



Ambitious Faith-Part 12
Attempting Great Things for God
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Well they used to sing a song a long time ago when they gathered for worship that I suppose would go over today like a lead balloon. With our appetite for happy lyrics and feel good churches, I'm quite sure this song would be far too dark to be included in any worship service lineup these days. But it's a good song, as a matter of fact, it is an inspired song, and it's found in the Psalm book of the Old Testament, its Psalm number 39. And it would be good for you to look at this because perhaps we would learn that Psalms like this that are maybe a little bit dark from our perspective, maybe a little bit negative, really do a lot more for us than Psalms that just kind of pat us on the po-po and say "hey, you're doing alright". Here's a Psalm that has kind of a wake up call to it, Psalm 39. Take a look at this Psalm that just wouldn't be sung these days, because it goes like this, look at the middle of it, verse number 4; show me oh Lord my life's end... Stop right there, that's a negative lyric, right? Show me the day that I die, right? Just let me think about that. And the number of my days, let me know how fleeting my life is... Does that sound pretty foreign to modern church? Well really it wasn't all that foreign to our grandparents, my grandparents, and my great-grandparents for sure went to a little country church out in the middle of nowhere. And they had this practice in those days of building around the church in the church courtyard a graveyard, a cemetery. Now we've got a team right now working on some plans for our lobby out there...and I'm just thinking, what would the city of Aliso Viejo say, what would you say, on your way to pick up your donut, we've buried Aunt Ethel right there. I mean it just doesn't seem like an appropriate thing these days. And yet they did it. And if you're going to go to worship 100 years ago, you're probably going to walk through a cemetery to get there. And you know that's an appropriate Biblical thing, because if you're coming to worship, we really want to have a little reminder here that our lives are fleeting, just like Aunt Ethel's life over here. We're not going to be here forever, this is a time to get our minds focused and honed in on eternal things. He goes on and he says, verse 5, you've made my days a mere handbreadth. You know what that is? Between the thumb and the forefinger, its just a little marked off period here on the timeline, the span of my years is as nothing before you. God, you know, on the big eternal timeline here, and life's history from Genesis to Revelation, I'm just a tiny little handbreadth. As a matter of fact, each man's life, it's like a handbreadth, its like a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow. And then there's that little word, Selah, and if you've studied the Psalms, you know that the word, Selah, is a word we don't really know. We're not sure what it means, but most Hebrew scholars would say that it's probably a word that gives the musicians a queue that this is for the musical interlude, right? So we have musical instruments playing now, and we're not singing. But certainly the commentators all say, well that's an appropriate place in the music to stop and kind of resonate on what's just been said. And so here, as they are playing, in worship service, I'm thinking about my life being nothing, it's just a vapor, here today and gone tomorrow. Then we start up singing again, verse number 5, man is a mere phantom, he goes to and fro, he bustles about, but only in vein he keeps up wealth, not knowing who's going to get it, see? Who's going to live in your house next that you've worked so hard for? Right? Somebody else, you're not going to live there forever, you're just a phantom, you're just here to and fro, going around and collecting your stuff, your 401k's your Roth IRA's, your bigger houses. It's just that you are going to collect it all and then you're not going to be here

anymore. You're going to be out by the donut table, buried in the lobby. You're here today and you're gone tomorrow, that's the point. Now why such a dark theme? Certainly I know its super dark for us as a youth idolizing culture, but its not meant to be. This isn't just to drive our nose into the fact that you're not going to live forever here on earth. Its to sober us and make us think that maybe just collecting wealth is not what this is all about. I mean because if its all about just kind of living and collecting my stuff and kind of having a comfortable Orange County lifestyle, you know what? Maybe it's like Solomon said when he took these same themes and expanded upon them in his Song, the book of Ecclesiastes, maybe it's nothing but just chasing after the wind. What's it really for? I mean its not going to last, we're just living out our days. You know a lot of people come to church hoping to hear a sermon like that. I mean a sermon where you kind of get comfortable and kind of get that place of security, maybe financially set, and just kind of live out the rest of your Orange County life and you'll be fine. But the Bible says, no, you ought to think; you don't have a lot of time left. It says there, teach us to number our day, that's the idea there. And its repeated in Psalm 90, we need to number our days so we can present to God a heart of wisdom. Average American lives about 75 years, that's about 27,000 days. I'm already pushing about 16,000, which if you're good at math, you recognize I'm way past middle age. I know a lot of you like to think I'm in middle age, that's probably just to make you feel better about where you're at on the timeline, but I'm way past middle age. I'm shooting toward the 4-digit range, right? The 9,000 range, I'm quickly approaching that. I'm on the downhill slope right now, and that's if I live out to be the average American lifespan. So what's the point? What am I supposed to do? I'm supposed to stand back and think, God, what am I going to do with the rest of my life? Work real hard and buy that next house so that someone else can live in it? No, I really probably should be thinking about bigger things than that. I should really step back and maybe use passages like Hebrews chapter 11 as a catalyst in my life to say, what am I doing with the rest of my life? I mean I've only got about 11,000 days left if I live to be the average lifespan. How about you, what have you got left? ...Oh I don't know, only the Lord knows, right? That's a great way of saying; I don't want to think about it. Maybe you should think about it. If, just I know it's a big if, but if you live for a normal life span, how much time do you have left? 20 years? 15? 7? 17? What have you got? Question, what are you going to do with that? Just keep trying to put that comfortable Orange County life together for yourself? The Bible would say, why? That's kind of a waste. There's a lot more you should be thinking about doing with the rest of your life. Hebrews chapter 11, we've been talking about ambitious faith, because one verse after the next, we get another lesson on looking at another person who wasn't content to just live a comfortable life. They were willing with ambitious faith to step out and say, God, I'm willing to be used in something great. Have you notice the title of this morning's message? The subtitle? It's all about us attempting something great for God. Why? Because that's what Hebrews 11 has been all about. And we get to verse number 32 and he's done expanding on the stories. I mean he's done giving full verses to one person, we now, after Rahab was the last one to get a full verse to herself, verse 32 he says, well what more shall I say? Here he starts; I don't have time to tell you about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. And then he starts talking about some of the things they did, who, through faith, they conquered kingdoms, they administered justice, and they gained what was promised. And if you have your Greek New Testament out, you can tell that's a plural here, they gained some promises. Because we're going to learn later, in the next passage, that they didn't gain THE promise, the singular promise, but they won a lot of battles. The war wasn't won

though, until Christ came, that's next week's message, sorry. In the process though, of gaining those little promises, the things where they conquered what God had set forth for them to do, they had to have some protection. Bottom of verse 33, God had to, through their faith, shut the mouths of lions. And sometimes their ambition to do something great for God put them at the doorpost, or at least some of them, got thrown to the fiery furnace, and because of their faith, and because of God's intervention and protection, they quenched the fury of the flames, and all of these guys, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, they all had to know that their lives were constantly in danger. But God delivered them from the edge of the sword; they escaped the edge of the sword. And then they were tired and worn out and yet they kept on pressing on for God's Kingdom and their weakness was turned to strength, they became powerful in battle and they routed foreign armies, and in one little period in Old Testament history, two gals in the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, even when all hope seemed to be lost, these women received their dead son's back to life. Its just amazing the way God stepped in and delivered these people, and he did amazing things through these folks. Now, I really resonate with verse number 32, in that little phrase that says, I don't have time to tell about all this, right? As I was mapping out Hebrews 11, I started looking at are we going to do a whole week on Gideon, Barak, we could do a whole week on... well, he doesn't, so I'm not going to try to, because we're trying to get through Hebrews. We're just going to take it all at once, and we're going to say, as he rapid fires through the list, he gets us thinking about more people who stepped out to do great things and it really leads us to stand back and say, "what's the point here?", Mr. Writer of the book of Hebrews, which is ultimately God's Spirit trying to say something to us. What have we learned so far? Don't sit around and do nothing with your life. Step up with ambitious faith and emulate these examples. And in this case, as he throws, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel out at us, we think, wow, yeah, they did do things like conquer kingdoms, administer justice, and they gained all kinds of hills for the Kingdom of God. What am I doing with my life? Trying to build my Roth IRA's? I mean come on, what's the point? Well I should maybe, number one on your outline, emulate this example, and lets just decide with the rest of our lives, number one, we're going to do something great for God. I mean lets just be as ambitious as these people in Hebrews 11, and say it isn't just about earning a paycheck, I'm going to try to, in my sphere of life, in my little corner of the world, I'm going to try and stand up and do something great for God. Well, Mike, you know, that would be great if I were like some you know, really spiritual and gifted guy, but you know, I'm just really...you know, I'm barely hanging on to my job, I cant do anything great for God. Look at the list again, look at the list. You remember Gideon? Did you go to Sunday school and learn the story about Gideon? What did he constantly need? At the beginning of his whole calling to deliver these people, Israel, from the oppressive hand of Midian, you know it was... you know I really cant do it, I need proof, you know, fleece, wet, dry, ground. What about the next guy? Barak? Do you know him, you know his story? I mean this was a sad guy who could not step up and God used him anyway. I mean Samson, he wasn't really the kind of guy that you'd think, what a great example of virtue and godliness. Jephthah? Were you there that week for Sunday school? Remember his story? Not a good story, read it on your own. I mean he did great things for God, but the guy wasn't perfect, he made some foolish decisions, he made some foolish deals with God. Oh David, now we're talking about a man after God's own heart, but even his story is kind of stained with failure. You realize, don't you, that this list is filled with people who have feet of clay. They weren't the greatest that God could find on planet earth, but they were people who stepped up, every one of them, in spite of their foibles,



and they said, God, I'll do something great for you, I will trust you and stand up and do something great. Some of them did it reluctantly, some of them did it after some coaxing, but whatever, they stood up with all of their flaws and said, God, I will do something great for you. As a matter of fact, you may feel like I don't have anything to offer, I'm not super smart, I don't have a lot of gifts... Whatever you're thinking, here's the deal, you don't need all that. What you need is ambitious faith. You need to, through faith, say to God, I'm willing to step up and do whatever is needed. As a matter of fact, I'm willing to build in my heart a desire to do something great for you. Remember that great phrase, we quote it all the time; expect great things from God, attempt great things from God. Remember that phrase from that famous missionary. You know what his name is? William Carey goes down in church history as one of the great men, one of the great people who really turned the world upside down, specifically the country of India. Now that phrase; expect great things from God, attempt great things from God, came from a man, who at the end of his life, wanted this put on his tombstone. Here's what is read: a wretched, poor and helpless worm. Not a lot of people asking for that at Forest Lawn, you know? Well, lets see? I'm going to pick out my tombstone; poor, wretched, helpless worm. Okay? That's how he saw himself. And the next line; but on your kind arms, Lord, I fall. And the point is, God, you know what? I'm trusting you, I'm going to hang on to you. And here's a guy who, by the way, never went to college, dropped out of high school, said, God, still though, with all my past, with all my deficiencies, I just want to do something great for you. The God who used him to do something great, he transformed, he opened the door to India and he transformed the country. Really, he just transformed it for centuries to come. That guy is a great man. Translated the Bible, this is a high school drop out, into five different languages. The guy was willing to be used by God, because he held onto God's hand. And look at the list, and we don't have time, obviously, verse 32, to go through all these people, but lets at least look at the first one, Gideon. Lets go to Judges chapter 6 and just remind ourselves it doesn't take the magna cum laude, it doesn't take the valedictorian, to be used to do something great. God can pick people like Gideon. Judges chapter 6, now I know if you know a little about the book of Judges, they are constantly falling into trouble, the nation of Israel. They did evil, verse 1, in the eyes of the Lord, and for seven years he gave them into the hands of the Midianites, and you kind of do this when you read that, oh yeah, I know, I've read that. Do you know how bad it was for them? Verse 2, this is how bad it was for Israel; they were oppressed by the Midianites, and the power of Midian was so oppressive, that the Israelites had to prepare shelters for themselves in the mountain caves and strongholds. Talk about building bomb shelters, these guys were driven out of their villages, out of their cities and into the mountains to live. That's how bad it was for them. Do you think there were prayers going up to God from the sinful Israelites who were now repentant and contrite, saying, God, deliver us from the hands of the Midianites. This was a bad day for Israel. And so God responds, as he does throughout the book of Judges and says, fine, if you've learned your lesson, if you're repentant, if you're contrite, I will send a deliverer. So lets see, hmmm, whom shall we pick? Drop down to verse number 12, angel of the Lord goes out, and he appears to a guy named Gideon. And he says, Yahweh is with you mighty warrior. And he looks over his shoulder, right? Me? Drop down to verse 15, Gideon says, how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh; we don't have three sharp spears between us. I don't see how you're thinking I'm going to do this, and not only that, have you seen my family? I'm the weakest. Every brother I've got can bench press more than me, I'm not the guy for you, God. I can't do it. Verse 16, the Lord answers, oh, you're right, I didn't notice that, forget

it. Do you see that in verse number 16, is that what it says? That's not what it says. Here's the words we see repeatedly throughout Hebrews 11, as we look at the stories represented in that text, I will be with you. I'll be with you. I know you are a poor, wretched, miserable worm. I get it, you are weak, and you don't even have a bow and arrow. I understand that, but you know what? Me and you, we can do something great. As a matter of fact he says, I will be with you and you will strike down all the Midianites together, just boom, you're going to do it. You know what that takes to believe that about yourself? That God can do that through you? It takes ambitious faith. Your going to have to say to God, okay God, I'm not going to sit here and peddle these stupid excuses to you and say, God, I'm going to save that for those preachers, or those missionaries, I cant do anything. You can do something for God. And all you need to do is to say, I'm willing to trust God to be utilized with, what have you got? 15 years? With the rest of your life. And say, God I want to do something great for the Kingdom of God. Well, okay, but I wouldn't know where to start. Okay, let me help you with that. 1 Peter chapter 4. If you don't know where to start, here's where you start. You need, what I like to call the "back page" of your prayer book, okay? I hope you have some kind of way to record your prayer requests. Well, I have a back page, and I call it the back page because it's where the ridiculous requests go in my prayer book, okay? If I've got a prayer request in my journal, it goes to the back page if its one of those whoppers. Its one where I'm thinking, well God, this is kind of crazy, but I'd like to pray for it anyway. I've got a few of those on the back page. And that's what I'm talking about, you all should have a few back page prayer requests. Those are the big things where you say, God, I just want to see this happen and if you want to use me to do it, okay, but I just want to see this happen. And I've got a few doozies on mine, I'm too embarrassed to share them all with you, okay? But I'm telling you, you have to have a few of those. Say God, here's the incredible thing, I just want to see that great thing accomplished for you. You want to use me to do it? Great, I'm here, God, let's see something great happen. I got a flyer in the mail, it was sent out to every church in Southern California, and it was some Christian camp in Riverside County that was kind of going under. So here's this big camp, and they have this mess hall and they have these dorms and all that, and oh, we're trying to sell it because we're folding. Well you know, I see it and I look at the price tag and its got all those zeros on it, and I'm looking at my wallet you know, oh... you know, throw it away, right? I couldn't do it... that's a back page prayer request right there. Pin that thing up, I told them, I said, don't throw it away, put it right there, just I'm praying. And people raised their eyeballs; we're not going to buy a Christian camp, are we? Well, I don't have any money obviously to do that, but wouldn't it be great? I mean wouldn't it be great to have a camp where there... Ah, it's a back page prayer request, obviously. Those are the big things. And we talked about this a few weeks back, but we're so into defensive praying. God, protect us, and I hope this hangnail goes away, and you know, I hope I have a good lunch today. You know what God's looking for? A little ambitious faith, please. I mean lets go take a University for Christ, alright? Let's just take it over. I'm praying for that. That's the kind of prayer that, I conquer kingdoms and administer justice, I don't think we need a Buddhist University in Aliso Viejo. I think we need a place that teaches the word of God, that's what we need. And so I'm thinking, God, if we could just have a church filled with people that have that back page prayer request list, praying for great things. Lets just do that with the rest of our lives. I don't know where to start... great, 1 Peter chapter 4. Well how do I start my list? Well, I'm glad you asked. Verse 7, first of all, let's start where our message started, verse 7, the end of all things is near. That's not a very happy thought, but you know what? It's a good

thought, because you know what that does? It motivates me to maybe spend the rest of my life on something worthwhile. So at the end of it all, either Christ is coming back or I'm going to die, but I'm not going to be around here forever on earth. So be clear minded, self-controlled so that you can, pray. Now if you're taking notes, jot down letter A; you're going to build your back page prayer list. Start with this, it starts with prayer. Don't sit around and contemplate your navel, or read a Christian biography, those things are great, maybe not the navel one, but its good to read Christian biographies... but what you need to do is lock yourself in a closet and say, God, I only have so many years left on this planet, what do you want me to do? What great thing do you want to use me to do in this world? What kingdoms do you want me to conquer, what promises do you want me to fulfill in my life? Lock yourself in a closet, and pray. That's how you start, letter A, pray. Secondly, verse number 8, above all, he says, love each other deeply because love covers a multitude of sins. Love each other deeply, okay? Number one, it starts with prayer. Letter B, it is fueled by love. And love is helpful because it keeps me from thinking that its about building my empire. That's not love, its selfishness, okay? The greatness that you should be aiming for is not the kind you'll see early in the morning on Sunday when you see the preachers talk about doing something great, because what they are talking about is getting your boat in the harbor, which someone else will own, eventually, or your big house on the hill, which you're going to give away to someone else after you die anyway. We're not talking about that kind of greatness, we're not talking about building your empire, we're talking about doing something that is fueled by love. And love means that its not about you, its about somebody else, its about others. It doesn't have to have our name on it. But the point is, can we please see this done for the good of the church, for the good of others, for the good of those that will be trained by it? That would be great. Start with prayer, fueled by love. That means its not about building my kingdom, its about building Christ's. Thirdly, drop down to verse number 10, each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. God is doling out what he calls grace in all kinds of forms, and we should be faithful, as stewards, to administer the grace he's given me, and so I want to make sure my big list for God, my great things for God, are in keeping with my gifts. I put it this way, letter C; it utilizes my gifts, see, not yours. Because when the angel of the Lord showed up and talked to Gideon about delivering the Midianites, it wasn't totally out of the box for him. Oh I understand he was the weakest and the smallest, but I'll bet he had at least a slingshot in his back pocket, right? This wasn't out of the box, this wasn't outside of his gift-set, the guy was a warrior. The guy was trained to fight, the guy had the propensity to think as a military leader, see? And so it is for you, you need to utilize your giftedness. Now this could be a whole other sermon, or for me, a whole other series of sermons, but the point is, you need to figure that out. And let me give you three sub-points to the sub-points that we're in, in the middle of the first point, okay? If your taking notes, you've got A, B, C, now lets do underneath C, 1-2-3. Number 1; if you are going to figure out what your giftedness is, then you need to be looking at things where you see the need, okay? You're going to see the need. Now there are things that are out there that you don't see the need for. For instance, one of my passions and prayers is that before you lay my body in the ground, whether its 1000 days from now, 10,000 days from now, and you go to my funeral and you cry, oh... Mike, and he's gone; I would hope that in the wake of that, that we get a Christian College that trains people in the word of God, okay? You know why I think that's part of something God would have me pray for, and want to utilized to help do? Because I see the need all the time. You may not see it, but I see the need all the time. I know that



part of my giftedness is to care about the training of pastors. I look around, every year, I read the theological journals, I get my alumni magazines, and I'm always going, God, the whole theological thing is slipping in our country. The value of God is gone, the centrality of scripture, the high view of God's infallible word, its just dumped into the trash can these days. There's so much compromise, I see the need all the time. I don't see the need for a lot of things that you may see a need for, okay? I will never start a, you know, a cooking ministry, I will never start that. Okay, you tracking with that? You would if you saw me cook. I don't, I can heat up spaghetti-o's. But I have no passion for that, no gifts for that, I'm not going to do that. That may be part of something great that God is calling you to do, he may have something in you for that, but I'm not, its not my thing. So you'll see the need. Secondly, you will have a growing desire to do it. God is great in that regard, he fuels our passion as we delight ourselves in him, he gives us the desires of our heart. He not only grants them, but he gives us the desires. We start to desire the things that he wants us to do. And so I'm saying to you, you'll have a growing desire to do it; it's a godly principle throughout the scriptures. You will sit there and it will almost become such a passion for you, you can't help but plan and think and lean in that direction. And thirdly, you'll have people continually and increasingly affirm it. You'll have people that affirm that gift in your life, okay? Now if Gideon was called by the angel of the Lord and apparently, and assumedly called the angel of the Lord to go out and lead the Israelites against the Midianites, and he failed and got defeated time after time, eventually you're going to say, hey, I don't know what you ate that day, or what you thought you heard from the Lord, but I don't think you're our military leader, because you're a failure at it, right? But that's not going to happen with Gideon. As a matter of fact, he saw success and people kept saying, you're a great military leader. You know in the story of Gideon, they eventually wanted to make him the commander-in-chief, the king. But he refused that, because that wasn't his calling. But the point is, people saw his giftedness and affirmed it. So you want to know what your gifts are? Look at the things that you see the need, where you have an increasing desire to be used by God in that area, and thirdly, people keep affirming, you're pretty good at that. That's what you should be doing; you'll have the affirmation of God's people. Verse 11, we're building the little mini sermon within the sermon; if anyone speaks, he should do it, and that may be your giftedness, to do something in teaching or whatever, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If God has gifted you, and that means that you see the need, you have a growing desire to do it, and people affirm it, and you do it well, then here's what you should do; you should do it as if you are speaking the very words of God. That's not sitting around going, well, I don't know, I've got a few things to maybe tell you today. That's passion. That's enthusiasm. That's doing it with all of your might. Or if your serving, maybe you're not speaking, or you're not writing, you're a servant and that's the way God is going to use you to do something great with your life...you should do it with the strength God supplies. What does that mean? You're doing it with all of your might. That would be letter D, okay? Starts with prayer, fueled by love, utilize your gifts, and it's done, letter D, with all of your might. Whatever it is, don't do it halfheartedly. Do your work heartily; not just your occupation Monday through Friday, but how God is going to use you in your sphere of influence, do it with all of your might. You're never going to do something great for God unless you're committed to go headlong into it and say, God, use me to do it, I will spend and be expended for this. You've got to have that attitude. For what purpose? Well, purpose clause, bottom of verse 11; so that in all things, whatever your giftedness may be, whatever mine is, that God may be praised through Jesus Christ, to him be glory and power for

ever and ever. Letter E; lastly, it brings glory to God. You want a last page big prayer request list, the things that God may utilize you to do? Well it starts with prayer, lock yourself in a closet, make sure its not self-centered, its fueled by love, its not something completely out of the box for you, right? It utilizes your gifts, its not something you're going to do half-heartedly, you're going to do it with all of your might, and lastly, its not for any other glory but the glory of God. That helps you build that last page prayer request list, and you throw yourself into it and you say, God, anyway you want to use me, I am here to see that accomplished. Okay? That would be a better way to spend the rest of your life than sitting around trying to create a comfortable life for yourself when you retire so you can buy yourself a nice rocking chair or recliner and hang out in it until you die. I don't think that's really an ambitious goal for your life. Let us expend our lives for something great for God. Expect great things, attempt great things. These guys were doing it. What were they doing? Conquering kingdoms, administering justice, gaining what was promised. These are here for us as an example, as a template, let it fuel our lives. Now notice the list, back up at verse 32, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, okay? Even the first ones, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and David, even Samuel is cutting off the heads of kings. You may say, this feels pretty military, it feels pretty warfare-ish, it feels like it's all about fighting, so what am I supposed to do? Get a glock and go to the range, and learn how to shoot, and maybe I can kill a few people for God? Yeah, that's it. No, that's not what we're talking about. We're not a theocracy in Old Testament Israel, conquering kingdoms as an extension of God's justice in the world, that's not what the church is about. And yet the military theme's prevail, even in the New Testament. And so we need to stand back and say, you know what? I need to take that mindset into our battle. So one little sidebar here, 2 Corinthians chapter 10. As you think about your last page prayer request, its going to feel like a military motif. But it isn't as some theological and world religions would teach, its not about cutting people's heads off. Its not what we're talking about here. Christianity, New Testament, new covenant Christianity is not about that, it's a different kind of warfare, and yet its warfare just the same. 2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 3, it may not be a conquering kingdom or administering justice in that sense, but it certainly is that, and it feels that way, but its different. Verse 3; though we live in the world, we don't wage wars, the world does. Okay, this is not about that, military, I understand that, government role, I get it, but its not what we're purposing in our hear, okay? The weapons that we fight with are not the weapons of the world, verse 4, on the contrary, they're better, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. What kind? We demolish arguments, that's the kind, and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. This is a battle for ideas, this is a battle for the people's minds and hearts. And we take captive every thought, and make it obedient to Christ, this is often misquoted, this is what we're talking about is in the world, we're going out to conquer some brains, we're out there to turn those hearts to God, we're to take those thoughts captive and turn them to Christ. I don't want people sitting in a classroom in some nice opulent campus learning the wrong things, I want to get it done right. I want God's word and truth to prevail. But its going to feel like a war. And because it feels like a war, the great thing that you choose to do, you will always have enemies; you will always have opponents. There will be opponents immediately as soon as you go into your closet and pray about it, the minute you get out, you will be opposed. You want to live a nice sedated Orange County comfortable life? No one will care, okay? Everyone will say, oh, fabulous, have at it... hope you get a nice recliner. But if you say, no, I want to do something great for God, I want to take a few hills for the Kingdom, I want to use my life for something great in

Gods Kingdom, then you will have enemies. I guarantee it. Look at the next few verses here in Hebrews chapter 11. Bottom of verse 33, because these guys were stepping out doing something great for God, they got thrown in lion's dens sometimes ala Daniel the prophet. And sometimes, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they were thrown into the fiery furnace. But by God's protection, they quenched the fury of the flames. Every one of them, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and David, they were up against the swords of foreign armies that wanted to kill them. But here's the great thing about our list of ambitious faith hero's, they escaped the edge of the sword. And in one case, in the early classical period of the Old Testament prophets, these women who thought all hope was gone, the prophets came in that little rash of those supernatural GT 1's, if you were there for that sermon, you know what I'm talking about, that little rash there in the Elija-Elisha period, there was even people raised from the dead, just like they were in the New Testament, so God was doing some amazing deliverance, was he not? He was, when people stepped out, doing amazing things to keep them, protect them, guide them, he just put his hand of protection on them. If you step out to do something great you'll have enemies and then what you're going to need to do on a whole new level, Number 2 on your outline, is you're going to have to trust God for protection, because you will be opposed. Lets talk about demons for a minute. Whooo.... Okay, now I know you liberals don't believe it, you non-Christians, you don't understand it, that's fine. But Christians who believe the Bible, you do know there are these spiritual opponents of God that are sent out as henchmen from the head demon, his name is Satan, the opposer, the adversary. And they go out in the world to oppose God's work. If your work in Christian life is all about finding a nice comfy lounge chair to live out your remaining days with a Bible on your lap, demons don't give a rip about that, okay? Have at it, bye-bye, you're already saved, see ya. But if you come out of your closet and say, we want to take a few mountains for God, guess what happens immediately? The whole entire demonic realm that knows who you are is now opposed to you. And they are opposed to that plan. You want to make some enemies? All you have to do is say, I'm going to do something great for God with the rest of my life. And that's what I'm asking you to do. And you're going to have to now pray on a whole new level, it wont be about hang nails anymore. It will be about much bigger things, because if you step up to do something great for God, and you will need his protection on a whole new level. David was plucked out of obscurity to be the leader of Israel, right? I mean he was this little shepherd boy, and he stepped up with the anointing oil of Samuel on his head, and he said okay, and he went up and did it. Did he ever get opposed? Everyday. Sometimes the opposition was so real, so harsh, so hot, that it came from even the most unexpected places and it hurt the most. Think about the fact that one of his big battles was against his own son, Absalom, right? He wrote a Psalm, in Psalm 3, that I think it would be good for us to quickly look at, that shows us that as a guy stepping up to do something great for God, he was opposed in a painful way, by his son and his son's army. And he had to show that if he was going to walk this path, he had to trust God for protection. Look at the way he does it, totally trusting himself with an utter dependence upon God for protection. Now don't miss the subscription of the Psalm. It is a Psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom. He was on the run, they were out to kill David, his own son. And he says, verse number 1; oh Yahweh, how many are my foes, how many rise up against me, okay? Now he's out there in the field as a shepherd boy, and he said, forget this whole thing, I'm just going to be a shepherd all my life, raise my kids to be shepherds, and their kids to be shepherds, and we'll just sit around... His big opposition would be a few wild animals. His sons would not care. But now, because he

stepped up to do something great, he's being opposed by his own son. How many are my foes? How many rise up against me? That's what happens to people who want to do something great for God. Many are saying of me, God won't deliver him. A lot of people are saying you're going to fail, people would laugh at me, so you're so prideful, how arrogant are you, you're going to make a University for Christ, well that's just like Mike, big head... right? Whatever, okay, fine, I understand that. You think it's all... I don't care what you think, I just want, before you lay my body in the ground to have done something good for the future pastors in the world, that's just what I want to do, okay? If God does not accomplish that through me, fine. But that would be one of my heartfelt prayers. Now whatever, a lot of people are saying, no, that's never going to happen. Great, fine, to all these people, verse number 3; but I have to say to all my critics, all my detractors, all the people that want to oppose me, all the demons that want to oppose me, I want to say, you know what? God's going to be a shield around me. Lord, that's what you are to me, you bestow glory upon me, you lift up my head, when I am ready to give up, my head is bowed down in hurt and oppression, you lift me up. Verse 4; Lord, I cry aloud, you answer me from your holy hill. Selah. Think about it. How many times have you delivered me? Try and step out and do something for God, you've done it. I lie down in sleep, and for him this is not just, oh, did you have a nice rest? Yeah I did... people want to kill him. Every time he laid his head down, he's wondering, is someone going to run me through and kill me when I'm sleeping? No, I lie my head down to sleep and I wake up again; I know that you are protecting me. The Lord sustains me; I wasn't killed tonight. Verse 6; I will not fear, look at this resolve, the tens of thousands that are drawn up against me at every side. Arise oh Yahweh, here comes the imprecatory part of the Psalm, arise oh Lord, deliver me. Oh my God, deliver me, strike all my enemies on the jaw, break the teeth of the wicked, take the opposers, take the demons, take all that oppose the great things that I am prayer for and wanting so see accomplished for you, you defend me, you go after them. Verse 8; from Yahweh comes deliverance, may your blessing be upon your people. Now what a good statement, God is our deliverer, he is our fortress. But unfortunately for a lot of people that still leaves us going, okay, but how do I do that? Great, I want to say, I am not going to fear, I'm just going to keep going, I don't care who opposes me, but how? It really takes a mental focus, we talked a lot about this in Hebrews 11, but you're going to have to focus. It's not like whistling in the dark, walking through the graveyard, ooh, I'm just not going to be afraid, you have to focus on something very real in your life. One more Psalm before we leave this thought. Psalm 27. Another time when David is writing about the opposition he faced. So much of David's Psalm's are about that. You'll see why in Psalm 27, the reason he's singing so much about this. Verse number 1; Yahweh is my light and my salvation. If he's that for me, as we saw in Psalm 3, then whom am I going to fear? Yahweh is my stronghold, he's the stronghold of my life of whom am I going to be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh from my enemies, and my foes attack me, they'll stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear, though war break out against me, even then, I will be confident. How are you going to do that? Here it comes, verse 4, it's about a mental focus. One thing I ask of Yahweh, and that is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of Yahweh all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of Yahweh and seek him in his temple. We read that and we picture David in his sandals and his robe walking into the temple. If David wanted to live in the temple, live in the temple. This is not about that. We can find a room for him somewhere; sure you want to sleep here? You can stay here, fine. It's not about that. Obviously, and you're not going to look on the beauty of the Lord, right? Wow, you're

looking really good today, God. He's not seeing God. There's no form to see, this is poetic language to talk about David's mind. When you go to worship and your mind is fixed on God, when you're hearing the reading of the Torah, when you're singing these Psalms to God, I just want my mind to be there. The day of trouble, he'll keep me safe in his dwelling, verse 5; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle, he will set me high on a rock. Then my head will be exalted above my enemies who surround me. At his tabernacle, I'm going to sacrifice with shouts of joy; his mind goes back to that act and sense of worship. Look at the bottom of verse 6; I will sing and make music to the Lord. That's key. And when you are opposed, when Satan has opposed you, and he's used people to oppose you, and you're saying, I'm fine, forget it, I don't want to do it, and you're hurt, and they threaten to undo you, as Martin Luther said, then here's the thing... you know what? It comes down to focus. And sometimes music is the best way to do that. That's why the Psalm book of Israel is so filled with these Psalms of deliverance, because they had to sing. And I don't know about you, but the worst darkest days in my life when people have opposed me, and there's been that pain of that, you know what? Nothing ministers more than music, than to be able to turn the sound of my voice to God and to say, God, I'm fixing my hope on you. How do I feel and sense that protection? How do I say, I'm not going to fear? It comes through worship; it comes through focus on God. I will sing and make music to the Lord. Verse 7; hear my voice when I call oh Lord, be merciful and answer me. My heart says, oh you seek his face, I love your face, your face I will seek. He's having this conversation with himself. God, I'm going to seek you, I need to seek you. How does he overcome all this? How does he really entrust himself to God for protection? It comes through a focus and worship, it comes in keeping his feet on the path. Verse 11; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. I just want to stay on the path, I want to keep doing the right thing, I want to worship you, I want to picture my heart and my thoughts as though I'm sitting in a worship service, singing in church. That's the picture for us. Trust God for protection, like David sitting in the lion's den. I'll bet he was singing part of that night, what do you think? Focus on saying, God, keep their mouths closed, shut their mouths, don't let them eat me up, don't let my journey in here let us see, and for him preparing the Israelites to go back to the promised land, in the middle of the Babylonian exile. I mean he had work to do and in chapter 6 of Daniel is not the end of the story, God was going to use him to do a lot more. Trust God for protection, you're going to need it. And when you get out of the lions den, because he's going to deliver you in these little skirmishes that you have as the enemy puts everything against you, you're going to in the heat of the battle, you're going to feel like quitting. I just guarantee it, you're going to get tired, and you're going to grow weak. That's the great thing about this text. One last set of phrases, verse 34 in Hebrews 11, these guys, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and David, all these guys, in weakness, and sometimes they felt weak, sometimes they were weak, physically and otherwise, they're weakness was turned to strength, that's a great phrase. Bottom of verse 34; they became powerful when they were weak, they became powerful in battle, and they actually finished the course, they routed the foreign armies. They were sustained, they had an endurance, they not only had protection, Number 3 on your outline, they were looking to God for their strength. They were looking to God for their endurance. They were saying, God, I may be tired, and you know what, I've come a long way, but its not happening now, and God keeps them moving ahead, makes them strong in the midst of their weakness. Now that's the perfect picture that I paint for you, right? Somebody just working away, working for God, God I need your strength. But a lot of times our weakness doesn't just come out of just being on the treadmill of serving God, it often comes

because we're on the bench rusting out, or we tripped and fell right on our face, or maybe, like Samson, we have piddled away our opportunity to be used by God. Did Samson do that, do you remember that flannel graph story? Not real good, the whole Delilah thing, remember that? I mean this guy, at the end of his life, talk about weakness, that weakness was not, I'm worn out serving you Lord. The guy should have been conquering kingdoms and he piddled his life away, chasing women and all this other stuff that he did... and he sat there at the end of his life and God just threw him in the trash can and said, forget it. Is that what he said? Do you know the story? One last passage in the book of Judges. Judges 16, just by way of example, and I know this is an example of physical strength, but for us it's a great template of spiritual strength and endurance, but here is Samson, Samson was made weak because of his failure. And maybe I just need to say that for your sake, perhaps for my own. But the times that we fail, and maybe our weakness is based upon our own failure, we need to look at Samson's life and say, even in his weakness, at the end of his life, we saw him reach out to God, and God turned his weakness into strength again. So I don't know maybe in this sermon, and I know it's painful because I've already done it twice and people on the patio and afterwards, there's a pain for some that maybe they've wasted a lot of their lives. There's the grey hairs here going, you know what, I just feel bad that I've just been sitting on the bench rusting out, okay? Don't mourn that. Tell God you're sorry and let's get about making the last pages of the prayer book. Let's do the great thing for God. Let's don't spend any time on that. Let's just repent of it and move forward. Because even if our weakness is based upon our inactivity or lack of zeal or lack of passion, I mean there was someone here this morning that hadn't been to church for two years, okay? They confessed that. Great, you know what I'm going to say? Be here next week, get involved, let's do something great for God, tell God you're sorry about that, let's get back on the beam. Well, Samson was in that situation because of his own sin. Judges 16 verse 25, remember the story? They gouged out his eyeballs, the Philistines, after all his fooling around, and out came the secret of his strength, and so now he's weak, and he's in shackles, and they've thrown a few back by the time we get to verse 25, and the Philistines are all thrilled they got the strong man tied up. They were in high spirits, they wanted to bring out Samson for entertainment. So they bring out Samson from prison, and he performed for them. I'd like to see that, what was that all about? I don't know, but it was humiliating for him and all the Philistines throwing him back going, hey, we're the winners. Now remember the Philistines, just to get a little perspective here, you do understand that God is not getting joy from wiping entire nations off the planet, okay? That's not God. God was looking at the Philistines, much like the Canaanites, who came earlier, who were willing to throw their children into the fire as an act of worship to their pagan gods. God's saying, I've had enough of that. Precious children thrown into the fires. God is done with that, and so he tried to raise up Samson to make a difference and do something for God. You know what though? He failed. He was now utterly weak because of his own failure, because he piddled away his opportunities to do something great for God. And so here he is, out there entertaining the Philistines. They stood him among the pillars and Samson goes, oh wow, remember he's blind, he's got his eyes gouged out... he said to the servant who held his hand, hey, put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so I can lean against them. Verse 27; now the temple was crowded with men and women, rulers of the Philistines were there, they were on the roof, there were about 3,000 men and women watching Samson perform. Then Samson prayed to the Lord, oh sovereign Lord, remember me, oh God, please strengthen me, just once more. And God said, ha! I'm not going to do that. Is that what God said? You've sinned away your

opportunity, where you been man, you've wasted you life. No. We see in the next few verses God answers him exactly how he asks. He says in verse 29, Samson reached toward the two central pillars on the temple, bracing himself against them, his right hand on one, his left on the other, and Samson said, fine, I know I'm done, I'm captured, I'm surrounded by thousands of people, I get it God, but in this last act, please let me take these Philistines down. That's what God raised him up to do, and he didn't do it, but now in this last chapter he says, God, let me do it. And he pushed them with all of his might, and God's power, by the way, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people and thus, now this is an interesting statement, he killed many more when he died than when he lived. Why did God raise him up? To kill the Philistines. And he piddled a lot of that away. But in the end, he said, God in your grace, please get me back on the Beam here, and for my eyeballs, and for the reason that you raised me up, let me take them down now. And God said, fine, I will strengthen you. God loves to give strength to the weary. I love that verse from Isaiah 40. And you may be saying, well, that's only if you're weary and doing good. No, no matter what your weakness is caused by, repentance, a willingness to say, God, I want to do something great for you, its not about me, its about you, God loves to give you strength. The New Testament equivalent of that? Oddly enough its not to push down pillars, its not to bench press a lot, this is about a kind of spiritual strength to do something great. One last passage. Ephesians chapter 3, I love the confluence in this text of doing something great for God, and our reliance on God, looking to God for strength. We're going to need that, their weakness was turned to strength; they became powerful in battle to do what God had called them to do. Well what is God calling us to do? Not push down pillars, but you need strength, spiritual strength. He says this in Ephesians 3:16; I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His power in the inner being. We're not talking about muscles; we're talking about your heart and your resolve to be strong to do the great thing that God has called you to do. And I love that, out of his glorious riches, out of that may he strengthen you with power. This is not a AA battery. This is out of his amazing strength, this power, he wants you to be empowered to do his will. I live this text, verse 17; so that he may dwell in your hearts through faith. Pray that being rooted and established in love that you may have power together with all the saints, to first of all grasp how wide, how long, how high, how deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be, here's a great phrase, filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now you live there, being strengthened by the power of God, then you cant help but do great things for God. The measure of the fullness of God, to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. He can conquer a lot, according to his power that is at work in us, a reliance on his power, to him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations including the 21st, forever and ever, amen. Time for us to stand up and do something great for God. How are you going to spend the rest of your life? Lets do something great for God. When you do, you're going to have a whole new host of enemies, because Satan and the world isn't caring if you just want to sit tight in the corner and not cause any trouble. But if you want to take a few hills for God, if you say, God, I'll spend my life, maybe like William Carey, I just say, God, I'm a worthless worm, but you know what God? Please, I will attempt great things, and I will expect great things for you. And that's going to be your new battle cry. Entrust God for protection, look to God for strength. And by the time we come to your funeral and we say, oh we sure miss him or her, we're going to say, you know what? They did amazing things for God in their lives. God can do that right where you live, he may not change your job, he might, he may call you to a new place. But you



know what? You can do it, and God can do great things through you. I am sick and tired and I hope you are too, of the self-preservation theology that is peddled from countless pulpits in countless churches across our country. And its all about giving sermons where we just kind of hug each other and say, oh, I just hope you get protected and you just live a nice life and you need to slow down and chill out and relax and I hope God gives you peace and it'd be really nice if God gives you a nice retirement too, and it'd be good if you get that vacation house too, that'd be relaxing and you need to de-stress a little bit and chill out. Am I making the point? You ever hear that preaching? Oh, stop it. Not only is it un-Biblical, which is bad, it is completely absurd in a generation that has made an art form out of text messaging how tired and stressed we are. What are you talking about? Our great grandparents are laughing at us from heaven right? You guys are working hard, you must be really stressed right now, yeah, you don't get up to change channels any more. I mean think about it. We have a society that is focus on relaxation and recreation leisure and we're all... preacher, tell us how to relax more, we need to relax a little bit more, decompress. Stop it, see, stop it. Its absurd and its un-Biblical. Here's what the scripture says, 1 Corinthians 15:58; we need to give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord. Fully, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vein. Give yourself fully to it, give yourself fully to it. Here's the words of Christ, because if you want to save your life, preserve it, this is not just soteriological, this is practical. If you want to get into preservation theology, you will lose your life, okay. And we're not talking about soteriologically, that's true too. You want to preserve your life, and reject Christ, you'll go to hell, that's true. But if you want to preserve your life now as a Christian and you're all into the self preservation sermons, and oh, I just want to keep my nice little life and be comfortable, then here's the thing... you will lose your life. You will piddle away the rest of your life, you'll get to Heaven and it will be wood, hay and stubble, and it will be gone. Or, as Jesus said, you can lose your life for my sake. And then you know what? At your funeral we're going to say, hey man, he found his life, she found her life, man she made a difference for Christ, he really made an impact on the Kingdom. Well, I'm not greatly gifted? We went over that. Neither was Gideon or Jephthah. But you know what? God used them greatly because they had ambitious faith. Stop with the self preservation theology, spend and be expended for something in the Kingdom of God. Whether its speaking, serving, it could be setting up a website, it could be starting up a ministry. It could be getting involved and giving our whole heart to a ministry. It could be saying, I'm going to go take that whole hill for Christ, lets do it. And you're not going to sit back and say, when we meet up in Heaven, you know I wished I'd hadn't taken that sermon so seriously, I spent way too much time serving the Lord down there on Earth. You think you're going to say that to me? No, you're going to say, man, I wished I had listened to that sermon. I wish I would have thrown more of my heart into that. You know, you told us about going into our closet and shutting the door, and not coming out until we have something great to do for God. I never even really did that. You're going to look back and say, man, wood, hay and straw, it's a waste. What are you doing with your life? What are you doing with the rest of your life? Do something great for God.