



Courageous Endurance – Part 3

Motivated by Our Sanctifying Effect

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Well, it can be sobering to observe that God records in the Bible the way things are, not always the way we would like them to be, even when it comes to the unvarnished portrayal of his people. We see all the warts and wrinkles. And that's particularly evident when we read about some of the leaders and the heroes of the Bible. I think of their state of mind so often like in Numbers Chapter 11 when Moses is trying to lead the people, he gets so frustrated, he says, God, I hate this job. This is a Mike Fabarez paraphrase. But I hate this job. I can't stand these people. I want to check out. Not just of the job, not just of the immediate circumstances, he wants to check out of life. He says, God, just please take my life. I mean, that's sobering. I see it not just in him but I see it in great leaders like Elijah. What a great prophet of God. Here he is in First Kings Chapter 18 in the showdown with the prophets of Baal he just seems like invincible, indomitable. And yet in the next Chapter he's running from Queen Jezebel and he's tired and exhausted without food and he finally just feels so embattled he drops down under a tree and he begs God, God, take my life, I don't want to live anymore.

Job, of course, and we can understand how bad and despondent he felt. His kids had been buried, his wealth had been taken, his wife had turned on him. And, Chapters 3 through 6 in Job, he just keeps repeating the fact that, you know, cursed be the day I was born. I wish I was never born. Why didn't I die as an infant? Then he says, God, you've done so much against me already in Chapter 6, why don't you just go on and just crush me? Blot me out. I'm done. I don't want to live anymore. Jonah Chapter 4, I mean, after this act of God that God did through him that he didn't like he sat under that tree and the tree gave him shade, the tree died and he said, that's what I want. I want to die. Just please God end my life. I don't want to live anymore. Even the Apostle Paul whose life we've been studying in the book of Acts, he confesses to the Corinthians in Second Corinthians Chapter 1, he said on one of my missionary journeys, which is several of them I'm sure were indicative of this, there were times that were so bad I just didn't want to live. I "despaired even of life." I was hopeless, I didn't want to go on anymore.

And yet all five of those cases that I've just referenced, every single one of them, God said, no, I'm not granting your request. You're not done yet. And it wasn't because God had more, you know, joys of life for them to experience or more heights to achieve or more vacation spots to go, you know, check out. It was because I'm not done doing things through your life that I want to get done in this world. I want to continue to use you. And when you're done you'll be done, right? When the race will finish and you'll be done, but there are a set of good works, there are a set of things I have planned for you that I need you to fulfill. And so you're not checking out. I'm not going to grant that request. I look out at you and most of you look very much alive. Most of you look like you're still breathing. You look alert, sentient. It's clear that if you come today as a Christian to church that if you are, in fact, a Christian God has you alive because he's not done with you yet. He's not done with what he wants to do with you here. I mean, Paul confessed it'd be better for me to die, he said it would be much better, far better for us to be there than here. But there's work to be done, and I'm assuming very



emphatically and without any doubt, the good works that he's prepared beforehand that you should walk in, they're not finished yet.

Even if you're going to die next Friday. Right? There are several things left for you to do between now and then. If you live on into next year or maybe into the next decade or maybe 25 years from now, if you're still alive, there are still things that God wants you to do. You're going to need some bold, tenacious courage, a kind of endurance that takes you through it all that tells you I'm not going to give up, I'm not going to quit, you've got me here for a reason. Sometimes it's good for us to think about that. Particularly as we study the life of Paul who not only at times felt like he wanted to die. Many times there were people who wanted to kill him. And we're in the middle of a story about a storm that seemed like it was wanting to kill him and he was trying to stay alive and was staying alive because God had said I'm not done with you yet. And clearly through special revelation he says through that angel you're going to make it all the way to Rome. You're going to stand before Caesar. I got work for you to do there on the shores of Italy. So you're going to get there. You're not going to die in this storm on the sea of the Mediterranean. You're going to continue to move on.

I want you to look at this story as we pick it up in the middle of this tumultuous sea that we have been tracking in Chapter 27 of Acts. And as you turn there, I'd like you to look at verses 27 through 38. And in this section of Scripture, which as you turn there I want you to know it is a challenge to read a passage like this and take the time to spend our time profitably in doing what God has called us to do. And if I can just engage in a sidebar here for a little bit it may be helpful in helping you to understand what we do here every weekend. Our job, as Jeremiah 23 would say, or Second Timothy Chapter 4, or clearly in reading passages like James Chapter 1, all of these texts remind us that when we're in a preaching event my job as a preacher is to proclaim God's Word to you in such a way as it helps you to think rightly about God and everything else and to do what is right. So I'm trying to help you think and do what is right. That's in Scripture we would call that instruction or teaching, and it always involves a life change and thinking rightly, changing your thoughts, changing your behavior. And that is what we would call in terms of the categories that we have to choose from, we would call that didactic. A didactic experience. It comes from the Greek word "didaktikós" in the New Testament.

But we use that word for several things, not only through the event, an oral event of me teaching and instructing, which the Bible would define as helping you to think in a particular way and to act in a particular way. Certainly the thinking starts with your trust in Christ, but from then in your sanctification, continuing to think rightly and do what is right. But we go to God's Word which is filled with all kinds of literary genres because that's what we're dealing with. What type of event is this? Right? I'm not sitting here giving you a bunch of facts. You're not a detective just taking facts from me. I'm here to help you, to persuade you, to think logically through God's truth, to help you to think rightly and do what is right. But in the Scripture we find all kinds of categories of literary genres. And what we've been studying here for some time back in Luke and all the way through Acts, much of it has been a kind of genre that is not didactic.



Now there are several didactic sections of Scripture. You can look at the prophets trying to help the people in Israel think rightly and do what is right. You see the apostles in the New Testament often the recording of their letters filled with imperatives, grammatical imperatives, telling people here's how you need to think and here's the wrong way to think and here's the wrong thing to do and here's the right thing to do. That's very obvious in certain sections of the Bible. And it's where all neophyte preachers should start. We should take those didactic sections of literary genres in the Bible and turn them into an audible preaching event where we're doing the same thing. Now there's still historical distance to bridge and it's not as easy as it sounds, but that's the easiest of the kind of expository preaching that we do. But we've been in a particular genre for a long time now and most of that is what we would call a narrative genre. And a narrative genre is not "think this way and do this." It's "this is what happened." And probably Acts 27 is the most lengthy and protracted section of just Luke going on and on, by God's Spirit carrying him along to record what's going on. And he's simply saying this is what happened.

And if you came to church to study Acts 27, for instance, you wouldn't leave expecting the preacher to tell you, well, you need to get on a ship and you need to go into a storm and you need to be shipwrecked on an island somewhere like Paul did. You would never expect that, right? Because just because something happened in the Bible doesn't mean that that's what you're supposed to do. So the preacher's task with a narrative genre of the literary text of Scripture is to somehow take that literary text of Scripture that is narrative and somehow work in the study throughout the week to bring it into a didactic kind of oral experience where what we're doing here is helping you to think in a particular way and do certain things. So that's a much more difficult challenge. I'm not trying to get you to, you know, see how hard this is but, you know, to see how hard this is, it's a hard thing to do. It's not easy. And there are other genres, of course, in the Scripture but the Bible is very clear in passages like First Corinthians Chapter 10 that all the narrative texts of Scripture, and he's talking about it in First Corinthians 10 about the wilderness wanderings, they're all there for our instruction. Paul says it to the Romans as well.

So if all the narratives, so this is what happened in biblical history, are also supposed to be instructive or didactic. Right? Then we have to somehow look at what happened even if it's on a ship in the middle of the Mediterranean and think what did we see here? How is God trying to through what happened in this passage, how are we supposed to learn how to think and how to live? So that's why in a passage like this, and many of them in previous sermons, I take you to a lot of other texts of Scripture, because the other texts of Scripture are very clearly in didactic sections of the Bible helping you to think in a particular way and act in a particular way. Do you understand that? So every time I say, would you turn to this passage? It's really important that you look at those texts because that's where we find the authority to be able to say from this historical event, this is what happened in the first century on the Mediterranean, this is why we ought to think and act in this particular way, and there ought to be some correspondence between the two. Maybe there's a pattern here, or there's a principle here, or there's a template here, there's a paradigm here, but there's something that we see and then we can transfer it to this principle that's a didactic principle in the text of



Scripture. And then the weight of the imperatives from an apostle or a prophet we can learn now how to think and how to live.

So that's what we're doing. And if you're neophyte preacher, by the way, you want to be like the pastors on our staff, don't start with narrative text. Don't start with apocalyptic text. Don't start with parabolic text. Lots of different genres. You need to start with didactic text because that's the easiest even though it's still hard. All that not to try and get a raise. I'm just trying to tell you that when I turn you to a passage of Scripture and I say, now turn to this passage, turn to this passage, you might think what is he doing? Why do you do that to us? Right? Because it's critical in the kind of literature that we're studying here in Acts 27. And nothing could be more narrative than this. Let's look at it now. Verse 27 of Chapter 27 of Acts. I mean, you want to talk about a narrative genre, here it is. Right? Here's the stuff that happened. It's hard for us to think just on the surface, like, how am I supposed to live? How am I supposed to think? But we're going to get there. But first, let's understand the "what happened," because there's still historical distance between the first-century mariners here and us today, and even understanding how it might work on the sea today. So we need to figure this all out. And ultimately, we're answering the question, why am I still alive? That's what I'm trying to get to. Why are you here? Why are you breathing? Why are you continuing on? Well, let's see if we can learn from this text.

Which, now that I said all that, it sounds like it would be really hard. But I've done it twice already so hopefully it'll work out. Here we go, verse 27. When the 14th night had come, as we were being driven along across... driven across, rather, the Adriatic... First you need to learn to read before you become a preacher. (audience laughing) That's a big skill that you need to start with. Verse 27 is where the edits come in. We got a great editing team. They just pluck up... the sermons that end up getting broadcast on the air are about 12 minutes long. (audience laughing) The rest is all on the cutting room floor. Verse 27, "When the 14th night had come." Remember there was no sun, no stars, no moon, they couldn't see it. There's such a storm on the sea. Violently tossed by the waves. "As we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea. Now if you look at a map today you'd see the Adriatic Sea is defined as that section there to the east of Italy. But in the ancient world, and you can check this from extra-biblical writings, it extended on down to the south and the east of Italy. So they're about to end up on an island called Malta. That's next week. But what we're going to see is that this is still described in the first centuries the Adriatic, but it's certainly in the mid-western part of the Mediterranean Sea, for what that's worth.

"About midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land. So they took soundings and found 20 fathoms." Now there's a sentence we need a little understanding of. "Took a sounding," right? And even the rest of this verse and "A little further they took a sounding again." Now I picture like the Hunt for Red October movie or something. Some guy with, you know, headphones on and sitting in front of a screen, a sonar. And he's saying, captain, you know, it's so, so... Sounding is not what you think. Sounding, I know you say well sounding doesn't mean sound. No, it doesn't mean sound. Matter of fact, I'll prove it to you, Puget Sound. Have you ever heard of that? Have you ever been to the Puget Sound? Puget Sound, what's that named after? Well it's named after a guy named Puget. I think he was a captain or



something, some seafarer a long time ago. But it's called "sound" not because you go there and it's quiet or it's noisy or there are interesting sounds there. It has nothing with acoustics. Right? And this is not about echolocation. This is not about sonar. It's not about radar. Right? "Sounding" comes from a middle English word because we're reading English here that means the sea or the ocean or actually it turned into a word like "swimming" for us. "Sound" means the "waters." And when they say take a sounding they're trying to figure out how deep and how thick is this water.

And to take a sounding in the first century, and even some rudimentary boats today might still have this, you put a weight on a tape measure. Well, in those days you took a rope and you tied knots, or you'd put some kind of rope around every section that's called the fathom and a fathom was about the size of a tall man, so about six feet. That's why in your Bibles, hopefully the reference says there in the column, this is about 120 feet when it says they found it was 20 fathoms. So somehow these experienced sailors are saying I think we're getting near land and they drop the weight with the rope. So this is very rudimentary compared to what you might be envisioning, some device you can get at, you know, Bass Pro Shop or whatever. But this is just dropping that line and saying one, two, three, for 20 fathoms. Right? This is 20 six-foot sections deep, so about 120 feet. Okay? And if you think about a ship in the first century that came from North Africa, which many of them did. If you look at the old history of maritime actions on the Mediterranean they would often take granary ships, big ships, that would come from North Africa, Alexandria in this case, and go to Rome. Rome, of course, was the center of the political world.

And those ships that if you looked up what size ship was it in the first century that could carry as you see in verse 37, 276 people. That would be a medium to large ship of the first century. And these granary ships, these cargo ship, had big holes on the deck that they put all the cargo in. And if you think about those ships, the ships of that size that could carry about 276 passengers and cargo, they would displace in the water about 300 to 400 tons. And what you have then is the draft, if you're a mariner, you know this, the draft, how deep is the hull of the ship into the water below the waterline could be anywhere up to 25 feet. It could be 30 feet depending on that. So you've got to have clearance. And just like if you borrowed a ski boat or rented one or you have one, you don't want to mess up your prop so you got to make sure that you're not getting into shallow water. Well, they did this in the middle of this storm bobbing around on the sea and they said it looks like we're about 120 feet in deep water. Well, then it says they go a little further. They did it again and dropped the line and they found out they were only 90 feet. So we're moving in the Mediterranean, by the way, the eastern Mediterranean is about 13,000 to 14,000 feet deep. This is a deep sea. And now they're coming into 120, 90 were clearly coming to land. And that's what they're recognizing. "And fearing that they might run on the rocks," because who knows what kind of reef there might be here. They didn't have all the sonar, the echolocation stuff that we have today. So they're thinking we could smash our hull right now, and they've already had it bound together by ropes that they put under the hull you might remember from last week.

"Fearing they might run on the rocks," bottom of verse 29, "they let down four anchors from the stern," back of the ship, "and they prayed for day to come," because we learned in verse



27 it's nighttime. "And as the sailors were seeking to escape the ship." Now think about this. Some sailors thought, okay, if we went from 120 feet deep of water to 90 feet deep of water, we're coming to the shore of something. Let's get the dinghy, which we took up from the back of the ship that was towed behind it. They put it on the deck before in the last passage we studied last week. And now they're saying, let's get that thing in the water and we're going to try and row this thing into shore. We'll let the ship break up on the rocks but we're going to get out of here. "Sailors," selfish sailors, "were seeking to escape the ship and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under the pretense," they're lying, "of laying out anchors from the bow." So we're going to go out and lay some more anchors down because we want this thing to stick, you know, in one place until daylight comes and then we'll figure out what to do.

Well, "Paul said to the centurions and the soldiers," all these Roman soldiers, "'Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.'" You got to stay in the ship to be saved. "Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go." So before they could climb into it, they had just gotten in here a bunch of these sailors and put it in the water, here come the Roman soldiers with their swords and they just cut the ropes and said done. We're going to let that dinghy just go into wherever it's going to float to in this storm but you're staying on the ship. So at this point the centurion and the soldiers believe Paul, which is you better stay in this boat if you want to be saved because that's what the angel told Paul. And so Paul's trying to keep them all on the ship. "As day was about to dawn," verse 33, "Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, 'Today is the 14th day that you've continued in suspense.'" What does that mean? Are we going to live or are we going to die? They didn't know. And because that's life or death they weren't worrying about preparing meals. They were "'without food, having taken nothing.'" They hadn't had any formal meals at least. "'Therefore, I urge you to take some food,'" it's time for us all to eat. "'For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you.'"

Now there's a storm and as I said before, that we know this because we have the history about to unfold, verse 39 and following, they're going to get wet. They're going to have to swim for it. There's a lot that's going to happen here in this shipwreck. But Paul at least knows we're going to make it to the shores. Now, I don't know if Paul knew where exactly they were, they were kind of lost on the sea of the Mediterranean. They're going to end up on an island called Malta. They're trying to get to the shores of Italy. But nevertheless, he says, it would be good for us to get some strength back into our body, we need to eat. Verse 35, "And when he had said these things, he took bread and giving thanks to God in the presence of all." Now just remember that this is a bunch of mariners, a bunch of merchants, a bunch of servants, a bunch of boat owners. They had all kinds of people here, Roman soldiers, a centurion, fellow prisoners. We had Aristarchus, another fellow Christian, and Doctor Luke and we had Paul, all different kinds of people. Paul stands up and says let's before we eat this bread let's give thanks to God. That's pretty bold. "And he broke it and began to eat. Then they were all encouraged," are all motivated here, "and they ate some food themselves. We were," Luke says, "in all 276 persons on the ship. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea." We're going to take the last of our provisions and throw it out. It looks like we're heading to land. If daybreak comes maybe we can get there. All



right. This is definitely narrative text, you know, even if you've never used that word, here's the genre, literary genre of here's what happened. Okay?

Now we're sitting here today going, okay. Pastor Mike set us up with "why are we still alive?" We got work to do. I want to talk about what's happening in this ship. I want to look for a paradigm, look for a template. And here's a template. Paul is in ship, and as guys start to escape, verses 27 through 32, Paul goes, no, no, no, no, you can't be saved if you don't stay on the ship. Why? Because God is going to get the ship and the prime persons who are Christians. We know Aristarchus, Luke and Paul by name, but maybe there are some other Christians. I'm going to get them all to Rome. And Paul, my servant, is going to stand before Caesar. So this boat's going to make it. You better stick with the boat. It's kind of like if the big fish that ate Jonah had a couple of other people in the belly of the fish, right? Guess what? If you want to make it to the shores of the mainland, you know, and be vomited up on the shores there as the path for Jonah to get to Nineveh, you better stay inside the whale or whatever this was. And all I'm telling you is the whale is absolutely impervious to anything bad happening to it. It is not going to croak on the way to the shore because this is God's vehicle to get God's man where God wants him to go. And if you're just going to stick with that whale, whatever this is, you'll be okay.

Now that's a bad and kind of gross illustration, but it's the same thing here that God is treating all those very diverse 273 other people besides Aristarchus, Luke and Paul in a very guarded way. He's treating them special. A lot of mariners, a lot of sailors died in storms on the Mediterranean. But these aren't going to die. Why? Because God's working out a history and a set of good works for Paul and his team. Okay. That principle, hold that thought now. I want to look to see if I can't find that in other texts of Scripture that tell us how to think and how to act. And I've got some for you. I got four of them for you. But let's give it a heading, because the whole point is this: you need to know your value in the world, and the world has a bunch of concentric circles in it. Number one, if you're taking notes, and I wish that you would, "Know Your Value in Your World," and it starts with your home. So once you write all that down, I want you to turn to First Corinthians Chapter 7 and we're going to talk about what kind of value you have in your home. Okay.

Here's what the Bible teaches in First Corinthians 7. Once you write that downturn there and look in the middle of this argument that Paul is making. He's making an argument about something that happened a lot in the first century and still happens today. And that is someone gets saved in a household and they get saved first, and it may be the only salvation in that household. In this case, he says, you know, you might be married and have kids and you become a Christian, sir, but your wife has no interest in this and your kids have no interest in this. So what should you do? Well, you go to church, you find a cute gal who likes to read the Bible and pray, and she's in your small group and wouldn't it be great for you to hold hands and pray together every day? Wouldn't it be great for you to live the Christian life together? Wouldn't it be great not to argue about giving to the church because you both love the Lord? So dump your non-Christian pagan wife and marry this godly girl at church. That's what he says in First Corinthians 7, right? No, he says don't do that, don't divorce her.

Take a look at this. First Corinthians Chapter 7. Drop all the way down... Well, let's start in verse, I don't know 12. "To the rest I say (I, and not the Lord)," which doesn't make it an opinion, by the way, this is the authoritative apostolic authority of the Apostle Paul. He is the spokesperson for God. Earlier he quoted Christ something we can find in the gospels. Here he's saying, now you can't look in the gospels to find this. But I'm telling you as he ends this discussion actually in Chapter 2 and in Chapter 3, he's making it very clear, I have the Spirit of God. I'm an apostle. I speak with authority. "To the rest I say," he says this, "I and not the Lord that a brother has a wife who is an unbeliever," there's a scenario I painted, "and she contends to live with him." Now, maybe you should be on the market for a new Christian gal if she says, "I don't want to be with you, I'm out of here." Okay. Paul's going to end up saying let her go. But if "she consents to live with you," she doesn't like your Christianity but she's going to be willing to live under your roof, "he should not divorce her." Don't divorce her. "If any woman has a husband," let's flip it around, "who is an unbeliever and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him." Why? Here's the rationale, verse 14, "For the unbelieving husband is made," now, this is an interesting word, "holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

Holy, holy, holy. All this holiness coming through. How? What in the world does that mean? Well, before we figure out what it means, at least write it down. Whatever God means by this, if you are a Christian in your household and God is looking at your home, the four walls and the roof over your head every night where you lay your head on a pillow, here's what the Bible says you are. Here's what's the value in your world. The first concentric circle, your home, Letter "A," it is that you are "The Holiness of Your Home," right? You make things in that home holy. Now let's understand the word holy. Because if I say the word holy you think about righteous behavior, moral choices, virtuous things that you prioritize. And there is an aspect, clearly, that the word "holy" means that. And perhaps even in this scenario you might think, and from my perspective as a pastor and a counselor of Christians for decades now, certainly I see this. There are some people who are non-Christians living with a Christian spouse, that just the presence of that Christian spouse retains some of the boundaries in the mind of the non-Christian spouse from doing things they would otherwise do. And I can test this because I've seen many of them finally say I don't consent to live with you and they leave and they're a different kind of sinner when they're not under the roof of the Christian spouse.

So sometimes it does affect their moral choices. Just like kids, it affects the moral choices of kids. Kids have certain rules because we have a Christian parent there saying, this is right, this is wrong, don't do this, do that. And all of those things help to curtail the behavior of others. But the word holy doesn't just signal or connote the idea of someone making a virtuous decision or doing righteous things. Because a lot of times the word holy is applied to things like the shewbread in the Tabernacle. If you got a piece of turkey and you want to have some slices of bread, well just go to the Tabernacle. They always have some there and just go use that. No, you can't do that. Your house is a little dark, right? You ran out of oil. We'll just go down to the temple and grab one of the candelabras and bring it into your home. Can't do that. You're smelling a little ripe this week. You need some cologne. So I know that the priest has a special kind of sweet-smelling anointing oil. Just get some of that and put that



behind your ears and you'll smell better. No, all of those are capital offenses. You're not supposed to do that. Why? Because those objects are said to be holy. They're different. God sees those objects differently. Although you could make a sandwich with the shewbread, you could light your house with a candelabra, the menorah, and you could smell better by putting on the anointing oil behind your ears. All that could happen. But it's not supposed to happen because it's set apart. God views it differently.

So here's what the Bible at least is teaching in the very least, not only does it sometimes curtail sinful behavior, but your presence in your home makes God look at your household differently, and the divorce would violate that. Divorce would be, okay, my spouse is going to go and live at some other address. And the kids now, perhaps in the modern day, they go back and forth, maybe through shared custody, three days here, four days there, and at least half the time they're in my house, but half the time they're not. And the Bible says you don't want a divorce if you can avoid it because you and your presence in that home every day, every night, it does something in God seeing your household differently.

Now is this salvific? No, you should know better. Are there any passages in the Bible that says if you get saved your spouse is immediately saved? No. No passage in the Bible that teaches that. This holiness is not salvific holiness. It may be some moral holiness and it certainly is in God's mind some kind of categorical holiness. If God wants to bless his child, he's going to do it and guess what's going to happen? That blessing is going to spill over into the people they live with. And here's what I have to say to you. And some of you are in this situation. You got non-Christian teenagers, you got a non-Christian spouse. You are the holiness of your household. God sees you differently. You are the dwelling place of the living God. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. You are a prized possession. As it says in Scripture, if someone tries to go after you as the temple of God's Spirit, God is going to go after them. And all I'm telling you is everyone in that household gets the benefits of that. There's some benefit of God's special care.

Just like if I'm sitting there just as some kind of yeoman on this ship, I just load the thing. But if I'm on that ship because the Apostle Paul is on that ship and Aristarchus is on the ship, and Luke is on the ship. Guess what? I'm going to make it. I'm not going to drown. And if they weren't, I might drown. Do you see that? You have a sanctifying effect. "Sanctus," by the way, that word is a Latin word which translates "holy," translates the word "Hagious" in the New Testament. So that may be a way to say it, you are the sanctification, you're sanctifying. Your effect in your home is sanctifying. Even if I say, well, I got all Christians in my home, all my kids are believing, my wife an on-fire Christian. Great. Well, you still have a sanctifying effect there, right? To the extent that you're making good, godly decisions and growing in your faith. Right? And as God's favor rests on you and you're blessed in what you do, thinking of James 1 again, you take the Word, you put it into practice. If you apply God's Word this week from this sermon and this preaching event, and God's blessing is poured out on you for some reason because of that, because you're in some aspect of that, that blessing, it spills over. You're a sanctifying effect. You're the holiness of your home.



Turn now with me for Letter "B." Let's go to Revelation Chapter 2. Jesus is writing postcards to seven churches. Some of them he's got nothing bad to say. Some of these churches get off without any kind of rebuke. Well, sadly not Pergamum. Pergamum is much like I tried to paint the picture of last week, like us as Christians living in Babylon. You want to talk about living in Babylon. This church in Pergamum is living in like, massive Babylon because look at what he says here in verse 13. To the church of Pergamum, he says, "I know where you dwell," this church is in a zip code, "where Satan's throne is." Well, that should send a chill up your spine if you get a postcard from Christ that says I know where your church is, right? It's where Satan's hanging out a lot. Because Satan can only be in one place at one time. He's a temporal being, right? Living a long time, obviously, immortal in the sense that he is going to live on forever in a place called the Lake of Fire. But he had a beginning, a temporal being. He's not omnipresent. He can only be in one place at one time, he can only have his concentrated attention in one place.

Well, his attention, his base of operation, apparently had been the city of Pergamum in Asia Minor for a while, at least during the time that this letter was written at the end of the first century. Christ says this: I know that. "Yet you hold fast my name." I love this bright lampstand here. The truth of the gospel is going out to people who are faithful to God. "You didn't deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you where Satan dwells." So this church is existing within a very hostile, non-Christian environment. You couldn't be more non-Christian than being in a place where Satan is just like, you know, giving commands to the demons. This is a bad place. But it's great. He just praised them in verse 13.

Verse 14, But, oh no, "But I have a few things against you." Okay. So the church, what's the problem? "You have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality." Now, you might not remember this part of the story, but you certainly remember, I hope, Balaam and Balaam's donkey and all that. And the thing you should remember about Balaam is not so much about the talking donkey, which God did in this very unique occasion. But you ought to remember that Balak the King was trying to, as the massive groups of people from Egypt were coming through, all the Israelites, the sons of Israel coming led by Moses. He tries to hire this, you know, for-hire prophet to curse them. And like Fonzie trying to apologize as he tries to curse them, Balaam can't do it. He's like mumbling and then he starts saying positive things. Did anybody catch my Fonzie reference? Do you remember? (audience laughing) No? His hair never needs to be combed and he never needs to apologize. Now he's doing Social Security, you know, commercials or whatever he's doing. Depends commercials. I don't know what he's doing. He's an old guy now but he used to be cool.

All right. What am I talking about? Balaam. Yes. Thank you. Balaam. So Balaam fails to curse them. And yet he does create the result that Balak, the king who hired him, because he was threatened by Israel. Well, how did he do that? Well, we don't read much about how he did it, but the result is clearly in the book of Numbers in that he gets them to intermingle and to have the dudes go after the gals, they're pagans, idle-worshiping pagans, and in their intermarriage



and their sexual immorality they start doing all the things that offends God in terms of idols and all the rest. The compromise took place, and there's a lot of that going on here, or some of it going on here in Pergamum. And look at verse 14 again. "You have some there who" do this. Okay? Verse 15, "So also you have some who hold of the teaching of the Nicolaitans. And you can look at your study Bible, read about that. We could go into that but we don't have time.

Here's the thing. There are compromising individuals. How many? Most of you? No, some of you. So here's a healthy church that's thriving, apparently. And it's in a very contrasted, sinful, decadent, terrible, satanic culture in a city that's really bad. And yet they're holding fast to the name of Christ. And yet there are some, just an individual here, here, here and here. Nicolaitans, Balaam's compromise, sexual immorality, all that. And God now says what? I'm just going to overlook them. No, look what he says in verse 16. "Therefore repent." Now he's talking to all of them. But that's how this starts to all of them. "Repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." The reality of God saying to this church, I'm about to war against you because some individuals within the church are compromised. I just want to invert that as a principle.

But before I do, at least remember Joshua Chapter 7. Do you remember in Joshua Chapter 6 the Battle of Jericho and they were not supposed to take anything from the city? And yet there was a guy named Achan, do you remember this? He took some stuff, put it under his floor of the rug under his tent, and then they go to the next battle and it's so small. The city of Ai is nothing like Jericho. And Joshua says just send a small contingent. And that small contingent goes and they get routed. Now why did they lose? Because one guy and his family were covering up all the stuff they stole from Jericho. The one guy affected the whole. And I just want to invert this and say this: to the extent that you fight temptation, to the extent that you do what is right, to the extent that you live your Christian life the way you should, you become... How valuable are you? Let's put it this way Letter "B." You are "The Health of Your Church." Every individual contributes to the health of the church. And if we're Pergamum saying man, we're in Southern California. Everybody thinks it's the land of fruits and nuts. And it's so pagan, I can't imagine it hadn't already slipped into the ocean. All I'm saying is if you live a godly life, the church is now praised by God like some of the seven letters written to the seven churches here that were postcards that are written by Christ, they got full praise. I want full praise. You want full praise. I don't want God warring against his own church, but he will, to the extent that we don't live godly lives.

So how important are you to this church? Man, you're a player that either helps us be healthy or helps us move in the other direction. Since this is a very positive sermon, let's just think about that. You are the health of the church. Continue to be the healthy part to contribute to the health of the church. Like it says in First Corinthians 12, the health of the church is really every part has to do its part. Every member, every contingent part, every appendage has to do its part. How important are you to the church? Very important. How you lived your life this week is very important to the health of the church. Would God oppose this church because of



your life? The answer is yes. At some point, some here in Pergamum. That's all it took was some. Not all. Not most.

Genesis 18. Let's get Letter "C." Genesis Chapter 18. In Genesis 18, we learn how to think about God, how he sees people who are godly in the midst of an ungodly society. I'm not talking about church. We're not talking about home. We're talking about society, secular society. And in secular society, you couldn't get much more secular in this particular point 2,000 years before Christ, than Sodom, Gomorrah, Zohar, all these cities of the plains out there near the Dead Sea in Judea and then before it became all that. But in Abraham's day it was so bad. It was so terrible. Sins have been named after the city. And you remember I quoted this last week, but I didn't make you turn there but I want you to look at it now. This is super important. Look at verse 26. Abraham's trying to negotiate with God and he doesn't want the city destroyed. And he says, well, what if there's 50 righteous people? "And the Lord said," verse 26, "If I find at Sodom 50 righteous in the city." Now how godly is the city? Not very godly. Matter of fact, it's notoriously sinful. But if there were just 50, "I will spare the whole place for their sake." That's a huge statement. The whole place is sinful and I should judge it.

And California should drop into the sea and sink and everyone should drown. But just think about this principle. People in it who are righteous, who are called by God's name, who are growing in sanctification, think about it. They become the preservation, the protection of the whole secular scene. And it gets better than that. It's not just 50. Look at the bottom of verse 28. I wouldn't destroy it for 45. Look at the bottom of verse 29. I wouldn't destroy it for 40. Look at the bottom of verse 30. I wouldn't do it for 30 people. Look at verse 31 for the sake of 20 I wouldn't destroy it. Look at this. Verse 32. He answered at bottom of verse 13, for the sake of 10 I will not destroy. Now the population of the city is what it is. But here's Abraham learning from God. It just takes a few. It just takes a few. It just takes a few. It just takes a few. If there were ten people there that loved me, that loved my truth, that followed me, that did the things that they know are right before me. If they trusted me, if they believed me, I wouldn't destroy the whole city.

How important are you to the secular circles that you run in? You are the protection, Letter "C," of your secular circles, the protection of it. You need to know that, Letter "C," you are "The Protection of Your Secular Circles" that you run in. Let's start with your neighborhood. Let's start then and go on to your job. Think about your job. God can look at a company that's got leaders at the top who are making just stupid, dumb, ridiculous, immoral decisions. Their policies are immoral. But you know what? Over here in accounting, over here in HR, over here in sales, we got Christian, Christian, Christian, Christian, serving the Lord, loving God, actively involved in their churches and God looks at that company and says, for the sake of those, I'll spare it. There are companies that should be driven right into the ground, and God is holy and he does not like unrighteous needs. He's indignant about unrighteousness. But because there are sprinkled within your job, think about your job, because this guy over here in this cubicle in row three, monitor five, because of him, because he loves the Lord, because he's uncompromising in the truth. Right? The stock prices of that company may go up. God may bless that company.



I often pray for people and they ask me to pray, "Pastor, I need a job, I loss a job," a lot of friends of mine. And so I'm praying actively right now for five different people who are looking for jobs. And as I pray for them, I'm usually praying like they're praying, oh God, they need a paycheck, they need a living wage, so please God, give them a good job. But sometimes I stop as I pray for people who need a job and I think to myself, God, what company, what business, what store are you going to bless by this godly person going to work there? Because all five of these are, well, four out of... I hate to say that, but 4 to 5 of these people are godly people. It's true, it's true. (audience laughing) I know. And if you're one of the ones I'm praying for, you can just wonder if you're in the four or the one. (audience laughing) But, no, no, no. And even the people that... Ahhhh! Edit, edit, edit. I want to be honest with you but only four of them... But of the four that I pray for, I pray what company are you going to bless? Because you're going to put a good, godly person there. And I think to myself I'm praying for the good of a secular company. I'm praying for the good of a secular industry, because there'll be someone there that I know who loves the Lord Jesus Christ.

You need to know that you are the protection of these concentric secular circles, even to the extent of our country, our state, our county. Right? We are the remnant of God's people who love the Lord, trust the Lord and are striving to fight temptation and live godly lives. And because of that God sees our whole area differently. I know everybody wants to run out of the state. I've had this speech before, gotten up on that soapbox. But man, we are a preserving agent. We're a protection to this area. That's how important you are.

One more passage, Second Thessalonians Chapter 2. And some of you may disagree with my interpretation of this text. But based on my eschatology and what I understand the Scripture to be saying, I think this is the biggest concentric circle of all, the entire globe, the world. If you read Revelation Chapters 6 through 19, this is a global problem of God's wrath being poured out on the world. Right? The Tribulation is God bringing tribulation on the earth starting in Chapter 6 where they're crying out because the wrath of God and the wrath of his lamb have come. So God's anger is being dispensed on the earth. And one of the key figures is the Antichrist. Right? You've heard of this, the world leader, the man of lawlessness as he's called in this passage. And as Paul is talking about this man of lawlessness and his great rebellion he says this in verse 5, Second Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 5. Is that where I turned you? No? So half of you said yes and half of you said no. Second Thessalonians Chapter 2 verse 5. "Do you not remember that when I was still with you," I was there in person teaching you, "I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him, the Antichrist is restrained, "so that he may be revealed in his time."

So restraining him. What is restraining him? Right? That's a neuter word, right? This interrogative, which is serving as a placeholder for a noun. Right? In that sense, a pronoun. "Only he who restrains him will do so until he is taken out of the way." So now we shift in verse 7 to a "he." So there's a "what" that's restraining the advancement and the ascendancy of the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist. And it's a "he" that is also restraining him. Well, there's a "he," I would put it this way in my eschatology at least, that is restraining the world of sin and all the judgment that's going to come and the outbreak of evil, particularly led by the



Antichrist, because of the what? The Holy Spirit is active within the church. The "what" is restraining evil because of the "him" who is working in the church. Our lives corporately as the Church of Jesus Christ in Canada, in Argentina, in North Africa, in Korea. You name it, anywhere. The underground church in China. The Church of Christ in this world is restraining all hell breaking loose. Right? Almost literally, I can say all the hell breaking loose of Revelation 6 through 19.

So how important are you to the world? Well, you are, Letter "D," "The Restraint of Sin in Our World." I know you're just one small part of the Church Universal, but you are one small living part of the Church Universal. And the extent that you're still breathing here on planet earth, you're the restraining force against all the evil that's going to take place and God's response of judgment on the world. That's my eschatology. What are you? How important are you? You're the holiness of your home, the health of your church, you're the protection of your secular circles and you can make some concentric circles there, and you're also the preservation or restraint of all the bad that's coming in God's prophecies regarding the future. You're the restraint of that sin and judgment in the world. So you're kind of important. Don't give up. You need in your life some courageous endurance to keep going until God calls you home.

Back to our text, verses 33 and 34. That again, is just the paradigm of a godly man and his entourage on a ship of almost 300 people. Those people are treated differently because those guys are on the ship. The boat of your life and the concentric circles, God's treating those things differently from your home to the world because you're in it. So that's important. Not to make you heady because God could replace you with someone else but he's using you right now. God could have replaced Moses and eventually he did with Joshua. God could have replaced Elijah and eventually he did with Elisha. But it wasn't time for that yet. So you are a placeholder in some way, a very valuable one that God is using to do all of those four things that we just looked at clearly in Scripture.

Verse 33 and 34, "As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them to take some food, saying, 'Today is the 14th day,'" we've got two weeks now, "that you continued in suspense without food having taken nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you." That's a hard phrase to read. The point is you're going to be okay but you need food. Now, I tried to read that with some commentary when I read it to you the first time but the point is they're going to make it but you need to eat. This is just wise counsel. And this goes back to reflecting the principle of last week that we need to be instructing the world with wisdom. Right? That's important. But this is wisdom that comes based on the revelation that the Apostle Paul got. He knows they're going to survive. They're going to have to swim for it, they're going to have to struggle, they're going to have to fight through the storm so you need strength. Eat. Okay? It's not just stop eating because we're doomed. Okay.

Number two, let's just put it this way. He's willing to share all that because he's living his life openly as a Christian. He's basing his decisions based on the revelation of God. He's giving wisdom that is helpful to them because he's living Christianity openly. Number two, "Live Your



Christianity Openly." That's what you need to do. You need to make sure that you are not the underground, silent Christian who is just going along with the crowd at work or in your home or anywhere else, because you have a job to do, and your job is to do certain things in this world that are going to be helpful. They're going to be wise. Matthew Chapter 5. You remember Jesus gives the example of being the light of the world. And he says, "A city set on a hill can't be hidden, but people don't light a lamp and put it under a basket. You put it on a stand so it can give light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others." The light of what you do that is based on God's wisdom that is helpful because that's what we're called to be, needs to continually happen, and you need to do it because you are a Christian. I put it this way. Letter "A," you need to "Do Wise and Helpful Things." Do wise and helpful things. Whatever it is that is helpful for your family, do it. Whatever is wise at work, do it. Whatever is going to be helpful in your neighborhood or your homeowner's association, do what is good and helpful and wise. You're called to be light. You're called to be salt. And God wants you to do that.

And if you do it, by the way, if you live by God's truth, much like Joseph in prison, he ends up rising to the ranks of one who could be trusted in that prison and God gave him favor. Or how about this? Jot this one down, Daniel Chapter 1 verses 19 and 20, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, aka Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were all conscripted as prisoners, and yet they were being groomed for good things in Babylon, good things in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar. Now they said I'm not going to compromise, I'm not going to do things that violate God's Word, but we're going to continue to do wise and helpful things based on our worldview, which is a Jewish worldview that believes in one God and you're not him. And we know how all this plays out. But here's a statement that's very important. Here's how Nebuchadnezzar started to see them. "And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them," Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, and Daniel, "he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all of his kingdom." I would like you to be noticed at work as a good, wise and helpful worker. I want you to be valued because you're willing to go the extra mile, stay the extra hour, and spend the extra dollar to be doing things from your worldview. If someone at work is having a baby then buy them a present. So there's a wedding going on and they're no longer going to be shacking up. Go and celebrate the institution of marriage, right? You stand for what is good, right? You avoid what is evil, you avoid even the appearance of evil. And that may not be very popular at work. But the good deeds that we do, we want them to be seen by men. Don't live undercover, live out in the open as a Christian and that means more wise and helpful actions.

Verse 35 back in our passage. Acts 27:35, "And when he had said these things, he took bread, giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat." Now remember who's on this ship. Not a bunch of Jewish people in a synagogue who are used to prayer before a meal. He takes the bread and says, well, first of all guys, we're going to pray. Now, how many guys do you think bowed their heads and closed their eyes? How many sailors were like, "Oh good, I can't wait to pray before this meal." Like Paul didn't care. He was going to do what Jesus did like in John 6. Think about this, John 6 I think it's verse 11, when they were there and the Bible is very clear many people were coming just to get a free meal. They weren't coming for a church service. And yet Jesus took the bread, he gave



thanks to God for it, and then he broke it and dispensed it. He's living openly, I put it this way, Letter "B" his God focus. You need to show that you are God-focused." You get a raise at work and your coworkers are talking about your new job title or whatever. Say, man, I'm really thankful to God for this, right? Yeah, that's not what you would normally say at work. You'd say that in your small group during the week at church. But I'm saying say it out loud, say it openly. Right? You pray before your meal, go into lunchroom and bow your head and pray. You don't have to pray out loud, but it's not a problem for you to show that you're a Christian who gives thanks for all things. "Show Your God-Focus."

Proverbs Chapter 3 verse 6, I know you've heard this passage 100 times, but it says, "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your path straight," right? Just to acknowledge him, that God is present in all things, and that you're going to know that you're going to live in light of God. Well, if you do, just let your mouth kind of articulate that. Because think back to the passage I quoted in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus said you're the light of the world, you're the light of the world, therefore, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works." That's the part that I read. Now let me quote the rest of it, "And may glorify your Father who is in heaven." One day they're going to see that you help them change the tire, or stayed late to fix the copy machine or whatever you did at your office and they're going to make the connection because you made the connection with your mouth. You show that you do this for God. There have been many times I've stopped at the side of the road to help somebody, and I finished that, you know, helping them change their tire and I've said something like this, "You know, I did this because I'm a Christian, and these are the kinds of things that God would ask me to do and want me to do. And that's why, I just want you to know, that's the reason I stopped to help you, because I'm a follower of Christ." I just want to show them that I do things in my life for the focus of God as it says in Scripture.

Thinking of eating, First Corinthians Chapter 10 verse 31, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." I want God to be seen. I want the spotlight to be on God. And if that's what your Christian life is about, don't just do it in the lobby of the church, right? You need to do it in the lobby at work. You need to do it in the lunchroom at work. You need to do it in the workroom at work. You need to be the kind of person that shows you're God-focus. So important.

Verse 37 and verse 38. "There were in all 276." Now, remember, I know three of them. Aristarchus, Doctor Luke, the Apostle Paul. Three of them I know are godly men. I know that. But I know I've already learned there are Roman soldiers, there are sailors, there's a boat owner here, a ship owner. I mean, there are merchants. There are lots of different people. There are prisoners that probably were already convicted going to their death in the Colosseum in Rome. So all kinds of people. And yet he is doing good and saying to them, don't even let the sailors get in the boat because they're going to die. He's saying to them, you should all eat and get strong, saying it to everyone. He's praying and giving thanks and showing his God-focus in front of everyone. And think about that. You're the Apostle Paul. You're a Jew, right? Here are the Jews having to pay taxes to the Romans. Paul, who now loves Jesus Christ. He's convinced he's the Messiah. He knows how he died. He knows it was Romans with swords dangling off their waist who were putting nails and driving them



through the feet and hands of Christ. He knows it was Romans standing there in their greaves and their breastplate who were jeering and mocking Jesus and pretending that he was a royal king and making fun of him, stripping his clothes off and gambling for his linen shroud.

Paul knew that the Romans were the ones who jammed this crown of thorns into his head and made his face completely red with crimson blood over his eyes. He knows that the Romans did that, and so did Peter. And yet Peter was told in Acts Chapter 10, go and share the gospel with Cornelius, a Roman centurion. I mean, this was something that we see throughout the Bible. It doesn't matter what category of person this is, right? You should be, I put it this way, Letter "C," "Be Indiscriminately Influential," indiscriminate, right? It doesn't matter who you are. I'm going to share the gospel with you. I'm going to do good works that are helpful and wise. And I'm going to put the focus on Christ. It doesn't matter who you are, anybody, any place, any time. Paul, even to the guards in Philippians Chapter 1, he doesn't say, I worked real hard to write some books for the Christians. He says, you know what? I was not only doing that, but I was sharing the gospel with the whole praetorian guard now, the whole imperial guard of soldiers, they've all heard the gospel now. He doesn't care who they are. And here's the point that God continues to make to Cornelius. I'm sorry, well, to Cornelius too, to Peter, to Paul, he makes this point. God is not one who shows partiality. I mean, God is a God he's just looking for people that he has called to himself, who the Spirit of God is convicting. He wants us to be an agent of good.

You never know who you're going to spend the extra dollar on, stay the extra hour for, go the extra mile for. They could be our brother in Christ and you don't know where they're going to come from. There are all kinds of backgrounds. And we talked about this last week. We talked about the Babylonians. We got to pray for them. We want them to come to faith in Christ. And it's these good works that you let shine. And think about it, you're the holiness, the health, the protection, the restraint of sin in the world. You got to keep doing wise and helpful deeds. Show your God-focus and be indiscriminately influential.

Two years ago, there was a bunch of chicken salads. You know, the kind you buy at the grocery store. They have the clamshell plastic thing that opens up. There was a bunch, a lot of chicken salads that were recalled from, of all places Whole Foods, where all the fancies go to shop. You know, all the trendy people. And this was years ago. And even, you know, it was even more discriminating at Whole Foods. Well, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said you're going to take all those salads and we're going to recall them. They were mandated by the U.S. government to send all of them back. A lot of money that was wasted in this chicken salad recall. It was called the Chicken Salad Scandal of 2017. You look it up. Why were all these chicken salads all recalled? They didn't have any chicken in them. They were shipped from the company without any chicken. Now, there was plenty of salad in there. And I'll tell you what, I'm not a salad guy as you can clearly see. But if I'm going to order a chicken salad there better be chicken in it. I don't care if you've got little scraps of onion or little scraps of carrots, or, you know, your little cauliflower here, your cucumber there. I don't care if there's iceberg or spinach. That doesn't matter, but you better have chicken. That's the indispensable ingredient. Chicken. Don't sell me a chicken salad without any chicken in it. And so it became a deal where the government said you got to take those back, you're defrauding people.



Paul was the indispensable ingredient in that sphere in which he lived. In this case, the boat became a great paradigm for us to think about our homes, right? Think about our church. Think about our neighborhoods and our jobs. Think about the world. You are the indispensable. How important is your life? Why are you still breathing? Well, one reason is not because God couldn't replace you. He could replace you. But he has you breathing providentially and alive in this generation so you can continue to be the indispensable ingredient for holiness, right? For health, health of your church, for the goodness and protection of all the secular circles you run in, the restraining of God's eschatological plan of his wrath being poured out and treading out the winepress of his wrath. You are important. You are the chicken in the chicken salad of life. So you want to sum up this sermon. I wrote it down in my notes. Here it is. Be the chicken. Just be the chicken. (audience laughing) Because if you're not the chicken then the world and your office and your home are just salad, and none of us should like that. Let's just put it that way.

Let's pray. God, help us all. As Jesus your Son put it to be salt, to be light, to let our light shine. And we know as your Word teaches us as we see just like Paul was indispensable on that ship for the safety of those men and women, we assume on that boat, we just know, God that we play an important role. We're not trying to pump our heads up today. We know, yeah, when Moses was gone you raised up Joshua, and when Elijah was gone you raised up Elisha. We understand that. We know that. But God, we pray, please, would you let us just lean into our role as salt and light? Let us do what we ought to do. "Let us shine brightly before men that they might see our good works." And one day, because we've been vocal about our faith, they might glorify our Father who's in heaven.

In Jesus name. Amen.