



Your Role in the Harvest-Part 4

When You're the Farmer of the Year

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It was a Wednesday in January 2012. Several hours before dawn happened to be a new moon so it was very dark that morning when 24 American Navy SEALs parachuted in from a C-130 at high altitudes so that it wouldn't be detected into the war-torn region of East Africa. That's always in the news—Somalia, south of the notorious Green Line.

They were there because three months earlier, Jessica Buchanan, an American aid worker 32 years old, had been taken hostage by Islamic kidnappers, kidnapping pirates, they call them Land Pirates. They'd abused her, they had terrorized her, they'd kept her for ransom.

And then came stealthily at about two or three in the morning, this team of 24 American SEALs. They had night vision goggles, and because it was a new moon, it was so dark they had certainly the advantage. And yet, the captors of Jessica Buchanan had all kinds of weapons. They had several rocket launchers and AK-47s and side arms.

And yet because of the training and the determination and the grit of this SEAL team, they came in with their night vision goggles, and an incredible firefight erupted. Nine of those kidnappers—which was all of them there in that camp where they were holding Jessica—were shot and killed.

They took Jessica, who at the moment was so befuddled by all of this in the middle of the night, she had to be convinced to go with the SEAL team. And they took her out into the desert where the forthcoming American military helicopter landed, to whisk her away to safety.

Meanwhile, in West Africa, Mike Rainer, who is our American ambassador to Benin, was busy about his work in the embassy. They were working on a speech project for the Beninese people trying to improve education in that country, trying to get the country to understand the importance of public speaking, and he was awarding several things at the time. And he was busy there doing what American



ambassadors do—representing the values and the important commitments of America there in that cooperative country of Benin.

I thought about what was going on there in East and West Africa and thought what a wildly different service to our country these two groups had: 24 Navy SEALs that came into a very hostile environment knowing they were risking their lives. They were to the hilt, they were armed to be able to engage in a firefight and rescue one of our American citizens. While Mike Rainer was there doing what he's called to do in, you know, three-piece suits and very expensive ties.

And I thought—the problem that we have as we study what we've been studying here in our series in Luke chapter 10—is when we see God's calling us to represent him in our generation, our minds quickly go, as your pastor was guilty of creating that image by quoting a passage which is certainly legitimate: that we are, 2 Corinthians 5, Christ's ambassadors.

And in the beginning of chapter 10 of Luke that we've been studying verse by verse, we recognize, you know, that is what we are. We represent a set of foreign values to the friends and co-workers and neighbors and extended family members that we live before. We shine like a light and we are to be like salt before them.

And yet the more we read through Luke chapter 10, and the more we study, particularly the passage that we encounter this morning, verses 17 through 24, we start to realize that maybe our mind should shift out of those marble floors of an embassy to the reality of that SEAL team being dropped in to engage in a firefight.

That involves not only dealing with a befuddled hostage that needs convincing and a little rough handling there to get her to even realize: this is your salvation, get out of here. But you're having to engage the entire time in a firefight of people that want to keep their hostage and want to kill you in the process.

The shifting of that image is important. Now both are true: we are ambassadors. But we're also very much as Christians in a lost world, we are an extraction team. And it's important for us to see ourselves that way.



Once you take a look at this passage—and it may be interesting to note that it is upon their success in sharing the truth of Christ with lost people that they start to see the reality of what it is to do evangelism in a hostile territory—the image that we have of fighting spiritual forces of darkness, in this particular text, they come upon the discussion of the 72 returning to report they’ve had success in getting people’s hearts ready.

Now remember, Christ’s ministry is moving from the north in Galilee, near the Sea of Galilee and all the surrounding cities, to the southern part of Israel that surrounds Jerusalem where Jesus would soon die. And he moved through that Samaritan region. And he sent in that Samaritan region his disciples—72 of them—to go into the cities and prepare people for the coming of Christ. He had a ministry to do in and around Jerusalem before he would be crucified there.

And these people, much like us, we made the parallel early in the chapter, they come and prepare people’s hearts through the message of repentance, as we saw broadly in the book of Luke, to get people ready to receive Christ at His first coming.

Now, it’s not any different for us in the sense that we’re preparing people to receive Christ. But the message of the gospel that leads to repentance—that is the key to being ready for Christ. But we’re preparing people for the second arrival of Jesus Christ, which will feel quite different and yet is no different in terms of the spiritual preparation that we need.

Now, in this particular text, they return—wherever Christ was in this process, we don’t have the details on it. But we know they come back to report to Christ after all this time in those villages and in those cities of southern Judea.

Follow along with me, let’s read these eight verses.

Luke 10:17 — *The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”*



In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Then turning to the disciples he said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

“The seventy-two returned with joy.” Now they’re happy. And they were saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.”

If you read that, and you remember that they had a special endowment to do things that you and I, in our evangelism, are not endowed to do, they were actually healing diseases—and we can assume casting out demons in some pretty dramatic exorcisms—and you say, “Well, that might be what’s in view.” But really, as we’ll see this morning, the battle that takes place in evangelism is really one against the spiritual forces of darkness in this world. And certainly this is something that arches its way from the first century to the twenty-first century in terms of what you’re up against this week if you want to open your mouth and talk to your non-Christian acquaintances and friends about Christ.

When you’re successful, you’ll be able to say with them, “Yeah, you know what, even the demons are subject to us in your name.”

And he says, verse 18, Christ does, “I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven.” Lightning comes quick from the sky to the ground—slams down with a great, you know, sonic boom. And he says, that’s what Satan was like. In this picture that I have of his predominance—as he’s called in 2 Corinthians 4, the god of this world—with every person who came to repentance, it was as though he fell from his place of preeminence and was slammed to the ground in defeat.

“Behold, I’ve given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.” Nevertheless—now this is an interesting, apparently medical statement—don’t rejoice in this. That’s pretty heavy, that you’ve extracted someone from the kingdom of darkness. But you need to recognize it’s not the top of the list to be thankful for—that the spirits are subject to you. No, rejoice that your names are written in heaven—that you’ve been extracted.



“And in that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said,”—so he’s saying things and praying things now that the Spirit, of course, is rejoicing in (which, of course, was everything Jesus prayed), but in particular, in this point of fellowship of the Triune God, they rejoice together as he the Son thanks the Father and says—“I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding”—and you might remember the scribes, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the elite, the high priests—they weren’t real receptive to the message of repentance coming from Christ and his disciples—“but you’ve revealed them to little children,” which isn’t much for your self-esteem, I suppose, as you hear that as Jesus compares you to a little kid. But the seventy-two that received the message and those that they had won to the message of the gospel and repentance, he equates them to little children.

He says, “Yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. And no one knows who the Son is except the Father”—that’s an interesting statement—“or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

Then turning to his disciples, he said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and they did not hear it.”

There are many things in this passage that raise questions in your mind, I trust. If you’ve read that thoughtfully, there are many things in this text that we need to untangle.

Let’s start with the first three verses here as the seventy-two return and they’re rejoicing: “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.” And as I said, I grant you that there may have been some spectacular, dramatic—what we call around here the GT-ones—that took place in the ministry of the seventy-two (that’s a God thing, by the way: a miraculous suspension of natural law), some very bizarre things that took place through the ministry of the seventy-two.

But I can see—clearly—draw a parallel between what they’re rejoicing in (which ultimately is a good reception from people who are preparing their hearts for the coming of Christ) which does involve much more than we’re apt to think when we share the gospel: a spiritual battle, a firefight, a hostile environment, a third party.



That is, something that they can say—whether they had this in their minds initially or not—we can certainly say: if someone comes to repentance in light of 2 Corinthians 4:4 that says the god of this world is blinding the minds of every unbeliever, when there's success and they see the glory of the gospel in Christ, well, that is certainly a victory over the enemy.

And he says, “Behold, I saw Satan falling like lightning from heaven.” Now let's see—what's more important? Healing an illness that will... come back (and certainly they all did; everyone that was healed ended up getting sick and dying or dying in some accident), or was it that their names were written in heaven—that they shared the gospel with someone, they repented, and God made them right with himself through the work of the gospel? That—that's eternal. That's the most important thing. And that would be the victory that Satan would despise the most.

You want to know something that makes Satan's defeat real and genuine? It's when one person repents. That's why there's so much joy—as we'll learn as we continue our study of Luke—in heaven over one sinner who repents. That's the ultimate win for heaven and the ultimate loss for Satan. And when people are saved, I can guarantee you, every non-Christian that you share the gospel with that comes to genuine faith and repentance in Christ will be a loss for the enemy, and it will be much like Satan in this analogy falling from his place of preeminence—at least in that one life.

“Behold, I've given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions.” And you should put an asterisk by that and make sure that you don't become a Kentucky snake handler as a result of this verse. Don't buy snakes and bring them to church. Only your pastor is allowed to do that on Good Friday—if it's gilded on a cross. (You don't get that joke? Go and stream it.) Don't bring snakes to church. Why? That's not what we're talking about in this passage. Not at all what we're talking of.

As a matter of fact, how does it start? Verse 17: “Lord, even the snakes are subject to us in your name”—is that what it says? No. “The spirits,” the demons. Look at verse 20: “Nevertheless, don't rejoice in this, that the scorpions are subject to you”—is that what it means? No.

He says “serpents and scorpions and over the power of the enemy,” and unless you think (and I know some of you do in your phobias about scorpions and snakes, which I share) that they are somehow inherently demonic—well, then you're wrong. Because there are some people that like snakes and scorpions—I don't know why they would—but they would certainly recognize that there is, in those particular creatures, God's glory, God's grace, God's creativity. They're not inherently evil, but they represent evil.



And just like lightning—Satan didn't literally put some kind of light out when someone was saved and fall to the ground and make a sonic boom. That's an analogy. So this is an analogy.

So put a little asterisk there by "serpents and scorpions," and know that throughout the Bible we see these as the things that tempt, the things that sting, the things that cause injury to human beings. And we're talking about those things in the spiritual realm.

What's the ultimate problem? Sin. What's the picture? Temptation in the garden—from the very beginning, all the way through the book of Revelation—he's called "the serpent," the old serpent. And what about scorpions? Oh, they're known for sting—at the end of their tail there's that dripping, venomous stinger that stings you in the heel. Well, that clearly is something that we think of spiritually throughout the Bible. The ultimate sting—as it's put in 1 Corinthians 15—is the sting of death. The wages of sin, coming through the tempter, is death—the sting of death.

This is the problem that we have. And it's all symbolic or analogous of the problem that we have that we're trying to solve with the gospel. We have people that are enslaved to sin. The wages of sin is death—or, to be more specific in Romans 2, they're storing up for themselves wrath, or anger, or just penalty for the day of God's judgment, the day of God's wrath. We want to solve that problem. We want to take away the sting of death and standing before this holy tribunal of God and hear this: "Depart from me, I never knew you," into the punishment that's very specific and exacting by a judge that judges justly. We don't want anybody to experience that that we know and love.

We'd like South County to be full of people that, one person at a time, are having the problem of temptation and sin and the penalty of death and the second death removed. This is a spiritual battle.

He says, "You know what, I've given you authority to tread on them, to crush them." Remember that picture in Genesis—that first picture of the gospel—that the seed of Eve would crush the head of the serpent? That idea there is here: when we share the gospel, that's what's happening—to tread on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

Evangelists, we have a job to do. And you need to consider the power of evangelism.



You have been encouraged in this series, exhorted, to share the gospel. It's not about just inviting people to church. That's a fine thing to do, and that's great. But to open your mouth through whatever means or mechanism you can to point people to their need to embrace Christ with real, genuine acceptance of the problem of sin (the turning from that that we call repentance) and the placing of their trust in the finished work of Christ—repentance and faith. We need to get people to understand that.

And when you do, you're fighting not just (what we thought of early in the series) people's intellectual questions: they don't get it, they need answers. Their volitional problem: they have a will that wants to sin, and we want to persuade them volitionally they need to turn to Christ. But we need to understand this is not just an intellectual battle or a volitional battle—this is a spiritual battle.

And when you go into the hostile environment of the world (which is what you live in) and you try to extract someone from the kingdom of darkness—as Colossians 1 calls it—that extraction isn't just going to be you sitting down with Jessica Buchanan saying, "Come on. We're the good guys. We're here to save you, we're here to take you home. You need to stop fighting us, stop pulling away from us, get in the helicopter, come into the desert, let's save you." It's not just dealing with her—it's dealing with all the surrounding hostile forces.

Now, if you're new to all this—maybe you just visited Easter, you thought you'd give it a second try—now it's getting really weird, they're talking about demons and angels and all that—you need to flip the worksheet over and give us a little chance here to understand what we're dealing with in terms of the angelic realm. You are not hardware only; you are hardware and software. You live in a world of hardware, and that's what we feel and see through the five senses every day. But there is software—that is who you really are: your spirit.

And there are also spirits that exist without hardware. Those are the angelic beings. A bunch of them have turned on God and they are rebellious spirit beings—those are the demons. (Dickason's book—there on the reading list—we try to give you some books that will help move you into another level of understanding about the things we preach on here. That'd be a good primer for you to start studying if you don't know anything about—or you kind of raise your eyebrow on—the discussion of angels and demons. That'd be a good place to start: *Angels: Elect and Evil* by Fred Dickason. I'm sure you can download it and you can get it—be reading it by lunch today.)



That I'll have to leave for another time; I taught for, what, 10–12 weeks on that recently on a Thursday night. You can get all those if you want—download those or stream them; they're all free. Go to pastormike.com, click on "All Sermons," type in "angels and demons," and you'll find that series.

Now, back to what we're talking about. Let me just—if you buy that, and you should, because it's real and it's true—let me give you a couple verses real quick that remind you that when you share the gospel, you're dealing with that realm. You're not just dealing with the person you're sharing with; you're dealing with the surrounding hostile forces that want nothing more than to keep their hostage and for you to be shooed away—and that's a mild way to put it.

Now, I already quoted one of the passages, but if you're a copious note-taker, jot it down: 2 Corinthians 4:4. The Bible says in evangelism you're not just fighting the person's intellect and volition—you're fighting the surrounding forces of the enemy who seeks to blind their mind so that they do not perceive the glory or the greatness of the message you're sharing. They'll do anything—Satan and his henchmen—to get you not to be successful in opening their eyes through the power of the gospel. That's one passage.

Here's another: Matthew 16:18. In that statement that I know you know about the building of Christ's church—"I'm going to build my church"—you know the rest of the verse: "the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Now, if you think about that, that's not certainly applicable to many churches that see themselves as a holy huddle: "I hope some people come to our church. We'll talk about God, and we'll try not to bother anybody, and we'll work together to worship and preach our little Bible, and we'll just be here—maybe we'll put a sign out in front, but, you know, we're just here to kind of do our thing because we believe in God." That has no applicability to this particular passage that speaks of the gates of hell—hell's domain—that are only of interest to people that are trying to invade that territory. Am I right?

The gates are a defensive mechanism. And if the church is what it's supposed to be, we're not just here as the holy huddle studying our Bibles on the weekend. We're supposed to be people that invade the perimeter. And we're supposed to get into the realm and the kingdom of the enemy to do what? As an extraction team. See, you're a SEAL Team Seven. (I see what you did there, Pastor Mike—Team Seven—yes.) You are there to extract the captive from the domain of the enemy.

And you need to understand, according to a passage like this, there are gates there that try to keep you out. There are things there—as easy as this: fear. This series—one of the reasons many of you have



done nothing about this series, now that we're on week number four—you've done nothing to share the gospel with anyone in the last month—is because you are afraid. You know who the author of fear is when it comes to evangelism? It ain't God.

Who is it? You'll talk about a lot of—if I was here and you're an Angels fan and we're all Angel boosters, and I said, "We're going to go out and share the good news message of the California Angels—let's go," I bet you would approach that task, with people that don't even like baseball, without the kind of fear. When I say, "Hey, you're gathered here as a fan of Christ, I want you to go out there as a devotee of Christ, and I want you to share Christ with people," now what's with that fear all of a sudden?

According to the Bible, there's a gate—there are things that try to keep you out. "Don't share the message with people." Satan will do whatever. See, it's not just that when the SEAL team comes into the camp there in Somalia to get Jessica Buchanan—it's not like they sit there and just turn their guns on Jessica; they turn their guns on *you*. And if you're approaching and creeping on the horizon on the new moon of January 25, 2012, to get this hostage, they're going to shoot at *you* to keep you out.

Do you understand the spiritual battle when I tell you that you have a responsibility not just to walk around on the marble floors of the embassy in some foreign country and hope that people come in and you can talk to them about America—or in this case, about the kingdom of God—but you're supposed to go into the territory? The gates are there—why are gates high? Fences. And you're supposed to invade that and get people out.

And what's the point there? You need to realize that the little things that keep you from sharing the gospel—the things that shut down your passion to share the gospel—it's the enemy at work. The gates are there to keep you out. You're an extraction team.

Lastly, here's another passage for you—how about this one: 2 Timothy 2:24 (and following). Just to round out this analogy: it says that when we're trying to convince people and lead them to repentance—here's the context: the servant of God leading people to repentance—we need to understand that they are captured in the snare of the devil, and they've been captured by the devil to do his will. That's what they're there for. And they have been made *captives*.



Put those three verses together, and you can picture what happened there on January 25. You have, in this case, the picture of someone who's held captive with a blindfold on, who doesn't even recognize that you're there to help them. As a matter of fact, your old-fashioned story about God and the Bible and sin and the cross—"I'm not interested in that." They don't even see that you're there to offer them the words of life. They're blinded. And they're surrounded by enemies—the Bible says here—that are there to keep *you* out. Spiritual forces of darkness to keep you at arm's length. And then the text is really—the image is—they're hostile, and your job is to free them.

That's the picture of evangelism that may take us from the nice, you-know, tie-clad ambassador to the armed-to-the-teeth Navy SEAL. But we have the gospel, which, according to Romans 1, is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who would trust in him—everyone who would believe. It doesn't matter who they are; doesn't matter if they seem close or far. "To the Jew first"—I get that: they're close. But "the Gentile," for the people there in the first century—"you mean that the barbarian, the Scythian, the slave, the free? You're telling me all those people could be saved?" Yeah, absolutely. That's the power of this message. You can infiltrate deep into the kingdom of darkness and see people won to repentance.

Because Christ came, according to Hebrews 2:14, to destroy the one who has the power of death—that is, the devil. That's the one—he wants people to get to the end of this life and die, and then face the second death. That's his goal. He wants that. And he'd like that for every non-Christian on your prayer list. He wants them to finish this life—as he's called there in John 8:44—he's a murderer; he wants them to die physically, and at that point, their opportunity for repentance is over. And then he wants them to face the judgment, because that's where he's headed.

That's the battle you're facing. And as mysterious and weird and mystical as that may sound, if you are not keen to understanding the reality of the spirit world, you need to recognize that what we're saying is rational—and it's true, and it's real. The reason we have trouble sharing the gospel, and the problem with people perceiving the truth of the gospel, is because there's a spiritual battle going on. But your job is to get in there with that message and to see that change.

Now, one passage on this—and this is all I'll show you—John 12:31–32. It's the passage I'd like you to look at with your own eyeballs. So call that passage up—John 12:31–32. I say this in reference, and with in mind, our Good Friday service. If you happened to be here for one of those services, we talked about Christ being "lifted up" in the manner of his crucifixion—remember that that conversation took place with Nicodemus in John 3. Well, in John 12 we have kind of a reprise of that image.



You can see in verse 33 we're talking about the kind of death that Jesus would die—to be “lifted up.” But look at the preceding verse. In verse 31 that precedes verse 32, it says (John 12:31), “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.”

And you might want to put (parenthetically) in the margin: “We’re not talking about all at once here.” Because I’m thinking, okay, he died (which is what he’s going to talk about here in the next verse) and Satan seems to be alive and well on planet Earth. He’s alive and well. But see—he’s not in *your* life. Certainly not in the sense that he is the murderer that is accomplishing his ultimate will in *your* life. Why? Because you’re saved.

And when you go out and do this in someone else’s life—you share the message of life, the words of life, and they get saved—you know what? He’s been cast out. You can put in the margin of this, as I did in mine: “one person at a time.”

“Now the judgment of the world is... now will the ruler of the world be cast out”—one life at a time. “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth”—which is talking about the type of death that he would die—look at the next verse—then it says, “I will draw all people to myself.”

Now, I should say—this is a quick sidebar—if you grew up in a Sunday school class that said, “All means all, and that’s all ‘all’ means.” If you ever heard that phrase—no? Okay, sorry to confuse you with that phrase. But some people read the Bible, they see the word “all,” and they say, “All means all, and that’s all ‘all’ means.”

People that have told you that—that’s not right. Because in the Bible, so often—particularly in 1 John and the Gospel of John—when John is writing to Gentiles about the Jewish Messiah, he’s very concerned that people get that what we’re dealing with here is not a Jewish Messiah who becomes a Savior for the Jews, but he’s a Savior for *all people*. And when I say “all” that way, I don’t mean “all people without one single exception.” I mean “all people without any distinction.” Because that’s what was in the mind of the first-century Gentile when you talk about the Jewish Savior.

Therefore you have to ask the question when they say “All means all,” and “That’s all ‘all’ means.” Here’s my response: Are you talking about *all without distinction*, or *all without exception*? (If you’ve heard me say that before—if not, stick around the church, you’ll hear me say that.) After “all,” you



need to ask the question: Do we mean all people without one individual exception, or do we mean all people—all kinds of people—without any kinds of distinction? All without exception, or all without distinction?

Clearly in this text—does he draw all people to the saving grace that means the destruction or the casting out of the ruler of this world? No. Not every person gets saved. But those that do—and they’re all kinds of people, some deep within enemy territory—all kinds of people get saved, including twenty-first century Gentiles on the other side of the planet. I’m sitting here with a room, I hope, full of them. And we have been saved. And Christ, when he was lifted up in his death—that cross that we preach—has drawn people like you and me to him. And that’s the destruction of the enemy’s working in that life.

And it’ll be seen—you want to talk about serpents that tempt and scorpions that sting—here’s the passage I quoted, and if you don’t know where it’s found, get to write it down: 1 Corinthians 15:54—“When the perishable,” us in our perishable state, “puts on the imperishable,” the resurrected body—“when the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’”

Like I quoted last week—that is not Herbert Lockyer’s book *Last Words of Saints and Sinners*. It’s important for us to realize that the problem of death—held in bondage and slavery to fear of death, the ultimate problem that we have that Satan would love to keep every non-Christian friend you have in—is solved forever, completely. And there is no sting in death. It’s not a good thing; we don’t like it; it may be painful. But the real problem of “It’s appointed unto man once to die, and then face the judgment”—if it’s a fiery judgment of God’s wrath, none of us will face that. Because Romans 8:1, there is no condemnation for those in Christ.

Death—where’s your sting? Grave—where’s the victory here?

Consider the power of evangelism.

Real briefly, I just want to deal with something that should be self-evident to Christians, found in verses 20 and 21. Look back at our passage—it’s printed on your worksheet. We won’t spend long on this, but we need to note it because Christ said this is the most important thing.



“Nevertheless, don’t rejoice”—that you can get out there and change, eternally, from a human perspective (because I know you’re just an instrument)—“but you can be a part of the process of seeing someone extracted from the domain of darkness.” Don’t get all hyped up about that—that Satan falls when you share the gospel and someone repents. But rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

I like that. Don’t get so hyped that you’re a part of the SEAL team that successfully saves hostages. Hey, you be grateful that *you are*, to use the analogy, an American citizen. You be grateful that you’re not captive in some Somalian Islamic kidnapper pirate compound. You be grateful for that. You be grateful because all of us at one time, the Bible says, were enslaved to our sins, but we’ve been extracted.

Be most grateful for our own salvation.

This is a great passage. Once you jot that down, I’d like you to turn to it, call it up on your device: Titus 3:3–7.

You must recognize that when you have success in sharing the gospel, you will feel good. And some of you have known that experience of leading someone to Christ, and you have said, “I shared with them, I talked to them, I dealt with them, I gave them a book, I answered their questions, I talked about the importance of their repentance and their faith, and they came to Christ.” You’ll feel so good about that.

And as you sit back and you revel in that experience of being someone who’s an instrument in God’s hand to lead someone to repentance, the Bible would remind us here: Hey, just look back and remember this. Just be super grateful—most grateful, supremely grateful—that you have been extracted. That’s something that should trump every thanksgiving you have.

Not that it’s a bad thing—you shouldn’t not feel happy about winning someone to Christ. But you should be grateful that you’ve been won to Christ.

Titus 3:3 — *“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when*



the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

You must remember: you were enslaved, foolish, disobedient. But God saved you. Not because of your works. Not because of righteousness. But because of his mercy.

That’s why Jesus says, “Don’t rejoice primarily that the spirits are subject to you—rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

And then the last section, verses 22–24:

“All things have been handed over to me by my Father.” Does it seem like all things have been handed over? Hebrews 2:8 says, “We do not yet see everything in subjection to him.” Already, but not yet. Christ owns all things, purchased by his blood at the cross, but the full reign is still future.

And then: “No one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Our knowledge is partial. One day it will be complete. For now, we see through a glass dimly.

And finally: “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.” Prophets and kings longed to see the Messiah, but didn’t. We’ve seen more—but still not all. The best is yet to come.

So here’s the takeaway:

Yes, you are an ambassador. But you are also an extraction team—called to invade enemy territory with the gospel, to see men and women freed from the kingdom of darkness. It’s not just an intellectual battle, not just a volitional one—it’s a spiritual war.



But take courage: nothing can hurt you. You can't be taken hostage again. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. And one day the full victory will be revealed, when every sting is gone, every tear is wiped away, and Christ reigns openly.

Until then—share the gospel. Do the work of an *euangelistēs*. Be grateful first and foremost for your own salvation. And remember: the best is yet to come.

God, I know this is a scary topic for people, and many probably have just taken notes and thought through this, and yet they haven't stepped up their evangelism. I pray this week, no matter how inferior we may feel, no matter how untrained we think we are, that we would realize we know enough to share the gospel. And according to this text, we have a great authority and power to do something that heaven itself sees as Satan slammed to the ground like lightning.

Help us to issue the fear, to remember that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes. In Jesus' name. Amen.