



Christians on Trial – Part 2

The Elements of a Good Defense

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Yeah, yeah I know. I know, I know, I know, I know. (I have a beard) Hey, look, I knew I'd get mixed reviews on this. I knew I'd be up against it at the 9:00. I thought, oh, 9:00 they're not going to like this. And, Saturday night, they didn't even notice. (audience laughing) But I thought I could find some support at the 11:00 service. But truth be known it was just that the less I raised that razor to my cheeks the less I coughed on my week off. And so when I just stopped shaving altogether my cough went away. So there was some strange hair-growing correlation. Samson had one. I apparently have one. And I'll tell you what, though, if I shave this off and my cough comes back, you've seen Lee's beard, our guitar player, haven't you? Just get ready for that because I'd much rather take the grief of the 9 a.m. service than have my cough. Yes. That's right. No, not everybody was against it at 9:00, just most of them. I kept my sleeves rolled down and everything for them. I thought, you know, I almost put on a coat. Would that help? No. I love the 9:00 service. Not as much as the 11:00. (audience laughing) Yeah, I know you prideful people.

Speaking of ugly things to look at, let me remind some of you, you remember it with me, way back in the day, Monday Night Football, it was the play that ended Joe Theismann's career. Do you remember that? Yeah. Lawrence Taylor, New York Giants comes through the line and breaks through to the award-winning, storied quarterback of the Washington Redskins, Joe Theismann and summarily proceeds to end his entire football career by snapping his leg clean in two. And, if you saw it, you remember it. If you have any compassion for people you wince at thinking about it. It was a gruesome and awful thing that they kept replaying on Monday Night Football. I remember watching, like, why do they keep replaying this? It was gruesome. And, I often thought, now, what would I feel like if I were one of the linemen there tasked to protect Joe Theismann? And, of course, the guy in the middle, most of you know, many of you know, the center snaps the ball to him, but on both sides, flanking that center are two guys, very important guys with the position titles of left guard and right guard. And the key word in their position title is "guard." Right? That's your job. And I'd often think well if I watched him being hauled off the field on a gurney, how bad I would feel that I didn't guard my, you know, MVP quarterback from this injury.

And they were doing quite well. It was early in the game if you remember the details of it. He had already completed seven of his first ten passes, one for a TD. And then all of it came to an abrupt halt when the guards didn't guard and Theismann went down and turned into a commentator on Monday Night Football. So I have to think, well, it's bad to end your football career with such a terrible thing. And hard to, you know, have the game's momentum, forward progress, all halted by this terrible injury. But, how much worse it would be for your Christian life in some way to fail to be guarded and to end the forward progress of that, or worse yet, our church. How terrible it would be to see the forward and good fruitful progress of our church come to a halt. And part of it, frankly, is that we have a good guard against the truth.



To put it in terms of first Timothy 6, God says through the Apostle Paul to Timothy, you need to "guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you." You've been given the truth.

The Church is the pillar and foundation of the truth, right? And you, as individual members of the church we're called to defend the truth. And there's a word that we use in our Christian teaching that represents that whole field of guarding the truth. And it's the word "apologetics" which many of you are familiar with. Apologetics. What you may not know is the word apologetics is simply a transliterated Greek New Testament word. It's a word in the Greek which is super helpful, as I often say when I tend to say these words, when it's a compound Greek word and it's compounded with a Greek preposition, which of course we have here in this case. "Apo-logemomai," apologemomai. And we just anglicized that and we just say the word apologetics and, apologemomai is a good and illustrative word. "Logemomai" is often the word that is used to represent someone bringing a statement. Right? A statement in this case, a charge against the truth and the job of Christians, and Timothy in particular in that passage in First Timothy 6, is to guard the truth. And the way we guard the truth is we take that preposition "apo," which means "away from," we take the charge that's coming toward the truth and we move it away from the truth. We get it off of the truth. We say you're attacking the truth but we're going to take that attack and we're going to move it aside.

We've been studying the book of Acts and in this series we just started last time we were in this passage in Acts 24, we called it Christians on Trial. And of course, I hope that you're not in a courtroom defending your Christianity with lawyers like Tertullus there in Acts 24 accusing Christians of being Christians. And I hope you don't have to defend yourself in that case. But all of us are under attack if you're known to be a Christian in your workplace, in your neighborhood, in your extended family. And I assume just by living out the Christian life and being vocal about being a Christian and a follower of Christ and all that they hear about Christians in society, they're going to bring a charge against you. They don't like your view of sexual ethics, of homosexuality, or the whole transgenderism thing. They don't like your views on the sanctity of life. They don't like the fact that you think that Christianity is the only way, and that Buddhists aren't saved. And they don't like the fact that you even think you need religion and this ancient book. There are lots of charges that come at you and we're going to have to apologemomai, take the charge and move it off of us. We have to guard the truth. And if we're not good at that, if we don't work at that, if we don't know how to do that, we're in trouble. The forward momentum of your Christian life and corporately our Christian life together is in peril if we don't have a good guard on the truth.

So I'm going to look at a passage with you this morning as we get to the second installment. We saw the charge in the first nine verses of Acts 24. Well now in verses 10 through 21 we see Paul's formal defense. Luke summarizes Paul's defense and he gives a great picture of how Paul defends. Now the charges against Paul are not going to be the exact same charges against you. And he's being tried for being a Christian, and you're going to be on trial for being a Christian. But we can't really study and dive into the particulars of how he was charged because they just would not be the most relevant thing for your Christian life. It's the same concept, the same category. You will be attacked. You will be dismissed. You will be belittled. You may lose a job or friends or clients because of your Christian values and your

Christian beliefs. But, they'll probably be different reasons than Paul for taking a Gentile into the court of the Jews on the Temple Mount. Right? That's not going to be the same charge that you have. So we need to just take the principles of how he does it and learn this morning from that. And this is critical, super helpful stuff.

So I want you to turn in your Bibles to Acts 24. We're going to start in verse 10, and we're going to say verses 10 through 21 and see Paul's formal response, his defense. Now remember, he's here on trial in Caesarea, a Roman outpost on the Mediterranean Sea where Tertullus was given five days to prepare a case against Paul and he laid it out. And as you saw, if you might remember last time we were studying this, there were some charges that were somewhat accurate. And then there were a lot of charges that were just fluff. Just like us. Are we ever accused of things that aren't true? And I love this one, and this has been so popular for so long. They call us phobic, right? We're homophobic or Islamophobic, right? I'm not scared of the drag queen at the library. I'm not scared of him. I'm really not. He's a big boy, but I'm not scared. Right? I'm creeped out by it all but I'm not scared. So it's stuff like that or that we're hate-mongers, right? We hate people who end their pre-born life in their womb. I don't hate them. Right? It's not hate. We're not bigots. And when we think about Christianity... So, there are a lot of ancillary charges that come our way. And so we need to be able to sort out, like, what are they saying that's true and what are they saying that's not true? And Paul does a masterful job at that in this passage. And we're going to learn from how he responded.

So let's read it starting in verse 10. Follow along. I'll read it from the English Standard Version as it begins in verse 10. "And when the governor," that's Felix now, in charge of all Judea, the governor appointed by Rome, he nods now after Tertullus lays out the case in the first nine verses, and he's going to say, hey, speak. What do you got to say, Paul? And "Paul replies: 'Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense.'" Verse 11, here it comes, "'You can verify that it is not more than 12 days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem, and they did not find me disputing with anyone, or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city. Neither can they prove to you what they now bring against me. But this I confess.'" Now look up at verse 10, that last word of verse 10 is the word "defense." There's our word, by the way, *apologemomai*. He's going to take the charge and he's going to kick it off of his back. Well, in the middle of all this, in verse 14, he uses this word "confess." And we're reading in an English, obviously, translation. So you don't see the connection between those two words. But the word "confess" is the word "*Homologeō*." The word *apologetics*, if you will, or defense is *apologemomai*. So the *apologemomai* is I'm going to take off my back the charges that aren't true. But my confession is that I'm going to agree with you about this charge. You said this about me? Well this is true. That's the sorting out that he's doing here.

And he says "that according to the Way," this is the way they called the early Christian followers of Christ who thought they found the Messiah. Of course they did. Now, there is one parenthetical objection "which they call a sect." Remember when I said they called it a sect, which is a bit of a pejorative, diminutive term, you're making light of it all. This is the grandiose fulfillment of prophecy and they are saying this is like a little sect here and Paul's like the ringleader of this sect. Listen, well, I'm not going to call it a set, it's not a sect, but "I do



worship the God of our fathers," I got to confess that, I got to agree with that charge. "Believing everything laid down by the law and written in the Prophets." I believe that, I agree with it. "Having hope in God, these men themselves accept," not all of them, but a lot of them did, "that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust. So I will always take pains to have a clear conscience before God," now, check this out, "and man. Now," he says, "after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and present offering." Remember that? We looked at the hints of it in the book of Acts, because Paul and Luke and in the book of Acts, they don't make a big deal out of it and yet we see it there, and Paul makes a big deal out of it in the book of Second Corinthians, that he's collecting money from the churches on that missionary journey and he's going to bring them to Jerusalem because there's a famine in Jerusalem, and the people are hurting there. So he's bringing gifts, financial gifts to the church in Jerusalem.

Now, they're Israelites. They're like Messianic Jews we might say, they believe in Jesus Christ, but he's going to help them. He's got a very substantial monetary gift and in that sense it falls under the category of what the Old Testament Jews called the "alms," we're giving to the poor. So I've come and brought gifts to the poor. It doesn't sound like an insurrectionist here, right? And I'm presenting offerings. "While I am doing this, they found me," this is important, "purified in the temple." I did everything that the Jews would expect me to do to come worship on the Temple Mount. I was ceremonially clean "without any crowd or tumult." I wasn't rioting there." But some Jews from Asia -- they ought to be here," by the way, "before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me." Which, by the way, remember they said you brought a Gentile into the court of the Jews on the Temple Mount. And he said, no, I didn't. We already got that objection previously. He had said in the previous chapter, I didn't bring the Gentile into the Temple Mount. So they thought he did because he was a brother with him and brought him to Jerusalem. And they said, well, he's brought a Gentile and violated the sensibilities and the legal code of Old Testament Judaism by doing that.

Now, he would have called him a brother in Christ, right? One-on-one, same, no Jew or Greek in the sense that he is somehow not accepted by God, but he didn't violate their sensibilities or religious sensibilities or the things that were said in the Old Testament by bringing him into that courtyard. So he's saying the Jews from Asia were making that charge, but they're not even here. They aren't even here making the accusation. "Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council, other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them," because he does have not only Pharisees, but he's got Sadducees who were not only impaneled on the Sanhedrin, but also probably supporting that sect of the Sanhedrin or that part of the Sanhedrin and they did not believe in the resurrection. So he says yes, I did cause a bit of a stir and a division in the Sanhedrin when I was on trial before those 70 Jewish, you know, law experts, because some of them didn't believe in the resurrection and some of them did. And I did cry out that thing and it did cause a stir. So that's true. And what did I say? Well, I said, "With respect to the resurrection of the dead I'm on trial before you this day." Remember, that was a very strategic and wise, diplomatic way for him to put the fight there between them and he got out of that



jam. And the Romans said, okay, remember the tribune said, well, let's bring him back into the barracks in Antonia's Fortress. So that part is true.

Matter of fact, the reality of that statement, there's some confession to that. But all the other things they're saying are not true. So he's saying this is true, that's not true. True, not true. OK. Look, you're never gonna be charged with this, right? I mean, nobody in this room is going to be charged with taking a Gentile in the temple or the charge of sedition or fomenting some rebellion against the Jews in Jerusalem. That's not going to be your charge. So we got a lot of charges. I referenced a few. You can think of yours. At the break room at your office when you stand up for Christianity what do they not like about that? Right? You're going to be attacked. They're going to be against you. And so Paul now is on formal trial. You're going to be on trial in the court of public opinion with your coworkers or your neighbors or your extended family. Like what do you do? Well, I want you to do what Paul does, not with the specifics of how he responds, because your charges are different, all related to Christ, but they're different. But how does he do it? Let's start in verse 10. And let's get four principles here that we can apply to our own lives to make sure that we respond the way Paul did.

Let's start with verse 10. Governor Felix, Antonius Felix says, hey, Paul, your turn. "Paul responds: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation." Okay. Remember I said Tertullus went crazy with all the "You've so great and amazing. And now we're wasting your time and we'll be fast because you are great, and the peace. You're just amazing. We love you to death." Okay? And we said that's flattery. That's ridiculous. And I said, that was not when I taught that passage last time we were together, I said that's not like "If it pleases the court," and, you know, "Your Honor." That was like way too much. It was like he was kissing up to the power. Well, this is the appropriate way, right? "If it pleases the court" and, "Your Honor." He's giving due respect here. And then he says, "I cheerfully make my defense." Now, that's a very positive way to start your defense of people who are accusing you wrongly of many things and rightly about a couple things. Very positive. And as a matter of fact, it's a courteous way to address the judge. He calls him the judge. You're the adjudicator. You're the decision maker. I'm under incarceration here in a jail in Caesarea and you've got the keyring attached to your guys who are flanking you. So you're the judge. You're in charge. I'm going to make my case to you.

Now, he could have said, who are you to judge me, right? He could have said a lot of things, but he gives him respect. And that's very important. Because here's the thing. When people accuse you, particularly when they accuse you wrongly of being phobic or hating people or whatever they charge you of, right? You just hate people. You're just narrow-minded. You're a bigot. Whatever they say about you as a Christian, you just need to know that our natural fleshly reaction is to be angry. And in anger we often say things that are not courteous, they're not kind, they're not respectful. So we have to stop and say here's something that Paul does so well. He's not flattering but he is bringing courteous language to the conversation. Even if they're angry, even if they're pejorative, even if they are engaging in ad hominem arguments, which are the personal attack, they're attacking you not the issues, his response here is going to be courteous, and he says that "I cheerfully make my defense."



So verse 10a, let's just start with this, right? We need to, just like Paul, "Keep a Courteous Mouth." And by that I mean our words are courteous. And they use that English word "courteous" to summarize what Paul's doing here very advisedly. I'm very thoughtful about the use of that word courteous because if you look up the history in English of the word "courteous" it goes back to Old English and it has to do with the kind of language you would use in the court, the courtly language. Now, there's language you use in the locker room, hopefully you don't go there, but there's language you would use with your friends in the break room over the mailbox. But then if you were called into an authority, if you were brought into someone's important office, you would be very careful about your words. You would use courteous words, words that would take the person you're talking to and elevate it to the place of you're an important person and I'm going to speak to you respectfully. Courteous.

Now here's the thing. People who attack us, we immediately think less of them. And when they curse us, quote unquote, we want to curse them. But Romans 12 says that's not how we should function. You should work in the counterintuitive way by thinking when they curse me I got to bless. It doesn't mean I agree, but the respect is that I am going to, and this basically, you know, "If it pleases the court," "Your honor," he's blessing in a sense. He's bringing positive words, respectful words, and I want you to do the same. Because that is the thing, according to Proverbs Chapter 15 verse 1, that does start to assuage, it starts to mitigate, it starts to muzzle the anger of the conversation. And we don't do very well in a quote unquote apologetics or defending the truth when we are angry. We want to take the temperature of the conversation down. You need to be calm. You need to be respectful.

Matter of fact, let's turn to that passage if you know which one I'm talking about, that "A soft word turns away wrath." This is a great passage with a great context so I'm going to look at it starting in verse 1 of Proverbs 15. Softer, even the tone you use and even Paul says, "I cheerfully make my defense." This is very respectful. This is very kind. And so it is in our discussions. We ought to be very respectful and kind. We ought to work at this. It's not natural. Our flesh wants to lash out because we're fighting and you are fighting, I get it. Paul would say this in Second Corinthians 10. "The weapons of our warfare are not like the weapons of the flesh," right? We're not Muslim jihadists with bombs and swords and cutting people's heads off. That's not how we fight. But he says in that passage, "The weapons of warfare ... have divine power for tearing down strongholds." Right? "Taking every thought that raises itself up against the knowledge of God." If someone says God should let human beings love whoever they want to love, do whatever they want to do, identify however they want to identify. We're going to say, no, no, no, no, no. We're going to tear those thoughts down.

That sounds very pejorative. It sounds very angry. It's combative. Right? But the idea is we're always supposed to do these things with gentleness and respect. Right? We are in a war. You are arguing with them in the most technical definition of that word. I want to tell you you're wrong. I want to correct your thinking, but how do I do it? Look at verse 1 of Proverbs 15. It needs to be with the right tone. "Soft answer can turn away wrath." Not in every case, obviously. But these are proverbs. Proverbially, it will dial the temperature down if we can just be with the right tone. Because you want to respond harshly. "A harsh word is going to stir up anger." What am I supposed to be doing? Verse 2. I want to be the wise person. I want my



words to be right. I want to "commend knowledge." I want to bring some light into the conversation. "The mouth of the fool," I love this verb here, pours out. It just "pours out folly." If you want to respond in a natural way, however you feel, your gut got stirred up, you're going to say things that are, verse 1, "harsh." You're probably going to respond in the wrong way. You need to be slow to speak. You need to be careful and measured in your words. You need to make sure, as it says in the book of Ephesians, that "no unwholesome word proceeds from your mouth." I want to muzzle my words. I want to think carefully about what I say. I want to be careful about how I say it.

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good," which is a great line, even in the context of this discussion, to remember that God is watching my conflict here. God is in the gallery of the trial. And God is watching how Paul responds. He's watching how Tertullus speaks. He's watching how the accusers are stepping up and God is keeping watch on it all. And that helps me. That can help calm me down. Right? In the lunchroom, in the break room, over the mailbox, in the driveway, in the stands of your kid's little league game, when Christianity comes up and they start accusing you, are you one of those? Are you one of the ones who think we shouldn't legalize abortion? Right? You get in those conversations, right? Just remember God is there watching, keeping watch on all of it. The right statements, the good statements and evil statements. So that's helpful to govern my tongue. Verse 4, "A gentle tongue," by the way, "is a tree of life," that can bring good things. I mean, I hope that someone brought you to faith in Christ through a gentle word. I mean, he was careful with how he spoke or how she delivered the truth to you. It's hard to be told you're a sinner. It's hard to be told you need to repent. It's hard to be told you're wrong. But it's that gentle tongue that can do that.

Perverseness, if you want to dip into this kind of ad hominem kind of discussion of anger, that just breaks the spirit. We're not going to go anywhere with that. "A fool," by the way, "despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent." I hope even that word gives us some perspective on what we're trying to do. You talk to someone, whether he's a militant atheist, whether he's just some, you know, blue-haired, liberal NPR listener who thinks that everything Christians do is wrong, here's what you need to remember. You're talking to someone who was created in the image of God. And as the book of Ephesians says, God is their father by virtue of creation, not by virtue of redemption. They're not brothers in Christ, but by virtue of God creating them, God is their father. And in that sense, you just need to remember what you're trying to do is to align them with their father's instruction. I want them to see the truth, and it's not like they're just distant out there and not created by God and have no relationship with God. They have a relationship with God technically in the sense that they are simply creatures made in his image, which is another reason why you need courtly language, right? They bear the image of God. I don't care who they are, right? They're made in the image of God. And so I've got to speak to them respectfully, and I want to appeal to them because the whole goal of apologetics is not to win an argument so I can feel prideful that I'm right. It's to try and get someone to get their father's, the creator's instruction and to adhere to it, because I don't want them, verse 5, to not heed that reproof, that correction. I mean, that wouldn't be prudent for them.



As a matter of fact an elaboration, Proverbs 15 verse 6, "In the house of the righteous there is much treasure," right? And not just speaking in the temporal realm but also in the eternal where we are storing up for ourselves since the day you became a Christian, every good and righteous decision has stored up for you treasure in heaven, even giving a cup of cold water in Christ's name to someone. Every good work is storing up for yourself treasure in heaven. Do you want that for the guy who is arguing against your Christianity? Of course. And don't think they're beyond redemption. I mean, just you can't determine that. Only God can because everyone wrote off the Apostle Paul who's now doing these very things before Felix the governor. I don't know who's beyond redemption. I'm going to see them as a person made in the image of God. I want them to adhere to the truth of the gospel, and maybe because of my influence, because God uses me to bring them to repentance, maybe they'll start tomorrow, next week, next month storing up treasure in heaven. I don't know what God is going to do. I hope he redeems them. And that's the whole reason I'm going to speak up, right? "In the house of the righteous there's much treasure, but trouble befalls the income of the wicked." Can you at least mourn just a little bit that the person who stands up and rejects Christ, there's a price to pay for that?

Romans Chapter 2 verses 4 and 5. They in the stubbornness and the unrepentant form of their heart, their insistence on not repenting, "They're storing up for themselves wrath for the day of God's judgment." I don't want that for them. If I have any compassion at all I don't want that for them. So what do I want to do? Verse 7, "The lips of the wise," I'm going to, "spread knowledge." I want to bring light to the conversation. "Not so the hearts of the fools." And I've just got to view the whole conversation that way. I want to bring light. I want to give knowledge. I want to help correct your thinking. You think we're phobic and angry and mad and bigots and we're just not. That's not right. Now there is truth to what you say there's right and wrong and there's good and bad. And there's sin and there's righteousness and there's heaven and hell. If you want to accuse me of that I'm going to have to be found guilty there. But when it comes to the whole discussion, calm, courteous. I want to be careful how I respond.

Don't flatter, by the way, flattery is always manipulation. Tertullus, even as I read that last time I just made fun of the way he was doing that, just on and on and on in verse 2 of this chapter. It's flattery, right? Some people think if a little bit of respect is good, then a lot of respect is even better. Not necessarily. Right? I mean, even in the passage I just read there in Proverbs, we're talking about the fool, the fool, the fool. And I can see someone who is worthy of courteous language that I still know this is a fool. And in that regard I'm not going to flatter them. That's not the goal. Flattery is always manipulation as the Bible says, Proverbs 29:5. It's just selfish manipulation. Tertullus I think was guilty of that. Paul was not but he was courteous and that's good.

What's the next thing he says there in verse 10? Go back to that passage. Acts 24 verse 10. He says this, "Knowing that for many years you've been a judge over this nation..." I begrudgingly give my defense. Do you see that word "begrudgingly" there in the Mike Fabarez translation of the Bible? Well, that's how I would give it. I'd be angry. I'd be upset. You do remember how this all started? A mob was trying to kill him. So the Jews were behind



the killing. And some people from the Jews, these people who were ardent about Paul being a bad guy, a troublemaker, they had vowed not to eat another meal until they killed him. Right? I would be angry. Now I get a chance to defend myself. I'm mad. And then the Romans who sat there and even Tertullus was talking about how, you know, we found out he's a Roman and we're just delivering him to you. Think about this. The tribune had incarcerated him, jailed him in Antonia's Fortress, put him in chains. He's a Roman citizen. No trial. Totally unjust. I mean, strapped him to a post and was about to whip his back. I know I'm going to be mad. What do you mean? I'm not going to be... What does it say? Cheerful, cheerfully making my defense.

Let me just remind you of this. The fruit of the Spirit. The only way it's the fruit of the Spirit is when it is counterintuitive. It is no virtue, biblical virtue, it's no fruit of God's Spirit for people to be happy and joyful and cheerful when things are going well. On a good day when people have everything going their way and they're cheerful, it's like everyone does that. You know what's hard is what James says to "Count it all joy when you encounter trials of various kinds." That's hard. That's counterintuitive. That's the supernatural endowment of you looking to God and saying I want to do what's right here, which isn't what I feel like. And I'm saying that Paul, I don't think he's not telling the truth, even in his courteous words without flattery, I think he's telling the truth, that he is cheerful to make his defense. "Hey, I'm glad that I can make my defense." And he goes and he starts to make it. But in that making of his defense he says, I'm happy to do it.

Even Proverbs 15, the first seven verses there, you can see why you might be happy to correct people's wrong thinking. There's a lot at stake. Every non-Christian who speaks up, your snarky brother-in-law at Thanksgiving, right? Whatever it is, they don't like that you're a Bible-thumping, offering giving, church attending, small group leader, you know, brainwashing the teenagers at your church. Whatever they think of you, I just want you to remember you should be happy to correct their thinking. I don't want you to think that way. I don't want you to accuse us of stuff that's not true. I don't want you to misunderstand what the Bible says. I'm happy to correct this. I'm willing to put in the effort, I'm willing to engage in the conversation, and I should be happy about it. That's hard. That's a biblical virtue. I know it's not natural, but number two, just like you should keep a courteous mouth, you should "Keep a Happy Heart" in saying I'm going to defend the truth of the gospel. I'm going to sit here as the right guard or the left guard, putting up the fight against the charge, taking the charge like a linebacker or a nose guard coming after us. And I'm going to take him and move him off this truth. I will not let him take the pillar and foundation of the truth, what's taught at church, what is biblically proclaimed, to be besmirched by you. I'm going to take this and correct it. I'm happy to correct this because this is the truth. And so I'm happy to make this right in your thinking.

I mean, there's some altruistic, good, positive, wholesome thing about saying, I don't want people to think wrongly. I don't want people to think two plus two is five. I want you to think rightly about God's sexual ethics. I want you to think rightly about the sanctity of life. I want you to think right about what God demands of people. I want you to think right about our need for forgiveness. I want you to think right about sin, that you're a sinner and you need to repent. I just need to think right about it. That would be a good thing. And we should be



cheerful to do that. By the way, this is just throwing this in for some of you who need it. Psalm 68 verse 3. Psalm 68, the default perspective on all Christians ought to be this: "The righteous shall be glad," Psalm 68:3, "they shall exult before God; they shall be jubilant with joy!" Now, is that one I'm going to quote to you, you know, when your wife dies at her funeral? That's not the preaching text for and that chapter of your life. But the default is that we are going to find joy even in our grief, it's tempered with joy. That's what the Bible says, right? We don't grieve like the rest of the world that has no hope. There's something about the Christian theology that should lead you to say, I know I need to be constantly pushing toward how can I turn my disposition from the negative, pessimistic disposition of the average person, or who I would be if I just followed my passions in my flesh. I'd be happy on good days. I'd be really bummed out and snarky on bad days.

But how can I be, even when I'm attacked at work in the break room, how can I be joyful? But that's really what I got to ask God. And if there's any situation in Paul's life where he proved it, it was earlier on his missionary journey in Acts 16. Do you remember that passage when he got beaten in Philippi? That would be worth quoting for you. Acts Chapter 16. If you're quick in your Scriptures, look at verse 23. Acts 16:23. Actually, let's start in 22. "The crowd joined in attacking them," Paul and Silas are being attacked, "the magistrates," the one in charge, "tore the garments off of them and gave orders to beat them with rods." Okay. If you were stripped naked and beaten with rods, with sticks. A rod, a wooden stick and people are just smacking you, bruising you, welts were coming up on your naked skin. That's not a good day. That's not a happy day. Verse 23, "And when they inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them in prison." Right? There's a word. They didn't say, what would you like for your first meal here in, you know, at the penitentiary? That's not it. We're throwing you in prison. "They ordered the jailers to keep them safely." We don't want you to be killed by the crowd. "Having received this order, they put them into the inner prison." They weren't worried about do you have enough light here to read your scrolls. They weren't interested in that. Matter of fact, we're going to "fasten your feet in the stocks." You can't go anywhere. We're going to lock you in.

"About midnight," verse 25, Paul and Silas were complaining. They were sending their prayer requests on their phones to their church going this is awful. We're struggling here. We're mad. Matter of fact, all we're doing is groaning because we're in pain. You should see the contusions on our body. We're bleeding. No. They were singing and praying. "They were praying and singing." That's just crazy. They're singing. Right? James 5, "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise." I mean, there's something going on that's counterintuitive, even when he's being opposed and beaten, "singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." That's not just an indicative statement, well of course. If there are other prisoners they are going to hear him. No. They're not just hearing. They're listening. Like, what's with these guys? I would like you to make your defense. When you feel like the super intellectual in your office is attacking Christianity, you think I'm no competition for this. As if a 300-pound linebacker coming toward the truth. How can I stop them? I don't know how am I to get this charge off the truth today. Still, even if you think you are outgunned, right? Enter into the conversation with respectful words, a courteous mouth, right? And try to bring in a cheerful attitude because in the end you know you'll be vindicated. You understand that.



"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." He knows exactly what's being said and he knows who's right in the conversation. If I bring Richard Dawkins in and here you are, a five-week-old Christian. You're barely through chapter two of Partners. Right? And you got Dawkins who is speaking with his very erudite you know, British accent. And everyone in the break room is circled around to see how you're going to defend Christianity. Yeah, I'm just going to get roasted. Okay. Right? Can you at least bring in a cheerful heart knowing this, that God is the God who is watching all things, who, by the way, created the brain of Richard Dawkins, right? Who's the one who is the redeemer of you and the creator of you and Dawkins and you just need to think, you know what? In the end I will be vindicated. Because the truth. Right? One day, when the King of kings and Lord of lords takes the football on the field he won't need us to block for him. We won't need to defend and guard the truth, right? The lion from the tribe of Judah is going to roar and out of his mouth is going to come a sharp, two-edged sword. And there isn't anybody who's a debater at Oxford who is going to put one little thing against Christ. Christ is going to win every argument.

But for now we've been entrusted with the deposit of the truth and you're told to guard it. And that can seem like an ominous thing. But please keep a positive perspective. Which, by the way, as long as I quoted Psalm 68, can I talk to you pessimists for a minute? You got a minute, pessimist? Let me talk to you. In this defense that's about to start in verse 11, Paul didn't talk about any of the injustices, or how he was mistreated, or how he was put in chains, or how the Sanhedrin didn't treat him fairly. He did not focus on the negative which I think has to be connected to his disposition. The reason you're a pessimist is because you constantly think about the bad stuff that's going on. That's all you think about. You don't think about the vindication of it all. You don't think about the culmination of it all. You don't think like Christ told you to think which is "in this world you'll have tribulation." Fine. We're not Christian Scientists. We're going to have trouble. "But take heart." Why? Because you got to think differently. "I've overcome the world." There's something coming to fix all of this. And you need to think like an optimist, a biblical optimist, who does not sit here and constantly say, "What if? What if? What if? What if it's going to be bad? It's going to be terrible. What happens if? And then I could lose my clients. I could lose my job. The favor of the office could turn against me. My family could disown me. It might be awful. They may not let me see the grandkids. It could be terrible if I stand up for Christianity." You will not be cheerful in making a defense. You need to be cheerful. You need to keep a happy heart when you stand up for the truth. Because it's the truth.

Let's get into the formal response. Verse 11. Acts 24 verse 11. The first three verses of his defense here, "You can verify that it's not more than 12 days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem." Twelve days isn't a lot of time to foment rebellion against the nation of Israel. That's two weeks, less than two weeks. Not a lot of time. So even that, the context should tell you Felix that this is not happening. And by the way, bring anybody forward to say with any honesty that I was "disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city." I wasn't. "Neither can they prove to you what they now bring against me." And for us, whatever the charge is, I'm not a bigot, I'm not afraid, I'm not hateful, we're not filled with hate. No, none of that is true. "You hate Buddhists." I don't hate Buddhists, I don't. I am not going to accept your charges when they're not true.



And so he's going to defend himself by saying that is not true, because I am innocent of the things you say I did that you're so mad about. Now, some of the things he can't avoid. He's going to confess some things. But the apologemomai comes before the homologeō, which is I agree with this charge, I don't agree with these charges. And the Bible says, "May you never be persecuted for being a murderer or a troublemaker or a meddler." I don't want you to be accused of being a thief. I don't want you at your office to be accused of stealing company time by logging hours on a project that you didn't work on. I don't want you to be accused of lying to your bosses, or lying for your boss. I don't want you to be charged with any of those things that you would say those are wrong. And yet they're going to say things about you that aren't true. And I want you to be able to say I have innocent hands.

Number three, you got to "Keep Innocent Hands," right? You got to keep a courteous mouth, keep a happy heart, and then make sure you can stand back when they say you're a hate-monger. I'm not a hate-monger. "But you hate them. I'm sure you called them names." I don't call anybody names. We're not calling names. Right? So your motive, if it's pure I hope will keep you from doing the things that they accuse us of. And you need to keep a clear conscience before man. Look at that passage there in verse 16, "I take great pains to have a clear conscience both toward God," okay, we'll talk with about that in a minute, "and man." I don't want people to think I've done wrong. Look at verse 17, "Now after several years I came bringing alms to my nation and to present offerings." Now he could get out of the charge of being guilty of sedition and fomenting rebellion against the nation of Israel just by saying that no one caught me, you know, having rallies against the nation of Israel. No one sat there and could see me doing bad toward the Jewish leaders on the Temple Mount. I didn't do that. But more than that now he leans into this. I was bringing gifts, man, I brought offerings. I was bringing money to the poor citizens in Jerusalem who were famine-stricken. I did good.

See, here's the deal. Not only do I want your company where there are people who don't like you because you're a Christian and you're willing to talk about the sanctity of life or sexual ethics or whatever it might be that will help defend the charge that you're all these things. I not only want them when they say, well, you're also doing all... I don't want any charges to stick against you, but instead I want you to counteract it with this kind of stuff. Right? Even verse 18, "While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple without any crowd or tumult." And even this accusation of taking someone on of the Temple Mount who was a Gentile, I didn't do that. They're not even here to charge me. I didn't do those things. Or I did say that I'm on trial with respect to the resurrection of the dead. But look at the good I've done. I want the people in your office to say if someone has a flat goes out to their car after work and has a flat tire, that they would think you're the first person, right? You're not going to blow by with your yoga mat, "Sorry, I hope you get AAA here," but you're the first one to try to help. If there's a problem and someone's got some illness or their husband has cancer, you're the first one to say, hey, can we start meals for you? You are a person who's known for good works. That's good. You want innocent hands that not only are not guilty, but hands that are seen as generous hands. That's important. That will make your hands even seem more innocent. Because you're known for good works.



Turn to First Peter Chapter 2. First Peter 2, First Peter 3, First Peter 4, all of these chapters interlace this concept of you need to try when they accuse you of being bad because you're a Christian, at least they know that the things that surround the things you can't change, which is you're committed to Christ and what he said. At least they're going to know that you're known for good works. I would love to take all the non-Christians in your office and interview them about you and say, what kind of good things does he do for you just as fellow coworkers? I hope they got something to say. "Yeah, on my birthday, I get a card," right? "He helped me with this problem. And when they say hi, they don't just say, 'how are you doing? Get to work.' They really like, are you doing well? They care, they care." They're known for good works.

First Peter Chapter 2. We're already trying to be good anyway, verse 11. Right? We don't fit into the world when we're not out getting drunk on Friday nights at the bar, right? We're "abstaining from the passions of the flesh." They're always waging war against us. So we would like to do whatever we want but we can't. "So keep," verse 12, "your conduct among the Gentiles honorable." Now the Gentiles - just representing non-Christians. Let the non-Christian see that you're an honorable person, "so that when they speak against you as evildoers," all they can do when they really look hard at your life is like, no, no, no, no. "All I see are good deeds." Oh yeah, they have that religion thing and they go to church and they give money to the causes that I am against. But man, they do a lot of good. And hopefully it's determinative in their life where they one day come to faith in Christ and they can "glorify God" one day on the day God comes "on the day of visitation." Jesus said the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount. You're a city set on a hill, right? Light shouldn't be under a bushel. It'll be set on a stand where everyone can see it. And you, like a city set on hill, let your light shine before men "that they may see your good deeds." And hopefully that's determinative. That they may then one day glorify God because of you. That's what we want. We want you to be known for good works. And that should be what helps when they speak against you as an evildoer.

And speaking of government, verse 13, next verse, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it's to the emperor as supreme or to governors sent by him to punish those who do evil and praise to those who do good." We're submissive, we're paying our taxes. And by the way, in the mid-60s of this first century, Nero was the emperor. And even if it wasn't at this particular time, which I think it was, he's marrying adolescent boys, fulfilling his sexual desires in the palace of the empire in Rome. He is not a good Christian man. He's going to end up skewering Christians and burning them in his garden, blaming the fire in Rome on them. But the reality is here they're saying we're still paying our taxes. We may not be able to take the pinch of incense and say as we put it in the fire that Caesar is Lord when we pay our taxes. But we are saying here are our taxes. We're being good citizens, we're subject to them. We don't do everything they say. We don't agree with them, but we respect them. We're living as obedient, good citizens.

Verse 15, "For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people." I want everyone in your office who thinks you're a terrible, hate-mongering phobic person to think this is the best person in the office and he just so happens



to be a Christian. That's your job. That's your task. You're to adorn the gospel at work. Oh, I shouldn't miss verses 16 and 17. You can think, "Well, I'm not a person in the world. You've already said I'm a sojourner in verse 11, and I don't really belong here. God's my King, not my boss at work, not the governor, and not the emperor." Well, yeah, you're free in that sense. You know, I understand that. You really answer to God only. But you're going to answer to your boss. You're going to answer to your government, too. Because, you know, I'm not going to "use that freedom as a cover-up for evil," and it would be evil not to obey these people.

I'm going to "live as a servant of God." Yes, of course, but in the meantime, "I'm going to honor people, I'm going to love the brotherhood," which is much deeper than honoring everyone. I'm going to love Christians, I'm going to "fear God," and I'm going to even "honor the emperor." I'm going to be honorable not only to the good but to the unreasonable which he says next in your job, verse 18. An indentured servant or even a Greco-Roman could be a white-collar person working as an attorney or a dentist in the ancient world, they still had the servant-master relationship. And he said, servants, you're working for someone. "Be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and the gentle but also to the unjust." Do you engage in your break room in all the criticism about management, about the bosses? I hope not. That's when you take your lunch and you walk out and you say, see you later, I'm going work on my fantasy football league or whatever you do. I don't want to be seen as the people who are just always jumping on the bandwagon, piling on when there's, you know, bad behavior in the upper management.

"Be subject to your masters ... not just when they're gentle and good but to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, you endure sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it," verse 20, "if when you sin, if you're beaten for it," right? If you do steal company time, you get in trouble, get called on the carpet. Well, wow, that's no big deal. "But if you suffer for doing good," if they call you on the carpet for not lying to clients, if they call you on the carpet for being a Bible-believing Christian, right? If they call you on the carpet, well, then that's a good thing, right? If you do then, "that's a gracious thing in the sight of God." God's got his eyes on the evil and the good. He's watching. He knows you're right. "For to this you've been called, because Christ has suffered," you're going to have to suffer, "he's left you an example, follow in his steps." Which, by the way, all of this is illustrated in so many different relationships. Paul's called before Felix to answer, right? And sometimes you've got people who are bad over you in relationships and in this case, First Peter Chapter 3 verse 1, wives can have some husband who is a bad husband. He's against the truth of the gospel, right? "He's not obedient to the Word."

Even here the whole point of this in Chapter 2, hey, you can win them even by the conduct that you have, "when they see your respectful and pure conduct." Don't let your adorning just be that you dress nicely, right? "Let the adorning be your hidden person," verse 4, "the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit." And it's the same thing at your job, right? You're not contentious. You're not always the first one filling out the complaint forms. You are someone who is kind, even to your extended family, think about that. Are you the one who is known for all the cantankerous conversations about so-and-so? Or some of you are gossips. You sit around in this church and you get in your corner and all you do is complain about the

other people in the church. "Those moms, look what they do and how they don't discipline their kids." Stop it. You should be known by finding the good and being gracious and kind and respectful, so that when there is an issue of right and wrong they say, hey, here's someone gracious and kind. I should think of this differently because they're known for good works. Their hands are innocent. Get into Chapter 4. So good in Chapter 4. Look at this crescendo into this great statement in verse 15 of Chapter 4. After telling us in verse 12, don't be surprised when all this happens. The trials are coming, right? "But," verse 15, "let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a meddler." Don't. "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, don't be ashamed. but let him glorify God in that name." And I'm teaching you today how to glorify God. Courteous mouth, happy heart, innocent hands. Those were the first three things.

Now to the confession. Get back to our text. Look at verse 14. Acts 24:14. Apologemomai, verse ten. Take the case. Here comes the linebacker after the truth. I'm going to do what I can to grapple with this guy and get him off the truth. But you know what you've accused me of? You're trying to tackle me because of this thing about the resurrection. Guilty as charged. I agree, I'm a part of the Way. I believe that Jesus is the Messiah. You call it a sect, but I'm just worshiping the God of our father. I'm just believing everything laid down in Isaiah 53, right? Malachi Chapter 1, everything in Zachariah. I believe it all. And that's why I'm a follower of Christ. That's why I believe in the sanctity of life. That's why I believe in sexual ethics that God laid down for us. "I have hope in God." The concern for him was there was this debate about the resurrection. I just want to let you know, some of these men even will agree with me "that there is a resurrection of both the just and the unjust, because I always take great pains to have a clear conscience," not only for men that I'm a good worker, a good family member, a kind person. I'm not a hate-monger. I'm not phobic.

But here's the thing, right? I also want a clear conscience before God. And that's THE most important thing to be loyal to God. And God wrote a book punctuated by predictive prophecy and several other things that prove to me it is God's authoritative word. "It's a lamp to my feet, a light to my path." I walk in line with that. That's my endeavor. That's my purpose, that's my resolve. And because of that I have to be loyal to him. That's why I can't say Caesar is Lord. That's why I can't lie for my boss. That's why I can't do things that are in some way violating my core loyalty to Christ. My life has to stay loyal. Number four, do you want to do this right, you want to defend the truth? You're going to have to agree when they push you about something that's true. You got to "Keep a Loyal Life." Your life needs to be loyal in totality. I need to be faithful to God and his Word. Because guess what? Eventually, the more the world learns about your Christianity and the things they don't like, they're going to go after you. And you cannot concede. You can't concede. You have to be faithful.

And here's the thing, there is no heretic that I know of who becomes a heretic just by choice. They become heretics, they make a choice to do it, but they do it in response to pressure. They do it in response to people saying, well, you should do it our way. If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were known as compromisers, we'd know why. Because you were threatened with being thrown in the fire. And there are compromised Christians everywhere who all the forward momentum of their fruitful Christian life is put to a halt because when they



were threatened with losing a position, a promotion, losing a job, losing something, losing income, losing money, losing a friend, losing a relationship with a grown child, whatever it might be, they capitulate. They give in. They fold. They let the linebacker go right after the truth, and the truth gets tackled in their life. And all I'm saying is you need to know what we're up against.

There's nobody, think about it, and I gave this, I waxed on passionately some weeks ago, about 100 years ago when we had this movement of neo-orthodoxy in Christianity, and all the churches were going liberal, right? And then we had the response of the fundamentalists who were castigated as weirdos and narrow-minded Bible thumpers. But I said, what happened when the church capitulated to the liberal thinking of, well, maybe there is no hell. Which, by the way, you know, when people start saying there's no hell? When old Aunt Ethel died and everyone loved Aunt Ethel, she always knitted us, you know, stockings for Christmas. And she was so sweet and nice and always, you know, gave us See's Candy for our birthday. Whatever, Ethel was super nice. And then someone in your family goes, "You're a Christian. I heard you go to that church that believes the Bible. You don't believe that Aunt Ethel is in hell do you?" And I'm not just talking about rank and file. I'm talking about pastors and theologians who have capitulated fully on the truth of God's just response to sin in a place called the Lake of Fire. They have totally wiped. They've become heretics on that particular doctrine because of the pressure of someone pointing their finger in their faces, "You can't possibly believe Uncle Harry or Aunt Ethel is in hell. You cannot tell me that you really think that Buddhists are going to hell. You cannot." That's the pressure. And then you got a choice. I'm going to be loyal to what God says, believing all that the law and the prophets and the New Testament say, or I'm going to go nope, you're right.

There isn't a church, for instance, that gives up on the fact that the Bible is clear about that only males, and I mean that with the old-style definition, males, that are allowed in God's economy to stand on the stage and preach the Word on a Sunday morning to a mixed audience, right? Not to exercise authority over a mixed audience. No one folds on the doctrine because it isn't clear in the Bible. They say that, but they fold because of cultural pressure. And so all I'm saying is whatever they're saying about you and having debates, which are whatever the new season of debate is, whether it's abortion or homosexuality or transgenderism or whatever the issue is, the exclusivity of Christ, do you even need religion, whatever? Whatever the debate is that's where the pressure point comes and you've got a decision to make. At some point you need to in the attack, say, well, you're right that I think that. I do believe that. I believe it on good reason. I'm going to give you my defense as to why you think it's wrong. I think it's right because here is the reason.

And this is where the whole topic of apologetics opens up into all the subcategories. You know, you think about apologetics, you go into our bookstore here on the way out, you find a book on apologetics that has all kinds of topics in it, right? They wonder, "How can God be good and know everything and let all this evil happen and birth defects and all the wars," right? Well, we have to answer that. And we are saying, though there is a God who is all-powerful, he is all good, he knows all things, he is sovereign. And yet all that is true. How do you respond to that? Now I get it. We all feel outgunned by the person at our office who has



done all the YouTube, you know, videos and they're ready to castigate you as a Christian. But you know what? Cheerfully respond with courteous words. Make sure they're not saying, yeah, no wonder you're just the meanest person in the office. No, I'm not right. I'm honest. I'm integrous. Matter of fact, I'm known for my good works in this place. But you know, if you're going to accuse me of something that is clearly in the Bible, I have to agree that is true. That is what I believe. It's what I believe because it's right and because it's true. It makes sense. It's true. It's what the Bible teaches. It's what God says, and it comports with reality in every way. And if we do that then we're in a place where we have to say, well, yeah, okay. If you don't like me for that, I guess we're stuck.

Remember Jesus just like Nehemiah. Do you remember Nehemiah was accused when he was building the wall? Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem, these were the enemies of Nehemiah building this wall. And so they started all this stuff. And it says that Sanballat just kept on and on and on about you're, just like Paul, you're an insurrectionist, right? You're fomenting this rebellion against the king. And so he said, no the king actually was the one who let me come here. And you're saying all these things. He actually said, Sanballat, Nehemiah you're just trying to be the king. Nehemiah was not trying to be the king. And I love his response there in that passage in Nehemiah 6, he says, "You're just making these things up in your head." None of the things you're saying are taking place. You're just making these things up in your head. But was he building a wall? Was he restoring it? Well there was truth to that.

Do you remember when Jesus was accused there at his trial before Pilate? There were things that they said that were not true. Like you said, you're going to destroy the temple. Did Jesus say that? No he didn't. We just studied it for this last Resurrection Sunday that we had for Easter. He said, if you "Destroy the temple, I'll raise it up in three days." And he's not talking about Herod's temple. He's talking about his body, which the text clearly says. But even if you were to take his words as a literal reference to the temple, he did not say HE was going to destroy the temple. He said he was going to rebuild it if you destroy the temple. But at his trial they said he should die because he threatened to destroy the temple. Not true. But then they turned and said in John 19 they said, hey, we're accusing you. When Pilate goes what wrong is it? We're accusing you because the law, we're condemning you for blasphemy "because you make yourself out to be the Son of God." Now that was true. Now Jesus in both accusations was silent because prophecy said he would be because if he opened his mouth to defend himself he would do it. But he was "silent before his shearers, and like a sheep led to the slaughter. He didn't open his mouth." But the reality is one of the accusations was false and one of the accusations was true.

And I just want us to be able to say and not be afraid, you are right about that accusation. Not that I'm hateful, not that I'm a bigot, not that I'm fearful. But that Jesus is the only way. I'll stand on that. Those are the kinds of things we just got to say. And it all starts devotionally with a passage if you turn your worksheet over, if you have the printed one. This is the first time I think I've ever done this. Every single question on the back for your small groups this week is all on one passage, one paragraph. And I just want to give you one phrase from it just to set the tone for your discussions and the application of this sermon. You want to take the



principles of this sermon and make it work for your life, right? I just need it to start with this: that we are supposed to set the Lord apart in our hearts as holy. That's a weird translation of the word "Hagiazō" as the verb, that is "set apart" or "sanctified," depending on the translation, that the Lord Christ, Jesus Christ, the Lord is holy. In other words, there's only one hagiazō in the verse. We're setting him apart. But because the translators want to say, what are you saying? Well, as holy, as unique, as what? As Lord.

So Jesus is Lord and we have to in our minds devotionally start there. If you don't start there then none of this makes sense. You're just going to lash out. You're going to be angry. You're going to feel defensive, right? You might choose to do some things that aren't innocent, right? And you may choose to capitulate to pressure and say, "Well, I'm not sure that that's true. I don't know about our pastor. He's kind of crazy that he believes that, but I'm not sure. I don't believe that." You need to sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. You need to say, I know he's the King because he's the King that's why all this stuff, it can flow from that commitment that he's the boss of my life. It starts there. I hope he's boss of your life. If not, I hope you know what to do. If not, grab somebody sitting in the aisle you're in and say, dude, how do I get right with the living God? We're happy to talk to you about that and get that done. But for the rest of us, if Christ is Lord, let's make it count. Let's live like he is by how we function this week. And if you're calling the carpet then courteous mouth, happy heart, innocent hands, a loyal life.

God, please help us in this increasingly difficult culture. At least for us as we think about the last few generations. It's hard. There are people in this room who are going to lose relationships if they haven't already. Lose clients. Lose promotions. Lose jobs. Lose the favor of their neighbors. Family members are going to cut them off. And God what we don't want is for them to make accusations that aren't true and us not stand up and say that is not true. As Nehemiah said, you're just making this up. But when they do nail the truth of our doctrinal convictions because you've clearly said in your Word, let us just be able to say, you're right. We'll confess that. We do believe what the Bible says. So God help us, please, to know the difference between them and let us keep that positive, optimistic attitude that knows that everybody who opposes us, as we said last time, will one day bow the knee to Christ. So help us God, get us there in our minds by starting with that very fundamental commitment to say you are the Lord of my life, you are in charge, you are the King. We set you apart as unique as the boss of what we do. May it lead to good conversations that reflect the kind of defense that you want us to have for the truth of Jesus Christ in our generation.

In Jesus name. Amen