



Courageous Endurance – Part 2

Confident in God's Indomitable Plan

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Well, on days when I walk through my garage and feel bad about how messy it is, how cluttered my workbench is. Or I go to my desk and I see my desk is a mess and I open a drawer and the drawers are just a disaster, I find my way to YouTube and I look up old episodes of Hoarders. It always makes me feel a little better because it ain't that bad, right? It's not that bad. And yet, as a student of the Bible I get around to passages like Proverbs Chapter 24 verses 30 and 31 that remind me that God even cares about how messy my workbench is. Solomon said, "I walk by the field of the sluggard," the lazy man, and I went "by the vineyard of the man lacking sense." So here's a lazy fool. And he said the yard was full of weeds and thorns, and the wall that needs repair just left there dilapidated. And I think to myself, I can't help but see that the Bible puts an emphasis on me taking care of the environment, the setting in which I live my life. And that I should at least there's a biblical principle I should get involved on my off day and start, you know, organizing things. Or in my work week, I'd have some time where I get things all organized. That's a biblical principle. Now, it's not the most important biblical principle and it shouldn't be my ultimate priority, but it is a priority. You can't get around that.

Well in the New Testament there are some verses that bother me, kind of like the Old Testament verses that tell me I ought to clean my garage, and they're found in the passage that we've reached today. It doesn't tell us that we need to care for the physical setting in which we live. It tells us that we ought to care about the cultural setting in which we live. And then that's a far different thing because at least I can say if I feel the conviction of God's Word that I ought to be caring about the physical setting in which I live. If the walls broke then I ought to fix it. If the flowerbed is full of weeds I ought to do something about it. It's hard for me to think what I'm supposed to do about the culture I live in. I mean, I can't just spend an afternoon on a Saturday fixing all that. I don't know what I can even do. And yet the principle, I think, is embedded in this story, which we're in the middle of, and we're just going to take six verses this morning and try and extract from this passage kind of what's going on in the heart and mind of the Apostle Paul, who you might remember is in the middle of a storm on the Mediterranean Sea. And that's all we're going to do is look at his response to what God had said to him and how he's going to relay that to a ship.

Now, we learned he shifted onto a new ship and he's now on this grain ship that has already tossed all of its cargo over the side, and even taking the rigging for the sails and just toss them because they're in the midst of a violent storm. They're being violently tossed around. And, we learned later in this passage, there are 276 people on this ship. So this is a big ship, big grain ship from Alexandria, Egypt. And, Paul says this in the middle of it all. Take a look at it. Acts Chapter 27 is the passage we're going to study this morning. We're going to look at verses 21 through 26. That's all we'll have time for. But start here with me and let's pick up our story where we left off last time. Acts 27 verse 21, "Since they'd been without food for a long time." Did you eat this morning by the way, did you have something? Did you eat yesterday? Anybody? Yeah. How about Friday? Did you have anything on Friday? Imagine if

you didn't and you're sitting here this morning, what kind of mood would you be in? And then what if I took your whole life for the last few days and I just made it a violent tossing, you know, mess? You would... Any patch behind your ear or a band with a little bump on it on your wrist or you taking Dramamine is not going to help. I mean, if you haven't had food for many days, I mean, this is a horror. I want you to put yourself in the sandals, the wet sandals of these 276 people on the ship.

And Paul stands up among them and he says this. Bottom of verse 21, "Men, you should have listened to me." You like that, right? Told you so. "You should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss." Now they're without food I'm assuming, because a lot of their gear had to go over but they're not stupid. I'm sure they kept some food, but they can't eat it. I'm sure they're just horribly seasick. And they've lost all their luggage. They've lost their backpacks. They've lost all hope of any economic gain taking grain in this Mediterranean trip to Rome. They got nothing now. "Yet," verse 22, Paul says, "now I urge you to take heart," cheer up, take courage, be brave, "for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship." Okay. How do you know that? Verse 23, "For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; You'll stand before Caesar.'" You're going to get to Rome. Don't worry. "And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you." So he says, listen, I had this special revelatory message from an angel dispatched from God and he told me that we're not going to die. I'm going to make it to Rome, and I'm going to stand trial before Caesar. And that's why I got on this ship. That's why the Roman soldiers followed me here to Rome from Jerusalem, from Caesarea. And, he said all you guys are going to make it. That's good news. So you guys ought to cheer up. You going to lose the whole ship. But you ought to cheer up.

Verse 25, "So take heart, men, for I have faith in God." Of course, Paul knows God's batting average, he keeps his promises. "I have faith in God so that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we must run aground on some island." And that's coming up next. They're going to shipwreck on an island. We're going to hear all about it. But for today, I just want you to look at what's going on here. You may have missed it. How in the world am I going to get out of this text that Paul's caring for the cultural setting in which he lives? Well, remember, there are 276 people on the ship. Some of them are there as just merchant marines. Some are there as Roman soldiers. Some are there as just passengers trying to get to Rome. And, some like Aristarchus and Doctor Luke, they're there as fellow Christians just going along with the Apostle Paul because he's such an important first-century Christian. And yet he doesn't say, because the captain and the owner of the ship and those who have the power on the ship decided to set sail from Fair Havens as you remember last time and Paul said, you shouldn't do this. He doesn't say, think of what he doesn't say. He doesn't say, you know what? You didn't listen to me. And if you had listened to me, I wouldn't be sitting here throwing up with the rest of you. I would have been eating three squares a day, and I wouldn't have lost all my stuff. I wouldn't have lost my backpack and my suitcase. And all of this is now gone because of the decision you made. Paul did not say, hey, this is a problem for me because you didn't follow my advice, right?



He's concerned about what they have lost. I think there's a genuine concern Paul has about these people. And why does he have that concern? Well, in part because God's angels showed up and told him that even God cares for these people. God could have said to Paul, listen, I'm going to get you to Caesar. You're going to make it to Rome, and you just should know that. Now the rest of these, well, they were just your ticket to get there and they're expendable. But God doesn't say that. This is the lesson, by the way, we're learning throughout the Bible. Even when Jonah goes to Nineveh and he is there at the capitol of the nation that is really being a pest to Israel, and he does not want them to be spared. And you remember the story in Jonah Chapter 4. I mean, Jonah's mad that God forgives them. He's mad in essence as God tells the story through the bush that grows up over his head. He's mad that God cares for them. Now I know you care for Israel, Jonah would say. But you care for them, the Assyrians? Or here Paul doesn't seem to be surprised by that because I think he understood the Old Testament. God does care for the nations. He cares for these people. He cares for the Romans that put Paul in custody to take him to Rome. He cares so much to say, hey, I'm going to spare them and you can tell them that. They need to trust me. I'll be their deliverer.

Now, this is temporal salvation, if you know what I'm saying by that. They're going to be saved from drowning in the Mediterranean Sea. But Paul picks up on that and he's very concerned for them. I mean, he cares about them. Here's the problem for Christians if you can follow my hoarders illustration for a second. They walk through the detritus mess of culture on their way to church, on their way to work and they do their thing. They're fit, they're well groomed, they're well dressed, and they say, I've got my Christian life together. I'm going to be salt and light at work as best I can and that just means keeping my nose clean throughout the week. And I am going to just walk through the culture because I know this. The Bible makes it very clear the culture is a mess and it's going to be a mess, and it's going to go from bad to worse, Second Timothy tells me that, and I just have no hope for this world. I hear the news and I think this is terrible and that's just the way it is. So off I go. What can I do about it anyway?

That picture of Christians who care very much about their Christian life but don't care much about the culture, right? They miss the fact that the culture is simply made up of people who express their own thoughts and their own philosophies and their own theologies in a lot of wrong ways just like all the people on the ship did. There are a few Christians on the ship, but not many and yet God is saying, I'm going to spare all of them. Right? The whole ship is going to go down. God doesn't need to save these people, but he's going to save them, at least temporarily because the lesson is clear throughout the Bible, God cares for more than just about you. He cares about you in a special way if you're a follower of Jesus Christ. If you've repented of your sins and put your trust in Christ and you know that you're a sinner and you deserve hell, but you've put your trust in Christ, God has adopted you as his child. Special concern.

But does he care about the culture? Does he care about what's going on at the Democratic National Convention in the United Center in Chicago this last week? Does he care about those people? Well, he doesn't care about them? No, No, no. God would remind us he does. Matter of fact, I'd like you to word this first point if you just look at the whole tenor of this



passage, at least the first two verses, that makes the emphasis that God is going to care about these people. And I just want you to remember that though they're not on our team and they're not. As a matter of fact, they're pitting themselves against us in so many ways. They despise the God who we serve. They took the words of God, as it says in Psalm 50, and they tossed the words of God behind their back. And I understand that. They're enemies of the gospel, as Paul would say of the rebellious Jews of the first century. But here's the deal. God cares about the people who he's made who bear his image and so should you. So let me word it this way that I hope will put the juxtaposition, the hard contrast, in your mind between what we should do and who they are. Put it down this way. Number one, if you're taking notes, you need to "Care About the 'Babylonians.'" How about that? What? There are no Babylonians on this ship. Well, it depends on how you use the word.

290 times in the Bible, the word Babylonians or Babylon is used. This is a frequently used word. It goes all the way back to Genesis Chapter 10 and Genesis Chapter 11. The tower of... What's it called? Babel. Here in Mesopotamia, the same place where Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. dispatches his armies to go destroy Jerusalem. Babylon, that place. Nimrod, the first real conqueror. Nimrod talked about in Genesis 10. You have in Scripture a depiction of a place named Babylon. And that theme of an enemy of God's people runs throughout the whole Bible all the way to the book of Revelation. Are there any eschatological junkies in the room? You read Revelation all the time. You're always looking at the headlines trying to see where it fits in. Listen, do you know that in the book of Revelation, the whole last generation of the culture in which we live is depicted as Babylon? Babylon. And here's what I want to tell you. There was a literal Babylon that took God's people captive. The young people like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, whose real names were Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah and Daniel, and they took them as hostages. They killed their parents. They destroyed the worship center. They burned the cities and villages around Jerusalem. This was a bad group of people. They worshiped foreign gods. They even deified their leader, King Nebuchadnezzar. They built a statue of him on the plains of Dura. And they wanted everybody to bow down and worship. That was Babylon. And here's what the Bible says about those who were taken captive to Babylon.

Turn to Jeremiah Chapter 29. Keep your finger here in this passage. Turn to Jeremiah Chapter 29. In Jeremiah Chapter 29, here's what God says to the exiles who are headed to Babylon. This is hard for us to process and we need to emphasize it. Jeremiah Chapter 29 verse 4. Let's start there. "Thus says the Lord of hosts," Yahweh of the armies, "the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon." So here's the literal Babylon at the peak of its anti-God campaign. What are you going to do? Picket, that's what you should do. Boycott, that's what you should do. Make signs. No. Verse 5, "Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there," have big family, have big family reunions, "increase and don't decrease. But seek the welfare of the city." Now I wish we would just put the proper noun there because that placeholder is, just read it this way. I want you to seek the welfare of Babylon. That's the city they were sent to. That's the context, is it not? Seek the welfare of Babylon, "where I have sent you into exile, and" pray to Yahweh, "pray to the Lord on its



behalf." On what behalf? On behalf of Babylon. "For in its welfare you'll find your welfare." If it goes well for Babylon, it'll go well for you. So pray for Babylon.

Do you know how hard that must have been for the exiles? What are we called in the New Testament, by the way? Exiles, strangers, sojourners. Our citizenship is somewhere else. We're ex-pats here to use the phrase we use today. You don't belong here. Your citizenship is somewhere else. We're just passing through. And as we just pass through it's like the man who's well-groomed, kind of tiptoeing through the trash and kicking the milk cartons out of the way as he's heading off to go to church. And all I'm saying is you ought to care for the welfare not only of your physical environment and your home, but the cultural environment in which you live. You ought to care about the 276 souls that you work with if you work in an office of that size. You ought to care about the people on the plane that you get on a plane with. You ought to care about everyone around you. You ought to care about the society in which we live because God cares about them. Ask Jonah.

Ask Abraham, by the way, in the Old Testament. Do you know he advocated for a city? That's a pretty famous city. Matter of fact, we have used the name of this city to typify the perversion that was going on in that city in a rampant, exponential way. Abraham said to God, please. He cared for the people of Sodom. Now, did he approve of anything going on there in Sodom? No he didn't. Full of sodomites to use a word that's fallen out of favor. They're sodomites. Right? Sodom and Gomorrah were full of sinners, notorious sinners. And yet he pleads with God. Do you remember? What if there were 50 righteous people there, he wouldn't destroy the city for 50 righteous people. See, there's something unique about Christians in the midst of Babylon, which, according to the last generation, as we move toward Revelation Chapter 17 and 18, as we move toward the end of this epic that God has planned out, the Bible says it's like Babylon all over again, only it's worldwide. It's all over the place. And what you need to remember in Babylon is that you matter as a sanctifying group of people and as a sanctified group of people set apart for God you should be praying for Babylon. You should be praying for the sinful culture in which we live, so that it may go well for them that it might go well for you. This is super important.

And let me just try and drive this home by taking you to the book of Proverbs real quick. Proverbs Chapter 9. If you could look at this passage, there are a couple of passages in Proverbs that I think will help you, particularly at the end of the week with all this news coming from the Democratic National Convention. Did you watch some of that? Did you take your acid reflux medicine and watch that? Hard to watch. Did you break any screens you were watching? It was hard for Christians who love God and his Word to watch what was going on at the United Center in Chicago. I mean, speaker after speaker after speaker defying the facts. Gaslighting you about things that you've seen with your own eyes. Don't believe your eyes. Don't believe what's going on. And here they are saying things and their platform is all about freedom, they define freedom as all the things that Bible says this is absolutely egregious, right? Freedom to be Sodom and Gomorrah, freedom to be like Moloch and sacrifice our pre-born children. Freedom to say it's not a human being if you don't want the child. If she wants the child, of course, you can be convicted if you kill a pregnant woman and she wanted her child. But if you kill the child, if you didn't want the child, well, then it's just a



bunch of cells. It's, you know, you should let a woman choose her reproductive rights because you don't tell a woman what to do with her body. Well, that might be a great concept.

But of course, do you know what the reality is about the body that's in her womb? It's not her body. Did anybody think about that on the floor of the convention center? It's not how it works as the famous line from the famous pastor put it, "I was once a man trapped in a woman's body, literally." Anybody? Because guess what? When my mom was pregnant years ago, that was my body not her body. I was so different from her. Oh, so different from my mother in every way. And God has so constructed her reproductive organs to isolate that system, that reproductive system in her body so that her body as a female woman does not attack the foreign cells of a little baby boy growing inside of her. I got my own brain cells, I got my own DNA, I got my own chromosomes, I got my own fingerprints. And I'm very different than mama. That is not her body. And the reality of watching all that's going on out there it's not hard for us just to simply open up our Bibles and go, duh! Look at this passage in Proverbs Chapter 9, drop down to verse 10. Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." How much fear of the Lord was there at the Democratic National Convention or even the Republic National Convention earlier this year? How much fear of the Lord? Well, there was probably more at the Republic National Convention but there wasn't hardly any going on at the Democratic National Convention. Did you notice that? Fear of the Lord? They feared that perhaps if they said the wrong things God might punish them. Do you think there was a lot of fear there?

Matter of fact, it's funny that they attach words like "pride" to the things that God has clearly said you must not do this, this is an abomination to me. And they'll talk about we're proud about that. Do you follow me here? There's no fear of God in their eyes as Abraham once said when he came to a town and said, here's the problem, they don't fear the Lord here. But you can't be wise unless you fear the Lord. And so you sit here today, I hope, as a sub-subculture, a contrasted subculture of this world and you say, do you know what? I do fear the Lord. And therefore the Bible says that's the beginning of you starting to get smart. You get some wisdom there "and the knowledge of the Holy One, that's insight." If you really understand who God is, that's the beginning of you having insight. You can build a platform for your brand-new political party, Bob's Political Party. You could start it today and your platform could be more wise and more insightful and more intellectually rigorous than what you're going to find with people who do not fear God and do not know the Holy One. And the Bible says that's what we have. "For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life."

So here's the prosperity for me it's going to be connected to, it's going to be necessarily tied to how much wisdom and insight I have. And that comes from me fearing God. I don't want God to be opposed to what I'm affirming. I don't want God to be opposed to what I'm thinking. I don't want God to be opposed to what I'm doing. And I know that God, I've learned about that God. God has disclosed himself and revealed himself in the pages of a book that God has his fingerprints all over it. And that is what we need to know to be wise. And here's the thing. As long as we're in Proverbs, go to Chapter 14. If it rests in your heart, Proverbs Chapter 14, look at verse 33. If it rests in your heart, then you're a man of understanding.



"Wisdom rests in the hearts of a man of understanding, but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools." Now here's where I'm going to say I hope so. Because Paul said to them when we were leaving Fair Havens I told you don't leave Fair Havens. And Paul said, as they laughed at him, he said, I told you so. I told you this wasn't right. I told you this wasn't right. We should not have done this. Now I'm going to tell you something else that God has said and that is you're all going to be delivered because I'm on this ship, God's going to take me there and God's going to spare you. He doesn't have to spare you, but you ought to take heart. Stop being afraid because you're going to make it. You have to trust in God's promise. And you didn't listen to me last time. I sure hope you listen to me this time.

And all I'm saying here is that you should have wisdom that does make itself known in the midst of fools, because if you don't fear God and you don't know the living God then you are a fool and all you'll do in your reason, you can be super intellectual, be super smart, but you're going to end up in a place where you're going to have a foolish set of beliefs that you build your life on. And the Bible says it'd be good if the subculture, you and I, as we gather together on Sunday mornings, us, like so many other churches across the country that teach the Bible unapologetically. We gather together. We learn from God's Word. You go home and every morning, I hope, start by praying to the God who you know the Holy One and you read his Word and you learn more about him. You learn to fear God and to respect God and to follow God. And that, I should say, should be the thing that should be made known among fools. Which means at some point you're going to have to speak up and say a few things in this world. You need to let the knowledge be known. And you know what? If you start to just have the tentacles of wisdom go out, look at verse 34, well then that's the thing that exalts a nation, just like my life in my personal life is going to do well if I'm just going to live in concert with wisdom, the nation, to the extent that it still holds to some of the wisdom that we propagate.

Because when Barack Obama flies into Orange County, how many years ago, 12, 16, 14 years ago, and he sits with Rick Warren down the street here on that stage, and he says something very simple that he got from God's Word. And that was marriage is between a man, which we used to know what that is, and a woman, which we used to know what that was, and he said that from the platform and all those evangelical Christians in Orange County were saying "Yay." Some of you were there, perhaps. Right? Guess what? He didn't say that after he got elected. He didn't say that certainly in his campaign for a second term and hearing anyone in Chicago, in the United Center at the Democratic National Convention this week who was saying and that if they were, if they thought that they certainly weren't uttering that because they probably would have got beat up on the floor of the convention. That is wisdom. The wisdom is that is what marriage is.

Where did Barack Obama get that? You might say he was just reflecting the culture, he's trying to get elected. Fine. He said something that was true. And you know what? We need to still be saying that. Wisdom needs to make itself known even in the midst of fools, which means in your workplace when they've got something going on in the workroom and some discussion comes up and it's about the realities of, let's just say, marriage or gender fluidity, which I hinted to and I said, no, no, no, there's nothing fluid about gender. Oh, there's distinction between men. Some are middle linebackers and some are captains of the chess



club. I understand that, but men are men and women are women and their distinctive based on their genetics. They're distinctive. And God has rules for each. And to say marriage is between one man and one woman, not polyamorous, but one man and one woman together in a relationship, in a covenant relationship for life, which our politicians used to talk about. Right? Then if you were to say that today, you may get sneered at because no one's saying that anymore, but you are expressing wisdom that to the extent that that is having its tentacles go out into the nation, it "will exalt the nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."

So I understand it's a battle of ideas when you're going to stand up for something. When the Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) guy comes in and gives his seminar at your workplace and you ask a question about reality. "Well, what if I came in and pretended I was a bird, right? And then I tweeted around and flew around, you know, can I build a nest on my desk." They're thinking, wow, that's ridiculous. We just want to say do we see the folly? "Claiming to be wise they became fools," which is exactly where we're at in this world. And the problem with us is that we as Christians sometimes are just too silent to even speak up by the water cooler or in the lunchroom because we're afraid of what they're going to say. Please remember this: "Wisdom rests in the heart of understanding." You've got to, at some point, let it be "known in the midst of fools." You have to. And maybe, maybe, maybe folly will not prevail in our culture, because right now we're living in the most ridiculous period that American history has ever seen, and we're on the brink of something that's going to go downhill really fast unless you and I are willing to speak up about it and be ridiculed for it. And I'm saying gentleness and respect. I'm all about that. I want to be gentle and respectful when I say it, but I don't want to be unabashed in saying you need to understand I care about you enough to tell you the truth, and the truth is X, truth is Y, truth is Z. Whatever the truth is on whatever topic is on the table. And I'm telling you, I know the world has lost their minds and American culture has lost their minds. And the dumbing down of society has made a bunch of sheep who just follow whatever flashy thing is going on in our culture. But at some point, Christians are going to have to say something in the conversation. In the civil discourse, which I know there's hardly any civil discourse left, but you be civil and say the right things and say what is true. This is how this works. Pray for the welfare of Babylon. Because when it goes well, it goes well for us.

One more passage on this before I leave this point. First Timothy Chapter 2. And you want me to leave this point. I know, I can see it on your face. I'm leaving the point in just a minute. But go to First Timothy Chapter 2. First Timothy Chapter 2. Why do I want to pray for Babylon? Why do I want to pray for the Babylonians? Why do I want to pray for the Democratic National Convention, the Republican National Convention? Why do I want to pray for this election, why? Well because verse 2 says, if I pray for them, "kings in high positions," those who are doing the policymaking in our country, well, "then it can lead," if there's any wisdom left there, to a "peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." Do you know what I want? I want the government to keep their hands out of my life. That's what I want. And people think, "Ah, he's a Republican. He must be really into this Trump thing." Listen, this is biblical Christianity. I don't want the kings or the governors or the Roman officials messing with us because our job, what does it say here? Verse 3, is to live in that way, peaceful, dignified, doing what we're called to do. "That's good and it's pleasing in the



sight of God our Savior." Why? "He desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." That's my job, to keep people saved and to give them the truth. I want to be able to do that unmolested by the government. I don't want the government telling me when we can meet, when we can't meet, what we can say, what we can't say.

My sermons are broadcast on almost a thousand stations across the country. We get a lot of criticism for that, and I understand that. But here's what I'm saying, I want the government out of all of this. I don't want people anywhere in government trying to tell us what we can and cannot say. And this is not Islam. We're not trying to shut down every other voice that makes a claim about God. All the truth claims they can be tested in the marketplace of ideas. I'm all about that. Let's go to war. And the war is not that we lose respectability or gentleness in our conversation, it's just that we're willing to have arguments that are actually tenable, that go and tear down everything that's raised up against the knowledge of God, the true God. That's our job. And we have to at least say that is the position of biblical Christianity. And it starts with you, first of all, at least praying, verse 1. "First of all, then, I urge you," this is First Timothy Chapter 2 verse 1, "that supplications and prayers and intercessions and thanksgivings be made for all people." Does God care about the 276 people on that ship? He does. Does he care about our country right now? Yes he does. Does he care about the 3.3 million people in Orange County? Yes he does. Does he care about us? Yeah. Is my cultural concern supposed to be my ultimate priority? No. And if I'm feeding the beast in some of your minds and you can't wait to slap me on the back in the lobby, this should not be our primary priority. Just like me fixing my fence in my yard should not be my ultimate priority. But it is a priority.

And so here I am preaching about a priority because I see Paul caring for the Romans and the merchants, who are probably doing exactly the opposite of what James said you shouldn't do and that is I'm going to go to such and such a city, I'm going to make a profit, then I'm going to come back. And they didn't care about God. They didn't say if the Lord wills. Yeah, they're sinners. He knows that. But God has shown that he cares for the 276 people. Jonah learned that God cared for the Assyrians. And you know what? You should care for the Americans, and you should care for our world, and you should be praying that we can have the kinds of leaders. Yes, you should pray and do more than prayer. If you want wisdom, you know you better register to vote and you better vote. And you better vote based on the principles of what's the best situation we can have given the relative mess that we're in. And you know what? I'm not running, so you know what? And your favorite Christian isn't running. Not that I mean to equate those things in any way. And I know I'm not your favorite Christian, but I'm just telling you this, right? We've got to elect a bus driver for this bus who can drive a little better than the last one. That's all we're looking for here.

So let's do what we can do to let wisdom be known so that we can live unmolested, godly and dignified in every way, and care about the things God cares about. What does he care about? He wants to see "people saved," and he wants them to "know the knowledge of the truth." That's all we want. We want to broadcast the truth. We want to talk about the truth. We want to be able to speak up in our offices without getting arrested for hate speech because we disagree with someone. If you can't read Romans Chapter 1 without being arrested, we're in a



whole different world than we used to be in. And then it feels like maybe, perhaps we're going to be in China or North Korea soon. And all I'm telling you is we have to see righteousness exalt our nation. This is not our primary concern, but it has to be a concern by you sharing the truth wherever you possibly can in a dignified, respectful, gentle way. I'm not asking for you to yell, get redneck, get your veins popped out on your neck. That's not what we're looking for. But you better pray. You better vote. You better care about Babylon's welfare. Well, that was a lot right there. (audience clapping) No, no, don't encourage me. It could get worse. So don't clap. No telling where I'll go next.

Verse 23. Go back to our passage now. Acts Chapter 27 verse 23, "For this very night there stood before me an angel of God to whom I belong," I love that phrase, "and to whom I worship." Love that phrase. That's a different sermon. "But he said," this angel said, speaking for God, hey, Paul, don't be afraid. You're tossing your cookies. You haven't eaten for days. You've lost all your luggage. "Don't be afraid, you must stand before Caesar." You're going to make it to Rome. "And behold, God has granted to you all those who sail with you." Well, that's cool, that's gratis, that's super grace from God. Fantastic. Okay. Paul goes on to say in verse 25, "You can take heart for I have faith that God is going to do what he said." And here are people expected to have faith in what God said through the apostle. He's just relaying the message. You should be able to have your disposition affected by the fact that you believe what God has said to you. I'm relaying it to you, and Paul says, I believe it, because God said this is what I'm going to do. And when God says he's going to do something, God is going to do something.

Number two, put it down this way. "Be Assured God's Plans Prevail." His plans prevail. His plans prevail. Whatever he plans to do he gets it done. Now there's a "want." He wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Right? That's what he wants. That's his "prescribed" will. But he gets done his purpose. Jot this reference down, if you would. We won't take time to turn there. Isaiah 46 verses 8 through 13. I won't turn you there because I've turned you there so often in the last year or two. This passage is great to remind us that when God plans to do something, he gets it done. We have to believe that. The vapid promises of politicians notwithstanding. You hear a lot of promises. When the King of kings and Lord of lords makes a decision and a plan, it always is... There's no Congress that can overrule it. There's no veto power in the populace and polls don't matter. If God wants something to happen, it's going to happen.

Now there are three groups here. There's Babylon that we live in. There are the 276 people, and most of them are not Christians on this ship. Aristarchus and Luke are the exceptions. But I just want to think through what is God's plan. Let's start first with his plan for this world. Turn with me to Revelation 17. As long as I mentioned this earlier, I'll go to the last book of the Bible and look at Chapter 17. I just want to remind you this is where the world is heading. But just like I am not going to dismiss everything I've said because this is the end plan for the world, it's the same reason I'll go home, see the leaning wall which I have, this mason wall that's turning over from my neighbor's roots. And I should really work to fix that. Even though I know this. The Bible says very clearly in Second Peter Chapter 3, it's all going to burn. Everything I have is going to burn. Or I can read Ecclesiastes, my house one day someone



else is going to be living in it, or they're going to knock it down and they're going to build a better house and some young couple is going to move in when I'm dead and gone. Yes, I know I can't keep it and I can't take it with me. And one day if Christ comes back it's all going to burn. That doesn't mean I don't weed the garden, and that doesn't mean I don't fix the wall.

Same thing in the culture. I know this is the end for Babylon and by that I mean the world system. Just take a look at how it's described. Verse 1 Chapter 17, "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls," they were judging the world, "said to me," the bowls were poured out, God's judgment, "Come, and I'll show you the judgment of the great prostitute," there's a word, "who is seated on many waters," right? A lot of applause. Verse 2, "With whom the kings of the earth have committed sexual immorality." Do you know that the theme of sexual immorality in the Bible as relates to God is always people worshiping and pursuing other things rather than God? It's called idolatry. It's called spiritual immorality. It's people who don't really care about the King of kings and Lord of lords, they do whatever else they want. "And with the wine of who's sexual immorality, the dwellers of the earth have become drunk," right? Debauchery, drunkenness and sexual immorality certainly hit on the topic not only of someone else that you're pursuing or something else that you're pursuing rather than God as your ultimate concern, you have another god before the real God, but it also speaks to the clear thread that runs through every other false god and that is just he'll give you what you really want. It started in the Garden. This is good to look at and good to eat and it will give you wisdom so this is better for you.

People love gods that deliver what they want. You make something that you want in your mind and the other gods will give it to you. The real God might say, no, that's not good for you, right? Do you want to eat Twinkies for breakfast, right? There are plenty of gods of this world that will give you what you want. The real God is a parental God and he's going to say, no, that's not good for you. Many things that you want because those are the fleshly desires. A whole other sermon. But that's why these themes are the way they are, sexual immorality, drunkenness. "And he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of blasphemous names and it had seven heads and ten horns." This is what we call apocalyptic literature. It's filled with symbolism. It goes back to the book of Zachariah. It goes back to the way this woman sat in a basket, and all the sins and iniquities are put in it and it's sealed up. You can read it on your own. But these ideas of God taking sin and at some point containing it and dealing with it, this is where the mind is going to go if someone knows the Old Testament.

"The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet," rich. Do you ever notice how a lot of sinful ideas when they do well in culture, it enriches those who have it? Just look at the net worth of all the people pushing the things that everyone loves to applaud that today that God says is an abomination. They get richer and richer all the time. "The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of the abominations and the impurities of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead was written a name of mystery." What was it called? "Babylon the Great" there it is, "the mother of prostitutes and the earth's abominations. And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Now, if they invited me to the Democratic National



Convention to speak this week, just imagine that for a second. (audience laughing) And I got up on stage in Chicago, where I used to live and stand up on that stage, and I start talking and I say, first, open your Bibles. I mean, let's just think of that sentence. Just how would that go? Open your Bibles, everybody. I want to remind us of a few things we've heard this week. Maybe I get to speak on Thursday afternoon. A lot of things we've heard. I just want to show you what God thinks. Just how would that go? How would that go?

I'll tell you what, you can say a lot of things, but you start quoting the Bible and you start saying I am a Christian who believes that what God did is save me from my sin, and the sin is sin, and it should cast me out of his presence. But because of Christ, he's come to save me. And now he says, you ought to pursue righteousness, and you need to know the knowledge of truth. You ought to fear that God. He ought to be the ultimate authority, right? I don't know if I'd get out alive. I better bring a real big security team. It's going to be horrid. Why? Because this always seems to happen. Now, what if I was a Muslim cleric or a Hindu, right? Or maybe I was a, you know, a Buddhist monk or something. How do you think it would go for me? Well, probably a lot better even if I said some things they didn't like. This is how it always works. The governmental system that one day in the Bible says is going to be worldwide. It's going to have the kind of philosophy that lets everybody do whatever they want, it doesn't matter how perverse it is, they will become rich, they will become wealthy, and they will pit themselves against the truth of Christ. And ultimately, the leader is going to be called the Antichrist. This is how the Bible describes it.

Okay. That's what we have, now turn to Chapter 18. Here's what God plans for it. And this is exactly what's going to happen. Revelation Chapter 18 verse 1, "After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory." This is a powerful angel. "And he called out with a mighty voice, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She's become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean detestable beast. For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth,'" now this is universal, this is worldwide, "'have committed immorality with her.'" If you wonder why conservative, Bible-believing Christians don't like the idea of a world order, and we're not real keen on the League of Nations or what now is called the United Nations. The reason we don't like the one world system is because the Bible says once you have that consolidated power, the ultimate prophecy of Scripture is it is going to be based on something that is going to ultimately pit itself against Christianity, and it will be drunk on the immorality and the perversion of telling people to do whatever feels good. "The kings of the earth have committed immorality with her." And when you get all these nations bowing down to this, "the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of a luxurious living."

Okay, so the plan for Babylon, the world in which we live, is destruction. In the meantime, he's giving people grace just like on that ship. If you don't repent, you may still be saved from this temporal shipwreck. You may not drown in the cold, you know, October waters of the Mediterranean. But you're going to go to hell if you don't repent. You ought to listen to what the truth is. And the truth is you need Christ. You need trust in Christ. And for us, if we do have trust in Christ what's God's plan for us? The subculture, the persecuted, embattled



subculture. Well, here it is in verse 4, "I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Pay her back as she's paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed.'" So God is going to punish them and here's what he says to you and me, "Come out." Now wait a minute. You're just telling me to speak up in my workroom. You're telling me around the water cooler to say wisdom. You've just gotten me in a lot of trouble at work, and now you're saying come out. I'm not talking about communes. I'm not talking about disconnection. I'm not talking about monasteries. I'm talking about that your life should be distinctive.

Now jot this down, we don't have time for it. But Second Corinthians Chapter 6 is all about this. And Second Corinthians Chapter 6 starting in verse 14, going all the way through the first verse of the next chapter, Chapter 7 verse 1, tells us that we ought to not be linked in sin with them, that we cannot have a yoking together with unbelievers that say, yes, I want to live by this philosophy. Let me be your business partner. No. Can I work with non-Christians? I have to, Paul said I'd have to leave the world if I wasn't going to have connections with non-Christians. But I cannot be unequally yoked and I cannot buy the things that they buy and do the things that they do and entertain myself the way that they do. I've got to be separate. So this is hard to be in the world and even influencing the culture without being of it. I go into my house, even if I worked all day on the garden and we did that thing, took all the thorns and weeds out of the garden, I'm not living in the garden, right? I have a different set of standards, and I'm going to be retreating from the moral standards of the culture. So God's plan for the rebellious Babylon is destruction. God's plan for you and me is distinction. What's for them? Destruction. What's for us? Distinction. And that distinction should be seen when you interact with them and speak to them.

And it's easy for us just to get mad at them. But you need to speak to them the wisdom that exalts a nation. And in your life be distinctive. Don't laugh at the things they laugh at. Don't chase the things that they chase. I mean, even down to the simplest... Think about the average person at your job. They work for the weekend. I mean, how many songs have you heard about that? Right? We're working for the weekend. That's all it's about. And we're trying to drive ourselves to retirement. You understand the Bible says you go in the weekend to get refreshed so you can go do the work God's called you to do. We rest so that we can work. They work so they can rest. The realities in the Bible are going to take you to a whole different place. You're going to live by a whole different set of standards. And I'm just telling you, you need to be distinct. And so much we could say on that. Well, it sounds like a hard road for us. Well, it is. And Jesus said there's going to be a narrow road and a small gate and the way is going to be hard. But where does it end? As long as we're in Revelation let's just go to the very end. Go to Chapter 21. Where does it go? As long as I'm alliterating this, destruction for rebellious Babylon. Distinction for you and me now, that's called our sanctification. How about this?

Let's head it with this one. As long as we're putting sub-points here. Delight. We are going to have the ultimate satisfaction. "New heaven, new earth." All that's now being unveiled here in



this chapter. "For the first earth is passed away." Well, thank God for that, because it wasn't so hot here after Genesis 3. "And the sea was no more." Which is the picture in Scripture of the tumult and the rebellion against God. To think that harlot "sat on many waters." Even Paul, in our passage in Chapter 27 of Acts threatened by the tumultuous seas, nothing's going to rise up in rebellion against God in this new place. "I saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem," verse 2, "coming down from heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." As I sit there with the best seat in the house, and I have to stand through the services, at those weddings, at the front of the aisle, I have this guy next to me. He can be the toughest, meanest dude in our church, but he stands there and blubbers as his girl comes down the aisle looking as good as she's ever looked. And I went through pre-marital with all these gals. I see them and then I see them on wedding day. And I have to check. Is this the girl? Yes, this is her. I've never seen her look so good. And he's sitting there blubbling like, "she's so pretty, she's so pretty."

Okay. That's the picture of you, the blubbling groom when God is sending your new home down the aisle like a bride "prepared for her husband." The delight of every Christian is the home that God is bringing us. And what does he say? "A loud voice," verse 3, "from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.'" You've never had the experience with God that you are going to have, praying to him long distance, having the comfort of the Spirit, that's nothing like what you're going to have when God unleashes his glory in your presence. He made you. He knows exactly what will delight you, exactly what will satisfy you, and all of that's coming your way the Bible says if you are a Christian. "And God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear" verse 4, "from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither shall there be any mourning, no crying, no pain anymore, the former things have passed away. And he who was seated on the throne said, 'Behold, I am making all things new.' And he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" Just like Paul said, I can take this to the bank. God told me, and this is exactly what's going to happen. And of course, God's batting record is perfect, and this is going to happen for all those whose trust is in Christ.

Well, hopefully all the people who aren't Christians they'll just go to sleep and they'll just stop existing. Not true. Annihilationism or conditional immortality, as theologians like to call it, is bunk. It's baloney. I don't care if John Stott teaches. I don't care who teaches it. It is not what the Bible says. And you and I need to be absolutely clear. If you're not a Christian here, you will hear from God, "Depart from me, I never knew you, into outer darkness where there's weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth." That's the reality for those who reject Christ. And you have an opportunity right here today to embrace him by faith and say I need him because I'm a sinner, or reject him and say this is for weak people, it's a crutch. And it's more than a crutch, it's a gurney. And you got to climb on the gurney and say my whole life needs to rest on Christ because I'm a sinner and if I fear God the way I ought to, I'd be threatened in my mind to ever think for a minute that I'm going to face him one day, and he's going to know every thought I've ever thought, everything I've ever done. You need Christ, and you need to trust in him.



He says this is what's going to happen for his kids. "Write it down. These words are trustworthy and true.' And he said to me, 'It is done! I'm the Alpha, the Omega, the beginning, the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. And the one who conquers will have this heritage, I will be his God and he will be my son. But for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.'" Which, by the way, "they get tormented there," the Bible says in Chapter 20, "day and night forever and ever." All in varying degrees based on how they lived their lives. But you need to be assured God's plans prevail. Destruction for Babylon. Distinction for us now. Delight for us one day.

Back to our passage. We read it this way. I emphasize this, but in Acts 27 he says in verse 22, you guys should take heart. You're not going to die. He says, God came to me and said we're going to survive. I'm going to get to Rome. And God told me, do not be afraid. In verse 25, he then says you guys shouldn't be afraid. I know God's going to do what he said. "So take heart," even though I know "we're going to run aground on some island," we're going to go through a shipwreck. Are your clothes going to get wet? Yes. So the October Mediterranean is cold? Yes. It's going to be cold. Are we still going to be hungry for a while? Yes. Until we find some food on the island. But that's okay. Don't be afraid. Whatever you learn from Scripture, if you understand the trustworthiness of God's promise, and you put yourself on the right side of history by embracing Christ and being willing to be ridiculed by the elites of our world who have all the money, all the power, all the people who sit there and say the ridiculous things on all the Ivy League campuses, just because they see that one seems to be more powerful than the other, they're always going to be as these neo-Marxist going for the oppressed instead of the oppressor, when in reality the oppressed, quote unquote, are in there raping and murdering people. And you can't do anything about it because, you know, you're the powerful one. If that mentality is going to prevail, if you're going to stand up the Democratic National Convention and talk about the indigenous people whose land we're on, this is insane the kinds of things we're talking about. And what we need to know is that God says if you're on the right side of history, no matter how much you're ridiculed, no matter how much you're excluded, no matter how hard is, and if God has to take you, as we talked about last week, through the shipwrecks of this world, right? You should never fear. Number three, just put it down that way, "Never Fear." Never fear. There's no place for fear in the Christian life. You have an omnipotent God who's told you not to fear.

One last passage just to drive this home. Revelation Chapter 1. There is no place for fear because the one who is more powerful than anybody who can seize your money, more powerful than the government that's behind the IRS, more powerful than anyone who can throw you in jail, or anyone, if I'm talking to the Apostle Paul, who can lop your head off in a basket in Rome, more powerful than all that is the Christ who died for us and rose again. Now who wrote the book of Revelation? Who wrote it? Who's the human author? John. Which John? John the Apostle. John the Apostle liked to stick his tongue out at Luke and Matthew and Mark. Did you ever notice that in his writings like, "Well, I was the one, you know, I was the one who Jesus loved." Just like, stop, right? So John is like really tight. Matter of fact, he says, "I was the one who always sat next to him. I leaned my head against his chest when we



were eating." Because that's the ancient Near Eastern way to eat on a low table and they would lean on their shoulder. And he says, "Yeah, I was always next to him. I'm the one he really liked." Okay, John, settle down.

But John, really loved by Christ, if there's anyone who is going to say, man, we talked so many times, I know his voice, all of that. When he meets Christ who now has the glory that John 17 said Jesus knew would be restored to him after his earthly ministry when he walked around with a beard and toenails and all that. Well, he's going to have a beard and toenails, but now it's going to be a completely different ballgame. Take a look at Revelation Chapter 1 and see what's going on in this text. Verse 12, John writes, "I turned to see the voice of the one speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands was one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe, and with a golden sash around his chest." Well, it seems like he's royalty. More than that, and "the hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like flames of fire." So his eyes are like flame throwers. Just picture this. What's this? Crazy. "And his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters."

Have you ever been to Niagara Falls? It's not a quiet place. Here is Jesus, who has whispered things in John's ear about Judas. And think about it when Jesus speaks now as the glorified King, it's like Niagara Falls. His eyes are like flamethrowers. His feet, you can't even look at his feet. They're "like burnished bronze," that are glowing in a fire. That's crazy. And in his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength." Let's just dismiss for a second and go out and stare at the sun for a while. Do you want to do that with me? No. He couldn't even look in his face. That's crazy. "When I saw him," verse 17, this weird, exalted king, "I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, 'Fear not.'" Don't be afraid. You're one of mine. "I'm the first and the last." There's no one before me. There's no one after me. "I'm the living one." And I mean living one who never is subject to death. "I died," in my human humility, in my human time of service to the King in dying on behalf of people's sin. "But behold, now I'm alive forevermore." And guess what I have dangling off my hip, right? "The keys of death and hell." There's no one else who has that, Buddha doesn't have it, Muhammad doesn't have it, no one has the keys for death and hell, but Jesus.

Now you can put confetti and balloons and drop them all on your best candidate of this world. But you cannot have this experience with any human being. Here we have the King of kings and Lord of lords who's in charge of all things. And if in fact you've repented of your sins and put your trust in Christ, he says you're mine and my plan for you, whatever the specific plan, it's going to be accomplished. I'm going to "work everything together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose." And he's got a purpose for you, just like you got a purpose for the church at large, which is distinction in our sanctification and delight in the eschatological end of our faith. But for now you have nothing to fear. Paul, are you going to be floating on a piece of a ship and make your way to the shores of Malta? Yes, that's going to happen. Shipwrecked. But I'm not going to be afraid. I don't know if you're a fearful Christian, but you got to stop with that. And I know some of you will watch the Democratic National Convention this week and if you have any semblance of morality, you're



scared. You're thinking, what if she got elected? What if these guys are in charge? I mean, you should be concerned enough to groan, but you should never fear. I don't care if Nebuchadnezzar is elected. I don't care if it is Nero. It doesn't matter if it's Pharaoh from the Old Testament. It doesn't matter if it's Sennacherib. Ashurbanipal. You can pick anyone, Antiochus Epiphanies from the inter-testament period. You pick an anti-Christian leader. It won't matter if it's the Antichrist himself. Because, as Paul said to the Thessalonians, he's going to destroy them with just the word of his mouth, breath of his mouth. They're going to say a word and it will be over. You're rightly related to the most powerful person in the universe and you know where this is all headed.

I know I raised some competitive kids. I didn't mean to. It's just who I married and who I am. And the combination, it was inevitable. Okay, I'll take some blame, but we're going to share the blame here. But you usually think it ends there. But I got to babysit two of my soon-to-be six grandchildren this Friday night. And, I saw that it just shot right on through to another generation. Now, this is a two-year-old and a three-year-old roughly speaking. Right? And of course, I love my grandkids. I get to see them occasionally and sometimes they get to, you know, go to Pepaw's house and it's a lot of fun and all that. But I thought, what's the Ruth's Chris equivalent, you know, what's the great place for the kids? So I thought, let's go to Chick-fil-A. So we go to Chick-fil-A. And one of the reasons why we went to Chick-fil-A, is because we can make a bit of a date out of this. And I know they got that indoor playground. So we go there and I put my two grandkids, two- and three-year-olds, which is like what it says, right? You get like this for three and under in this little playground, there's a little bench in the corner and no one was in there. I walk in, it stinks a little bit as you think, you know, these indoor playgrounds do. And of course, it was just so idyllic. Norman Rockwell was nearby, ready to paint a picture of me as I was taking their shoes off and holding their shoes and sipping on an iced tea. And I was just like, oh, this is great.

And they're there starting to play in this little jungle gym. Have you been there, moms, do you know where this is? And then it's like, a bus must have stopped and a bunch of sixth graders got out of it and they all ran into the playground. Sixth graders, like starting to need deodorant and running around. And this thing started to smell worse immediately. And they come in and they start talking about, "Let's play tag!" And so they want to play tag. Okay, now I got a few choices here as a grandparent, right? First of all, I'm looking at them all thinking can I take them all? Can I take them all at one time if I have to? Right? I had my back in the corner. I thought I could probably pull this off. So I'm bigger than all of them. Little, little twiggy arms, little pre-adolescent bodies. And yet I didn't want to interfere. I don't want to be one of those grandparents. I'm not going to intervene. Just like, okay, as long as no one gets, you know, injured, I don't bring the kids back to their parents with stitches. I was like, okay, I'm just going to see how this plays out. Well, they want to play tag. Well, I got a two-year-old and a three-year-old in there and guess what they want to do now? Play tag. And they not only want to play tag, they want to win, at two and three, against kids who are twice their size running around. And this is like a militant kid. They're climbing on the outside of... I'm waiting for someone in a Chick-fil-A outfit to come in and police this thing. I'm on call. Right? I'm there, I'm watching. Right? I put my drink down, I'm ready to leap into action, but I'm watching them getting hit and bumped and kicked and just all these things are happening, I almost intervene.



I lean forward a few times. I never had to intervene. And I'm thinking, you're getting knocked around.

And here's the thing I kept saying in my own mind. I promised them at the outset, we were going to have a great night with grandpa. We're going to go to Chick-fil-A and after Chick-fil-A when it's ending and we already eat our stuff we're going to go get ice cream, and then we're going to go to Pepaw's house, and we're going to sit in his recliner and we're going to watch whatever, Bluey, you know, a bunch of words I never knew before. Cocomelon whatever. We're going to watch these weird videos as I fall asleep underneath you. So they get beat up for a while in the jungle gym there, this indoor playground and I just kept thinking, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay. And sure enough when they've had enough I said, let's go. We're going to go gorge ourselves on ice cream, and then we're going to go and sit in the most comfortable seat in the house, and we're just going to stare off into our big screen TV. And they were as pleased as punch. And even my little Jordan was sitting there, he's not mine, but one step removed. My grandson, right? I see his eyes start to droop as he's sitting there watching Cocomelon or whatever we were watching. I thought to myself, this is it, man. And I knew it the whole time. I knew it when they were getting punched and kicked and thrown around in that playground that I hate to tell their parents how bad it was, but I thought it's all going to end well.

And even if anyone wanted to really do damage to them, I might get up and probably end up in jail. But I'm going to fix these e-bike-riding sixth graders. (audience laughing) Don't clap at that. Don't egg me on. And now I pastor a bunch of children of God who I know are getting beat up. And I know it's hard out there, and I know it can be scary if you don't have your hand firmly placed in Christ's. But you need to. And if you're not there yet, you'd better get there soon, because who knows when the door of opportunity is going to close. If you're not a Christian here today, today's the day you got to do it. You better do it. You might have some really good intellectual reason not to do it. And if you do, let's talk. We got to figure that out. There is a God who has revealed himself. He's made it very clear in the pages of Scripture. It's time for you to get right with the living God. And I'm telling you, if you are there's nothing to fear. Care about these people. Care about them. I got to care about the e-bike-riding sixth graders. I got to care about the Democratic Party. I got to care about the people at my job if I work where you do, that they're just the worst, I got to care about them because God cares about them. Read the Word. Abraham got the message. Jonah got the message. Paul gets the message. I want you to get the message. Be assured God's plans will prevail. Get on the right side of history. And when you are, never fear.

Let's pray. God, help us please to never be afraid in this world. Help us not to long for the old days, even as Solomon said, if you just keep talking about the good old days, then we've missed something. Something's really wrong with us. We know history is marching forward. We know things are going to go from bad to worse, but we are going to continue to care for our culture. It's not our primary priority, but it is to be a priority. I should care, I should pray, I should vote, I should make sure I'm doing what I can around the water cooler when the conversation goes in a direction that is absolutely antithetical to what you've said. And then maybe one day when all of this philosophy falls apart, the stuff on gender and marriage and



all the rest we'll be able to say with the Apostle Paul, you know, you should have listened to me. I told you. And not to be snarky, but just to be one who's consistently relaying the wisdom of God in our generation. So help us God, please, to do this well, to do it with gentleness and respect, to have our words seasoned as they should be with salt, so to speak. To be able to know how to answer outsiders and be gracious in our speech with them, but to speak up for what's right.

In Jesus name. Amen.