



Living More Like Jesus – Part 6

Increasing Our Endurance

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Well, certainly with all that's going on I think we have seen without question a resurgence of boldness and courage of Christians who are willing to speak up and be vocal about their Christian life, and that is certainly a good thing. We have to say that's a good thing. But I think the skeptic in a lot of us has probably said, some of us at least, you know, how long is that going to last, right? Because I think if you're a realist, you say well we've certainly lived for a long time here in the West with a kind of fragile Christianity. It doesn't take much. And I guess it's not just here of late in the West. You can go all the way back to biblical times, where you can find people like Peter with a bold, confident, like, I'm going to, yeah, I'm ready to die with you. And it doesn't take much to push you back into a kind of timidity of hiding in the shadows. And I find in Christianity, in America in particular, it doesn't take much for Christians, even with a bold resurgence of courage and boldness to say yeah, I stand with Christ, to find themselves maybe with a social media jab, or maybe a cold shoulder from a non-Christian coworker, or maybe some neighbor, you know, giving you some rebuke, or maybe somebody at work, you know, having you written up by Human Resources or something goes wrong and all of a sudden now you retract back to just being, you know, well, okay, I'll be quiet now and you retract back to normal, you know, timidity of following Christ silently and trying to just shine brightly as a kind of do-gooder and I'll just keep quiet over here for Christ. It doesn't take much it seems to shut Christians down.

And I just want to recognize that as Christians you know that's not what Christ would have us do. As Paul said to Timothy, he "didn't give us a spirit of ... timidity." That is not what Christ's Spirit within us would want us to be. He's given us a different kind of spirit, a spirit that is trying to fight through our flesh that is so easily scared. I mean, we are prompted by circumstances to be afraid and God would say, hey, you have to get past that now. And the real question for us as Christians is what is it going to take for us to be bold and to continue to be bold, not just this week or this month or this year, but what's going to take for you to continue to be brave and courageous about your Christianity two years from now, 12 years from now. Or what's it going to take for us to be at your funeral and to have a line of people stand up and say about you after you are dead to say this guy or this gal they were bold about their Christianity. They didn't care what you thought, they were going to say I stand with Christ. And when it came to standing up for what Jesus and what the Bible said they were going to tell you this is what it says, this is what it means and I stand with Jesus on this. And if you don't want to like me over that, that's okay. This person was courageous and this person stood with Jesus Christ.

I mean, what does it take to get you to have that kind of life from this point all the way to the end, whether it's popular or whether it's not? What's it going to take for you to be the kind of person, whether you're a preacher or not, to be like what the Apostle Paul was trying to get Timothy to do, to stand up for God's Word in season or out of season? Well, the good news is, I think this text that we've arrived at in Second Corinthians Chapter 6 verses 3 through 10, I think there are some things in this text that will answer that question for us. Some principles



that if we understood what's going on in this text, we could leave today, at least with the ingredients for us to say okay, this is going to help us. This is going to give us what we need to say, okay. If we can understand this and put it into practice and remember this we can be bold Christians, not just for a while, not just when it's popular, not just when people are feeling it. But we can make this the regular practice of our Christian life and have the mindset the Apostle Paul had. Because the Apostle Paul, we can agree he set the pattern for us. I mean, he was certainly one who lived this courage up all the way to the end. And in the last extant letter we have from the Apostle Paul, he certainly said it, right? "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." And then he said, I know "there is a laid up for me the crown," of righteousness that I did it the way I was supposed to do it. And everyone at his funeral certainly was able to say that guy, he was bold about his faith. And I want God to say the same thing of you. And I'd love for your family, your friends and people to eulogize your life and say the same, not for your glory or for your honor, but ultimately for the honor of Christ.

So let's look at this passage, Second Corinthians Chapter 6. We're going to study verses 3 through 10 this morning and look for us to find some answers here that will safeguard our lives for this very important cause, that you might be a faithful voice for Jesus in this day, because God knows we certainly need it in these dark times. Second Corinthians Chapter 6. Let's start in verse 3. I'll read it from the English Standard Version and you might remember where we were. You do know this is part six of a seven-part series, and it traverses the chapter division. And these chapter divisions have not been around for long, about 500 years now. So when I took this series and I said okay, this is all about and, you know, this is not God breathed, of course, but just I said okay, this is living like Jesus. Let's learn principles about how to be more like Christ. And as Paul said in the first letter to the Corinthians follow me as I follow Christ. We're trying to follow the example here of what the Apostle Paul is saying, and the theme really in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 was he's calling himself and Timothy ambassadors. And that really is the theme here. And he's bouncing back and forth in terms of trying to have them identify with him, and also then him trying to be the ambassador for them. And so we've kind of looked at this from several angles, but ultimately trying to say let's be like the Apostle Paul and understand what it's like to be like Christ, who ultimately is going to be faithful to God in the mission that God gave him, the Father gave him. And so all of this really has to be kept, we have to keep Chapter 5 in mind. Okay.

So we've dealt with all of that in Chapter 5. And then we really as he leaned in to say, okay, as an ambassador, I'm telling you this is all about urgency. We looked at that last time we're together now he says in verse 3, looking back at his ambassadorship, he says this in verse 3, "We put no obstacle in anyone's way," as an ambassador, we don't want to do that, "so that no fault may be found with our ministry." We want to represent Christ in our generation, and we don't want anyone to find fault with what we're doing. "But as servants," and that by the way, is the same word in the Greek language, a different form of the word "ministers," right? This is our ministry and as ministers, "of God we commend ourselves in every way." We want to say we're just doing what we should do. And how do we do this? "By great endurance." Now, I use this word a lot in the Greek language because it's a great picture. It's a great picture of what we need. "Hupomonē," right? Have I given you this word enough to now know



this? Do you feel like a Greek scholar now because you know that word at least? Hupomonē, "hupo" is "underneath" the Greek preposition and then "monē" is "to remain," to stay and to stay under.

And you have that picture that I always think of when I was in sixth grade in Tijuana. I didn't live in Tijuana in the sixth grade, but I had visited from time to time, and seen that big, big load on the back of the burro and to say it stays there, it doesn't collapse underneath it. Hupomonē. So that word here, "endurance" is really the one word that we need. And then all these things are the reason we need it because this list comes after it. "Afflictions, hardship, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights and hunger." Those things Paul had experienced. And in all of that he needs endurance. And whatever happens, he says, I don't want to put an "obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry." We're going to be "servants of God we commend ourselves in every way." We're not going to have the cause of Christ besmirched, even if all these things happen to me, we're going to endure, right? That's the essence of what's being said in verses 3 and 4 and 5. Okay. So endurance is the key, which is what the sermon is really all about in a sense. We want to endure with a faithful voice in our generation, just like Paul as a faithful ambassador. I want you to, let me just make this a little Sunday School lesson, this little light of mine I'm going to let it shine, right? Let Satan blow it out. No. Right? Do you want to sing it? No. We don't need to sing it, but you know if you grew up in church, your kids are learning it now, let's just pretend.

You're going to try to in your office, in your family, in your neighborhood, represent Christ as an ambassador in our generation. And there are a lot of reasons why, it doesn't take much of a little bump here or there, to let your light not shine. You're going to put it under a bushel. And that's what's going to happen if you get scared or you're going to be timid. Now we don't want that to happen. We want you to be vocal. Not a jerk. We don't want you to be a jerk. Right? Pastor, what did you learned at church this week? Not to be a jerk. I don't want you to be a jerk. Right? I don't want you to be pejorative. I don't want you to be an antagonist. I don't want you to be an angry person. I just want you though to be with gentleness and respect, absolutely unyielding about the fact that you stand with Christ and you care about people, you care about people enough to tell them the truth. So this is what it's all about to endure whatever it takes. And it may be that standing up for Christ as an ambassador is going to bring afflictions, hardships, calamity, beating, imprisonment, riots, labor, sleepless nights, and hunger. Now, I hope it's not going to take that in our generation but perhaps it will. If you live in a different part of the world it might. Even in our country now, I don't know if you live in Dearborn, Michigan it may mean that now for you. Who knows. And it may mean that for Southern California in a matter of decades. Who knows? Maybe in a matter of years.

But he says we're going to lean into what we're supposed to be, verses 6 through 8. I know I'm supposed to be reading the text, but I'm reading it with a little bit of commentary. Give me some grace. Verse 6, are you ready? "By," now he says, here's what we're all about, "By purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit," which is all about those things, right? You've read Galatians 5, "genuine love by truthful speech and the power of God," I love this now, "with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and



dishonor, through slander and praise." And now he gets into this kind of this and that kind of language, which started with weapons of war of righteousness for the right hand and the left, which, by the way, in the ancient world of hand-to-hand combat, your right hand, of course, was an offensive tool, if you're right-handed and your left hand was a defensive tool. So we have to, you know, honor and dishonor, slander and praise. And that gets him now into this volley of the kinds of things that are going on in terms of how he's treated and what the reality is. Right? "We're treated as impostors, and yet we're true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing," in a sense, they're taking everything from us, right? And in a sense, even theologically, he agrees with us. We have nothing here on this earth, "yet possessing everything." This is a great text in so many ways, and in a sense I feel bad I took it all at one time, but nevertheless, we're here.

So here's a great statement and it has so much in it. And if you look at the worksheet, which I hope you either download, it's on the website every Friday by 5:00 and you have it ready to go by Sunday morning, if you come on Sunday mornings. And I want you to be able to see where we're going with all of this, or you get the printed worksheet on your bulletin if you get one when you get here and you'll see how we broke this down. Now remember you'll say well, wasn't it good enough the way that God laid it out in the Bible? You have to always mix it up every Sunday. I don't mix it up every Sunday so stop saying that. Okay? But sometimes my job as a preacher, do you know that? My job's a preacher? And my job as a preacher as a homiletician is trying to get this into your mind in a way that is going to teach you and train you and to get this in a place where it's going to be applicable and so you can flesh this out in your weekly life. So sometimes we're going to put this in an order that is going to preach well, homiletically work in a way that is different than the way that Paul wrote this. And so I sometimes break this apart for good reasons. So trust me in this. Okay? If you would. I'm your pastor so you should trust me.

So we're going to take it this way, right? We're going to start with verses 3 and the first half of verse 4. And then we're going to look at verses 6 through 8, because that's the positive that he's going to be committed to. And then we're going to take the negative, right? He's going to need endurance, which is the umbrella term, and then all the difficulties that are going to come, and then he's going to pick it up here with this kind of volley of the negative that's coming but the commitment of the truth of what he's all about and the purpose of it all. And so then we're going to pick it up in the middle of verse 8 through verse 10. Now the verses, they're not inspired obviously, this is not God-breathed but we're going to break it up that way. If you have the worksheet you can see this, right? Verse 3, 4a, 6 through 8a, 4b through 5 and 8b through 10, whatever. But do you see that there? Okay. Let's take a look at this, verses 3 and 4.

Let's start with this. How are we going to increase our endurance? How are we going to learn from this text how to stay strong till the end of our lives and not retract and not be scared and not have a comment here, or a problem there, or someone not inviting us to a party, or not being a part of their inner circle, or having someone say, why don't you shut up and stop jamming your religion down my throat, make you actually hide your light under a bushel? How



are we going to stay strong and be faithful as a good and obedient ambassador for the rest of our Christian lives? Well, let's learn a few things from this passage that may help. Now, this one sounds counterintuitive because it sounds like a defense but let's look at this that will create a good offense for us. Ready? Number one. Verses 3 and 4, "Put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry," you have a ministry too you're not a professional missionary, I understand that, "but as servants of God, we commend ourselves in every way." Let's just put it this way, number one on your outline, "Safeguard the Reputation of Christ." Safeguard the reputation of Christ.

Now, how is he doing it here? There's one obvious way I'll get to that in a minute, but let's talk about one way that may not be so obvious as you read it and that is the ministry itself. What is the ministry that we have? I've already hinted at it throughout the introduction and the reading of the text. What is the ministry? Well, it's an ambassadorship that comes in the context. So let's talk about that. Let's go back to Second Corinthians Chapter 5 and let's just see it, put our eyeballs on it again. Go back to Second Corinthians Chapter 5. The ministry itself, how can I protect or safeguard the reputation of Christ with the ministry itself? Here's a way that you wouldn't protect the reputation of Christ is if you failed to fulfill the ministry, then the reputation of Christ would somehow be besmirched, somehow be tarnished, somehow you would do damage to the reputation of Christ if you didn't fulfill the ministry. I'm going to show you why.

Let's look back at this. Let's start, for instance, with verse 14. Okay. Verse 14, it says, "For the love." This is Chapter 5 verse 14. Are you with me on this interactive 9:00 crowd? Okay. Verse 14, "For the love of Christ," what's the next word in English there? "Controls us, because we've concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and was raised." Okay, so he's all about now trying to convince people that they should no longer live for themselves, but they should live for the one who died for them and rose again. Now, the ultimate act of love by Christ was that he would lay down his life for us. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son," so that the Father gives the Son in a great act of love. Christ comes and willingly lays down his life. That's the ultimate act of love. So the whole point of this is how amazing the love of God is, that he would send his Son and that Christ would die for us. It's amazing that sinners would have the grace of God be demonstrated in such a loving way. And he says this "the love of Christ controls us." We understand that love and therefore we're calling people to live for Christ. That's a lot like verse 11.

Look at verse 11. Go back up, "knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others," knowing the fear of the Lord. Well, we just talked about the fact that we're all going to have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Verse 10, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done to the body, whether good or evil. Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others." Okay, so Paul is saying we're compelled, so to speak, because we know God is so, so powerful. He's the one in charge and we fear him. We're going to have to stand before him. Therefore, we have to persuade other people. And then a few verses later, because the love of God, we



know what a huge thing it is, it controls us. We have to tell people to live for Christ. Okay. Those two things, two different aspects of the nature of God, he says, we are so overwhelmed by the massive truth that God is the king of the universe. He's in charge, the creator of all things. He has dominion over us and therefore, because of that, man, we have to persuade people. We see God as so high and exalted we have to tell people. It's like Isaiah 6, right? We see the greatness of God and God says, hey, I got a job. Someone has to go compel the Israelites. Here am I, send me, here am I, send me. The greatness of God I have to go persuade others. And here is the love of God. Oh, man, I can't believe he would do this for us. It constrains me to go share this message. Okay.

What if you don't take the message and run with it? What if you don't feel like this love is worth sharing, right? Well, then what you're taking is the view of God and you're bringing it down. You're taking the fact of the love of God is not all that great. In other words, the extent to which you fail to persuade others, the extent to which you don't want to share this message that God loves sinners, right? Romans Chapter 5. That he was willing to love sinners and die for them. That this massive thing that was done, that instead of taking the whole human race and putting it in the trash compactor and saying you guys are sinners, rebelled against me, well, I'm sending you all "into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping," wailing, "and gnashing of teeth." No, instead, he's going to reach into sinful humanity and draw them out as Jesus snatched them from the fire and saves them. I mean, that's an amazing thing, right? Instead, you're going to say, no, God is great and I don't want to see people judged. Because of the fear of God I have to persuade people. Because of the love of God, the love of God compels me. Okay.

If you don't do what God has called us to do, you must have some deficient or defective view of God, right? Isaiah didn't have that certainty after the view and image of God, this view, this vision of God that he has in Isaiah 6. And I'm just wondering this, what is your view of God? How bad would it be for you to be an ambassador of the greatest kingdom that ever was and you knowing the greatest king who ever was, the King of kings and Lord of lords? And he says, I've have a message for you to share, the greatest message of love that ever was that he would lay down his life for sinners, and he's the greatest God of all time, that one day people will hear from his voice, depart for me, I never knew you "into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping," wailing, "and gnashing of teeth." And you said, well, yeah, that's kind of a scary thing, but it's not scary enough for me to tell my coworkers about. And for them to one day maybe let's just imagine for a second if this is how it might play out and who knows, I don't know, because the Bible doesn't say it's going to play out, but let's just say that you happen to be there when your coworker hears those words and your coworker could possibly look over at you and say, dude, you're hearing "enter into my kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," you're hearing "enter in" and I'm hearing "depart for me." You knew and you said nothing. What are you talking about? You went to church and sang about the greatness of the king. You sat there and taught your kids about how great the love of God was. You never shared that with me. You must not have thought he was that great. You must not have thought the love was that great. What are you talking about?



Do you see how you could damage the reputation of Christ? Eventually, at least one day it would be obvious that you really didn't think his greatness was that great. You didn't fear him that much. And you really didn't think his love was that compelling that you needed to share it? Do you see how you're doing damage ultimately to the greatness of God if you're silent about the message, if you're not a good ambassador for Christ? Ambassadors need to share the message. Ambassadors need to represent the Kingdom. Ambassadors who don't represent the kingdom and are embarrassed to represent the kingdom, they must not think he's all that great.

Let's go back to what I alluded to in the very first paragraph of what I stood up here and talked about. It doesn't take much. It doesn't take much to have bold declarations of their loyalty to Christ, to end up going into the shadows and say, I don't know him, I'm not with Christ. I alluded to Peter in Caiaphas' courtyard as he's warming himself by the fire when some teenage girl said to him, I think you're with him, I think you're with Christ. And he goes, no, I'm not, no I'm not, no I'm not. And then the rooster crows and he starts cursing. I just want to think at that moment, if you're standing by as you are standing by as you read the text, what do you think of Peter at that point? You saw him do miracles. You saw him raise Lazarus from the dead. I mean, your view of Peter, if you're going to write him a letter of recommendation as he goes to become the pastor of the first mega church in Jerusalem, he's going to be the preaching pastor standing there on the courtyards with 5,000 people and their families. And you're going to recommend him to the search committee of that church? I think you're going to go, I don't know. He doesn't have a very high view of God. I don't think I'm going to recommend him to be the preacher of this church, because he folds pretty quickly when some teenager thinks he's a follower of Christ. I don't think he thinks Christ is all that great. I just wonder how great you think Christ is. I wonder how great you think his love is. I wonder how much his love compels you.

I know it seems counterintuitive, but your safeguarding of Christ's reputation begins with how great you think God is. Does the fear of God compel you? Does it really constrain you? Does it drive you to persuade people? Ambassadors need to "ambass" which is not a bad word, because in Latin that really comes close to how you would say it in Latin. It means to be a servant of the one who sent you to "ambass" you. You're supposed to go out and do what he says, and he says, if you follow me I'm going to make you fishers of men. If you follow me I'm going to entrust you with a message. Put no obstacle in anyone's way and no fault to be found in our ministry.

Here's a fault that may be found in your ministry. The people that you rub shoulders with for years at your job, in your neighborhoods, in your extended family may have a legitimate case against you one day by saying we rubbed shoulders for decades and you never ever, you never ever discuss this thing with me. What is wrong with you? You knew this would cost. Now I get it. Romans Chapter 1. You can be Mr. Theologian on me and say, oh, the Bible says they're "without excuse." You're right they're without excuse, but you're also without excuse because you were told to persuade people and you were told to let the love of God compel you to tell people to no longer live for themselves. So the fault is on both sides if we don't safeguard the reputation of Christ by being faithful to our ministry.



That was pretty heavy for the first point, wasn't it? Okay, well, we're past at least Letter "A," let's go to Letter "B," which is what you expected me to preach on. Obstacle here is not the normal word for obstacle. When you hear obstacle or stumbling block, it is usually the word "Skandalon" in Greek, which is the common word, which is more like a trap. Sometimes it's used in the classical Greek for trap, to set a trap. And you don't want to do something that sets a trap for another Christian and even non-Christians, right? Sometimes it talks about in First Corinthians Chapter 1 that the cross is a stumbling block, it's an obstacle. But it's an obstacle in the sense that they get caught by it and by that it's different and in Romans Chapter 14, it's a different story. I don't want to get into that. But this is a "hapax legomenon" and we call it, and it's the only time, this is the fancy way to say it, only time this word is used in the New Testament. And the obstacle is that it just basically turns them away. This is more like an offense. And in other words, I would be more interested if it weren't for that. So this is more minor. It's a word that's used in classical Greek outside of the New Testament for like a ship that's going along and runs into another ship. It's like a fender-bender on the ocean. And the point is, I'm sailing along and your ship got in my way and that kind of ruined your day. And the point is, I'm trying to get here, get your ship out of my way.

And that's the point of seeing, at least in this case, that you would have someone maybe drifting toward Christ and all of a sudden now your ship got in the way and he says I don't want any obstacle to get in your way. I don't want my life in any way to be an obstacle to someone drifting toward Christ. Now, it's more than that, and it's deeper than that, obviously, theologically, as God's drawing people to himself. But Paul says, I don't want to be getting in anybody's way. Now, what's the positive way? We started with a negative way. Your silence could be ultimately some kind of obstacle, but obviously your actions could be an obstacle. How could your actions be an obstacle? Well, obviously what kind of neighbor are you to your neighbors? You pull in with your Compass Bible Church sticker on your car, or I hope your neighbors know, I hope you invite them at least to the Easter services or Christmas services at church. And you bake them cookies. You do whatever you do. They know you're Christians. I hope they know that you're Christians. I hope you're a good neighbor. I hope you're a good neighbor. I just hope you do everything to be a good neighbor. If you're a bad neighbor, obviously you could put an obstacle toward them. I don't want them saying, yeah, we do have a Bible-thumping evangelical Christian in our cul-de-sac, but that's the worst neighbor we have. That would be an obstacle in the way, right?

Or you're at work and there's a million ways for someone to look at you and it would be just a minor offense, but it's enough for them to say, yeah, the Christian in our office, the Bible-believer at our office, and they have a million reasons not to like Christians, but now they have this added thing. Well, you're a Debbie Downer. You're always negative, right? You're always whatever, or you're a hypocrite or whatever it is. It could be a minor thing, but it's enough to be that the ship gets bumped into and we don't want that. So you have to live a cut above, I understand that. And speaking of bumper stickers, right? Some of you don't even want to put a bumper sticker on your car because you don't want to mess with your driving because you know you're in the jungle of the freeways in Southern California, and I don't want to put a bumper sticker, then I have to drive like a Christian. I don't want to have to drive like a



Christian. Listen, my point is this: I understand being a Christian and being labeled a Christian in your office or in your neighborhood or in your family, which I hope you can avoid, it is going to put a higher standard on you, but that's what the Bible says is going to happen, and you're just going to have to live with that higher standard. You're right. They're going to scrutinize your life more because you are a Christian, but you're supposed to be known as an ambassador. So get used to that.

That is the burden that you bear. And they're going to look twice whether or not you take a paperclip home, or they are going to look twice at you whether or not you're going to respond in a particular way, and the neighbors are going to care about things that you do more than they care about the other neighbors who are atheists or agnostics. It's just going to be that way. So you're going to have to go the extra mile, stay the extra hour, and spend the extra dollar. That's just part of who you're going to have to be, and you're going to have to live with that because you can't let anything get in the way. You can't be hot-tempered. You can't be the gossip. You can't be the guy who cuts corners. You can't be the person who lacks integrity. You can't do those things. You've just have to live in a different kind of way and just say, I can't do anything that in any way is going to put any kind of obstacle in anybody's way, because I don't want in any possible way to besmirched the ministry because you're a servant of God and you have to commend yourself in every possible way, even ways that don't even seem to be religious, that have no relation to theology. And so you can't be the curmudgeon. You can't be whatever it is that you want to be. And you knew that part. That's the easy part. And you can execute that on your own. All right.

Let's get to the problem. What? No. Let's get to the let's get to the positive or this is the positive part that we're supposed to be all about. And this is the part we preach ultimately, and it's the part that causes problems. Let's start with the first word in verse 6, "by purity." The world doesn't like these things, right? The world doesn't like purity in the knowledge and the knowledge that we have. Let's just start with those two words, right? The message that we bring is a message that the world doesn't like, purity. When we talk about purity, let's just talk about purity in any area. Sex is the easy way to say you want to talk about sexual purity how does the world think about that? Crickets. How does the world like our sexual ethic? It doesn't like it. It doesn't like it because it's difficult and it's hard to maintain and it's even hard for Christians to maintain. And so we're fighting the battle with our flesh and our kids are fighting the battle with the flesh and all of a sudden now we're telling the world, well, that's how we're supposed to live, and you should live and all of that's going to be a struggle. And then all the world is all about, at least from the 60s, publicly saying this is the way we should all live, and the sexual revolution takes place. And so now we're all living in Alice in Wonderland when it comes to sexual ethics. And now all of a sudden we are the bigots and the narrow-minded, whatever. And now it's in the courts all the way to the Supreme Court. Now we've legislated all the nonsense in sexual ethics, and now we're saying, oh, no, we still are preaching purity. And all of a sudden now all that's going to cause the problem.

All I'm telling you is that when God says here is what knowledge is, here's what purity is, here's what patience is, here's what kindness is, here's what the Holy Spirit stands for. Which, by the way, if you want to know what the Holy Spirit stands for, he wrote a book. This is the



Bible. It's what it's all about and what genuine love is. And truthful speech is all about verse 7 and the power of God is all about. Then here's the thing. It's going to be a message that disrupts. Right? It is. And it's going to be like weapons in a world that doesn't like it, verse 7, "weapons of righteousness for the right hand." That's offensive weapons. And when they throw stuff at you, for the left hand is like a shield and it's going to be "through honor and dishonor." Some people are going to like it. A lot of people are going to hate it "through slander and praise."

And we've already talked about the fact that for some, it's a stench of death, and for others it's the savor of life. And so we know it's going to be the majority who are going to hate it, and a few people are going to like it. But we have to stand there and continue to be billboards of it because we're representatives of the kingdom. We're ambassadors of Christ, "purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, by truthful speech, and the power of God." And it's going to be like weapons in a world that doesn't like it. And our weapons, not with steel, weapons with words and ideas. We're preaching a message, right? We're not Islam. We're preaching with words and concepts and theology and doctrine, and we're fighting battles, as we'll see later in the book of Second Corinthians. We're fighting everything, we're tearing down everything that raises itself up against the knowledge of God with our mouths. Right? They can come after us with bullets and swords but we're preaching with our words, and that makes them angry. And that creates the battle we'll deal with in the third point.

But let's just at least camp for a minute on the second point, verses 6 through 8a, let's just deal with this. We need to remember, number two, the "Power of Our Message." When you remember the power of our message. And that's not benign. The whole point is for us to camp on and let our minds kind of fixate on the word "power." And here's what people don't like, power. They don't like power. They like power as long it's kind of fitting nicely into their view of how things should be. But they don't like power that disrupts and real power disrupts. And I want you to picture it this way. You go into a place, you know, a little Shangri-La over there, a little campsite and you pull in with power. Now everyone has their campsite set up and it's nice and tranquil and it's around dusk and everyone has their Weber, you know, grills out and they have their RVs out and you pull in and let's just say everything about you is power. It's power. Right? Everything about you is power. Your lights are like halogen lights with, you know, you have generators out there and your quads are like, you know, no muffler quads with, you know, thousand cc motors on them. And if there's a lake, you have the loudest speedboat possible. And everything about you is power, right? Everything is power. People don't like that, right?

It reminds me of Ephesians 5 like, hey sleeper, awake from your sleep. Let Christ shine on you. Everything about the Christian message is power. It's power to people who don't like the power because God's power is waking up the dead. I mean, that's really the picture of it all. People like what they like, which is the tranquility of saying don't mess with my life. I have it just the way I like it. And the message of God is no, the way it is not right and so the power is going to disrupt it all. And what we need to know is that we're bringing in a message. It's already disrupted our own lives. We had our lives the way we liked them, at least the way we



thought they should be and God has disrupted them all through a thing called repentance and faith. We've now trusted someone else. We trusted ourselves, and we've repented from our way. We were like sheep going our own way. Now we've returned to the shepherd of our soul and say, okay, you lead us now, that's very disruptive. And the power of it all is we're supposed to follow this King of kings and Lord of lords. I'm supposed to submit to him. This is the big deal. I'm now submitting to someone who's external to me and I'm calling him the King, the Lord. And this is big. He's not just a buddy or a therapist or some kind of a consultant. He's the King. And this is huge. This is hard.

Turn with me to Matthew Chapter 11 and we make this point. You already wrote down the point. Remember the power of our message and which was very hard for people to understand. Matthew Chapter 11 verse 12. And as you're turning there, let me remind you what was said in Acts Chapter 17 verse 6 when the church was encountering Paul and Silas when they came to Thessalonica. There was an uproar there. They didn't want the missionaries of Christ coming, the ambassadors of Christ coming. And when they came there here's what was said, because the message and reputation of Paul and Silas had preceded them. And here's what they shouted. They didn't say it. They didn't write a few notes down and post bills on the wall. They shouted. They said, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also." Now what did they do? Did they burn anything down? Did they blockade anything? Did they bring bullhorns or did they scream? Did they set up, you know, banners. Did they make billboards? They did none of that. They just came and taught. They used words, right? And yet they said they've "turned the world upside down." See, that's the power of the message of the gospel that calls for purity and knowledge and the lordship of Christ and the power of the Spirit.

We're saying here's what you need to do. You need to submit your life to Christ because you're a sinner. You need to repent of your sins because if you don't you're going to hell. These are powerful words in a powerful message. And they said when they came to a little, you know, town called Thessalonica, they said you've "turned the world upside down." Don't come here and try to turn our world upside down. And in sleepy, you know, Orange County, California, where everyone thinks they have things just right and they say they love power. They love power as long as the controlled power that they get to exercise, doesn't come in with this cosmic power of a Christ who is supposed to be the King of kings and Lord of lords telling me what to do. Telling me how to run my sexual ethics or my business ethics or my parenting ethics. Don't tell me how to run my life. And we're saying, no, you have to. He's the king. He's in charge. As a matter of fact, he owns your life. He owns your body. He owns everything about you. And he's the good shepherd and you should trust him with your all. We're giving them a powerful message, and they don't like it. And it's a hard thing for people to process.

Here's how Jesus put it. I turned you to Matthew Chapter 11. Drop down to verse 12, did I tell you the verse? Verse 12, "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force." Have you ever run across this verse and that makes you scratch your head? What in the world are we talking about? Now, this verse fits nicely with so many other passages of Scripture that I know you've read and they



make sense to you, the other passages make sense to you. I mean, there are passages all over the New Testament that make sense to you in light of this text. I mean, there are passages like Jesus is going to build his "church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." I just want you to think about that motif. Christ is going to build his Church and the Church is going to expand. Here's another one. The mustard seed, he's going to plant a seed and he makes a parable about the seed being the kingdom. It's going to grow. It's going to be so big that all the birds are going to come and nest in it, and it's going to be huge. It's going to grow huge. So we understand that the kingdom is going to grow. I'm going to start this thing, it's going to grow and like that it's going to go and it's going to be the Church and it's going to go up against the gates, the parameters, the barriers of hell and the barriers of hell are going to collapse because the Church is going to go past those barriers.

Now I'm just thinking, what's that collision like? Or use this passage which I think you can understand. Right? It's easy to understand. This one may be hard to understand, but it's really not all that hard when you think of all these other passages. First John Chapter 5, it says, "We know that we are from God, and the whole world," First John 5, "lies in the power of the evil one." Oh, okay. Well, what happens then when one person becomes a Christian if the whole world lies in the power of the evil one? Or Second Corinthians Chapter 4 verse 4, right? That "Satan has blinded the minds of the unbelieving." That's why they don't trust in Christ. Well, what happens when someone gets up here in the baptismal tank and says, yeah, I was a non-Christian but three months ago I met someone here at Compass Bible Church and I put my trust in Christ because they shared the gospel with me. And I have this all figured out. I got involved in the discipleship program, and now I'm a devoted follower of Christ. I'm sharing the gospel with people. What's Satan doing at that point? Right? This is a violent encounter with Satan. This is a big violent encounter.

Or even what we've said about when it says there in Ephesians about the collision of the problem of people who are asleep. It's not just sleep. It says there earlier in the text, Ephesians Chapter 2 verse 1, they're "dead in their transgressions and sins." And now I'm waking up people who are asleep, which is a euphemism for death. And I'm saying, no, let Christ shine on you. Arise from your death, from your sleep. And then the point is this, as he goes on to say, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against," principalities and powers and cosmic "forces of evil in heavenly places." What's that all about? This is some kind of cosmic warfare. And then to talk about "weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left." This is like some kind of weird battle. And I want you to think about what's going on here in this passage, in verse 12, "From the days of John the Baptist until now."

Now John the Baptist was foretold in the book of Micah, some forerunner for the Messiah. And here we had 400 years before he shows up. And he comes on the scene and what is he? Is he one of the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of the Jews? No. Is he one of the priests there who are putting sacrifices up on the altar in Herod's Temple? No. Right? He's out eating the locust in the wilderness. Who knows, he may be out in Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were eventually buried. I mean, who is this guy? As a matter of fact, he says over there when Jesus is talking about him in Luke Chapter 7 verse 24, he said when you went out in the desert to listen to John the Baptist preach what were you looking for? "What did you go out to



see? A man dressed in soft clothing," like you might go see in the temple? You knew this was a man of God, a prophet. He said, no, he's more than a prophet. What are you looking for? You're looking for a man who's going to tell you the truth. But the man who is telling you the truth is not the guy at the temple right now. You're looking for a guy who's telling you the truth, but he doesn't fit the mold. Because right now the mold is this tranquil, nice little campsite where everyone has their RVs parked nice and neat. And they don't like the disruptive power of God because the kingdom of God is all nice and neat.

But from the days of John the Baptist till now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence because the kingdom of heaven, quote unquote, has been nice and tidy. And just like in our day, everybody, it's all nice and tidy. Life seems to be nice. Everyone likes to talk about being a good person and everyone's going to end up in heaven. Most people that you meet think they're going to be just fine when they die, and all of a sudden we're disrupting all of that by saying, you know, it doesn't matter if you're a good person because no one's good. No one's good. Not even one. Read Romans 3. You're not good. Everyone's going to hell unless you put your trust in Christ. That's disruptive. And if you want to fix the problem, you're going to have to put your trust in Christ and that's a big deal. And do you know what's going to happen? You're going to be considered a violent person at that point. And violence, I know that sounds so harsh but that word is used in a lot of different contexts outside of the New Testament. It's just a struggle. It's the concept I've been trying to paint the picture of. You're coming in with a powerful message and it's disruptive. John the Baptist came in with a powerful message and it was disruptive. And he wasn't even welcomed among the establishment.

Neither was Jesus, was he? That's why he told stories. You don't put a new piece of cloth on an old garment because once you wash it, it'll rip off. You don't put new wine in old wineskins. It's going to burst those things. You don't understand what's happening now as the whole concept, the theory, the theology of the Messiah that was all neat and tidy in people's minds, now he's here. You're right. This is going to blow people's minds. John the Baptist was this transitional figure pointing now to the person of Christ. You do understand this is going to blow people's minds. They're not even ready for it. When Jesus read the scroll in his own hometown and he sat down and he said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." They chased him out of town, brought him to the edge of the cliff. They wanted to throw him over the cliff and kill him because he was seen as the violent one. He was seen as the one that the kingdom of God is now suffering violence.

All I'm telling you is we have a powerful message. And it's still the same today. Because of the neat and tidy religion of our culture is really not ready for what we're doing when we say, hey, do you want to go through Partners with me? I mean, I'm serious. The concept of what we're asking people to do to submit to God's New Testament truth and to actually take it all seriously is going to disrupt their lives. It's a powerful message and it's the truth. And you cannot be a Christian just by saying I believe some concept about there was a God and he loves me and Jesus is, you know, someone who I believe some abstract truth about and I think he loves me too. This is about understanding my sin, recognizing that God is my creator, that he is holy, that I fall short of that, that by God's amazing grace and love for me he dies on



a cross, Jesus does, rises from the dead, and the imputation of his righteousness can be mine if I repent of my sin and trust in him. And that doesn't mean that I get some insurance policy and tuck it in my back pocket but I give my life to this King. And this is a big disruptive thing.

From the days of John the Baptist until Jesus is said this, the kingdom of heaven, man, has been disruptive. Some big, high-powered, high-horsepower thing has pulled into the campsite and it's suffered violence. And the violent, guess who's taking the kingdom of heaven by storm? People who are willing to roll up their sleeves and say, if I don't fit into the whole, you know, system now, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter if I'm rejected by the tranquility of what everyone expects. I'm willing to be like John the Baptist. If I'm a zealot or a tax collector, a former tax collector like Levi, or maybe I'm a Peter-James-and-John fisherman from Galilee, it doesn't matter. I can be the uneducated people who end up leading this thing in Acts Chapters 4 and 5. It's okay. I don't have to be in the tranquil group that's accepted.

It's an interesting word here "Biazō" which is "suffer violence." It's a hard-fought struggle and it's one that you and I need to be ready for. I'll tell you it started at the very beginning in Jesus' life, Simeon is the guy you don't want to invite to a baby shower in Luke Chapter 2. They hand this baby Jesus to Simeon. Do you remember his prophecy? He says to his mother, think about it, you hand this baby to this old guy on the Temple Mount and he says your baby is either going to be loved or hated. He's going to be, "for the fall and rising of many in Israel." Right? And they'll either repent or they'll rebel against him. Oh, and by the way, there's going to be a sword. And he uses the Greek word for big sword, and it's going to pierce your heart. Oh, here's your baby back. What kind of blessing is that? That's crazy. And it did, because Mary sat there and watched her Son die naked in his mid-thirties on a cross as the ultimate act of love and redemption for her sins and for everyone else who put their trust in him. That's not the kingdom of God, the nice and neat, tidy kingdom of God that everyone perceived. This was a violent, revolutionary concept, which, by the way, is not a bad word. The dictionary defines a revolution as a forceful overthrow of social order in favor of a new system. And that's exactly what Christianity is with people's preconceived ideas of religion. It worked in the first century and it works right now with most people I talk to about what they think religion is. They want a nice, neat, tidy thing. They want a "Jesus loves you" moment. And I'm telling them about repentance and faith, and it's a whole new thing. So get ready for that.

What's it going to bring? Go back to our passage now. Point number three. Well you're going to need great endurance because what you might get is a little bit of push back, maybe not as bad as the first century Paul did, or John the Baptist did. They cut Paul's head off, they cut John the Baptist's head off, and they hung Jesus on a cross. And I pray that doesn't happen to you, but you better look at something on the spectrum of what he endured. He's going to have to hupomonē under all the pushback of afflictions. Right? Maybe the pressure that's going to build when you're the odd man out, hardships, maybe that difficult grind that doesn't let up when you're living out your Christian life in a non-Christian setting. Calamities. That's a weird word but those are the unexpected troubles that may blindside you knowing that your battle isn't against flesh and blood, or the beatings, maybe it's not physical blows for you, but a lot of verbal beatings. I know people I talked to from Sunday to Sunday have a lot of hurt



feelings and insults. Imprisonments, we don't have a lot of imprisonments for our Christianity in our culture not quite yet. Maybe it's not the bars and guards, but the isolation. The exclusion that you get comes from your loyalty to Christ.

Riots, maybe the conversations that turn into a dark alley because you've spoken the truth this week. Labors. Maybe it's just the exhaustion of always being part of doing what's right standing up for Christ, feeling like it's never over. Sleepless nights. Maybe not like Paul's sleepless nights but I know what it's like for many of you to have concerns for people's souls, people in your family, people at your workplace. Hunger. Paul went physically without food because he was standing up for the truth. But maybe you'll go without other things, legitimate needs that won't be met because of your quality service to Christ. That may be true for you.

Now drop down to verse 8. You may be treated as an impostor, but you need to make sure that you're always going to stay true. Now, this volley back and forth is what we need to focus on. And this is where we get our third point, right? Let's put it this way. Number three, you need to "Look Past the Pain to the Purpose." Now this is a great contrast that I think helps us really draw into what I want. In the afflictions, in the hardship, calamity, beatings and all the rest, I want to make sure I stay focused on the purpose. And I get this concept from Hebrews Chapter 12 when Jesus in that passage says he set his sights on the end. He said, you know, he set his sights in Hebrews Chapter 12 on the crown. Jesus, "For the joy that was set before him endured the cross." He was able to look over the darkness and the shame of all of that. It's a great word. "Kataphroneō." He looked down "phroneō" means "to think." He thought down on the cross and all the shame of the cross because he was looking beyond it to what comes on the other side. And that's a great picture of what we need to do with all these things. Like if you get excluded, if you get insulted, if you feel like, man, there's just too much cost in all this, I just need you to think less of it. That's what kataphroneō means "to think less of it" so that you can look to the purpose of it all.

And this is where the volley back and forth in verses 9 and 10, I think will help a lot. So let's look at that. Number three look past the pain to the purpose. Well what's the pain and the purpose? Well, we can see that nicely paired together in a number of these. Okay? Well the first one was in verse 8, "treated as impostors, and yet are true." A lot of people think we're misrepresenting Christ when we talk about repentance and faith. We talk about being sold out to God. They think a little bit of religion is all you need and you'll be fine. It's an insurance policy. But we're saying, no, this is about Jesus is Lord. I mean, this is the point. And they think it's too much. Okay, well, you can think we're impostors, but we're just reading the Bible. We're doing what God's telling us to do. What the Spirit of God is affirming is truth in the book that he wrote and the truth of it when we put it into practice. Verse 9, "As unknown, and yet well known." The more you lose points in the social status of standing up for what's right, I guarantee you, the more this is a thing where God is saying to you in heaven, well done, well done, well done.

And I quote it often, but when Moody's granddaughter was born and he sent that telegram and it said, "May she be great in the kingdom of heaven." I just love that line. I don't care how she fares in earthly popularity but I want her to be great in the kingdom of heaven. That is



what we care about. And you may be unknown and increasingly so as people want to forget about you as you are less and less popular because you stand for Christ but you're increasingly well-known, your fame in the kingdom is growing. And the next one in verse 9, dying, "As dying, and behold, we live." That reminds you of Romans Chapter 8 when Paul was talking about the fact that we're always like sheep led to the slaughter. They're always trying to put us away. They're always trying to put us down. And in their day, of course, literally, we're trying to persecute and kill these Christians. They went into the catacombs under Rome. They tried to hide from the persecution. I mean, there's so much Diocletian's persecution and Nero's persecution in the middle of the first century, so much was going on, he's saying they're trying to kill us. We're like sheep led to the slaughter. But to the extent that they live physically, "we live." But more than that, they have real life, the kind of life that God was granting and that is the guarantee of eternal life, the kind of qualitative life of life in Christ "as punished," and certainly they were many of them were whipped, many of them were incarcerated, as the book of Hebrews says, "and yet not killed." And ultimately, the second death is what we're most worried about. And not that, not ever. And then as Jesus said, they can "kill the body but can't kill the soul."

Verse 10, "As sorrowful," there are lots of things to be sorrowful about, "yet always rejoicing." Even think about the things that went on in the book of Acts they're there, chained up in a prison after being whipped. I guarantee I'm going to be sorrowful if I'm whipped, but by midnight they're singing in that Philippian jail in thankfulness to God. And even early in the book, even as they sat there thinking about their persecution, they counted themselves even worthy of suffering for Christ. They found joy in that. They were "counted worthy to suffer" for Christ. That's a hard thing to get ourselves to think that way. But just to know if we do suffer we're suffering for the right reasons. "As poor," you can take a lot of things away from people, even as it was said in the book of Hebrews confiscating their property, "yet making many rich," more on that in a second, "as having nothing, yet possessing everything." I don't know what they might take away from you, but there are people in our church who have missed promotions. There are people in our church who have lost their jobs. There are people in this church who will lose their jobs. In certain professions, you will not be able to maintain your profession if you're going to be a faithful Christian. I know that's coming for some of you, it's coming. And I just think you need to know that this is the reality of it all. But you're possessing everything as a faithful Christian, you need to know that. And sometimes, even if you keep the things that you have, I think we need to look at this as First Corinthians 7 says, even if you do possess things you need to act as though you don't. Because nothing in this world as he says, "The present form of this world is passing away." I hope nothing in this world charms you enough to make you hold on to it too tightly as Ecclesiastes 5 says, it's not worth, you know, being charmed by the things of this world. "As poor, yet making many rich."

Years ago there was an article written, I think it was in Forbes magazine, about a massive, massively rich man who was remarkable and written about not because he was rich, because of plenty of rich people in the world, but because his desire was not to amass more wealth but it was his joy in making other people wealthy, or at least dealing with their financial problems. His joy was in giving his money away. That second-to-last line, that penultimate phrase there, "As poor, yet making many rich," right? If you're poor, how can you make people rich? Of



course, as Christians that's our job. It's what ambassadors do. We make people rich, as it says in Second Corinthians Chapter 8 verse 9, Christ made himself poor, "so that you by his poverty we might become rich." Well, how are we rich? If we have the inheritance of the kingdom, or as it's put in Ephesians Chapter 1 verses 7 and 8, when we become Christians "he lavishes upon us," his grace which is the guarantee of an inheritance. No one can be more rich than having the guarantee of the kingdom. And you as an ambassador now you've taken up this. Jesus says, while he's in the world, he's the light of the world. Now he's gone. We are the light of the world, right? And that means we're the agents of making people rich. And that's an amazing thing. And if you think about that, that's a crazy concept that you and I have the ability to make people rich.

And this man in this article, he said, I just find great, great joy in making people rich. He paid off people's mortgages. He bought vehicles for families that needed them. He anonymously covered people's medical bills that he didn't even know. The journalists who were interviewing him said, well, yeah, this guy seems very happy. And he kept saying to the guy interviewing him, it's so much fun to make other people rich, to meet other people's financial needs. And he says, I already have so much money more than I'll ever need. The best part is giving it away. I know you can roll your eyes at a rich man who finds joy in giving it away, but this is the point I'm trying to make, right? We have great wealth as a Christian, and God is saying that we have the ability just by leading someone to faith in Christ as an ambassador to make them eternally rich. That's why that passage says that we want to be making friends by means of earthly wealth, that when it fails we can welcome them into eternal dwellings. The point is, we have even by our earthly money at building bridges and giving it to people to make friends through our earthly money that we can win someone to Christ. We can make them more wealthy just by having them have a place in the kingdom. We can share the kingdom with them one day we'll realize how wealthy we've actually made them.

But here's the problem, if you're not bold you'll never do it. If you're not strong, if you're not willing to say I'm courageous enough to talk about this you'll never make anyone rich in Christ. So we need that first and foremost in your workplace, in your neighborhood, in your family. So I'm praying for that this week. It requires courage. It requires that you don't wane in your ability to speak up for Christ. So I'm praying for that today.

Let's pray together now. God, I know a lot of people are being more vocal about their faith, and I'm so grateful for that. We watch it on social media, we watch it on television, but we need this to be a staple of our lives from this point forward. If we've been more bold, that's great, but I pray it's not just part of being a part of the crowd. We need to make sure, just like we read in the Bible, whether it's in season or out of season, we need to be able to speak up for you. Let us be good ambassadors who don't hide in the shadows when someone calls us out and we fear. When we're afraid, when we're timid, I pray you give us strength. God, I know that's not going to be something that just wafts into our hearts and we're going to be passive. We're going to have to dig deep. We're going to have to say we're going to stand, we're going to be strong. So, God, we know that you want us to reach out and pray and seek you in this. So we want to do that now. Prepare before the time of testing comes. We pray you give us all that we need, whether it comes tonight or tomorrow or Wednesday or Friday.



Give us all that we need that we might be able to remember this sermon, remember this passage. You know, it takes some people who are willing to have the "weapons of righteousness in the right hand and the left." To have people who are willing to roll up their sleeves, like John the Baptist, who wasn't concerned about being accepted in the right circles, just willing to speak the truth. I pray that none of this would be taken in the wrong way to excuse a bad attitude or excuse a nasty temperament. God, I pray we would all just really want to love people enough to deliver this with gentleness and respect. But to be firm and truthful, to love people enough to tell the truth. I pray you'd use this as a conduit of your gospel, of your truth.

In Jesus' name. Amen.