



Courageous Endurance - Part 1

No Exemption from Trouble

Pastor Mike Fabarez

Well, what did you expect in the Christian life? Like when you got started what did you think? What's this going to be like to live a Christian life? Smooth sailing, perhaps? Did you think that? Well, I sure hope that's not what George and Jacob told the 85 people they convinced to go with them to the Promised Land. The Promised Land back in 1864 was, of course, going to California. A trip from Illinois to California that I've made many, many times. I've always made it in a car or a plane with, you know, comfy seats and air conditioners and heaters in the winter. But they made it back in 1864 with nothing but dirt roads and covered wagons and shotguns across their laps. And it was a rough go, back in the middle of the 1800s. And, I sure hope that when they recruited all those people to go with them in their posse they told them it was going to be a bumpy road. It would be hard, I hope they told them, and it would be a narrow road to use Jesus' terms, because that's, of course, exactly what it was. George and Jake, by the way, they were brothers. Their last name you may know, their last name was Donner. And if you've ever come into California on I-80 up north you certainly have seen their surname on signs as you're going through there passing Lake Tahoe in the Sierra Nevada mountains there. You've seen the turn-off for the memorial that memorializes 41 of the people in that group of people who followed the Donner brothers through what is now called Donner Pass. Of course, they had a brutal and one of the most horrific stories in the American West in the pioneering of California. It was a tragic story. Half of them were wiped out there and they're memorialized in Donner Pass today. Perhaps you've stopped there and seen the memorial.

I don't know if the stats are about right but certainly I've been pastoring in South Orange County for a long time now and I've seen plenty of people associate themselves with the Christians who are walking on the Christian life, and it does seem like half of them come and they stay for a while, and then they check out. Not that they're moving to other places, they're just not interested anymore. Jesus talked about that in Matthew Chapter 13 when he said, there will be people that will receive the Word with joy. They'll be excited to be here. They'll tell me on the patio, well, that's a great sermon. Love it. Love going deep into God's Word. And after a year or two they're done. They've had enough. They're not interested anymore. A lot of it according to Jesus is because they have encountered tribulation and persecution because of the Word. In some areas of their life it's become hard, too hard, and they're done, they've checked out. And of course, real Christians, if you know your theology, they're going to persevere to the end. And that is true. But the Bible's very clear that the struggles of the Christian life, if you're not ready for them you are going to associate yourself with a group of believers who are walking on the Christian life and you're going to be tempted to leave. Of course, we always need to be going back to testing ourselves to see if we're of the faith. That's important. Second Corinthians Chapter 13. But we need to be the kinds of Christians who are working very hard to anticipate the realities of what Jesus said would come, and then knowing what to do with them when they happen.



And that's what I'd like to prepare you for in this final series in the book of Acts. I've entitled it a kind of Courageous Endurance that we all need. We need to finish the course that we've started. We need to endure to the end. And it's going to take courage. It's going to take boldness, and it's going to take some clarity about what to expect. If you're new to this, you need to know it. And if you've been around for a while, I think you'll say amen to plenty of the things that we're going to bring up. But even if you've been around the block many times in the Christian life, I just need you to know how to respond to every kind of trial that comes our way. And this 27th chapter of the book of Acts certainly provides us with a corresponding set of struggles that we're all going to face as Paul faces his own struggles. A literal historic voyage on the Mediterranean Sea that turns into an absolute disaster. And we need to recognize that the disasters that you may face in the Christian life are no reason to give up. Matter of fact, we ought to anticipate them.

Even at the beginning of this in verse 1 of Acts Chapter 27 we're reminded that Paul is incarcerated. He's under arrest. He's heading to Rome to stand trial for being a troublemaker, being someone who has taken the teachings of Judaism and turned them into something that is outlawed and disruptive. He is not free to go, as they often say in the cop shows. We need to be very careful about looking at this passage and just seeing Paul in it. We need to see ourselves in this. So take your Bibles if you haven't already, turn to Acts 27, and we're going to spend time in the first, I know, hard to believe, 20 verses of this chapter, as we understand that this is in the first-century literature, one of the most complete maritime historical accounts that Luke is actually a part of. We learn more about what it was like to do shipping or even sailing on the Mediterranean Sea than any other piece of historical work from the first century. So we're going to learn a lot here, more than we probably need or will ever use, even as we just read this text to find out what it was like for the Apostle Paul in the first century being a prisoner on the ship. I provided a map for you. And with that map, because it's a big area they're covering and this big text of Scripture you've got about postage stamp size to take notes in this morning. So it's one of the reasons to download our digital worksheet which you can always get starting on Friday evenings if you want to prepare by reading the text and getting your digital device and bringing it to church. If the sermon gets boring you can watch golf or football or whatever is going on on our free high-speed Internet. I'll do my best to compete with sports on Sunday morning.

Verse 1, Acts 27 verse 1. "And it was decided," by the way, not by them, but for them it was decided, "that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius. And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea there, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica." Now he is an important guy we'll see in the epistles of Paul. But you remember on your map there that we've come down from Jerusalem heading east to the coast. We get in a ship there at Caesarea where he's been a prisoner for a while. And it says in verse 3, "The next day we put in at Sidon," up north, not very far on our map. They didn't make it very far, for whatever reasons, getting supplies or whatever they might need there in Sidon. "And Julius," this Augustine soldier, it says, "treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and to be cared for." Remember, many of these missionary journeys began in Antioch, not far from Sidon. And so

here was a port where the friends knew that Paul, apparently news had gotten out, was coming. So, you know, Paul's not convicted yet. He is under arrest and that's true. And there are other prisoners maybe already convicted, maybe going to their execution, to go into the arenas of Rome. But Paul is given some freedom here, I hope, in assuming, like Joseph in the Old Testament, he's a model prisoner. And so Julius treats him well, as we saw in Joseph's case in the book of Genesis. And, he's allowed to go and be cared for in port.

Verse 4, "And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus," not the windward side of Cyprus, the island you'll see on your map there, "because the winds were against us." It's very hard to tack against the winds in the ancient sailing vessels that sometimes can be very big. And, we learn about these from archeology of how big these sailing ships actually were. "When we sailed across the open sea," verse 5, "along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia." Myra is the home of Santa Claus, by the way. You might want to circle that. Look that up later. It's true. Go to pastormike.com and you can just look up Saint Nicholas and you'll find a whole sermon about the real figure in ancient history. He was the pastor in Myra, his name was Nicholas but that's another sermon. Don't get me started. But, it's all there for you to marvel at and realize it wasn't an invention of Coca-Cola. Verse 6, "There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria." Now Alexandria, I don't think I include that much on your map but that's North Africa. This ship happens to be there off the coast here in Myra and they get on this Alexandrian ship, much like you might see a federal agent carrying some kind of prisoner on a commercial airline and maybe in some hub in Dallas they get on a different plane. That's what's happening here. He's still under arrest. Different ship. This is a big ship. Probably a grain ship that's from Alexandria and they're going to get on here at Myra in Lycia and they're going to get aboard that ship and they're going to transfer to that ship and try and make the rest of the way there.

Verse 7, "We sailed slowly for a number of days," verse 7 says, "and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salome." So we've got both islands here in the Mediterranean that they've now tried to use as a windbreak. Verse 8, "Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea." Verse 9, "Since we had since much time had passed," very slow going, "and the voyage was now dangerous because even the Fast was already over." If you don't know biblical history, if you don't know the calendar of Israel, that doesn't make much sense. Who cares whether people are hungry or not? Well, the Fast in the Jewish calendar is in late fall. It is the only day on the calendar that's required to fast. It's, in the Day of Atonement it's called, Yom Kippur in Hebrew. It was the one day that you were supposed to fast. And so that just gives us a time marker on the season. And like, this year, I think Yom Kippur is in October sometime. So, we've got the onset of winter and the summer breezes are changing now into the storms of winter. That's why it's saying it's becoming dangerous.

So, "Paul advised them," bottom of verse 9, "saying, 'Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss.'" Now, occasionally in the book of Acts, we have people having God giving them special instruction. I don't think that this is a special instruction here. Paul, if you might remember, we've had a lot of maps on the worksheets throughout the years, I

guess literally in our study of the book of Acts, because Paul's made a lot of journeys across the Mediterranean. Now, I know he's not a merchant marine like these people in the Alexandrian ship but he's done a lot of sailing and he's been pushing with urgency into the waters, even when, maybe, perhaps they shouldn't. And so he knows a little bit about the weather. He knows about the Mediterranean all around the year and he's going to say, I just don't think this is wise. Right? I don't think we should go. As a matter of fact, we're going to lose cargo and the ship, and we could lose our lives. And you might want to jot down Second Corinthians Chapter 11 somewhere down around verse 24 or 25, when he talks about the fact he had already been shipwrecked some three times, and one time on debris floating in the Mediterranean on a plank.

"But," verse 11, "the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in." Now you've got to understand, Fair Havens was such a nice name, it wasn't a great place for them to stay. They needed a bigger place. And so they're going to go on to the next city that has a better place to spend some months. And if we're going to get until the spring, we're going to have to take a whole, you know, season to get to Rome. We don't want to do it in this place. If we're going to have storms bashing against the beach we'd much rather be in the next harbor. Verse 12, "And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor in Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there." Now, I don't know if you travel like I do, but you can't read that sentence without going, wow, this is weird. Phoenix, Harbor, Sky Harbor, southwest. It took my mind somewhere else. But this is all ancient first-century history I hope you know. Nevertheless, get back into the first century and read that again. They wanted to get to another city. You don't know much about the city of Phoenix there on the coast but they wanted to get there because that was a better harbor in Crete where they could perhaps spend months and great.

But here's the problem as they're trying to make that short jaunt to get from Fair Havens to Phoenix. It says a "south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose," like this is going to be great, "they weighed anchor," they pulled up their anchor, "and they sailed along Crete, close to the shore. But soon," verse 14, there we go, "the tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land." You can read about that, in ancient meteorological observations from the first century, the pretty normal thing that happened and still happens with a winter storm. "And we gave way to it," pushed them off the coast, and they were "driven along" now out into the Mediterranean. "Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we manage with difficulty to secure the ship's boat." So they have a dinghy, a little boat behind them, much like you have on a cruise ship today, those boats, those rescue boats that are hoisted to the side. Well they were dragging this little boat behind but they pulled it in. They were going to try and save this. "After hoisting it up," verse 17, "they use supports to undergird the ship." So now they're putting ropes under the ship to keep it in one piece because the tide here or the whitecaps are bursting against this ship.

"Then, fearing," bottom of verse 17, "that they would run aground on Syrtis," which, by the way, means in Greek the sandbar or quicksand, "they lowered the gear, and thus they were



driven along." So we're just going to get away from this. "Since," verse 18, "we were violently storm-tossed." Right? People are getting sick, vomiting over the edge of the boat. You can just imagine how terrible this is. "They began the next day to jettison the cargo." We think the ship's going to go down, so we're going to start throwing stuff off of the ship. Now, this is a grain ship from Alexandria, perhaps. They're throwing their very valuable cargo over the side of the ship. "On the third day," verse 19, "they threw the ship's tackle overboard." Now, this is what helps us hoist up our sails. I mean, they were just like we just want to save our lives at this point. We're not worried about sailing and navigating. They did it "with their own hands" on purpose. Verse 20, the storm now. Verse 20, "When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest," that's ancient language, where the big storm "lay on us, all hope of being saved was at last abandoned." Because when you are just seafaring on the ancient Mediterranean and you've got overcast, you don't even know which way the sun is, or you can't see the stars at night, you can't navigate. So they're in big trouble and here is Luke and Aristarchus and Paul and there they are saying, I don't know what's going to happen. Everybody's like, we're lost.

Now we'll stop the story there, because that's a massive amount of text to get through today. But I just want to show you that if you asked Paul early on when he became a Christian what's it going to be like to be a Christian, I don't think he envisioned this. And I'm not sure what you envision but whatever it is you might be going through or about to go through you just need to manage your expectations. So if you're taking notes on the whole of this text, number one, jot this down, "Manage Your Expectations." Manage them in favor of what the Bible says and here's what the Bible says. Are you ready? John Chapter 16 verse 33, I quoted incessantly and forgive me for that, but they are Jesus' words and they're true. "In this world you will have," here it comes, a wonderful life. Jot that down. You know that, right? So I was won to Christ. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, right? No. Correct me now 9:00 crowd because that's not how it goes. "In this world you will have." Do you know what Jesus said? "Tribulation." Trouble. That's what you're going to have. Now, the hard thing in the midst of a storm, whatever your trouble is, is to "take heart," and remember that "God has overcome the world." It's very clear in First Corinthians that eye can't see and ear can't hear and mind can't imagine the amazingly wonderful things that God has planned for those who love him. I mean, there's something coming for us that's amazing.

But as it was taught in Acts 14, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." So between now and then, that small gate that gets us in to the most mind-blowing pleasures, satisfaction, joy, life the way it was intended to be lived in a world where Christ is on the throne and Satan is kicked out. That world that you are going to live in if you are in fact a genuine Christian between here and there, tribulation. The Bible teaches that, Paul echoed it, Jesus taught it. You should expect that there's going to be hard times. Let me put it this way you're never going to be exempt from the storms of life. Never, never. We have no exemption. And we could open up the microphone, call you up on stage, and have plenty of people say, "Yep, I thought if I love Christ, things were going to go better but I got cancer, right? My wife died. My kid got hit by a car, right? He's in a wheelchair for the rest of his life." We could go on and on and on. "Things are bad. I lost my job. I had a great career but



standing up for Christ I lost it. I can't even go back into the industry. I lost my license. I lost my credential."

I mean, this is the problem. This is a text, by the way, that Joel Osteen is not preaching from this morning, I'm quite sure. Right? We don't want to talk about these storms of life. But yet I know plenty of Christians, I've been in this for a long time, verse 20, they all hope of being saved in the temporal sense from this particular trouble. It's all been lost. Alls been lost. I've been there. Prenatal ultrasound. Hey, your kid here is not even going to survive. Certainly not, no hope of this child being normal, right? Wheelchair-bound at best. I understand when there's no hope of temporal salvation, when the battle is going to be lost and whatever it might be. When the grain on the ship is not even going to get there and that's going to put all these merchant marines in a really bad attitude. This isn't going well. And it's going to end, by the way, just in case you never read Acts 27, in a shipwreck. This isn't going to end well.

Now, does it end well for Paul? I mean, absolutely. He is going to enter the kingdom as a hero. I believe, according to Revelation Chapter 21, I think his name is going to be etched on one of the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem. You're going to read his name all the time, see it up in lights so to speak. It's going to be great. Paul's a hero. But even as I talk about the troubles that he's been through, I think about First Corinthians Chapter 2 when he speaks about all the amazing things that we have waiting for us. Well, in Chapter 4 he says this. I mean, "We're a spectacle to the world." We have the "sentence of death" on us. "We're fools for Christ's sake." He says "We're hungry, we're thirsty, we're poorly dressed, we're buffeted, we're homeless, we labor working with our own hands, we're reviled, we're persecuted, we're slandered. We become still and are now the scum of the world, the refuse of all things." Which, by the way, he's chiding the Corinthians who live in the Orange County of the first century. He says, hey guys, if you think Christianity is supposed to make you a king and everything's going to go right, you just need to rethink that and calibrate that based on the fact that the guys writing you letters, God-breathed letters, New Testament information, that we're the scum of the world. Now, how do you compute that? Because I can guarantee you you don't outrank the Apostle Paul in your Christianity. How is it that things are going good for you? He says, I wish you were kings, because if you were kings, I'd be reigning with you, because there is a day when we are going to be kings. We're going to be the princes and princesses of the kingdom, children of the King. It's coming. But right now you shouldn't expect it to be that way.

Have we had some seasons of prosperity? How about this? Has it been well for Christians in this society at one time? Well, there was a time when it wasn't quite so bad. Unless you were going to be a hard line like literalist about the Bible and still talk about hell and Uncle Harry is going to go to hell and you mention that at a Thanksgiving meal and try and convince him to repent. You're still going to have trouble even in the best of times in the 1950s, I get that. But today it's gotten really bad. The storms are ramping up. And if you expect that somehow we're just going to have our prayer meetings and then everything is going to be fine for us, you don't understand what the Bible says. There's no exemption. "All those who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." That's what the Bible says. So let's just not be surprised by the storms. If you want to be disenchanting, if you want to be disillusioned, all you



have to do is have the wrong expectation. That's why the prosperity gospel is not only heresy, it's a damnable heresy because it gets people attracted to Christianity, which has happened in evangelical circles, Bill Bright and the rest of them saying, God has a wonderful plan for your life. Unless you say, well, it's going to happen after this life is over then you miss the point. Is there some joy? Is there some peace? Is there some love? Sure there is. But where does this go? Here's the problem. We have a mentality and a mindset about Christianity that just naturally wants to read the text of Scripture and whatever we see that's good we want to glom onto that and say, well, I hope I can get that now. Well, you can't get it all now.

First Timothy Chapter 6. Paul says, there are some people who think godliness is a means to great gain. They think it's great gain. We think if I become a Christian it will make my life better. And he says well it is if you're content, because if you're content, then you will be content just with food and covering, and that's all you'll need. Because "you don't bring anything into the world and you cannot take anything with you out of the world." So "with these things we'll be content." Oh, godliness is a means to great gain, but it has nothing to do with your financial temporal gain. It could bankrupt you to be faithful in your job as a nurse or a doctor or a teacher today, particularly in Southern California. You could really be without an income if you're faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. So we just need to calibrate our expectations. Christianity, frankly, is going to make things in the short term a little harder.

Turn to First Peter Chapter 2 before I leave this first point and look at verse 11 with me. Just to put it in some old categories that you can remember and I hope recite to yourself throughout the week as you ponder and digest this sermon. First Peter Chapter 2 verse 11, "Beloved," there's a reminder that things can be good. I hope you have good relationships with the people in this room. I hope you have tight friendships. I hope you have confidants and people who you will lean on and rely on. It's great to be loved in the body of Christ. That's nice. "I urge you though as sojourners and exiles." Right there we're reminded by the Apostle Peter you're not going to fit in here. I mean, I hope your head is not buried in the sand. I hope you do at least keep note of the headlines in our American culture right now. And I do hope that you feel more and more like these two words, a sojourner and an exile, which means I don't belong here. I hope you have that sense as Paul wrote to the Philippians, I'm a citizen of a different place. I'm an expat here. I don't really belong here. Ultimately my homeland is somewhere else. That's what expat means, right? My homeland is somewhere else. Our citizenship is in heaven. Why? We don't fit in here. Why? Because of the culture. Here's the biblical word for it as John likes to say in First John 2. It is the world. And the world, unfortunately has a cultural value that is never going to make you feel at home if you're really faithful to God's Word, not even in the 1950s. But certainly not today in the 21st century.

So you got the world against you and then look at the next line. Hey, if you're a sojourner and an exile, remember this: to "abstain from the passions of the flesh." What does that do? "Wages war against your soul." Now, if you read Ephesians Chapter 2 verses 1 through 3, here's what you're going to find out. My non-Christian life didn't have these problems. In my non-Christian life, I was carried along, I follow the course of this world. So I was okay with culture. Then I become a Christian. I'm not okay with culture anymore, because all I got to do is listen to what people say. And I realize that's not what I'm supposed to do. And so now I



have to be on the narrow road. Now I have to be the salmon swimming upstream all of a sudden. It's going to be hard. And then all of a sudden you realize that God is going to tell you, don't do this, don't do this, don't do this, and do this and do this and do this. And you're going to say, oh, I hear his voice, I'm going to follow him. But if I follow him there's something resonant within me. It's called my flesh, the principle of my own humanity that is pulsating to do the other thing than what God says I'm supposed to do. All of a sudden, now I have a problem with my flesh. Well, in the olden days I could as it says there in the first three verses of Ephesians Chapter 2, I can just go along with it. I could just go with it. I could be in sync with the spirit that's now at work in the sons of disobedience. I can just keep on going. But I can't now. Now I have to fight it. I have to fight greed and lust and gossip and all the things I'd rather do. All the things my body is saying do that, do that, do that. And now I have to fight it. So I got war now with the culture, we call it the world in the Bible, we have a problem now with my human impulses. We call that the flesh in the Bible.

And you've heard this old triad before. What's the third one? First Peter Chapter 5. Let's skip there real quick. Look at verse 8. First Peter 5 verse 8. "Be sober-minded; be watchful." Oh, here's the third thing. "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him." Now I got to resist my flesh. I got to resist the culture. Now I got a whole other problem. I got this adversary now, this spiritual adversary that I open my Bible and I read about and he's always making a mess for Christians. He wants to "come and steal and kill and destroy." He's out against us because we're related to the one he hates. So now I got a third problem, the world, the flesh and the devil your grandpa used to say. But it's your culture. It's your human impulses. And it's a spiritual adversary that doesn't want you being obedient and following Christ. Those three things are going to make, as Tozer rightly said, your life in this world harder. You might as well just defer all your expectations for the good life to a whole other time to paraphrase Tozer. That's a good thing for us to do. And I know I say that a lot and if we didn't have the culture in Christianity saying the opposite I wouldn't have to say it as much to you. And I'm so sorry I have to correct the thinking of every other, you know, major bestselling Christian book in the world. But I do because Christian bookselling unfortunately and a lot of Christian broadcasting, unfortunately, is giving you a message that takes your expectation and puts it in the wrong category. So I have to occasionally more than I would like to, trust me. I wanted to preach these messages in the kingdom I have to say just please manage your expectations. "You're so negative, right?"

Okay. Let's look at our text here. The text is negative. Look at all these things. Let's start in verse 1. What I want to do is look at all of Paul's difficulties and say do I have any kind of commensurate experience that he had? Well, let's boldly face those, because that's what this is all about. This is about Courageous Endurance. This is about me pushing on in the Christian life. So number two, let's give us a title then we'll work through these verses that I've listed for you on your worksheet. Number two, "Boldly Faced Difficulties" because this passage is all about difficulties, twenty verses of difficulties and Luke is in the middle of it so it's more detailed than almost any other part of Acts because he's there in the ship and this was like a life-changing storm. And he's writing about it all and he's, you know, he's a doctor. So he's all into whatever. He's into that. Now he's going to tell us all about it. Stuff I have to look up to figure out what does it mean to weigh the anchor, whatever. I didn't grow up, you



know, in the yacht club. So a lot of this I had to learn. But what's the point? He's experiencing difficulties and he's relaying them all to us in twenty verses to get to the place where you have no hope.

What's the first thing? Paul is a prisoner. "Paul and the other prisoners," verse 1. Now, you're not a prisoner here unless you're watching online from prison. But you're here and I'm going to say most of you who are sitting here, unless you're a fugitive, you're not a prisoner. And yet, here's the thing about prison, right? It curtails your freedom. And just you should jot that down next to verse 1 there on your outline. The sub-point here, "Curtailed Freedom." And you just need to ask yourself, put a question mark there, is there anything in your life where your freedom is curtailed? And all I can do is look at the gray hairs right now and can guarantee your freedom is curtailed because you can't even bend over as far as you used to bend over when you were a teenager, right? I mean, aging itself curtails your freedom. There's stuff I see now. It's like, I want to do that. Well, I can't do that unless I want to pay for it for the next month or maybe with my life. I can't do that anymore. Your body doesn't work the same. Now that all comes, by the way, because of Genesis 3 and the curse, the entropy in the universe and the deterioration of your body and all the radiation from the sun. And God has just designed this world to remind us of sin and aging certainly reminds us of sin. You don't have to say Amen. But I know a lot of people in this room agree with that. And you don't want to admit we're old. But it is a bummer, isn't it, to get old?

So let's just start with that. Curtailed freedom. Or maybe you've had some problems beyond that. Maybe you've had an accident, it's curtailed your freedom. Maybe you've had problems medically and it really has been a disability for you. There are abilities that no longer are able anymore. Or maybe you just say, well, when God was dishing out the brains, I didn't get a lot of it so I'm struggling here with the limited... I can't even follow your sermons half the time Pastor Mike. I don't get it. Okay, well, that's a limitation. That's the freedom that's curtailed. Some of you have gotten yourself into situations with contracts. Some of you signed some things you never should've signed. You slid your card and things you never should have slid your card through. And you are in contractual limitations of freedom. Some of you are in financial limitations because of that very contractual limitation. Some of you engaged in business partnerships you never should have been in and you've curtailed your freedom. You cannot do what you otherwise would have done and you've got some curtailed freedom, whatever it might be. Maybe you've been fired, right? Maybe you've been foreclosed on. I don't know what it is. But for each of these I want to remind you of one attribute of God that you need to lean into and think about every time you feel like, hey, in this stinking world the storm in my life is the curtailing of freedom. I want to take you to an attribute for each of these and the first one's found in Isaiah 43.

So turn there real quick with me and let me just remind you the way this lays out, I want to remind you the overarching thing that is the emphasis of this text here and throughout the book of Isaiah is something that I think we need to jot down and learn more of. As a matter of fact, I want a lot of people in our bookstore today getting books on these things that relate to God's attributes depending on what issue you might be dealing with because they have got plenty of books on this. Isaiah 43 verse 1. Is that where I said I'd take you? All right. Verse 1.



"But now thus says the Lord," right? This is just an authoritative statement. "He who created you, O Jacob," a synonym for Israel, "he who formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not,'" don't be afraid, "I've redeemed you; I've called you by my name, and you are mine." Okay. So, I'm yours. You created me. You've redeemed me. I am yours. Okay? And I hope I'm speaking to people right now you can say the same thing. Yeah, I know God made me. I know God redeemed me in the most profound way, in Christ. Yes. "When you pass through the waters." Well, wait a minute. If I'm yours and you love me, you've redeemed me then why in the world would I be passing through the waters? You must have left me. Are you sleeping or are you somewhere else? No. "I will be with you." If you're with me and you love me, you've redeemed you, I don't think I'd be walking through the waters. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, that's how it is. "When you pass through the water I'll be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned, and the flame will not consume you." Why? "Because I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you. Because you're precious in my eyes."

Wait a minute. All these bad things are happening and I'm precious in your eyes. Yes. "You're honored." Wait a minute. These circumstances don't match. "And I love you." Well, if you love me, why do I have these freedoms curtailed? Well, in the future, the freedoms won't be curtailed. "And I will bring you your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you. I will say to the north, Give up, and from the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and I've made," I'm going to bring them all back. Now, this could obviously, in terms of circumstance, all just be focused on the Babylonian return. Right? The exile is over. But this is much bigger than that. I mean, even the poetic words walking through the floods and the waters and the fire. Here's the one attribute I need you to think of because all of this was clearly planned. God is making promises authoritatively setting this up with three scripts about he's the Lord and he has spoken. This is all about and all around this, by the way, starting in Chapter 40 and following. It's all about God's sovereignty. Jot that down next to verse 1. Right? If you have any curtailed freedoms you need to remember this truth about the God who loves you and honors you and is with you, that he is sovereign and his purpose for you is exactly what's taking place in your life. Is that a mind-blowing concept?

Let's just start with the hardest attribute of God, sovereignty. We might as well start there. And we need to start to grapple with that because there's nothing going on in your aging, nothing going on in your finances, nothing going on in your health, nothing going on even in the contracts you've signed or the money you've spent or the debt you're in, or whatever problems you face, that God is not sovereignly saying, well, listen, you're my kid, I made you, I redeemed you, I'm taking you sovereignly through these things and one day they're going to end. I'm going to restore you. I'm going to restore you in a kingdom, you're going to get to the end of this. But I'm doing all of these things and none of it's out of my control. In fact, I'm going to walk you through it all. I'm going to walk you into it. You're going to follow me, the shepherd, into the valley of the shadow of death. I'm leading you there. So we need to focus on God's sovereignty when we think about the storms of our life, particularly if the storm of our



life makes me feel like why are you taking me into something that's so painful and curtailing my freedom?

Verse 7, back in our text. We're going to bounce back and forth so maybe just look at your worksheet here, verse 7. "We sailed slowly." You see this throughout it. Like verse 9, "much time had passed." We could quote other texts here. This is a long journey. Matter of fact, that squiggly line on the map I thought was kind of funny that Crossway or whoever put this map together they're just like we're wasting time, right? This is circuitous to use a cute word. Yeah, this is not a straight path. God is taking us on left turns, right turns, reverses, U-turns. We're getting tossed around on this violent storm and we are now making slow progress. How long does it take to go from Caesarea to Rome? Not as long as it took Paul and Luke and Aristarchus and everyone else with them. It took a long time. Verse 7, the second thing on this sub-point. Jot this down. "Slow progress." Is there maybe some slow progress in your life? Do you have a plan for your life that went a little faster than the plan that God had for you? Slow progress. God is really moving slowly here. Maybe you're dealing with the fact that you can't find a job, or you can't find a spouse, or you're infertile and you can't have a kid and you're saying, you're making me wait. Yeah, God may have a plan, much like he did for Abraham and Sarah to have a kid. But you know what? You could have got to it a little bit faster. And there they were made to wait. Even after they had the promise that God was going to give them a family. He made them wait. He made them wait. He made them wait. God's big on making his kids wait. And that's a bummer.

But there is one thing that we should remember about God. Turn to Second Peter Chapter 3. This is one thing you should remember about God. You should lean into this attribute when you're thinking about the God who seems to be taking forever. Second Peter Chapter 3. Whatever it is you're waiting for, we're just waiting to own a house, or we're waiting to do this, or waiting to do that. Okay? God, why don't you speed this up? Now the concern on the table here in Second Peter Chapter 3, and I quote this all the time, is the fact they were saying, Christ is never going to come back. You said he'd come back. He's waiting forever to come back. And he reminds the critics of this in verse 8, do not overlook, this is Second Peter Chapter 3 verse 8, this one fact, "Beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." That's the problem. That's the problem. I haven't even lived a thousand years. Some days I feel like I've lived that but I haven't lived a thousand years. And he makes a promise and he can take a thousand years to fulfill it and for him it's no big deal it's like one day. Well, that's not one day for me. It's a thousand years. And for Abraham and Sarah it was over ten years. Why are you waiting so long for this? But for God it's no time at all.

Just jot this down, would you next to this verse 7, "God Is Eternal." And if we don't get our arms around that, which is a lot harder than you might think. Augustine dealt with this intensely, you know, we've had a lot of good theologians, even Aquinas, working hard on getting our arms around what does it mean that God is eternal. Lewis deals with it in Mere Christianity. What does it mean that God is eternal? This is a big doctrine that should get us to start thinking about the fact that God is not a God who is looking at time the way that we are. And this passage gives us some great insight. Verse 9, "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his



promises as some count slowness." Well even to Christians he feels slow. "But he's patient toward you." And here's something very important after the comma. He's got a purpose. Now to wait for the return of Christ his purpose is I'm delaying it on purpose. And you can know this about the waits he gives you in your life. You're not getting that job. You're not getting that marriage. You're not getting in a relationship. You're not getting that promotion. You're not getting that kid. You're not getting whatever it is. Just know this: God has a purpose. You have to believe that. And God is eternal and none of this bothers him. It bothers you, but it doesn't bother him and he knows what he's doing.

There are a lot of attributes that intersect with all of these problems, but if God is making you wait, you just need to think about the eternity of God. God hasn't forgotten anything. You think with time because people forget stuff and you think that God has forgotten. God forgets nothing. Time is not an issue for him, and he's going to have to make you wait and here I learn at the bottom of verse 9 there's a reason for it. And then here it is, verse 10, when he fulfills his promise, because they said he's not coming back, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief." It's going to be bang, it's going to happen. When God gets Sarah pregnant, well God doesn't do it, but Abraham does it, when he has this thing hit, when these cells come together, it happens. And it happens. And it's going to happen if God wants it to happen. This eternal God from eternity past is going to say this is my plan and it was planned to be happening on this day at this time and this is exactly how I planned it. The sovereignty of God and the eternity of God will help in the midst of our storms. It took a long time for them to get there and Aristarchus and Luke, I hope, were talking with Paul about the fact that we're getting there just right on schedule. We'll get to Rome when we get to Rome and it'll be exactly when God wants us to get to Rome. They were doing everything they could, and you should do everything you can. With the immensity of God, the eternity of God, the infinitude of God, all these things get us to think, okay, I got to stop with the tapping of my foot and the impatience of my Christian life.

Verse 9, back to our text again. So on your worksheet look at verse 9. "Since much time had passed," well, that's the problem, "the voyage was now dangerous." Why? Because now we're in October. We're in the fall. Winter is upon us. The storm season is upon us. And now it's getting dangerous. And Paul senses that. I don't think we should go. I don't think we should do that. And he ends up getting dragged into it anyway. And God may be dragging you into something that is a threatening circumstance. Jot that down next to verse 9. The third thing on this sub-point, "Threatening Circumstances." Any threatening circumstances? You get an official letter in the mail. It could be from your insurance company. It could be from a lawyer. It could be from who knows what, your boss at work. And all of a sudden now you think, God, where are you in this? Well, this part of the storm is God's going to take you into threatening territory. And it could be physically threatening. God may be taking you on a trip and you might find yourself in a physically threatening situation.

As a matter of fact, that's the passage I want to take you to when you think about God taking you into threatening situations. Matthew Chapter 10. Just real quick, take a look at this text, Matthew 10. I know you're afraid when threatening circumstances come. But verse 28 says, "Do not fear," the one who can sue you. Do not fear the one who can hurt you. Do not fear the



one who can get you fired. Do not fear the one who can get you kicked out or fined in your homeowner association. Do not fear. Stop fearing even if they "were to kill your body," don't fear. Don't fear the storm. Don't fear the thugs. Don't fear. Because here's the thing they cannot do the thing that God can do, they can't do the thing God can do. All they can do is do what they can do, but it's always limited. "They can't kill your soul." Only God can do that. He can do that. "Rather fear him who can destroy." Now God has the "can." The world has, well, only I can only do what it can do.

I put it this way in terms of the attributes you need to lean into, especially when you're afraid. Right? Letter "C" here or verse 9. You need to lean into "God's Omnipotence." God is an omnipotent God. He has this omnipotency. He has all power. And the Bible is always juxtaposing God's greatness and power, usually in the Psalms, next to his creative power. Look at what he does in taking the six-septillion ton rock and spinning it around in the cold vacuum of space and having all this stuff work out just the way he wants it to work out. With the moon floating around the satellite. Plenty of satellites all over in our solar system. Plenty of them, but the only one that's perfectly designed to do exactly what it does here for life on this planet, 400 times smaller than the sun, 400 times closer than the sun. All the symmetry of God's greatest, all the power of God to do all of this and make it and sustain it, is supposed to remind us that we're going to be okay.

Matter of fact, one passage we studied on the Compass ship cruise last week, Psalm 102 verses 25 to 28. It leads to verse 28, which says, "You should dwell secure." You shouldn't be afraid just contemplating the power of God, because even his power goes all the way down, verse 29, if you're still in Matthew 10, all the way down to the sparrows. Sparrows are like nothing. Who cares about the sparrows? Well, "Not even one of them is going to fall the ground apart from your Father." And that means you're not going to die in some back alley because your company took you to someplace that was scary in nature without your Father. Your Father is going to be all about the day you die. The day you die is all about him saying your life is over and the day you die is the day you die. And even the day birds die is the day the Father has determined for the birds to die. And all of that is a power that no one else has but God. And you? How important are you? Well, you're a lot more important than sparrows. "Even the hairs on your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore," fear not, therefore, fear not, therefore. Why? Because God is more powerful and can do things that no one else can do. And he loves you. You're honored. Just to go back to quoting Isaiah. Right? You're more valued than many sparrows, obviously. Curtailed freedom. God's sovereignty. Slow progress. God is eternal. Threatening circumstances. God is omnipotent.

Verse 12 in our text. Look at your worksheet printed there in verse 12. "Because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in," maybe there are not enough bars for the merchant marines, they said, well, the majority, we're going to go out to sea. We're trying to make our way to Phoenix. "The majority decided to put out to sea." Hmhm. Is the majority deciding dumb things in our day at all, ever? All the time. Now, because the word culture can be defined at various concentric circles in your life. You can have a work culture. You can have a homeowner association culture. You can have a, you know, California culture. You can have a national culture. You can have a world culture. Culture is a word we can use and let's put it



this way, there are a lot of people making dumb decisions in our culture. I just wrote it down this way next to verse 12, "Foolish Culture." Do you have a foolish culture at work, your bosses, your boards? I mean, I don't know, in your neighborhood. How about your family? A family culture can be led by some dumb people making dumb decisions. Maybe your maritime culture obviously was making dumb decisions for Aristarchus, Paul and Luke. Dumb decisions. Obviously you read the news in an election year you can't help but be pointed to all kinds of dumb things the culture is believing and doing. Of course we have a foolish culture.

What's the one thing I want you to remember when it comes to foolish culture? What attribute of God could possibly I want to take you to? Now jot it down, the first 7 verses of Isaiah Chapter 6. We don't need to turn there, but I do want you to turn to Matthew Chapter 7. I want you to jot down Isaiah 6 and what are the angels singing thrice over as they hover around the throne. They say, what? Love, love, love is the Lord God Almighty. Is that what they say? Holy, holy, holy. When you see the culture making dumb decisions the attribute I'd like you to lean into is the holiness of God. God is a holy God. And since he's God and outranks everyone else, even though the entire culture may vote in a different direction, the entire culture may value something that God says is abhorrent to him, is an abomination to him. You ought to make the decision that Jesus tells us to make in Matthew Chapter 7, and take a look at verse 14. It is as simple as it can be. "The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life." And you know what? "Few are those who find it." So here's what you're going to have to do, cling to the holiness of God when no one else does. In your industry, in your workplace, in your family. If we are the last congregation on planet earth, which, of course we won't be, I don't think that's going to happen. But if we were the last congregation to teach what the Bible teaches about X, Y, or Z, and everyone in the world and all the church denominations think that's a ridiculous thing to hold on to, if that's what our holy God has said, then we do what he says and we don't care about the rest of the culture.

Now Paul didn't have the steering wheel to this ship, so he was dragged along just like we're dragged along in our culture. They're scurrying out of California. I get it, right? But I've told you, I'm sticking around to finish my mission work here, and there's work to be done. And I hope that some of you will stay with me as we continue to reach this community, this part of the county for Christ. We've got work to be done. I'll tell you what. There's a kingdom I'm going to scurry off to the day I die. So I got a better place, a homeland that God is building for me and I hope for you. In the meantime, I'm ready to weather the storm. And to say it may be a foolish culture, it may have a foolish Senate up in Sacramento. The state Senate. We may, I get it. No, we do, I get it. But here's the deal. We're supposed to cling to the holiness of God and reflect his holiness in what we say, what we affirm, what we do.

Verse 17, drop down to verse 17 in our passage. "After hoisting it up, they use supports that undergird the ship. Fearing that they would run aground." The first time we see that word here, "they're afraid." It may not be threatening circumstances, although it could be, but I just want to single that out, because some of you are afraid of things that are not circumstantial. There may be anxiety and worry. I put this down this way on my notes next to verse 17. Write down "Fearful Seasons?" There may be some fearful seasons in your life. Maybe there are fearful seasons. Now, we've already seen this in Isaiah 43 but let me just remind you that no



matter what your fears are, no matter what keeps you up at night, no matter what your anxieties, no matter what makes you bite your nails, whatever it is that you're really having your ulcer over, whatever you're afraid of.

Okay, I want you to lean into this one attribute. I'm going to read from Ephesians Chapter 3. We saw it stated in Isaiah 43 but let me just look at this text because it's good. And many of you, unfortunately, because it's such a simple attribute of God, at least it's the most familiar attribute of God, some of you think you've been there and done that and I guarantee you haven't been there and you haven't done that. You haven't fully comprehended it. Ephesians 3:14. "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family," that includes you, "in heaven and on earth," you're here, "is named." He's related to you, right? He made you. "That according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power." That's what I need to get through this endurance. I need to endure. I need to have a bold endurance. I need to have a strong endurance to get through this life and all the storms in your inner being. And that's where fear takes hold in your heart. "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts." And guess what? He'll eschew all the fear. You need your heart to be filled with Christ in that metaphorical sense. "Through faith -- that you, being rooted and grounded," in holiness. Is that what it says? No. Rooted and grounded in what? "Love." I know you think you know the song, "Jesus loves me this I know." Learn that. I'm not going to go into the bookstore and buy a book on God's love.

I love Don Carson's book title, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*. It's just a good little slap in the face, like, difficult? I've figured that one out. Have you? Keep reading. I want you to have strength to comprehend with all the saints. It would be good if all of you got this. "What is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth, and to know the love of Christ," here it comes, three words, "that surpasses knowledge." You can spend the rest of your life writing dissertations, getting PhD after PhD on understanding what it means that God loves his people and you would still have more to research and figure out. You need to dig into this doctrine. If you're afraid, if you're nervous, if you're anxious, if you're worried, if you stay up at night and your doctor says you need to take this antacid because your stomach, you know it's crazy. What are you worried about? You need to get something on the doctrine of God's love. And you need to start to plumb the "depth and the breadth and the length and the height" of God's love so that you can, I love this, "be filled with the fullness of God." Do you know what people who are filled with the fullness of God, or as it says in verse 17, "that Christ dwell in your hearts through faith." If that's the case you're not going to be afraid. You'll be strengthened with power in your inner being. What does it mean that God, the God of the universe, loves you? Fearful seasons. Remember, God is loving. God is love.

Verse 19, one more, back to our text printed there on the worksheet for you. Look at the bottom of this. "The third day," the ship's tackle, "they threw the ship's tackle overboard." They'd already jettisoned in verse 18 the cargo because of this violent storm. The storm detached me from my stuff. Think about the captain of this Alexandrian ship. All of his stuff is out the window. He's not going to make any money on this run. I hope there's insurance for all this because it's done. You just dumped it in the sea. You had good reason. But this storm is separated from you your stuff. I put it this way, verse 19. I put this next to it, "Incurring Loss." I



mean, really, is it some loss in your life? It could be the death of someone in your family, someone you love. Could be the loss of your stuff. Maybe because of the loss of your job, the loss of your income. Maybe the loss of your environment. Maybe you're watching this online because your job took you to another state and you were forcibly removed from your church home, right? I mean, you felt like I don't know what else I could have done. And maybe you're right. Maybe God's providence moved you to Idaho or Iowa, I don't know.

But in that loss and you feel that loss I just need you to remember this. It doesn't matter where you are. I've been to places in the world that seem so remote. I feel like God hadn't been here yet. But the Bible makes it very clear you need to lean into this doctrine and understand what it means. God is omnipresent. He's omnipresent. Jot these two references down and we don't have time to turn to either of them but Psalm 139, the first ten verses. Psalm 139 verses 1 through 10. God is a God you cannot escape from. I don't care how bad it is, I don't care how detached you are from what you want or the person you want. God is omnipresent. He's near to the brokenhearted. He is there in every place. And jot this one down, Hebrews Chapter 13 verses 5 through 6. The reality of God is that you should never struggle with being detached from stuff. You can be content. No love of money. Why? Because God says I'll never leave you, never forsake you. The reality of God's presence has to be explored. I know these are all simple, right? They're not. On the surface they're simple. God is sovereign. God is eternal. God is omnipotent. God is holy. God is loving. God is omnipresent. If I said in a test when you came in, are all these things true? Right? Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know all that. But do you? To the extent that you don't know them, well then here's what's messing up your faith: curtailed freedom, slow progress, threatening circumstances, a foolish culture, fearful seasons and loss. And you've got to say those can be a counterattack to deal with all of this.

One more verse in our text. Acts 27 verse 20, "When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days." I don't know how long your storm has been going on and "it's no small tempest," right? This has been rocking you. It's been laid on you just like it was laid on Aristarchus and Luke and Paul. He says, "All hope of our being saved was at last abandoned." Number three on your outline. Let me just say this as firmly as I can. "Never Despair." Never despair. Verse 20. Number three. Never despair. You have never been given permission by God to despair. Just like the priests in the Old Testament they were never to allow their hair to be unkempt. Do you know those days when you don't want to get up and don't want to comb your hair? Right? Some people today in this new generation don't even try it seems. But, you know what I mean. You don't want to get dressed for work, you don't want to shower and you're just done. Done with life.

Priests couldn't do that. And tear your clothes. That was the ancient Near Eastern sign of wailing and weeping. Priests weren't supposed to do that. Priests were supposed to be people you understood were close with God. They knew God. They were never supposed to be like that. They're never throwing in the towel. They're never giving up. They're never wailing and having no hope when they grieve. Oh, they grieve. We know they're human, but they don't grieve like the rest because they've always got hope. They don't have lands. God wouldn't let them possess lands. They had to live like renters their whole life. They had to live off of the sacrifices of other people. They needed to feed their kids based on the offerings that



came into the temple. But still they were people without big bank accounts who were supposed to be seen as never despairing.

Paul didn't despair. Jot this one down. Second Corinthians Chapter 4 verses 7 through 12. Since "we have this treasure in jars of clay," we're weak. We understand that. Fragile. It's all that's "to show the surpassing power belongs to God not to us." God's going to get us through this. "We're afflicted in every way, but not crushed; we're perplexed," sure, we are, "but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed; we're always carrying in the body the death of Jesus." Because Jesus kept saying as they hated me, they'll hate you, persecuted me, they'll persecute you. Please don't expect a different kind of life than Jesus had. By God's grace, it's better, but it's still sharing in the same sufferings. "Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our body." How is the life of Jesus manifested in your body? Well, because when we really imbibe on things like God's sovereignty, God's eternity, God's omnipotence, God's holiness, God's loving nature, and his omnipresence, we start to go away saying it isn't so bad. It's bigger. My circumstances aren't going to determine whether I'm despairing or not.

And some of you think, well, I don't despair. I'm not cracking up on the floor of my small group saying, oh, in a fetal position, you're not doing that. But you still come and complain all the time. I mean you couched your complaints in prayer requests. Where's the rejoicing? Seriously. Because the priests were supposed to be happy no matter what. In the sense at least that they had the joy that God was their portion forever, as Asaph put it. Don't despair. Paul didn't despair. "We who live are always being given over to death." That's true, he says. "So that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh." That's important. God's work through you like a branch that is connected to the vine the power to get up in the morning and brush your hair and brush your teeth and put on your clothes and get out there and do life and to not tear your clothes in despair. I don't care how bad the storm gets. We can't get to the place where we have no hope. Your eternity is secured. You do know that, right? Nothing can "separate you from the love of God."

Jot this down for homework. Ephesians Chapter 1 verses 11 through 14. You have been guaranteed an inheritance if you're a genuine Christian. You've been through the Sierra Nevada mountains, have you, on I-80 coming into California? Truckee, California, it's called, a weird name. They have a monument there in Donner Pass for George and Jacob's endeavor. Both of them, by the way, died in this. But half of the group survived. And the monument that's there, 22 feet high at Donner Pass is memorializing the people who were lost, but it's commemorating the people who survived. And it starts with the courage that they had to move west. They were going to go for what they saw as the land of promise and they risked and they went. Risked and they went forward. That's the word on the plaque. Because they had the courage to do it. It ends with two words. The last two words on that bronze plaque says they were indomitable and unafraid. That's good. People are falling to the left and right. Maybe somebody you looked up to as a great Christian, this Christian wants nothing to do with it anymore. How many people do I have in my life I used to sit here in church with and now they're gone. They have no interest in this anymore. Jesus said a lot of people are going to do that, but you are supposed to endure to the end to maintain the hope you had at the



beginning all the way to the end. It's going to take an indomitable character that you derive from really being attached to the God who is, learning who he is and you got to be unafraid, not afraid of the storm, never going to despair. Never lose hope.

God help us in our day with lots of reasons to be frustrated and upset. We should be to some extent. We should be angry at sin, I understand it. But help us, please, to be men and women who have an indomitable, unafraid, bold and courageous endurance that takes us to the next year and the next decade if we are going to live that long, to the finish line, let us get to the finish line that we may be brought safely into the eternal kingdom, as Paul put it. May it be the best day ever when this life is over, we lay down our arms, we lay down the struggles, we fought the good fight, and we enter into a place where we see you face to face and we'll be judged. What we will be has not yet been seen, but we know when we see him we'll be like him because we'll see him as he is. God, there's going to be a great day ahead. As Paul said in First Corinthians 2, my mind hasn't even imagined how good it can be. So help us God, please, to keep pushing forward with a bold and courageous endurance.

In Jesus name. Amen.