



**Ambitious Faith-Part 10**  
**Trusting God When You're Back's Against the Wall**  
**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

One of the most unsettling chapters in all of the gospels has to be Matthew chapter 10, when Jesus looks at his disciples and he says in verse 16, you know I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves. Remember that passage? Now that doesn't sound good, you're going to go out and you're going to be like sheep among wolves and he says, you're going to have to be as shrewd as snakes and yet you've got to stay as innocent as doves, do the right thing. Seventeen verses later in verse 34 he says, you know what? Don't think I came to bring peace on the earth... you don't see that one on Dayspring cards very often, right? He said I came to bring a sword. He said and I, and then he starts quoting Micah 7, the Old Testament, he says, I've come to pit a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and he says a man's enemies will be the members of his own family. We're not going to crochet that into a wall decoration, that's not up in the nursery, you won't find that painted on the walls, that's a rough passage, that's unsettling, that doesn't feel good. But the Bible says, that's what it's going to be. I'm going to send you out as my representatives, you're going to be my disciples, but when you go out there, you've just got to know you're going to be opposed. He says, so be on guard against men, be ready, be careful, people, they're going to stab you in the back, people are going to betray you, you're going to have people that you think are going to be supportive of you and now they're going to rise up against you, they are going to intimidate you, they are going to threaten you, there's going to be people that really do all that they can to undo you in one way or another. The last nine weeks, we've been talking about ambitious faith from one of the most motivating chapters in all of the Bible, Hebrews chapter 11. and we've looked a lot over the last nine weeks at a kind of ambitious faith that's proactive, it's on the offense, it charges ahead, it takes risks, it moves forward. But as we'll see today, as we get to the next three verses in Hebrews chapter 11, there are times when people are pitting themselves against us, when we find ourselves face to face with an opponent, when people unjustly put themselves against us and seek to undo us. There are times when we need an ambitious faith that just allows us to stand firm in the face of opposition. Sometimes we need a kind of ambitious faith that's as good at defense as it is at offense. As it says in verse 33, later in our passage, and we'll get to this in a couple of weeks, if we have ambitious faith enough to conquer kingdoms, but we don't have ambitious faith enough to spend the night in the lions den, then we're not really equipped for the real world. Because in the real world, you're not only going to be asked to step out for God and conquer the mountain, you're going to be asked to stand firm in the face of opposition. Last week we looked at our battle against sin and our example in Hebrews 11 was Moses and his parents. Well this week we're talking about a little different kind of battle, a battle where the people that are opposing you, they have names, and in this case the Egyptian army, and they have spears, right? And they're out with chariots to undo you. Now, I'm hoping the Egyptian army is not going to come after you this week, but I know that there will be situations that you face when you are going to be ganged up against. There will be people that will say things that aren't true. They'll be folks maybe at work, they'll be even more painful situations in your family, where people are going to oppose you. Sometimes specifically because you are a Christian, sometimes just because we live in a world where things don't always happen the way they ought to, and you're going to be facing opposition. How do we deal with

that? Because the world's going to watch us. God has told us how to respond, and if we're not ready, if we're not equipped, if we don't have the kind of faith to stand firm with the right attitude then you know what? We've got a lot to lose. The world is going to say, you know what? You're just like everybody else. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount says, if you're just like everyone else, what's the difference? If you just ask like everybody else acts in the face of opposition and enemies and opponents, then what good is it? Your Christianity ought to be distinctive and unique. And thankfully, in Hebrews chapter 11, beginning in verse number 27, we find some equipment, some help, some basic steps that will prepare us the next time you find yourself opposed. And if you're starting to yawn already going, oh yeah, whatever, my life is fine. Great, cool, right? But at least nod at me if you know what it is to be opposed by people. Do you know what that's like? And if you're not nodding, you're next, right? Because it's going to happen. And it's going to happen with the kind of intensity and a kind of curiosity and it will be a head scratching experience because you sit back and say, well, I'm a Christian and God loves me and why is this happening? You're going to have these moments, and sometimes they'll be intense and sometimes they'll come from the most unexpected places, and you and I need to be ready. And a good example for us, the inspired template moves on in Moses' life in verse number 27, he is the "he" of verse 27, the pronoun there, by faith "he", that is Moses, left Egypt. Not fearing the king's anger, he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. Now you remember the context, this is 1445 B.C., they had been in Egypt now after the death of Joseph for 275 years, they were enslaved, they were growing and Pharaoh he was a little bit nervous about the growing group of foreigners in his midst, so he started to oppress them with a heavy hand, he made them work harder with less resources, you remember this story. And it's a situation now where they are crying out for God's deliverance. I mean there was the promise of this land that was flowing with milk and honey, and they were going, God, what's going on? And so Moses is getting a sense, though he grew up in Pharaoh's court, as we learned last week, he's a guy who's recognizing this shouldn't be happening, this needs to be fixed. And the Bible says here, it took ambitious faith, now this is interesting, to leave Egypt. Now that's odd, when we're talking about conquering kingdoms, he didn't lead an army to fight the Egyptians. This wasn't a slave's revolt. He didn't lead some kind of coup d'état to get out of this mess. Interestingly enough, he stepped back, he stepped away. And that took incredible faith, according to this; it took a kind of faith that overcame fear. And that was unique because that's not what you would expect, that's a bit unconventional. Pharaoh, of course, is the king, that's who we're talking about, the antagonist is Pharaoh. In verse 29 it says, that the people pass through the Red Sea as on dry land, but the Egyptians, when they try to do so, they were drowned. So Pharaoh, his anger toward Moses and the Egyptian army, and their anger against the Israelites, and you saw the movie, you saw how dramatic it was, right? I mean this is a big deal, they all get drowned. Well then there's this verse sandwiched right in between, and I skipped right over that, but look at it now. There's another little interesting twist in the story in Exodus, and that's the initiation of this thing called the Passover. And by faith, interesting here, it took faith for them to keep the Passover, which if you remember was this very odd thing where you lived with a lamb for seven days, then you had roast lamb that night, and you took the blood from that lamb that you killed and sacrificed so that you could have dinner, and you put his blood on the doorpost, so that the destroyer of the first born, would not touch the first born of Israel. Everybody else who didn't have the blood on the door post, well their first born died. How many firstborns do we have here today? Firstborns? Oh is that all, come 'on if you're a first born, show

me you are a first born. You'd be dead, right? I'm not a first born. And that was huge, can you imagine, if everybody in our society, the first born is dead? That's huge, that's big. Well, by faith, they not only conquered Pharaoh's anger, by faith they not only skipped the destroying angel, but by faith, ambitious faith, they were able to escape when their back was against the wall, literally against the Red Sea, and they thought, what are we going to do? And in all cases here because of their ambitious faith, they were able to do what was right, do the right thing and see and experience the deliverance of God in the face of some pretty serious opposition in verses 27, 28, and 29. now, if you've ever traveled, or you have an art book somewhere tucked away in your house, and you look through the art book for pictures and paintings and sculptures of this guy named Moses, you may be led to the wrong conclusion. And we read passages like this, verse 27 especially, he didn't fear the king's anger, well of course not, I've seen his sculpture in Italy, right? I mean the guy is a cyborg, he ripped, he's chiseled. I mean have you seen him? He's not afraid of anything, he's impervious to fear, guy hasn't worried about anything his whole life, right? No, that's not right. I mean that's what they make him look like, but if you know the story and you went to Sunday school, you know that's not what happened. As a matter of fact, he's a guy just like you and me with insecurities and fears. And as a matter of fact when Pharaoh, even the thought of Pharaoh's anger started to formulate in his mind, was he afraid? Let me show you. Exodus chapter 2. Go back to Exodus, and let's look at the historical accounts. I just want you to recognize, for him to be able to be described 1400 years later as a guy who didn't fear the king's anger, there had to be some work done in his heart, because the thought of Pharaoh catching him as a turncoat in Pharaoh's court, well that was a frightening thought. As a matter of fact, he's a man just like us with insecurities and fears just like we've got and initially he was afraid. Take a look at it, let's get some context. Exodus 2 verse 11; one day after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were, the Israelites, and he watched them at their hard labor, they were being oppressed because the Pharaoh was threatened, he thought these guys were going to lead a revolt. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people, glancing this way and that, seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and quickly buried him in the sand. The next day, he went out and he saw two Hebrews fighting, and he asked the one in the wrong, why are you hitting this fellow Hebrew of yours, what's wrong with you? And the man said, who made you ruler or judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me the way you killed that Egyptian yesterday? Uh huh, we know about what you did. Underline the next four words, then Moses was, what's the word? Afraid. Would you be afraid? I'd be afraid, right? The natural reaction to that, what I've done is known, and if Pharaoh hears about it, whoa, I'm going to be in big trouble. And he thought, what I've done must have become known. When Pharaoh heard this, he tried to kill Moses... that seems like a frightening experience. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and he went to live in Midian where he sat down by a well. That doesn't look like a guy who's not afraid of the king's anger. And you say, well that must not be the exodus we're talking about, that's the small e exodus, the big E Exodus is coming later in chapter 13 and 14. Well that's true. But what's interesting about this is that if you look at your worksheet at the printed text there, if you look at it you'll see the thing that comes after him not fearing the king's anger and leaving Egypt, what comes after that is the Passover. And that comes later. And most commentators think that this must be the leaving of Moses in chapter 2. as a matter of fact it's not just Christian commentators, before the New Testament was ever written, the Rabbi's in the old period before Christ, they wrote about Moses actually leaving Egypt strategically getting over his fear and fearlessly leaving as a strategic thing where God was

made clear to him, it's not the time and it's not the way. And is that the case? Well, you say, well, I don't know, maybe and maybe there was something that took place between the fear of verse number 14 and the leaving at the end of verse 15, maybe there was some change in his heart. That's what the Hebrew commentators, the Jewish commentators of the Old Testament times, that's what they thought. But even if it's not, because we know he left later, and even if it's not that leaving, you might say, well it's got to be the other one because that one he wasn't afraid. Really? Take a look at the next chapter; I think there was some fear involved in that one as well. Initially, there was fear. Chapter 3, look at verse 10, this is the big Exodus he's about to lead. Now, he says, God's talking to him, burning bush experience, he's about to go back, pull the Israelites out, and leave Egypt. He says, I'm sending you to Pharaoh, to bring my people, the Israelites out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, you got it man, I'm not afraid; I'm going to go right now. Is that what he said? Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt, not me, you're not talking to me are you? I don't want to do this. And God's response was this, verse 12, first part of the verse, look at it, one basic response; I will be with you. See? What God was saying is you've got to see the one that's invisible; you've got to know that I will be with you, okay? So he said, okay, got it, no problem. Is that what he said? No, drop down to verse number 1 in chapter 4; Moses answered well, you know, what if, underline those two words, we'll talk a lot about those; what if they don't believe me or listen to me? What if they say Yahweh didn't appear to you, God didn't come to you in some burning bush, that's a big load of malarkey, I don't believe that for a second. What if they say that? And then you know what goes on in verses 2 through 9, you've got the whole stick turning into a snake, and you've got the hand in the cloak and out it comes out leprous, and wow.. Okay, that's pretty impressive. Maybe these signs, if you'll do these signs in the presence of Pharaoh's court, maybe they'll believe. Maybe they'll believe that you've come and spoke. Oh, okay, was that it? Was that all he needed? No, not really. Look at verse 10; Moses, now round three at least, Moses says, Lord, I'm going to have to go there and give some speeches there and tell them to let the people go, um, you know, I kind of did not do so well in those public speaking courses in Egypt, I was never really good at that, I'm not eloquent, neither in the past, nor since you've spoken to your servant, I'm slow of speech, my tongue's all messed up, I don't think I can do it. Okay? He's still stumbling over this... he's afraid now of his own inadequacies. Verse 11, so Yahweh said to him, who gave man his mouth? Who makes a person deaf or mute? Who gives man sight or makes him blind? Is it not I? Is it not Yahweh the God of the Universe, don't I do that? Now go, I will help you speak and I will teach you what to say. You've got to see the invisible, you've got to hold my hand, you've got to trust me, you need ambitious faith. Now just go back, all I want you to do is go back, tell them you're leaving, take the people and go. At least that's how simple it seemed at this point, okay? So Moses got it right? That was the end of the debate? No, verse 13; but Moses so oh, Lord, please send someone else, I don't want to go. He didn't want to go. Now he doesn't look like that marble statue in Italy anymore, right? Now he looks like a sniveling little, what's wrong with you? God wants you to go, just do it. He's struggling with it. And if you don't think it made God mad, look at the next verse, verse 14; Yahweh's anger burned against Moses. That's a pretty potent way to put it. He's burning mad at Moses. And he says okay, what about your brother, get your brother, he got an A in speech class, right? He can speak well, why don't you go and get him. Which this concession of God, by the way, in his lack of faith at this point in boldness and all his fear and insecurity and anxiety, really was not an asset. Did Aaron end up being an asset? Well, you know, I guess he kept him out a few speeches in front of Pharaoh

but, the guy was a lot of trouble in the long run. It would have been better had he not been the mouthpiece. Okay, well, he's not looking very fearless, he's not looking very courageous, he doesn't look like he's gotten rid of his fear.... Well, drop down to verse 20; something takes place, from chapter 3 verse 10 to chapter 4 verse 20. So Moses took his wife and sons, he sucked it up, he said okay, I'm going, he put them on a donkey, he started back to Egypt, and he took the staff of God in his hand. Okay, I know, you're with me, I'm going to hold onto it as a reminder that you are with me, you're going to help me, and I'm going to trust my insecurities to you. Why? Because he was able to see the one who was unseen. Number 1 on your outline if you're taking notes and it would be good if you did, because you might need this in the future. Jot this down, next time you're faced with opposition, and it might not be Pharaoh, but it's going to be somebody, some group of people, ganging up against you, intimidating you, threatening you, taking you to court, suing you, whatever it is.. Just remember this, you've got to exchange fear with focus. You've got to exchange fear and turn it into focus. Focus on what? Focus on the one that is unseen. Isn't that what verse 27 says in Hebrews 11? You've got to be able to persevere in the face of this scary opposition. What does it say? Because you are able to see the one who's invisible. Now, I know that's a bit of a play on words, right? Because Moses is the one we think of who had these visions of God, saw the back of God hidden in the cleft of the rock, whatever that means, some manifestation of God, or the burning bush, but that's not really what we're talking about here. We're talking about the eyes of faith, the kind of ability in my mind to focus on God and say, God is with me, God will help me. And what that does is it expels fear. Now Moses had the same problem we always have and that is when we face opposition, and people we don't expect start opposing us, when people are out to get us or they've stabbed us in the back or betrayed us, we get naturally afraid. And we think what happens if? We start the "if" flowchart, right? Do you have those going in your mind all the time? Well, if that happens, well, if that happens, we could lose that, and what happens with.. I could lose a job, and we might not be able to afford our rent, and what if... God wants you to stop it with that. That's called in the New Testament, and here's a great word for it, the root word in the New Testament is merizomi, is the word to divide, or tear apart. It's the word translated in the New Testament, forms of it, the verbal form, to be anxious. Anxious, and that means that my mind is going into my elaborate "what if" flowchart. My mind is brought into all different directions. To be anxious is to have my mind going everywhere. And what the Bible is asking us to do is to focus. Focus on what? On God. Focus on the God that will walk us through this. You know, does this sound vaguely biblical? Don't be afraid. You know that's not a biblical thing, to be fearful, that's not a godly thing, to be afraid. And you're going to face things that will naturally cause your knees to knock. You will say, wow, I don't understand this, they're coming against me, they're talking about suing us, whatever it is. And here's the issue, you've got to be able to say, to be a godly Christian, I will need ambitious faith to say no to fear and to start focusing my mind to be able to see him who is unseen. You want a passage that just nails this? Go to the New Testament book of Philippians chapter 4. Here's a classic central passage in the New Testament on anxiety, and it gives us the prescription, and we often jump right into the main verse, but let's get a little context here. It begins with a statement about our attitude. And we've talked a lot about our attitude in Hebrews chapter 11, that we need a bit more of this biblical optimism, not this pie in the sky worldly optimism, but a real biblical optimism, that God is working things out for good in our lives, that God is going to walk with us, that God would never leave us or forsake us, that our sins are really nailed to the cross. And he says, based on all that

kind of truth, Philippians 4 verse number 4, the Bible says, then you ought to rejoice in the Lord, because sometimes I can't rejoice in my circumstances, right? Things don't look good, I'm going to rejoice in the Lord how often? Sometimes? Most of the time? what does it say? Always. Always, I hate those superlatives, don't you? Because I've got eighteen situations I don't feel like rejoicing in the Lord in. But the Bible says, you should rejoice in the Lord, always. And if we didn't get it, he's going to poke his finger in our chest and say, let me tell you again, you've got to rejoice. Get this biblical optimism about the supra-cultural, supra-circumstantial kind of truths. Okay? Then it says, let your gentleness, what do you picture there? Butterflies, daisies? I don't know, but it's not the full effect of this word, the old translations used to translate it, forbearance, doesn't that sound different than gentleness? Doesn't it? Forbearance? But I don't know what it means. That's the problem with the word, that's why they ditched it, forbearance. What does it mean? What does the concept mean? Gentleness is close, but it doesn't give you the whole picture. Because it's a kind of calmness in the midst of some kind of pressure. I mean we're going to talk about anxiety here. There are circumstances that naturally cause us anxiety. Context this morning, when people oppose us, when people gang up against us, when we're attacked, okay? Well when we are, we need to be calm or steadfast, there's another word that we somewhat understand, steadfast is still used, right? When we stand firm in the midst of the pressure. We have this kind of forbearance, perseverance, calmness under pressure, let that be seen by everybody. Let it be obvious, put that out there, make sure it's real, but let it be evident to all. Why? Next four words, the Lord is near. He's near, he's right here, he's right by you. You've got to see him who's invisible. You've got to know, how in the world can I be calm when the pressure is on? I know the Lord is near, I'm holding his hand, I see the one who's invisible. I have that sense of ambitious faith that I'm not in this alone. Now let's get to the heart of the matter, verse 6. Philippians 4:6; do not be anxious. There it is. Do not let your mind be scattered everywhere. Do not be anxious about, oh here's another superlative, what does it say? Anything. Do you have the biblical right to be anxious about anything? Well, my kids, I've got to be anxious about them. My job, my future, my retirement, my 401k, right? Can you be anxious about anything? Answer. No. You cannot be anxious about anything. And here's the time when we're most apt to be anxious. When there's something pitted against us. When our back is up against the Red Sea. When we think there's no way out right now, I cannot see how I'm going to get out of this mess. When you feel that, the Bible would say, here and in every situation, do not be anxious. Do not create the "what if" mental flowchart. Instead, in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. You want the prescription when your mind is building a "what if" flowchart? You need to say, my goal, my step, my prescription, my instruction from God is to pray. Specifically, with thanksgiving, I've got to dump my requests out to God. I've got to take my anxious thoughts and turn them into prayer requests. I've got to say, well, what if that, what if that, stop, okay, listen...here's my prayer God, here's what I need, here's what I want, let me be very specific. Take my prayers, petitions, with thanksgiving and present them to God. If you do that, that's the act of starting to see my fears subside because I'm seeing the one who's invisible, I'm putting the need before God. And look at the promise, verse 7, if you do that, look what it says, the peace of God, does that sound good? That's the concept of forbearance, the concept of gentleness, calmness, steadfastness under pressure. It will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Which, by the way, it transcends all understanding. Why? Because people don't get it. They're looking at you going, well I don't really believe you, are you really calm, because look

what everything's happening to you and I can't believe that you are standing up and surviving. Yeah I am. Because I've taken my anxieties, and I've exchanged those fears for focus on a God who's there, who wants to walk through this with me, the Lord is with me on this, and I'm putting my requests out there before God. Is that hard to do? It's hard to do, but you've got to do it. It's the pattern of Christ, is it not? What was the most stressful, anxious period, if you will, of Christ's earthly ministry? What was the worst night he ever had? What was it? The night before he was crucified, right? He was just overcome with sweat as though his head was bleeding. He was there, stressed, the pressure of the cross was before him. So what did he chose to do? Watch a few reruns, try and get his mind off of it? Go out to dinner, eat some chips and guacamole, let's just not think about it. Is that what he did? Where did he go? He went to a place called the Garden of Gethsemane. What did he do there? Pray. And you know what? When the pressure is really on, it might be a good idea to bring a few people with you. Hopefully your friends are a little better than Peter, James and John. But he tried to get them in with him to pray with. Can you watch and pray with me? Okay? And they are there...(snoring sound), there not very good prayer partners, but he knew what he needed, he needed to pray, and he needed to pray with his friends. If you're facing opposition, and you're not right now, you will, and sometimes it will be a real pressurized situation. You need to turn all the anxieties and the "what if" flowchart, and sometimes we even create them, well if that happens, this will happen, etc., stop with that. Turn your fear into focus. Focus on God, get on your knees and pray. Well I'm really busy, there's a lot going on right now, and I've got to... Are you busier than Christ? Let's just think about that. In his earthly ministry, how busy was Christ? You think you're little phone/calendar thing is filled with stuff? Oh really. Can you imagine being Jesus Christ? Can you imagine for three and a half years being out there in Galilee and Judea and going all around in Jerusalem and people know you can heal them, and give them a free lunch, right? Fish and bread whenever. Do you think that people are going to be crushing on your door to get at you? Christ was busy. But here's three verses to jot down. Luke 5:16, Mark 1:35, and Matthew 14:23. What do all of those speak of? Christ who had to vigilantly, militantly, guard his schedule so he could get away at some very odd times, to some very odd places, so that he could pray. You've got to carve out the time, you don't find the time, you've got to make the time. you've just got to do it. And Jesus did it, he needed to do it, we need to do it, he showed dependence upon the Father, we need to too, we've got to see him who's invisible, that's the thing that's going to expel fear, and God does not want you to be afraid in the face of opposition, he wants you to be fearless. The righteous are as bold as a lion, that's what he wants from you. How do you do it? You've got to pray. Specifically, carve out time. I love those three passages, it says that he often had to go out to solitary places to pray, he just had to find those. Do you have one of those? Do you have some secret places? How about when Jesus talked about the inner room, the closet? Do you have a place where no one can find you, with a lock perhaps, on the closet? That would be a good thing. Go to Lowes, get a lock for the closet, okay? If you've got kids especially, I know how it works. Just find a place where you can get alone and do it. Christ did it. Or how about the second one I quoted you, Mark 1:35; very early in the morning, before dawn, he went out to pray. Now I know that's hard, we're going to sacrifice sleep, but you need it when you're facing opposition. Or I made you write down Matthew 14:23; he had to go up to a mountainside to a lonely place to get away by himself to pray. And when it's a really stressful situation, take a few people with you. Hopefully not tired people, right? Take them out to pray with you, because you are going to need it, its scary, standing in the face of the Egyptian army or

Pharaoh, it's scary, but you need to exchange fear with focus. Well, it's hard, I prayed, I got off my knees and my mind is starting to go back to it. Are you still in Philippians 4? One more verse, look at verse number 8. When you get off your knees and you say okay, I'm finding strength, I'm not afraid anymore, your mind is going to want to go back to the "what if" flowchart, here's what you've got to do. Finally brothers, here are the categories, whatever's true, whatever's noble, whatever's right, whatever's pure, whatever's lovely, whatever's admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things, govern your brain, focus your mind. That is a list which is categories. Now start filling in, based on what you're going through, just fill in things under each category there. Look at them again. Whatever's true, right, noble, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy. Those are the things you can think about. Laminate it, put it on the dashboard of your car, put it on the mirror in the bathroom, put it on your computer screen at work, and say, these are the things I'm going to think about. When I think of the big bad people that are coming against me and are going to threaten my future or my income or my job or whatever it might be or my family, think about those things, stop with all the marizomi, all the mind going in all different directions.. focus. Focus on this, focus on God who wants to walk you through it. The Lord is near, you've just got to see it, you've got to see it with your mind's eye and prayer is the tool. 1 Peter 5:6-7; here's what it looks like; we are casting all of our anxieties on the Lord, because he cares for us. Isn't that a great verse? It starts with this, that's humility. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that he might lift you up at the proper time. It's not always going to be on our calendar, we've learned that many, many times here. God's got a different calendar than you, but trust, humble yourself, know that you are dependent on God. Pray, cast your anxieties on him, he's near. He cares for you. Focus on God, focus on his provisions, focus on his abilities, his plan in exchange for fear focus. Was Moses initially afraid? Yes, look at Hebrews 11:27, but he got over it. He got over it, he wasn't fearing the king's anger, and he had to focus his mind on he who was invisible. He persevered because he focused on he who was invisible. Make sense? Right? There it is. Verse 29; the Egyptians are chasing the Israelites, and the Israelites got their butt wet against the Red Sea, they don't know what they're going to do, and God opens up, and you saw the movie, and you know how it ends. The protagonists are Moses and the Israelites. The antagonists, verse 27, is Pharaoh, the king. The antagonist in verse 29 is the Egyptian army with spears and chariots. Who's the antagonist in verse number 28? This is odd. In the middle of these two things, we have a discussion about Passover. Now the antagonist is named here, is he not? The destroyer of the first born. Question, Sunday school grads, who was destroying the first born? God. Ewww, that doesn't sound like the right Sunday school answer, does it? God? Yeah, God was the destroyer of the first born. He was going through Egypt, including the Israelite camp, and he was killing the first born. The first born is representative of the whole, right? The wages of sin, here's New Testament theology for you, the wages of sin is? Death...spelled out all throughout the scripture. Everyone before a Holy God deserves to die. Everybody before a Holy God deserves to be punished. Everybody before a Holy God deserves his wrath. But God is going to spare people, not only in his grace short-term, that's called common grace, but specifically and entirely in his specific grace, if they respond to that grace, on his terms. Now his terms in this particular 1445 BC episode is to take a lamb, live with it for seven days, have lamb chops that night, take the blood from that meal, and put it on the posts of your house. And if you do that, you won't be killed, and your first born, that represents the whole, you're not going to lose. Now, why? Why was this stuck in the middle of all this? Now think about it. Some people, and the Israelites were classic at

having this mental blunder in their mind, they thought, well, God's killing the Egyptians because they're bad, and he's not killing us because we're good, right? That's what they often thought. And we often think the same thing. We like to think well, God is opposing my opponents because they are bad, but he's not opposing me because I'm good. And that's not true, right? How many have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God? Everybody right? All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. You're a sinner and God is Holy and because he's Holy, he's got to respond to that sin and he needs to punish that. The grace of God provides a way out. In the old covenant, it was symbolized by the Passover. And the Passover was an animal that was a substitute, the substitutionary lamb that was symbolically by the doorpost blood, it was shown that I am protected by a substitute. Now that's all symbolic of the New Testament truth when John saw Jesus coming to be baptized, he said, behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. He was the real one that was to be substituted so that God would punish him instead of us. Now I want the benefit of that so that God does not oppose me. How do I do it? Have lamb chops and spread blood on the door post? No, we don't have to do that; that was symbolic of the reality. The reality is Christ. What do I have to do? I have to put my trust in Christ. I have to repent of my sins and put my trust in Christ's provision. If I do that, it doesn't mean that now all of the sudden, you know, my sin it never happened. It happened, but it's all been nailed to the cross, it's been paid for by faith. Now, why is that in the middle of this discussion? Well, it's certainly chronological, it's certainly in the text of Exodus, but helpful for us to see, is that the opponents in life, whether Pharaoh or the Egyptian army, I just want to make sure that one of the opponents in my life is not God. I don't want God to oppose me. Pharaoh my oppose me, the Egyptians my oppose me, a lot of people may oppose me, I don't want God to oppose me. Well God should oppose me, why? Because I'm a sinner, and God's Holy. And because he's Holy, he should react to my sins with punishment. But you know what? If I would respond to his provision, I make God my friend, that's what the Bible says. I turn him from my opposer, to the one who now reconciles me to himself and now I'm on his team, I'm adopted, I'm accepted in the beloved, I'm accepted in Christ. Now that's a hard thought for people who've grown up in man-centered churches, and I understand people don't get that because our picture of God is this man in a rocking chair who just loves everybody and kids on his lap, and long beard, and suckers in his beard, and it doesn't matter, we love you all, it's cool. That's not God. God is a Holy person who dwells in unapproachable light. He is a God that cannot tolerate sin, Habakkuk is clear, the Bible is clear. But, because he loves us, he's provided a way out. And the thing is, you'd better take that way out so that you are not opposed by God on two levels, ultimately and practically. Let's put it this way, number 2 on your outline; I think it's helpful for the Passover to be stuck in the middle of these two earthly opponents. There's a heavenly opponent and you need to make peace with him. Number 2, make sure or ensure that you're at peace with God, okay? Because whatever obstacles or opposition you face, we want to make sure its not God himself, don't you? I don't want God to be my enemy. And unfortunately, we're born as enemies of God. Did you know that? You're not born as a friend of God. We're all born as enemies of God. And to get that right, we need the blood on the door post. Oh no, that was symbolic, we need our trust in the blood of Christ, see? And then the one who opposes me because of my sin, becomes my redeemer and my friend. That's an amazing transaction. That's called reconciliation, okay? It's much like the picture in Ephesians chapter 2, remember that passage? Ephesians chapter 2; ensure you're at peace with God. Now I say this is on two levels, and if you're really good note takers here, you've got an A and a B. A is

the ultimate opposition, that's what Ephesians 2 talks about. The ultimate opposition is to make sure that I no longer alienated with God, but we were born that way. Verse 1 of chapter 2; as for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live, (that's an interesting oxymoron, right? I was living in a dead state), when you follow the ways of the world. You were not in synch with God, you were not a friend of God, you were not connected with God, you were dead to God, and you followed the ways of the world, the rulers of the kingdom of the air, the spirit that's now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us, every single person, no one is born a Christian. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh, as the NIV says, our sinful nature, this fallen earthly principle of our humanity, following its own desires and thoughts like the rest, we were by nature, three words to underline, objects of wrath. What does that mean? God is our opponent; we are born with God as our opponent. The ultimate opponents of God, that's who we were, we were opposed to him. But, here's the grace of God. Ready? Verse 4, remember this passage? But, because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions and sin. That's a resurrection, right? That's not, he looked at you, and you're really trying, and you're getting better, and I like how good you're getting, and now I'm going to adopt you. That's not how it is. You were dead in your transgressions and sins and God in his grace, quickened you, made you alive, brought you into his family, made you alive with Christ even though you were dead. It is by what that you are saved? Grace. Does that mean you earn it? Can't earn it. It's by grace that you're saved, see? And you can't earn it either in the old covenant, putting blood on the door post is not earning it. It's a symbol that I don't deserve to live, but God is going to be my friend and not my opponent. By grace you've been saved. God raised us up with Christ; he seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. Does that sound like you're his friend in that? Absolutely, you're on his side, you're in his family. In order that in the coming ages, by the way, he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ. We didn't deserve it, by grace you've been saved. It's through faith, its not of yourself, it's the gift of God, it's not by works, it's not the result of doing good things. So that by the way, no one can boast, no one gets to heaven and goes, hey, look at me, I earned my way in. You didn't. You were a sinner like the rest; you put blood on the door post, fantastic. You didn't earn your righteousness, it was attributed to you. You made peace with God, because of what Christ has done for you, not because of what you did for him. That's the ultimate sense. Next verse, verse 10, well now we are (present tense), God's workmanship, right? We're new creations in Christ. Created in Christ Jesus to do what? Bad things? No. Good things, good works, which God has, in his sovereignty, he has prepared them in advance for us to do. Does God want you to do good this week? Absolutely, so here's the great thing. Now that you're a Christian, you always do good all the time, right? Always, without fail, right? No. Real world stuff. You and I step off this path that God has prepared for us all the time, okay? Hopefully not a chronic, continual sin, because 1 John 3 says, if you're always in a ditch, you're proving you're not a Christian. But if you are a Christian, you're going to step off the path every now and then. It's called sin and it happens, and it's a reality in the Christian life. Now what happens when we, as friends of God, we're no longer opponents, we're not alienated from God, God is no longer our enemy, what happens when we step off the path? Nothing? No. Hebrews chapter 12 says, if nothing happens to you when you step off the path, you're not even a child of God. Because if you're a Christian and step off the path, and you do wrong things, God is a loving Father who's going to get you back on the path. And you know how he does that? He does

that with (spanking sound), owwww, spankings. Did you like that? Because that kind of hurt. You know what that looks like in my life practically? Like God is opposing me. I've got a 9 year old, a 10 year old, and a 4 year old, and every time I discipline those kids, right? And they deserve it a lot. Every time they sit there and whine, you don't like me and you don't let me do whatever... Why do they do that? Because it's not pleasant, correction is not pleasant. As a matter of fact, it seems to be like Dad is against me now, right? Now am I against my son when I correct my son for doing the wrong thing? No, I'm totally for him, that's why I'm doing it. I want you to do the right thing. But from his perspective, it feels like Dad is my opponent. You get that? Two levels. I need to make sure you're at peace with God, level number 1. If you're not a Christian, become a Christian today. That's the great thing, you could do it right now, you could repent of your sins and put your trust in Christ and you will change enmity to reconciliation, great. Now, on Wednesday, when you mess up, on Wednesday afternoon, at 3:30, okay? When that happens to you, now here's the thing, when you step off that path, and you spend some time in the gutter, here's what you can expect, opposition from God. If the first one, letter A, was ultimate opposition, letter B is practical opposition. I don't kick my kid out of his family because he's done wrong. But I do correct him, and that feels like opposition, see? And I don't declare war on my son, but I do do things in his life that feel like opposition. And we don't need to turn there, because we're going to do a whole series on this, but Hebrews chapter 12, at least jot it down, in verses 5 through 13, the opposition of God is discipline. If you want a cross reference, how about James 4. Remember James 4 verses 4 and following? There are times when we do things that God then has to oppose us. One of the punch lines in James 4 is this: God is opposed to the proud. Have you ever been proud in your Christian life? Have you ever done things and said, oh I know that God didn't want me to do that but I'm going to do it anyway? That's called pride, and the Bible says he's opposed to the proud. At what level, ultimate opposition? No, but he is, if he is your Father, he is going to practically oppose you. And that happens. And when that happens, you need to make sure that you fix it. How do you fix it? If you say you are without sin, you're a liar, the truth is not in you, so you're going to step off the path. When you do, you need to confess your sin, because he is faithful and righteous to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And some people think that's ultimate opposition being faced. We're talking about practical opposition there. We're talking about the fact, and I know that because chapter 2, and I'm off on a tangent right now, but chapter 2 of 1 John says this; I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin, but if you do sin, (he's talking to Christians now), we have an advocate, we have a mediator, we have somebody who stands and pleads our case in our defense. The point is this, Christians sin, and when you sin, you'll feel the opposition of God. If you want to remove the opposition of sin, what do you do? Confess your sins. What happens then? He's faithful and righteous to forgive your sins and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness, and now he doesn't oppose you anymore. This is so helpful to be in this passage. And maybe we should have put it first. But next time you encounter opposition, and Pharaoh comes in his anger to oppose you, or the Egyptian army sharpens their spears and they're pointing at you and you think the world is coming against me, okay? Here's the question you want to ask, is God behind this? Because even as a Christian, God may be behind it. Was God ever sending world leaders against Israel in the Old Testament as an act of his discipline ever? Yeah, right, exchange Pharaoh for another guy named Nebuchadnezzar, right, remember him? Who was doing that deal? Or how about Tiglath-Pileser III, in 721 BC with the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel? Well, yeah, God was doing that. God was using those opponents in the lives of his

people because he was disciplining them. You will encounter opposition in your life and you need to say, uh-oh, get on your knees and say, God, Psalm 139, search my heart, try me, let me know if there's any wicked way in me, am I in sin right now, is there something I need to confess? Why is work against me, why is my family against me, why are people against me right now? Ask the question, is there sin in my life. Are you tracking with that? That's pretty simple, we're going to start with that prayer. And if you say no, its not that, the blood's on the door post, I'm a Christian, my sin in confessed, this should not be God's opposition here, then you can rule that out and say I'm dealing with Pharaoh and the Egyptian army, now what do I do? Well, number 1, don't fear, no "what if" flowcharts, pray more, and then lastly, look at verse 29 of Hebrews chapter 11. We're back to the Egyptians now. We've got Pharaoh and he overcame his fear and he exchanged that for focus on the invisible God. He kept the Passover, he was sure that God was not his opponent, God was on his side. Verse 29; by faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land, and you remember why, because if you read the story in Exodus, what you'll find is that God could have sent them along the Mediterranean coast up to the land of Canaan. He could have sent them there, no problem. That was the land of the Philistines, and he could have sent them there, but he didn't send them there. Instead he sent them a different way knowing they would have their rear ends against the wetness of the Red Sea, and they would be stuck. And here come the spears of the Egyptian army. So he put them in that situation. Well the great news was, they passed on dry land. Like I said, you saw the movie, you know how dramatic this was. And then the Egyptians said, well, we're going to chase those guys. And then what happened to them? (Whooshing sound)... you saw the movie, they all got drowned. Hmmm... what was that like? Glad you asked. Turn to Exodus chapter 14 with me. What lesson do we learn from this? How do we deal with our opponents? How did God deal with Moses and Israel's opponents in this passage? I mean their knees are knocking, naturally they're concerned, wow, we're in trouble, our back is against the wall, what are we going to do? Verse 13; Moses answered the people, do not be afraid. He's preaching our sermon today, right? Do not be afraid, stand firm. And here's the great thing, you will see the deliverance, two words, that the Lord will bring you today. Who's going to bring the deliverance? God. He didn't say, get your sling shots, man, you've got sticks and clubs, come on, let's take on these Egyptians. You're going to see God's deliverance today. The Egyptians you see today, you will never see again. And that's true, right? They're going to be floating on the bottom of the Red Sea. I guess you don't float on the bottom of something, but ...you sink to the bottom, service number 3. Verse 15; then, Yahweh says to Moses, why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites, move on. And I'm thinking, but I've got a problem here. I got the Red Sea in front of me. Well, verse 16, raise your staff, stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so the Israelites can go through the sea on dry land. Great, fantastic, but that's hard. Now skip to something in verse number 14, do you see this? The Lord will fight for you, you only need to be still, just chill out, and then again, a little variation on this, verse 15, just move on, move forward. I love the New Testament equivalent of this, he says, when we are unjustly persecuted, when people are piling their opposition against us, we entrust ourselves to our faithful creator and continue to do good. That's what we do; you've got people ganging up against you, right? Entrust yourself to God, don't be afraid, no "what if" flowcharts, you trust God, keep walking, keep doing the right thing and watch, as this text says, watch God deliver you, watch him take care of your enemies. Let's put it this way, number 3 on your outline, you need to leave your opponents to God. This is not a message about governmental warfare, that's a different sermon. We're talking about

horizontal relationships. When they're ganging up against you, and you're being unjustly opposed, leave your opponents to God. Because God will take care of it, you don't have to put up your dukes and repay evil for evil. That almost sounds biblical, doesn't it? Don't repay evil for evil, where does that one come from? How about Romans chapter 12, right? Are you familiar with that passage? Romans 12; put it into today's language, here it comes, New Testament, new covenant concept here. Same thing that Moses and the Israelites were doing, they were showing incredible restraint, be still, relax, keep moving forward. Romans 12:17; do not repay anyone evil for evil, be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody, if it's possible, as far as it depends upon you, live at peace with everyone. Did Moses even try that? Absolutely. Hey man, Pharaoh just let us go, okay? Go out in the desert, and we want to worship our God. He tried, okay? Do not take revenge my friends, but leave room (now this is an amazing statement) for God's wrath, for it is written (interestingly enough, now he quotes Deuteronomy 32, which Moses penned) it is mine to avenge, I will repay says the Lord. Who is the judge, jury, and executioner? Me? No, God. God will take care of it. This is not a governmental statement, that's a whole different sermon; you can get my CD's on that, it's all about issues of our relationships. Don't repay evil for evil. Leave room for God's wrath, it is written, it is mine to avenge, I will repay, says the Lord. And that was hard enough, you want to talk about ambitious faith, verse 20, on the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. That's hard, because you kind of want to lace the food maybe with a little something, right? I mean that's hard, feed him, I don't want to feed him, I want to hurt him, right? No, no, no, feed him, if he's thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing so, you will heap burning coals on his head. And a lot of people say, well, I don't understand that. And that is a hard ending, and we're not sure exactly what that means, but it means this, verse 21, we know for sure, you're not going to be overcome by evil; you're going to overcome evil with good. There will be a redemptive work somehow in this, just know your place. Well, I'm going to be a doormat, that's my place. No, you're not going to be a doormat; you're just going to know your role in this. It's like the analogy of being a kitchen working in the state penitentiary, there's one for you. Now here comes a guy who carjacked you in the line. He carjacked you, now he's in prison, and he's coming through the line. He's coming through the line and you're working in the kitchen, what are you supposed to do? Feed him. Feed him, why? Because your job is just to, according to verses 17 & 18, is to do what's right, do the right thing, and live at peace with people as far as it depends upon you. If you can, do it. And if you have an opportunity to do good, do good. Leave room for God's wrath, because he is the judge, he is the executioner, he will take care of them. They could be on God's death row, so to speak, but it's not your job. Your job is just to be kind, be polite, be respectful. As a matter of fact the Bible says, in the Sermon on the Mount, pray for them, pray for them. Sometimes I want to pray imprecatory Psalms on them, Sunday School grads know what I'm talking about, but I need to pray for them. Because why? Because my job is not to be the judge and the executioner, that's God's job. Now does God take care of people that oppose you? Yeah, he'll deal with them, he does, nothing escapes his notice. And I know some say, oh God, you don't see, you're not watching, it's so unjust, these people are unjustly ganging up against me, it's wrong, you must not understand what I'm going through. Do you think God understands? Absolutely. We just quoted Deuteronomy 32, you know what else it said in Deuteronomy 32, as Moses recounts at the end of his situation here in God's deliverance? He looks back and he says, you protect us like the apple of your eye. Now I grew up hearing that statement, I had no clue what it meant, right? I just pictured apples and eyes, I didn't understand. *iyshown*, the Hebrew word, *iyshown*, it doesn't mean apple,

it means the pupil, that's the apple, that came through an English idiom and all that, but he will protect us as the pupil of his eye. How well do you protect the people of your eye? If I shake your hand on the way out of the door and say hey, great to see you, and then I go and try and just mess with your eyeballs a little bit, are you going to protect your eyeballs? Or are you just going to be polite? Well you know, that's my eyeballs, okay. Is that what you're going to do? You're going to freak out. You're going to wrestle me to the ground, stop touching my eyeballs, right? Because you don't like that, you're going to defend... and the Bible says, that's how he deals with his people. He protects them and defends them as the apple of his eye. Now they were in Egypt a long time crying out for relief, the timetable is not our timetable. He's incredibly patient, he has an incredible tolerance for people messing with his eyeballs, but trust me, it doesn't escape his notice. God knows, and he will respond. And if you want to start saying, God, you must not know what I'm going... that should, by the way, for Sunday school grads be reminiscent of Isaiah 40, does that sound familiar? Our way is hidden from you, what does he say? No, here's what the prophet Isaiah says, Isaiah 40, you just wait on the Lord. Just wait on the Lord. If you wait on the Lord you will renew your strength, you will rise up and fly like on wings of eagles, you will walk and not grow weary, you'll be able to run and not faint. And ultimately, the bottom line is, you wait on God to deal with your opponents, and all the injustice in your life, he will deal with it, because he cares for you, and he's going to protect you like he would protect the eyeballs in his head. Which is just an analogy, right? He doesn't have eyeballs. He's going to guard your life, he knows, nothing escapes his notice. Why is he doing it? One last passage. Exodus chapter 9, I just want you to know, it's back to the concept, this biblical optimism of Romans chapter 8, and that is that God has a plan, and if you are his child, you love him and you're called according to his purpose, he's working out his glorious plan in your life even using your opponents to do so. Exodus chapter 9 verse 15; for by now (he's talking now to Pharaoh) I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the face of the earth. Now do you often think that? Why, God, why is he allowing this, couldn't you stop this? I mean you could be oppressed with disease or attacked by people, God stop it. Well of course he could have stopped it, he's God, he could stop it. But, verse 16, I have raised you up for this very purpose, it's part of my plan that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth. Now you're not Moses and you're not going to write the first five books of the Bible, and I understand that. But on some level, he's going to use the opponents and the conflicts in your life when you are right with him, your sin is confessed, you're being unjustly opposed, he'll use that to glorify himself. He will use that to work another good chapter in his plan for your life. It may not feel good, you may have to wait for a while for his deliverance, you may see your opponents thriving, but you know what? Just entrust yourself to God, he'll take care of it, and he's working his plan out. Of course he could stop it, but he's doing it for a purpose, you've got to believe that about the conflicts in your life. Ambitious faith, granted, it's a lot about offense, but you'd better have the kind of faith that's able to play defense, so that you can stand up in the midst of opposition. Let's get out there and do that, stand strongly, without fear.