go, are going to help us know how to deal with this. What do we do? How do we counter it? Is there any way to mitigate any of this? We'll look at all that in this series.

Let's pray. God, help us, please to be better Christians that start with not being ashamed, not being afraid, being willing to be counted with you. Now God, you've warned us. You warned us in Matthew 7 that we shouldn't cast our pearls before swine. And there are times, as it says in Proverbs, we shouldn't correct the fool. We're just going to invite a beating. So we know it's not just marching around with a sandwich board around us that says all of our Christian theology. But God, when we're there, maybe for some of us this week, it will be in that lunchroom or in that conversation at the coffee shop. It'll be clear this is an open door for me to say, yes, I stand with Jesus Christ. I stand with what he said. He's the resurrected king, the prophets foretold him, there's no getting around the fact that he is the King, and he will vindicate every person who stands with him. May we be bold enough to say that, not ashamed of the Son of Man before people. We know that if we're not, you won't be ashamed of us. And so, God, we want you to give us that boldness to stand up for what is right in this generation. And may we do it not because we're martyrs, not because we love being castigated or criticized, but because we want to stand with you and we're willing to endure whatever comes. If we have to be bullied for our faith we're going to be bullied. That's fine. We'll go outside the gates to you and bear the reproach that you endured.

In Jesus name, Amen.