

The Ultimate Test of Courage

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Various Scriptures
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Well, I almost never do this kind of thing, so please cut me a little slack today. But instead of approaching the weekend like a preacher, ready to proclaim the truth from a text of scripture, I've approached this weekend like a shepherd, burdened about some things that I want to speak to you about today from God's word. So I want to share my heart with you. When I was finished last week, I thought, "Well, I'll just do the next text in the Book of John as my last message before sabbatical." But the more I thought about not preaching for 13 weeks, I thought I want to talk with you about what's burdening me as your pastor.

There have been three major themes that have been standing out to me as I've studied God's word and as I've prayed and I've been thinking about what's going on in the world and thinking about what's going on here in our church. Three burdens kept coming to mind that I want to shepherd you in, three themes that I think are very applicable to all of our lives. I've organized these three themes around three words that start with the letter C. I have a condition called pastoritis. These kinds of things happen. So sorry about that.

But now listen, you don't have to worry that I've just lost my mind and now I think my thoughts are better than God's words. I don't. My thoughts will never be better. These themes are biblical themes. So I will be teaching the Bible today, but if like a grenade, I toss this into the church and then leave for three months, just know that pastors will rebuke me and we will pretend like this never happened. All right? Now, with all of that in mind, let's talk about my first burden, which is *point #1*), the word **Courage, Courage**.

I was struck by something this week that helped me think through what's going on in our world and help me think through about how Christians should respond to what's going on in our world. I don't know about you, but I need bottom line kind of things, and this is a bottom-line kind of thing. Look back at Second Timothy 3:12, "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Question. Anybody here want to live a godly life? Anybody? 2 Timothy 3:1 says, "In the last days, there will be difficult times for Christians" then while describing those difficult days, Paul says, "The godly will be persecuted."

What I noticed for the first time in this text is that this text gives us only two choices. "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." Do you see the two options here? Take a look at it. It is either godliness, which leads to persecution, or it's ungodliness, which leads to the opposite of persecution. So acceptance. In other words, if Christians want to just go along to get along, the trade-off for that is our godliness.

In our world today, if you want to be godly, which means you want to live your life committed to Christ in every area, you want everything in your life to revolve around knowing and doing the will of God. If you want to live your life to please God so that you will here, "Well done," when you stand before Jesus, one of the many results of that is going to be persecution. If you want to avoid being attacked for Christ, if you want to be at ease, if you want to be accepted by the world around you, the price that you'll pay in order to have that is godliness. You can have comfort, you can have ease, you can have acceptance. Just be ungodly, which means treat godliness like it's extreme. "Oh, super Christians are godly. I'm just normal." Hide your commitment to Christ. Don't revolve everything in your life around knowing and doing the will of God, live to please other people so that you hear, "Well done," from them and the result will be ungodliness, but it will also be no trouble, ease, acceptance, no persecution.

So the choice is ungodliness that leads to acceptance or it's godliness which leads to persecution. In what is a historical anomaly in the United States, we've been able for a few centuries to have godliness and acceptance, but it seems to me those days are very quickly coming to an end, if not already being over. So godliness, being devoted to Christ, committed to knowing and doing God's will in our lives and in this culture, it's going to cost all of us. For some of you, I know it already has cost you. For some of you, I know it has cost you very dearly, but it seems to me that a lot more of us are going to pay this price.

My point in what I'm seeing in the text is that the days of godliness leading to acceptance are gone and the sooner that you and I accept that, I think that's for the better. Why? Because too many Christians believe silence on the truth is godly because it means that non-Christians aren't going to be mad at us. In fact, many think it's a badge of honor when Christians are mad at us, but the world applauds them. "The world is watching. So let's compromise some biblical truth here and there for the sake of evangelism because the world doesn't want to hear it."

I'll never forget, James 4:4 is clear, saying, "Friendship with the world puts us at odds with God." The more the world hates Christians, the more the world accepts... I'm sorry. The more the world likes Christians, the more the world accepts Christians. The more the world applauds Christians, the more anti-God's will, the less godly, the less committed that we have become. We live in a day when pleasing the world is far more important to many Christians than pleasing God. Pleasing God is no big deal because God forgives, but pleasing the world is huge because their salvation is on the line and if people's salvation ultimately depends on us and if they like us, well, then we just can't do anything that'll make them mad at us. Their salvation is on the line, like their salvation ultimately depends on us.

Now, if you know godliness leads to persecution, if you know your commitment to Christ will get you canceled. If you know pleasing God comes with a price and that price is infuriating the world, then what we will all need is a heavy dose of courage. Courage will determine whether it's going to be godliness or ungodliness. For all of us, it is courage or it is compromise.

Now, you may have been nodding with me this whole time and like, "Yep, yep, that's true, amen." But here's where I might make some of you uncomfortable. Today, we tend to listen to

things for agreement, not to be challenged, but I'm talking about this today because we're all going to have to choose to be godly and make godly decisions as we get closer and closer to the election.

Four years ago, if I went on sabbatical in May, June, and July, it would've been during riots that tried to tear our country apart. Wouldn't you know it? Today, almost on cue, there are riots that are seeking to tear our country apart. See, you right now are living in the midst of a so far, mostly non-violent Marxist Cultural Revolution where people are seeking to overthrow your country, which was founded on biblical principles. This is not hyperbole. I've read their stuff; I've listened to their speeches. One of the pastors just sent me a text where they took down the American flag and they put up, "Fill in whatever flag you want." You know what that is, right? That is we are an occupying force in your nation.

Marxism is a religion and what they're doing on the streets and on college campuses is their form of worship. It is a false religion and it's one issue after another that we're all supposed to be outraged about, but only zealots can be outraged in perpetual outrage and the rest of us don't live like that. So we will check out or we have never checked in, and the zealots advance.

You see, churches that embrace Marxist ideologies, they can be as political as they want to be, but as soon as biblical churches even hint at something that may be kind of... I don't know, that might be sound political, "Can't talk about that." In fact, Christians will justify our inaction in the face of this revolution with, "That's politics and Christians should just preach the gospel." However, nothing, and I mean nothing that people call political today is purely political. Pretty much all of it is theology.

The life issue, that's theology. All the gender issues, that's theology. LGB issues, that's theology. The T, the trans issue, that's theology. The climate, that's theology. Black Lives Matter, that's theology, Ukraine, Israel, and Hamas, that's theology. The border of crisis, that's theology. Every office you're going to vote for, like some judge, you don't even know who he is, all the way to the President of the United States, all of it is theology. None of it is purely politics and every one of those issues has a true position and a false position on whether or not that position is dominated by what does the Bible say on this issue or what will the culture allow me to say on this issue?

See, whether they know it or not, many churches have tried to baptize Marxist ideology, but all they have done is they have become more ungodly. So let me get this straight. Christians, especially Christian pastors and teachers who know the Bible and are the experts in theological issues, at a time when our world needs theological accuracy most, we should be silent on politics. That doesn't make sense.

Now, our relative silence and inaction on many of these things because Christians should stay out of politics, does not honor God, and it does not love our neighbor. However, when it comes to Christian involvement in politics, throwing that word politics at Christians means, "Shut your mouth. Your views are not welcome here." That's what that means. Now, we could afford to be

passive. We could afford to be silent because the culture was on our side and all that anti-Christian, that's just crazy, weirdo fringe stuff. Well, guess what? We're the fringe now. We're the weirdos. We're the crazy people and the only thing that is going to stop the revolution for our children and our grandchildren is courage.

My burden for you is that in the weeks ahead, you're going to be beaten into submission by a coordinated effort to get you to stay home, to stay quiet and to stay uninvolved. "Just shut your mouth and go about your life and leave all that politics to every non-Christian in the world. Because Christian, you're not supposed to be involved in this, not in a representative republic like we have." In fact, some of the most famous events in the Bible would be considered political. Did you know that? Let's never forget, it was courage that caused the Hebrew midwives in Exodus chapter 1 to practice an act of political civil disobedience, when Pharaoh commands them to kill all the Israelite baby boys and they refused.

Never forget, it was courage that caused Moses to defy Pharaoh when Pharaoh said the Israelites were not to worship God in the way that God told them to. We forget the whole Exodus event starts with politics and civil disobedience. Never forget, it was courage to refuse to bow down to an idol of King Nebuchadnezzar as a political act of rebellion against the state by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Never forget, it was courage for Daniel to disobey a law that said he was not to pray for 30 days. American evangelicals would never be Daniel. They'd say, "Well, we must obey the government. Well, we can honor God in other ways for the next 30 days instead of praying." That's what we would do.

Never forget, it was courage for the prophets in the Old Testament to speak out against the sins of their country and their governments. They practiced what R.C. Sproul advocated for, which is the prophetic voice of the church. That is the role of the church in a society is to say and advocate for God's will against the sins of a nation. The word politics has been used for decades to silence the prophetic voice of the church and to convince millions of Christians that it is good and godly for us to be silent while our nation devolves into chaos and sin and idolatry. But that's okay.

Never forget, it was courage for John the Baptist to keep calling out the sin of Herod, a king who could and eventually did kill him because John the Baptist feared God more than him. Never forget, Peter and the other apostles were arrested for preaching the truth. They're like, "Well, they're preaching the gospel." Yes, but when it is illegal to preach the gospel, preaching the gospel becomes a political act, a political act of civil disobedience and their response to that, to the authorities was, "We will obey God rather than men." Never forget, men like Joseph and Moses and Samuel and David and Elisha and Eliza and Ezra, Nehemiah, Mordecai, even Esther and more are all God's people engaged in government.

In the end, the Bible does not teach the non-engagement with the government of God's people, and neither does the reform tradition which many of you identify with. Not to mention how Christians loving their neighbors in a society ended political things like slavery, human sacrifice, segregation, child prostitution, gladiatorial combat, infanticide, the burning of widows, lack of

healthcare, lack of education, just to name a few. In other words, a ton of evil has been stopped in the world and a ton of evil could be stopped more in our world, in our culture if we got more engaged in our political process instead of watching other people do it and just sitting back and honestly, for some of you, this would be as simple as registering to vote.

Let me say this too, the Bible does not teach the absolute authority of the government either. It is God over government when government conflicts with God or when government tries to be God. So when the government breaks the law, when the government encourages lawlessness, when the government becomes godless itself, there's only one group of people in the entire culture that can call that culture back to God's ways and back to God's will and who is that? God's people. They're the only ones that can do it. Oh, but that's politics and we're supposed to stay out of that and just preach the gospel. No, we can walk and chew gum at the same time. We can preach the gospel and we can love our neighbors and we can do good works and those good works of loving our neighbors through the political process can actually show, "Hey, that Jesus thing is actually pretty amazing because it's actually transforming people's lives and societies as they apply that stuff." But no, we can't do that because we're just supposed to preach the gospel and leave the government to the non-Christians. It makes no sense.

Now, listen, I'm also not advocating for the overthrow of our government. Are we clear on that? Some Christians are, I'm not. Nor do I think the American experiment of inalienable rights and self-government has failed. It has not. Why? Because if what I'm advocating for, which is Christian re-engagement in the workings of our government to instill biblical truth in our government while others seek to instill the opposite of that, if we do that and God shows us mercy in the midst of his judgment on our nation, then we could see things change. But if we're going to do that, it's going to take a massive dose of courage to do that in a culture that hates God and hates us too.

But Paul from prison for preaching the gospel, which again means it was illegal, which means preaching the gospel was a political act, he puts it this way, Philippians 1:20, "With full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death." Notice, he says courage was something that marked his life always. The reason he thought that way and acted that way is because Second Corinthians 5:6 says, "We are always of good courage." So we're always of good courage. Why? "Because we know that while we are at home in the body, we're away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." So whether we are at home with the Lord or away in our bodies, we make it our aim to please him.

So not only does Paul say that courage always marked his life but notice the virtue that fuels the goal of living a life that pleases God. The virtue that fuels godliness is courage, which brings us all the way back to 2Timothy 3:12 and the choice that we all have, that being godly will bring us persecution. Since that's the case, remember Hebrews 13:6, "We can confidently say the Lord is my helper. I will not fear. What can man do to me?" The answer is nothing. Why? Because the worst they could do was kill us, but that sends us to heaven, which is actually what's best for us.

So for us, it's the win of faithfulness and the win-win of faithfulness in heaven. Either way, we win.

So as I go on my sabbatical this week, I have a heavy burden about this for all of us because if it continues, our children and grandchildren won't have America. Maybe you think that's what we get for all of the wickedness that our country is involved in, but the consequences of losing America will be devastating for all of us and for the world. "Well, being a Christian is illegal. We'll just go underground. God doesn't need the First Amendment." Well, no one is saying that he does. But I laugh at how flippant some Christians are with their freedoms who say things like this.

When I've been to nations where Christianity is illegal, I've been with pastors when they are terrified because they think the government found our meeting. I've taught in rooms that just a couple of days earlier were filled with policemen because the police raided the building because they heard that there were Christian meetings going on in that building. I've taught in a church that was later demolished because that church refused to put cameras in their worship center with face recognition software so the government would know every single person in the room. I've worn disguises, I've used fake names, so the government wouldn't catch on that I'm a Christian and let me tell you, what we have here is infinitely better than that. Yet we will be the Christians who lose the freedom to preach the gospel in the name of only preaching the gospel, when that freedom to preach the gospel has taken the gospel farther and faster than it ever has in the history of the world.

So if I have to say to my kids and grandkids, "I'm sorry you don't have the free exercise of your God-given freedoms like I did," I hope I can say right after that, "But I tried." If you want to join me in that, then the thing that we all need most is courage. That's my first burden. My second burden is in Romans chapter 1. It's on page 1,040. **My second burden**, I've summarized with the word **Conflict, Conflict**. According to Romans chapter 1, verses 24-32, our nation is under God's judgment. So take a look at chapter 1, verse 24, "Because of the idolatry and disobedience of a nation," verse 24, it says, "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity." This is a sexual revolution. Look at verse 26, it continues. Step two of a God's judgment on a nation. "For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions for their women exchange natural relations for those that are contrary to nature." This describes a homosexual revolution, which we experienced last decade.

The third step, and there's only three, is in verse 28. "Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, since they started removing God from their culture, no longer acknowledging him, God gave them up to a debased mind." A debased mind is a mind that's become or worthless, unable to do what it was designed to do, which is to love and serve the Lord. So today, the collective mind of our culture is anti-God, anti-Christ, totally worthless for recognizing, knowing, and then doing God's will and the result of that is what you see in verses 29 to 31.

Now, what I think you will notice about this list if you read it, just about all of these sins are relational. They're filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They're

full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, their gossip, slanders, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Most of that list is clearly relational, and all of that list is applied relationally. So what's the point? The point is, when a nation is under God's judgment, it will begin to tear itself apart. Why? Because the people will begin to tear each other apart. Now, as Christians, we may not be of this world, but we are definitely in this world and if we're not careful, this conflict that we see in a nation under God's judgment will begin to come out of us too. The world will spill onto us and then it'll spill out of our lives onto others.

So a couple of weeks ago, I posted this on Twitter, I said, "I think the best question to test the level of your maturity in Christ is how do you respond to conflict? How do you respond when you don't agree? How do you respond when there's tension in relationships?" People come and go from local churches all the time, but almost all of it has to do with conflict. Instead of handling it like the Bible tells Christians to do, we handle it like the world. When we don't like the food or the service at a restaurant, we usually don't have a civil conversation, even a civil confrontation, get reconciliation and then go back there the next week. Right? We just don't go back and then we tell other people, "You shouldn't go there either." We do the same things with our doctors and our mechanics and our plumbers and our chiropractors and just on and on and on and on and on.

So what is accepted practice in our world, "I'll just find another one," we do with our church, but that's not okay. Why? Because Ephesians 4:3, written to a local church, written to multiple local churches in fact, we're told to, "Be eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." So Jesus accomplishes peace with God, with all of us, every single one of us. We have peace with God because of the cross if you're a Christian. But Ephesians Two says, "He's also accomplished peace with each other," that the normal existence for Christians is peace, because when we all have peace with God, we have peace with each other and so Ephesians is written to a real world, real people. So it says that we should work hard. Because we have peace with God and peace with each other, we should work hard to protect that unity, to take care of it, to cultivate it, to watch over it and protect it, not treat that unity like it's no big deal and we just move on to something else.

Well, what does this kind of thing look like? Well, instead of only going to the person we have an issue with and working it out, we rally people to our side with gossip that often starts something like this. "I have a prayer request. Can you help me with something?" Which, who's going to say no to that? "No, I'm not going to help you." Right? We don't apologize when we're wrong. We don't ask for forgiveness, make cryptic posts on social media, harbor anger instead of talking about it with the goal of reconciling, we forgive, but never forget. We put the worst possible spin on people's motives and actions. We cut people off with, "I think it's just best if we don't talk about this," when actually, we're commanded to talk about it and work it out and we justify all of it with, "I just don't like conflict." Or we become prophets and predict the future and say things like, "Well, it's not going to help anyway," like we know.

In the end, First Peter 4:8 should be our normal everyday attitude as we interact with each other. In the face of everything that you and I could be in conflict about, in the face of everything that all of us could be in conflict with all of us about. First Peter 4:8 says, "Love covers a multitude of sins." Not just one and I'm out. Not just, "Oh, I've got a couple issues and I'm out." Love covers a multitude. Who is this written to? Christians in a local church. Love covers a multitude of preferences.

Wait, it's not talking about preferences or opinions. It's not talking about likes and dislikes. Love covers a multitude of sin. That's not how we treat other Christians. It's not how we treat churches, but what is the standard of forgiveness that I'm supposed to show the other people in my life and in my church? We're supposed to forgive each other 70 times seven times, which doesn't mean at 491, I can cut you off now. It's forgive to the max, forgive lavishly, just like God forgives you. Aren't you glad that God isn't 491 forgiveness? Then on 491, boom, you're done.

In fact, Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 say that Christians are to be in the habit of forgiving one another as God in Christ has forgiven you. So the standard of our forgiveness, what protects our unity is you forgiving me like God forgives you. That's the standard. So what does that look like in practice? If someone says, "Can I talk to you about something?" You say, "Yes," but you find that their issue is not with you, but with someone else, unless it's like a crime, you should stop them mid-sentence and ask them one question. That question is, "Have you talked with so-and-so about this?" If anywhere in their answer is no, like, "Well, I don't..." When you start to see that, then you just say very kindly, "Until you talk to that person, it does not please the Lord for me to talk with you about this." If they say, "Yes," then you should say, "Clearly, you still need to go talk to them because this hasn't been resolved yet, because this is beginning to get into the area of gossip and slander and the Lord's not pleased with that either."

In fact, Psalm 101:5, God says he will ruin, he will destroy those who slander other people. I don't know about you. I don't want to do anything the Bible says God will destroy me for. Even if I'm forgiven in Christ, I don't want to do it. I want to stay away from that. This isn't just how people leave churches. This is how people split churches by being demonic when it comes to conflict rather than being godly and loving and humble and treating people in the conflict the same way that not only that we would want to be treated, that's first level, but the Christian level is treating one another the way that God treats me. That's how we're to treat each other.

So it's all recognized that in conflict, most of us here, either peace breakers usually are the ones who bring conflict into the relationships, or we're peace fakers who usually pretend that there's no conflict in our relationship when there really is. Everyone know which one they mostly are. After recognizing that, let's ask for God's grace to honor him by being peacemakers, who Jesus says in Matthew 5:9 are blessed because they are the sons of God, which means that they take on the characteristics of their father who is a peacemaker with us, people who have sinned against him.

Now, why do I say all of this? Because people go crazy when the pastor's on sabbatical. Things just start to fall apart and break apart, and everybody starts fighting with each other. It's some

crazy thing that tends to happen for some reason. So let's talk when we're in conflict, okay? That's why I stand at the back door. That's why our emails are in the back of all the programs so we can be available and shepherd you in this. Part of shepherding us is all of us acting like mature Christian men and women, and not like the world when it comes to doing what the Bible says about conflict. So can we just all commit to doing that, please? Not just for 13 weeks, but forever. Let's all commit to not biting and devouring one another, but loving and forgiving one another because we are eager, because we want to work hard to protect the precious unity that Jesus purchased on the cross, not just with us and God, but also with each other.

Well, all of that is a burden. But my greatest burden as I go on sabbatical is found in Hebrews chapter 3, Hebrews 3, page 1,104 in the Bibles we give away. My greatest burden is I get ready to leave, summarize with *point #3*), the word **Christ**. So while I'm burdened by what could be coming for us in the next six months and how Christians may or may not respond to it, and while I'm burdened for how the world's cancel culture is creeping into the church, especially on social media, but also creeping into this church, I have to admit that what burdens me most is that some of you listening to me still have not believed in Christ.

The Book of John, which we go through every week when I preach, its sole purpose is to show people how wonderful Jesus is so that they will turn from their sins and they will give their lives to him and when they do that, all of their eternal punishment is gone, and eternal life is theirs. Every weekend I reason with you, every weekend I plead with you, every weekend I call on you from God's word to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You hear me over and over again and over and over again in your mind, in your heart. You resist. You push back. You harden your heart with another layer of rebellion against Jesus and against giving your life to him. It's like when you've had a cast and the water of God's word hits your heart. Like whatever's in a cast, the water actually hardens and the water of God's word puts another layer of hardness around your heart.

So with that in mind, please listen to the words of Hebrews 3:12. It says, "Take care, care deeply. Care about this brothers, lest there be in any of you, an evil unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. Watch over your soul. Take care of your soul because if you have an unbelieving heart that's not trusting in Christ, if it's resisting, the result will be falling away from the living God." You will walk away and you will never come back. Notice the remedy for that says, "Exhort one another every day, as long as it's called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." So every week, I'm exhorting you and urging you and imploring you and pleading with you so that your heart does not become hardened by the deceitfulness of rebellion so that your heart is not convincing you that rebellion is good and Christ is not what's best.

Then notice verse 15, the response. "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." What's best for you is not resisting the work of the Lord. It's not resisting what he does in your mind and does in your heart when you come here week after week. What's best for you is that you give in. What's best for you is that you give up. What's best is to resist the resistance and rebel against the rebellion and come to Christ. Christians, when you hear me

pleading with non-Christians every week because that's what's in the text, that should be your cue to what? To start praying and praying earnestly. Great, you've got your ticket to heaven. But other people here need what you have and the only way for that to happen is where God takes your praying and my preaching puts it together and does that supernatural work of ministry in our midst, in the chapel, on the livestream. Where God uses us together in this moment to save souls from eternal hell and give them eternal life.

So before I leave on sabbatical, if you are here and you have not given your life to Jesus, if you know that he is the truth, if you know that he is savior and Lord, listen to me, do not harden your heart in rebellion again. Come to Christ, surrender and be saved. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved from your sins, saved from condemnation, saved from God's wrath, saved from eternal judgment. I hope you sense like this whole thing is really true. This is reality.

This is the most important thing that you'll hear all week because Jesus really did die and he really did rise from the dead. You'll be saved and be accepted by God; his acceptance is the only acceptance that matters. Adopted into his family, a child of his forever. Reconciled to God. No longer at war with him, but now and forever at peace with God, which also gives peace on the inside. Set free from sin, death, hell, and Satan. Set apart for God, no longer living to please self, but to please him. Not to make yourself good enough that he would accept you, but by faith in Jesus, by trusting in him, God will accept you as if you were Jesus.

So turn from your sin and trust in Christ and you will be saved and if that's you, I want to know, I'll be at that back door. You can fill out a connect card in your program or you can send an email or talk to somebody here. We want to help you in this walk with Christ in this new life that you need help with. We all need help with it. Anybody need help with that? Yeah, we all do. That's what the local church will be. Well, those are my three burdens as I leave for sabbatical, courage, conflict, and Christ and after all that, you might be thinking, "He really needs to go on sabbatical." You might be right, but please cut me a little slack with the burdens that I have on my heart as I go. As the team comes back up, let's pray.

Father, thank you for your word. It's one thing for me to give it. It's one thing for me to preach it and teach it. It's another thing for us to respond to it and so my prayer is that you will use your word in all of our lives today. First few points don't matter if that third point isn't firmly fixed in our hearts. So for some, my prayer is that you will show them grace, open their eyes to their sin and their need for a savior, and may they come to Christ and be saved. For the rest of us who know what that is and are so grateful to you that you would show us that kindness, my prayer is that you would give us more love for one another, especially as conflict enters our lives, and that you would give us courage in the face of the craziness that is happening in our world. Jesus, you are Christ over politics. You are Christ over conflict, and you are the Christ who saves. We pray these things in your wonderful name. Amen.