

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: Philippians
October 18, 2020

Courage from and for the Gospel
Philippians 1:12-26

"Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me." It's the Word of the Lord.

Father, we do pray that your Word would not return void today, as you've promised. Would you open up our hearts and our minds to know the truth, and would you shape us today as we study this Scripture? Help us to know what you desire for us and what we should change. I know every soul in this room represents a busy life and chaos and different things happening, coming and going.

So, God, would you just calm us now and focus us now onto what you want us to see? As we walk through those doors in just a moment to go back to our normal world, would you help us to be different, that your Spirit did some work in our hearts and minds, that we would walk and leave this place different than when we came in. In Jesus' name, amen.

Earlier this week, our family went to eat at Union Hall. Love that place. We can never really decide what we want on the occasions that we eat out. Somebody is like, "I want pizza. I want a burger. I want Chinese." Just different debates around that. So that really is a fun experience for us. If you're not familiar with Union Hall or haven't been there yet, it's a modern food court where you can go and eat at different places.

We were there as a family, and I gave each of the kids a little bit of money and said, "Hey, you can go wherever you want. We'll meet back here." Weston came back, and this was his question: "Dad, the bowl of lemon drops over there... Are those free?" It was a bowl of candy like *this*, and he wanted to know if those were free. I said, "I don't know, buddy. Go ask them." He looked at me, and he was like, "Okay." So he wanders off.

Well, he's gone forever. Fifteen minutes have gone by. I'm like, "What happened to this kid?" When I get up to start looking for him, he comes back, and he says, "Dad, I'm scared." I'm like, "Well, what were you doing? Where have you been? Have you been like praying around the corner? I don't understand."

I was like, "Son, it's going to be okay. You can walk up, and you can ask them. It's okay. They're going to say either 'It's free; take one' or they're going to say no, it has some cost, and you can come back. I'll tell you what. If you have the courage to ask them, I'll make sure you get one. How about that?" So he kind of runs off.

I realized what had taken him so long. There was a long line of people, and he had gotten in the back of that line, and he had waited 15 to 20 minutes all the way to get to the front, and then he chickened out and came running to me. What I did with him is called *encouraged*. I encouraged him. We use that word, like, "Somebody encouraged me." Like, "I really love the way you look today. Hey, way to go. You did a great job."

We think that's encouragement, and it is, but the etymology of that word to *encourage*... We see the root word *courage*, and that first part, *en*, means to put in. When you encourage someone, what you're doing is putting in them courage. When Weston came back afraid, what I attempted to do as his father was to put in him courage. What the apostle Paul is going to do to the church in Philippi, and what the Holy Spirit is going to do in our hearts today, is to put in us courage.

As we read this ancient text, what I hope happens is I effectively put in you courage. The subject today is *Courage from and for the Gospel*. When we see that word *gospel*, we have to define that appropriately before we go on. If we're going to get courage *from* the gospel and if we're going to get courage *for* the gospel, we need to know what the gospel is. So, I'm asking you: What is the gospel? Who can share with me what the gospel is?

Male: It's good news that Christ died for our sins and overcame death for all of us.

Jonathan: He says it's good news that Christ died for our sins and overcame death for all of us. That's absolutely correct. The death and the resurrection of Jesus as a payment for our sins so we can be with God forever. *Gospel* is a word that literally means good news. Now, before we go

further in the message... This is free. Anytime someone asks, "What's the gospel?" that's an "Ooh, me! Me! Me!" opportunity. Okay?

When you walk through those doors in a minute, just know if anyone ever asks you, "Hey, what's the gospel?" that's the moment you've been waiting your whole life for: to share the gospel. Look for those opportunities to share it. The death and the resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins so we can be with God forever. His action, not our works. Our works follow our belief that Jesus died for our sins and God raised him from the dead.

We're in this series where we're moving through Philippians. It's subtitled *Finding the Joy of the Lord* because this word *joy* is repeated over and over and over. I think we are slow to share the gospel because we're like Weston. "Daddy, I'm scared." I can motivate you to share the gospel any number of ways. I can say, "All you've got to do to share the gospel... How much do you have to hate someone to not share with them how they can live forever?"

I can say that, and it will be motivating and encouraging and inspiring to some of you, and you will leave, and you'll feel convicted, mixed in with a little bit of guilt, because it's hard to know the difference sometimes. At lunch today you may be encouraged, and you'll be sitting there, and there will be a server, and you'll be looking like, "Are you going to do it? Are you going to do it? Well, Pastor said we've got to do it," and you'll fumble through something.

I think what we can learn from Weston is all you have to do is just really want something badly enough to push through your fears, knowing you're going to get it, believing God for it, because that's what God is about: his glory, that people would know him more, that we would be encouraged in that. So, rather than guilt you into sharing the gospel so you might do it one or two times and return back to normal, what I hope to do here on Sunday mornings is to give you a superior desire for Jesus, a superior satisfaction in Christ, the enjoyment of God.

What does that word *enjoy* mean? To put joy in someone. If you enjoy something, it puts joy in you. I pray that Christ would be that for us so that we would be motivated to share him. As I think about why we don't share Christ, why we don't share our faith, why we don't share the gospel, we could come up with a list of reasons, but I think it's because we lack faith. The challenge I see here is that we have been inoculated to Christianity.

I think that word *inoculated* is the right one. What that means is you get a little steady diet of it so that, in some ways, you're actually immune to it. In theory, I can't get COVID-19 right now because I've had it. My body has produced antibodies to fight it, so now if I come in contact with it, my body would successfully fight off that virus. This is how vaccines work. You go and get a little sample of the virus in your system so that it produces these antibodies to fight it so you won't get the flu or whatever it is.

Now don't take science advice from me. I'm repeating things I've heard. I assume they're correct. Take Bible from me. But that's what has happened to us, I think, in some ways, with Christianity. We've gone our whole lives. We've gotten little pieces of it, little samples of it. We go on Sunday, so that we leave here believing we're living as a Christian but not actually living as a

Christian. For some of you, it is almost like you're immune to it. "Oh, I've heard it all before. Jesus (yawn) died for my sins."

I want to be as honest with you as I can. That's terrifying to me. We read from the apostle Paul, and we see such a gap from him to us, and we think, "We can't just be like that." Or you could be just like that. What if? What if you could be just like that? So, I want to learn from his courage today. As we move through verses 12-26, we're going to look at how his courage is *contagious*, how his courage is optimistic or *confident in opposition*, and how his courage is *from Christ*.

To set this up, as a repeat from last week, we looked at how Paul grows his affections for the Philippian church, how it started there in Acts 16. This book is written by the apostle Paul. He's imprisoned Rome, most likely chained to a Roman soldier. That was normal for this time. He is penning this letter or orating it to someone else so they can transcribe it, so they can write it down for him. The year is about AD 62. This is about 10 years after he planted this church, these people he loved so much, and this is what he says to them in verse 12:

"Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear."

He's saying, "Hey, I know I'm in prison, but rest assured, this isn't going to stop the gospel. Because what am I doing in prison? I'm sharing the gospel, and people are actually being emboldened to share the gospel because I'm in prison." Now how could that be? The biggest fear right now in the church is "Well, if I talk about Jesus, they might arrest me."

All of a sudden, you see Paul. He's arrested, and he's like, "Look. The gospel is still growing. It's still picking up steam, and I'm kind of enjoying this in ways, because I get to share the gospel with people I wouldn't normally be around." And the church is emboldened. They're like, "Well, if he can survive prison, we can survive prison. Let's talk about Jesus." What's the question? When someone goes to prison, what do they ask you? "Hey, what are you in here for?"

Paul loves that question. "Did you murder somebody? Embezzlement? Did you steal? What are you in here for?" He's like, "No. Let me tell you. So, there's this guy named Jesus. Okay? So, all of these people killed him. He had actually lived a perfect life. He died, and then he defeated death. He showed back up, and he showed up to me. I was just on this road doing a little jog to Damascus, and he shows up and talks to me, so I've just been talking about him." They're like, "Yeah. But what are you in prison for?" "Talking about Jesus."

Paul is saying, "If they're talking about me, they're talking about Jesus, because they have to talk about why I'm in here, which is Jesus. The reason I'm here is Jesus." This is the answer for you at work tomorrow. "What are you here for?" "Well, to work." No. For Jesus. In the coffee shop: "What are you here for?" "Jesus." You're sitting at the table at dinner. "What am I here for? To talk about Jesus. This is why I'm here." "But I've got to eat." Yeah, that too, but I'm alive, I exist... God saved me and left me here so I could talk about Jesus.

1. *Paul's courage is contagious.* In verse 14 it says, "**And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.**" Paul's lemon drop is that he wants Christ to be known. This is the sweetness he's after. That's why he can push through whatever barricade the world throws at him. He wants Jesus to be known, and his courage is spreading. Why? That's what courage does.

You've seen this before. Anybody ever been cliff jumping in Whitney? Have you ever jumped off the cliffs, the bluffs? Bluff jumping, whatever it is? Okay, two of us. Great. So, we're on Lake Whitney, and my kids see the cliffs, and they're like, "Daddy, I want to do that." I'm like, "Great. Let's do that. Put your life jacket on. We'll go do it." There are a bunch of people.

So we go over there, and they climb up the cliff. From here it doesn't look that tall. You get on top of it, and you're like, "Whoa! That's tall. Daddy, how about we do it over here?" "Okay." They kind of slowly... "Whoa! That's still tall. How about we do it over here?" We slowly make our way down that cliff. They get to this height they're comfortable with, but they still can't do it. They still can't muster the courage to jump until one of them does.

They jump, and they disappear in that water, and then they come out and fist-pump the air and say, "Woo! That was awesome!" and they're smiling ear to ear. What that does is it shows the next person, "Well, they survived it, and they seemed to have fun. Okay. I'm going to do it." And then they jump, and then the next person jumps, and the next person jumps, because courage is contagious.

I'm looking at some of you parents out there. You desperately want your children to know Jesus and share him, and what I would say is jump off that cliff. You go first. Let your kids see you share your faith and then be okay, and they'll do it. I've seen a lot of young adults, and the ones who share their faith the most saw it modeled for them. For your friends... Show your friends what it's like to share your faith and be okay, and they'll follow suit, and Christianity will continue to spread as Christianity does.

Nothing spurs people on to share their faith, to share the gospel, than someone actually sharing the gospel. A church that does not talk about Jesus is not normal. That's not a normal church. That's not why God wanted his people to assemble this morning...so you could feel good about your week and have enough Christianity to get through the next six days. If that's what you think about church, you're thinking about church all wrong.

Consumeristic Christianity is rampant in America. We don't assemble here so that you would feel good. That's not why we're here this morning. We're here this morning so that you would taste and see that Jesus is good and leave and delight in him throughout your week and live as a follower of Jesus. This is what it would look like for you to know him, that you would also make him known.

When you do that, you can share Christ with the confidence that whoever you're talking to is going to know you're right. Have you ever argued something where you knew you were right?

Can you think of a time where you were arguing with somebody and you knew they were going to know you were right? You argue differently. You just do.

This happened to me. Cuero, Texas, came up in conversation, and someone said, "Yeah, it's north of here." I go, "No, it's south of here." They're like, "No, it's north. It's north of here. You drive north. You drive up 35 and you'll get there." I'm like, "No." There's just an unsettling confidence. Right? You're not amping up. You're not escalating. You're like, "No, it's south of here."

"How much do you want to bet it's north of here?"

"Dude, I'll bet whatever you want to bet. It's south of here."

"No, no, no! I am certain."

"That's cool. You're certainly wrong. It's south."

"Well, where are you from?"

"Cuero, Texas. That's where I'm from. That's where I lived. It's south of here. Okay, buddy?"

It's just unsettling confidence. When Paul says, "Hey, Jesus Christ died for your sins and God raised him from the dead..." When you tell somebody that, do you know that they're going to know you were right? Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess. You can share with the unsettling confidence that if they swing on you, they cuss you out, they flip you off, they're going to know one day that what you did was the most loving thing you could have done, and you can share with that confidence. Verse 15:

"It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance."

Paul is saying, "Hey, I know I'm getting out of here. I'm confident of that. And I know the gospel is moving forward." He separates people into two groups. He says there are some who preach Christ out of selfish ambition, envy, and rivalry. What does that look like? Paul was gaining popularity in this time, so people were watching him. Believe it or not, in the first century, people liked to be liked. I know, it's weird.

So, they're watching Paul gain followers, and they think, "I want followers." So when Paul goes into prison, they think, "This is my chance to inherit his followers. All I have to do is stand up

and repeat the things I've heard him say." So they're saying, "Hey, yeah, yeah. So, uh, Jesus...he died for your sins, and God raised him from the dead." They don't even know what they're saying, but they're saying it so they can inherit Paul's followers.

Then he says there's this other group. That's the group we're firmly in. They actively share Christ motivated by love. Because they love people, they share Jesus. He says, "Some of that first group share Christ to stir up trouble for me." What does that mean? Everybody has a fire-starter in their life, and that's the person who's amused by drama and conflict. They're like, "So, do you know what so-and-so said about you? Yeah, he really did. He said that. Crazy, huh? What are you going to do about it?"

So, what they were doing was they were saying, "Yeah, man. That's crazy. Paul said you killed Jesus. That's what *he* said. Yeah, man. And he said he showed back up from the grave, and all of these people love him. I've kind of been thinking about following Jesus myself, because that's what Paul said. So, he's in prison? How long are you going to keep him there? Don't you think if he gets out this whole message about Jesus is going to keep spreading? Are you going to beat him in there?" They're trying to stir up trouble for the apostle Paul, but he's like, "Hey, God can use it for good." He has this crazy, unsettling confidence, this optimism.

2. *Paul's courage is confident in opposition.* He's crazy optimistic. It's because he knows how it ends. Have you ever seen a football game on DVR, and you know the result, and now you're watching the game? You say, "I'm going to go back and watch the game." You TiVo-ed the game. Your friend made the mistake of telling you, "Yeah, Baylor wins 12-6." You go back, and you're watching the game because you want to watch it, but you know the results.

You respond differently. When they get that 15-yard penalty, you're like, "I know how this goes." You're not yelling at the TV. Some of you probably are, but most of you aren't yelling at the TV because you know how it ends. When that person gets hurt and you heard they get back in the game, you're not sitting like, "Oh no! What's going to happen?" You know they're okay. They actually come back in the fourth quarter and win the game for us. You're just watching with a different confidence.

This is how Paul preaches the gospel. It's like us. We've read the back of the book. We know who wins, and now we just get to play. We get to enjoy it. It's fun because we know who wins. He says, "Hey, there are these two groups." Paul's attitude can almost be confusing, because he's like, "What I care most about is that people are talking about Jesus. Some of them are doing it for the wrong reasons."

We've been talking a lot about unity here because of everything that's going on in our world. If you look at the past several messages, you're going to see this theme of unity. What's crazy is some of the biggest disunity exists in the church. Have you ever noticed that? Christians don't love each other well. We can be competitive. Have you ever seen this?

"You're a Christian, huh? I'm a Christian too. What denomination are you? Oh, okay. Baptist. Which of the 142 Baptist churches do you go to? Hmm. Yeah, do they preach the gospel? Hmm. Arminian or Calvinist? Calvinist? Really. What do you do with limited atonement? Huh? Huh?"

Yeah, okay. Dispensationalism? Are you Reformed?" It's like we're trying to figure out "What kind of Christian are they?" Have you ever noticed that? "Are they my breed of Christian? Are they my tribe?"

"Really, huh? Yeah. What do you do with TULIP?"

"I don't even like flowers. What are you talking about right now, man?"

We put them through this little trivia, this little, "Yeah, well, what about you?" We know so much. We're great at knowing all kinds of things. Sometimes your theology replaces the gospel. You care much more about these tributaries of belief than you do the river of the gospel. Paul is like, "Man, I don't care." What am I saying? I want to be careful, because we're going to guard our doctrine carefully. The Scripture calls us to.

But we're not going to participate in godless arguments. Where we can high-five on Jesus, his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins, we're going to do that. We're pursuing unity, and we're celebrating this idea that God wins. Stop being so smart for your own good. You're leaving out this very important motive. They do so out of love. If that has fallen out of your Christianity, then what you believe in is not Christianity. Be careful.

What we see here is this idea that the gospel grows stronger in opposition. It's like trying to put out a forest fire with gasoline. It just flares up and spreads. You grow stronger in opposition. Do you know this is the second time I've taught this message here? This exact text, verses 12-26. Second time I've stood on this stage and taught this text.

The first one was November 18, 2018. Almost exactly two years ago I taught this text. What we talked about that morning was how the gospel prevails. I said, "Hey, I know you guys don't have a pastor right now, but I'm confident that God has a plan for you, because the gospel continues to move forward, and it spreads like a forest fire. God is going to care for this church." I had no idea what he was going to do.

That Sunday, I stood up here and preached, and 575 of you showed up in this room. There was another campus downtown watching, about 150, and they were happening simultaneously, and we had no presence online. This was the message: "God has a plan for you." I had no idea what he was going to do.

I'm going to share some things with you, and I want you to know up front. Listen. Lean in carefully. I want you to hear me. My motive in sharing this with you is so we can celebrate a work of God, not celebrate me. I'm not the smartest guy in the room, but I'm smart enough to know God will do what God is going to do in spite of me.

This morning, we're going to fill this room three times. This will be about the smallest crowd that is in this room today, right here. You can look around and see it. There are about 550 of you in here. We're going to do that three times. This is in the midst of a global pandemic. What COVID has done for us is it has allowed us to pivot with technology. We began to stream the service online. Some people right now are sitting in their living room with groups of people, and they're

streaming it, and they're watching from all different places of the world. Hello, India. I saw you. There are different places in the world watching.

Do you know how many people...? And I'm talking not watching on the app later or rewatching this week. I'm talking about today, before the sun sets, how many people will watch *this* message live? Get a number in your head if you would. Somebody said "300." Another said "500." Somebody said, "It might be 700." Ready for the number? This is a real number. It's a very conservative number. What I did is I gathered the data and I took a couple thousand off it, because people may get on and jump off.

Twenty thousand people will watch this message, livestream it, before the sun sets today. Now, I want you to know something. Right now, you don't have to think, "This is a big church." You don't have to think, "Well, he's just bragging." You don't have to feel cynical toward it. I want to free you up right now to look at that number and just enjoy the work of God and say, "Father, thank you."

Any dollar you give to this place... Say you invest in this place. You are investing in 20,000 people who you can't see hearing the gospel before the sun sets. That's a great work of God that he's doing in spite of us. I was talking to somebody, and they said, "I don't know if you should say that because it's going to feel like you're bragging." I got a two-year degree from TSTC in art. All right? That's what I'm bringing to the table. If you think I go to bed thinking, "God, you sure are lucky to have me," you've got it all wrong.

God is going to make himself known. I'm soberly aware there might be handfuls of you who could get up here and do what I do. God is marching the gospel forward, and we can celebrate being a part of that movement. If you want to, you can even enjoy it. You can find joy in being a part of a movement of God. That's what Paul is doing. He's saying, "This is kind of fun watching the gospel march forward and getting to play a part in partnering with the Creator of the heavens and the earth. I kind of enjoy this."

I'm just going to add this. This will be the only thing some of you hear. If there is a cynicism in your heart, if you can't enjoy that, if you are crossing your arms, "Eh, big things," something is wrong with you. I'm going to be really honest. Something is off. We have to fix that. We need to beg the Holy Spirit to root that out and to fix it. It doesn't please God is what I'm trying to say. It does not please God.

Let me tell you about another number. It's one. Last week, when I was done preaching at one of the services, one of you came up and said, "Hey, I want to give my life over to Christ," and I got to pray with you right there. You prayed to receive Christ. You trusted in his death and resurrection. Guys, is my mic on? I'm going to say that again real quick. One of you came forward and placed your faith in Jesus, and you crossed over from death to life, and you're going to be in heaven now.

Hold on, because I want to make sure. Let me try something else. Did you guys hear Waco is getting a Costco? Oh yeah? That's exciting? Did you hear Baylor won the national

championship? Okay. We're like, "Let's go! Come on defense! Let's go! March down the field! Oh, he got it! He got it! Two-point conversion! Yeah!"

"Someone trusted Christ." *Yawn*. Do you hear me when I say *inoculated*? It's not okay. Something is off, guys. What happened to us? We care about a silly oval ball moving down a field. Do you know what you're not going to talk about in heaven? The national championship. Never once. You're never going to talk about it.

Woodrow Wilson said, "I would rather fail at something that ultimately is going to succeed than succeed at something that ultimately is going to fail." That's my biggest fear for you. As we look eyes as I'm preaching up here, I'm like, "I don't want you to succeed at the wrong things." If it doesn't matter a hundred years from now, it doesn't matter all that much. I want you to succeed or even fail at the things that *will* matter a hundred years from now.

I would rather you fail a thousand times trying to talk about Jesus than succeed at something that's going to be buried with you in the ground. This is where he seems delusional. How does he do what he's doing? He says in verse 20, "**I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed...**" That word *ashamed* really means disappointed by God, like, "God is not going to let me down."

"...but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me."

Here's what's going on. He says, "I'm not going to be put to shame. I know how this ends. I know God comes through." He says, "If I live, then I'm going to live for Christ. If I die, that's better for me, because I will be face-to-face with Jesus. I don't know what I want to choose, but I have a hunch that I really need to continue to live so that you would be rooted in the gospel, so that you would grow in the faith. So, I'm going to stay alive for your sake, knowing that my preference would be to depart and to be in the presence of Jesus."

Where he says *desire* there, "I desire to be with Christ, which is better by far," it's the Greek word *epithumia*. It's like epic desire. It's like desire times 10. "My deep yearning is that I would be in the presence of Jesus." That word comes from this idea of a ship that is tied to a dock that longs to be at sea, and the rope starts to loosen. That's what he says. He says, "My rope is loosening so I can be set free to my one and true calling, which is to be fully in the presence of Christ, but for your sake I'm going to remain tied a little longer so that you would know Jesus."

Paul has to be the most frustrating human being to his opponents ever. They can't beat this guy. They're pouring gasoline on the forest fire. Think about it. They're like, "Hey, you've got to stop talking about Jesus." He's like, "Nope." They're like, "Throw him in jail!" He's like, "Cool, man. People in jail need to know the gospel." They're like, "Okay, well, beat him!" and he's like, "Hey, man, it is a joy to suffer for my King." They say, "Okay, well, beat him and drag him outside the city!" He's like, "It was time to go somewhere else anyway." So then they're like, "Okay, well, let him live!"

"To live is Christ."

"Kill him!"

"To die is gain."

"Argh!" They can't beat this guy. They can't get him down. He's like, "Anywhere I am, God has a purpose for me."

"Put him in chains!"

"I'll write the gospel."

"Tie up his hands!"

"I'll dictate the gospel to Timothy. He'll write it." They can't beat him.

3. *Paul's courage comes from Christ.* Jesus is the source of his courage. Jesus went first. Jesus modeled these things. He lived a perfect life. He lived out his purpose. The disciples who were close to Jesus were cowards, but when he showed back up from the grave, they all turned courageous. All of them died a martyr's death except one.

Then Paul meets Jesus on the road to Damascus, and he's empowered. He also saw into heaven, which I think has something to do with his crazy, insane courage. What I'm trying to say is you moving closer to Jesus, you learning to enjoy Jesus, you loving Jesus more will stir up your courage. You believing that he's worth it, he is worth you pushing through your fears, wanting others to know him... We talk about things we love.

What do you love? For me, I love ice cream. Anybody else love ice cream? I love ice cream. It's like the best thing ever. In Waco we have amazing options. If you're listening from India, you want to come to Waco and get some ice cream, because it's amazing here. What is y'all's favorite? Heritage is great because they have a lot of different flavors. What else? Baskin-Robbins because it's all of the flavors. They have so many options, so we like Baskin-Robbins too.

What else? Andy's is good. It's custard. It's kind of competing with Katie's. You have Katie's and Andy's. They're doing this duel. They're both good. I don't discriminate. I hit them both. What

else? Sub Zero. You know it's my favorite because of the nitrogen. It's not gimmicky, guys. It makes it better...the smoke and all that stuff. We love some Sub Zero.

What else? Peachwave? It's yogurt, but it's good, because you can dump the stuff on top. We love Peachwave too. What else? Hey Sugar, because they bring that in from Denton. That's good too. We love Hey Sugar. Again, I don't discriminate on ice cream. I love ice cream, and it's not hard for me to talk about it. I love it.

I was at Clay Pot last week, and I was sharing the gospel with a server. It went about as poorly as it could go. Just so you know, this outcome is what most of us are terrified of. And it's not a terrible outcome. It's fine. But this is the worst. This is about as bad as it gets. I'm sharing with her, and she's completely disinterested. I'm like, "Hey, I'd love to talk to you about faith," and she's like, "Oh, okay. Yeah, I've got some tables, but go ahead real quick."

She's looking around and won't make eye contact, and it was awkward. That's about as bad as it gets. I'm just going to tell you. Eventually she said, "I just don't like pushing my beliefs on other people." I said, "Hey, I don't either. I just found the best ice cream in town, and I love sharing it. This man changed my life, and I would be remiss if I didn't share that with you. I found someone I really enjoy, and I want you to know him." And it was fine. I assume God is going to save her. That's what he does.

In summary, our courage is contagious, yours and mine; our courage is confident in opposition; and our courage comes from Jesus. Last week, after the 7:00 p.m. service, I was driving home, and I was going over that overpass over Highway 84. Ritchie Road goes over 84. It was dusk, the sun was setting, and there was someone standing in the middle of that bridge kind of leaning over.

I stopped for a moment. I wasn't trying to determine, "Am I going to stop or not?" I was trying to determine, "Are they going to take their life or not?" Because if they're going to take their life, if I believe that's what's going to happen, there's not a scenario in all of the world where I don't get out and engage them, because I want them to be restored to something greater than that.

It reminded me of a story that happened on a bridge in Golders Green in London. At about 5:00 p.m., someone was walking by, and there was a man on the other side of the railing, certainly about to take his life. People began to gather around him and watch, almost like, "This is going to be interesting." They're thinking this, and nobody does anything.

Finally, one man reaches out and grabs him, and when that one man goes, somebody else was emboldened, encouraged, and they grabbed him too, and then another one, and then another one, and then another one. All of a sudden, there were 10 people holding him. There's a picture. They actually went and got ropes and wrapped the ropes around him as they held him there for two hours, because they didn't want him to die. Somebody went first.

As you leave here, you're going to be around a lot of people who are dying, and you have a rope. You can share Jesus. They may pray to receive Christ right then or they may respond poorly, but God is at work regardless, and you can know that. You can walk out of here with that

confidence. You know that God is going to win. You may have to keep going back. Just be faithful. That is what is ultimately going to succeed. A thousand years from now, that will matter. Ten thousand years from now, that will matter. I pray we would be courageous to do that.

Father, would you give us courage? Thank you that your Word does not return void. As we prayed up front, would you help us to live in the faith? Not to be inoculated by it, not to have just enough to get us through the week, but to live it out, to bring others in, to continue the movement your Son Jesus started here 2,000 years ago and the apostle Paul continued. We get to join in with you in that.

What an amazing benefit and privilege of being alive right now. We get to give people hope. We can tell them how they can live forever. Would you stir that hope in us? Father, right now, by the power of your Holy Spirit, would you root out cynicism and religiosity and churchiness, and would you replace it with pure, unadulterated Christianity, purified, true faith? As we sing, Lord, would you do that in our hearts? In Jesus' name, amen.