

America: Over-Ripe for the Gospel, Part 2

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[0 : 00] Thank you for that hymn. That is one of my favorites, and I especially enjoy that third stanza that says that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.

And we can be grateful for that. And he has given us something with which we can combat this strong world, and that is a gospel that is even stronger.

We have a privilege and a responsibility to communicate that message, and that's what we're going to be discussing this morning. And I'm going to ask Gary if he will come and read for us now, or read in, what are we going to do? Read in? Responsive. Responsive reading, okay.

From the First Thessalonian Epistle, if you will use your scripture sheet for that, please. We will get right to that. Thank you. This is the first epistle of Paul to the Apostle to the Thessalonians.

And please read responsively. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers.

[1 : 47] Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father.

Knowing, brethren, we love your action of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

And ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word and the resurrection with the joy of the Holy Ghost.

So that we were on samples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place where faith of God was spread abroad.

So that we need not to speak even in heaven. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.

[3 : 16] And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised on the earth, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain. But even after that he had suffered before, and was shamefully entreated, as ye know, that he was ill of God.

We were bold in our God, who speak unto you, the gospel of God, with much contention. And I want to especially emphasize the word bold and boldness that is going to be reoccurring as we move on through our message.

Because it is that manner in which the gospel is to be delivered. It is not to be doled out timidly, nor tentatively, but boldly, with certainty.

And the only way we can do that is to be absolutely certain of our ground, that on which we speak. And that is going to be the basic thrust of what we will be discussing this morning.

- [4 : 33] Our message title has to do with the over-ripeness of America. And we have likened it to the basket of summer fruit that Amos identified in the vision that God provided for him.
- The basket of summer fruit simply indicated one thing, and that is ripeness. The nation to which Amos was called was the northern ten tribes, and they were as ripe in fruit.
- They were ripe for judgment. The United States of America is akin to ancient Israel.
- We, too, are like a basket of summer fruit. We are ripe for judgment. And if judgment is what is deserved, and Paul made it very clear when he talked about where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.
- Well, folks, we are abounding in sin. I don't think there could be any serious doubt about that. The nation is awash in evil, and there is nothing else we can call it.
- [5 : 53] That means that there are only one of two things in store for this great nation. And one is judgment. And that is surely coming unless there is a national repentance.
- But if there is, then grace can abound. Because where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. And God knows we are up to our eyeballs in sin.
- We need a massive injection of the grace of God. There is only one way that that can come about. And that is through the proclamation of the gospel.
- We have been provided with news that is absolutely stunning in its implications. And yet, we must confess, we have been negligent in dispensing this good news.
- We have been withholding it, largely because we know full well the culture in which we live today is not that all appreciative of what the Christian message has to communicate.
- [7 : 03] In fact, most of them will rise up and call us judgmental. We are admonished in Scripture to have nothing to do with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, expose them, denounce them.
- And how can you do that other than addressing the issue of sin? But who wants to hear that? Besides, many think that they are guilty of faults and mistakes and poor judgment, but they don't own any of those sin things.
- Well, the truth of the matter is, we all do, don't we? Some of us are in denial about it, but we all do, because the Scriptures make it quite clear that all have sinned, all have missed the mark, all have fallen short of God's standard.
- And because of that, we are ripe for judgment. We are a nation that is ripe for judgment. Has our nation ever been at such a place where grace is so desperately needed as now?
- If the amount of evil and wickedness is that which, when maxed out, calls for and desperately needs the grace of God, we are here.
- [8 : 24] And as we read the prophets, and I am among those who take this position, we must understand that God is speaking to the nation of Israel or to the nation of Judah.
- And I would not attempt to plug America in there and make that mean America. But there is a thing called application.
- And the application of a passage of Scripture can be far different from the interpretation of it. The interpretation is, as the text says, it is directed to Israel.
- But the application can be applied to any nation, including us. And I would remind you that God raised up the prophet Jonah to go to that wicked city Nineveh.
- And they certainly were not Jewish. They were not Israel. They were what we would call pagan idolaters. And yet, the message that God gave to Jonah to give to them was that the judgment of God is going to fall if you do not repent.

[9 : 25] That was some 700 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. And the message that Jonah is delivering to the nation of Nineveh or the city of Nineveh is the same nation, that same message that I am delivering to you today, and that pastors like myself throughout this land ought to be delivering to their congregations.

And that is, I'm not putting any timetable on it, so you can relax. I'm not saying 40 days and America shall be overthrown, but I'm telling you this.

America is going to be overthrown. We are going to be judged. We are going to be judged for our evil as a nation. There is no country on the face of this earth that has been benefited and blessed like the United States of America.

America. And the thing that makes us most accountable is the fact that we have grossly erred and strayed from the principles of our founding fathers.

And they base those principles upon the Judeo-Christian ethic found in the scriptures. We have abandoned that. It's gone. I do not know that it will ever come back.

[10 : 40] But if it doesn't, we are ripe for judgment, and it is coming. It may not be in my lifetime. It may not be in your lifetime. But I'm not whistling Dixie.

It's coming. The only way it can be averted is where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. And how is that grace to get out there so it can abound?

It is only through the dissemination of those who have that message, who have that gospel, who have that hope, who have those standards, to communicate it to others.

But it's really difficult to do, especially when we know they're not eager to hear it. As I pointed out in our previous message, the message of Christianity in general has never been less welcome than it is in this nation right now.

And perhaps the great reason for that is because, along with our message, there comes an inescapable, undeniable concept of the exclusivity of Jesus Christ.

[11 : 55] And that's the problem. Right there. That's the problem. You can go out in the public marketplace and get away with, at least you can get away with it right now, maybe in most places, but not in all places.

And you can talk about God in nice, general, generic terms. And you might raise a few eyebrows, but mostly you'll be tolerated.

But the moment you reduce that God to the person of Jesus Christ, the opposition is going to come. And they don't understand it and they don't know it.

But it is because what is tied to the person of Jesus Christ is the cross. And people find the cross offensive.

The apostle made it quite clear when he addressed the Galatians in chapter 5. He said, you know, if I would just add something of human works, of something of human merit to the gospel, I could put it over much easier.

[13 : 02] But I can't do that. If I were to, for instance, say, yes, salvation is by grace, but you have to be circumcised. You know what that would do?

That would take the pressure off. Because people would then say, ah, there's something I can do. I can contribute to my salvation. But Paul said, if I were to preach circumcision and make that a necessity or anything else, baptism, church membership, you name it, just add something that man can do.

If I do that, then the offense of the cross ceases, takes the pressure off. Because then you give man something to do.

And he wants to have a part in providing for his own redemption. But there is no part that you can play. Someone has said, what do I have to do in order to become a Christian?

You don't have to do anything. It's already been done. There's nothing for you to do but believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. But that's too easy. Well, it is easy.

[14 : 13] And as I've said, God did the very most that he could do so that he could require from you the very least that you could do, which is to just believe.

And for someone who says that's too easy, I say God has already done the hard part. And that he did through his son, the Lord Jesus. Ancient Nineveh is described in the first chapter of Jonah when a curious expression is used.

It says, arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their wickedness has come up before me.

Interesting expression. Their wickedness has come up before me. Well, where was it before? Wasn't it there?

Of course it was. But it was more in the closet. Now it's out in the open. It is an effrontery to the Almighty. It is open and unashamed.

[15 : 24] Is ours any different? Up before me? It was laying low underground before in the closet.

But it isn't in the closet now. There used to be an expression years ago about those who were of the homosexual persuasion.

And they were spoken of as being in the closet. That is, they were secret homosexuals.

It's no secret anymore. Now it is flaunted. Now it is demanding parity. Now it is not only demanding acceptance.

It is demanding affirmation. And if you will not affirm homosexuality by saying, No, no. Nothing abnormal about it.

[16 : 24] It's perfectly normal. It is just as acceptable as heterosexuality. That's the demand. Nothing in the closet about it.

It's come up before God. It's come up before us. It's come up before everybody. And it is flaunted. It is boasted about. Now, homosexuals enter into what is called marriage.

The abandonment of moral absolutes provided by a moral law giver paves the way for the re-evaluation of human life itself, which finds its way into abortion on demand for the homosexuality, that finds its way into same-sex marriage, that finds its way into sexual encounters outside of marriage, that finds its way into whatever inclination one has about pursuing whatever sexual activity one wants, including human trafficking.

What's wrong with that? Nothing. Nothing's wrong with that. Nothing's wrong with that if you are willing to abandon absolute morality.

As Dostoevsky said in *Brothers Karamazov*, if there is no God, all things are permitted. You have no right to say human trafficking is evil.

[18 : 10] What do you mean it's evil? If it isn't evil in the eyes of those who are doing it, it's their business and not yours. After all, morality is determined by the person who holds the position, whatever it may be.

And so long as there is no moral north star by which everything is gauged and evaluated, it's to each his own. And no one has the right to impose their view or say anybody is wrong about anything.

And when the Christian comes along and says, we see this is evil. And by the way, there is a law against that.

You know, our authorities are intent on putting an end to or interrupting or as much as they can, this thing of human trafficking, innocent people, boys and girls, men and women taken captive to serve as somebody's sexual slave.

And we see that as wrong. And we prosecute it as wrong. And it is against the law. It is illegal. Have you ever thought about the things in this country that used to be illegal, but aren't anymore?

[19 : 28] What happened? What's going on here? If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do? How can the righteous flourish?

How can the righteous function? How can you operate in a place where the very foundations are torn away and the superstructure is crumbling right before our very eyes?

Human trafficking has to be one of the greatest evils that has ever been perpetrated. And it is going on right under our nose.

I'm not a betting man, but I would be willing to bet the farm that there are people on Interstate 75 right now transporting men, women, boys, girls for illegal sexual trafficking.

Right now, as we speak, it is that prolific. It's everywhere. If you don't believe me, just talk to the law enforcement people. They can't keep up with it. It's overwhelming.

[20 : 31] And that, in addition to the other responsibilities they have. So there are laws against that. But I ask you again, in order to be consistent, where do these laws come from?

Who made them? How did they arrive at human trafficking being wrong? And where are the lines to be drawn? They, our forefathers, our drafters of the U.S. Constitution, and other laws, base their lawmaking upon the standards set forth in the Bible.

These, these standards are what we, as Americans, have been progressively abandoning. There was a time when human life was valued and considered precious and priceless and to be protected at whatever stage of development or birth.

Those days are gone. Our Supreme Court, think of this, our supposedly most brilliant jurisprudence in the nation has said that a woman has a constitutional right to terminate the life of the baby that is in her womb.

Now, we have warned you in time past and so we say again that man reasons with a warped and a flawed intellect and that goes for Supreme Court justices also.

[22 : 10] It is a disease that afflicts all of us. We all, in our natural reasoning, our own human consideration, we exercise a flawed logic.

That's why we desperately need the scriptures to straighten out our thinking because mankind can come up with some really bizarre ideas and we're up to our eyeballs in them right now.

The gospel. Would you look at Romans chapter 1 please and verse 1? Just a moment. Got some other scripture for you. This is such powerful stuff.

I've been exercised with this stuff. I just can hardly sleep beyond 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning. I wake up with it. I'm thinking of it. I'm making mental notes. I get up and jot things down so I won't forget them and this thing is getting a hold of me more and more.

Maybe it's in my old age. I don't know but I sometimes get the feeling that Marv you're coming up on 84 years of age. It's about time you get with it. This is the feeling I've been struggling with.

[23 : 28] Romans chapter 1. Paul bondservant of Christ Jesus called as an apostle set apart for the good news of God.

That's the gospel. That's what it means. Good news. Set apart for the good news the gospel of God and that good news consists of what he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures concerning his son who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh who was declared the son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead according to the spirit of holiness Jesus Christ our Lord through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for his name's sake among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.

This gospel is what we have. It meets the issue of moral relativity head on by declaring that there is a moral law giver who established boundaries for behavior of humans made in his likeness and image.

This means a fixed standard for moral issues is in place. God has been in place from Genesis chapter 1 as humanity's north star.

He has provided humanity with a code of behavior because he values the lives of those he has created. And that is a very important point to understand and most people who are not believers do not understand it.

[25 : 08] Sad to say even some Christians don't understand it. And they think that the Christian life and the salvation and that the grace of God that we preach is designed to restrict people and confine people and to keep you from having a good time.

And quite the contrary. We have this gospel to proclaim because it is a demonstration of God's love and care for his people and the requirements that he sets forth whether you believe it or not are for your own good and protection.

Because God loves you and he has set parameters for you to remain within. And if you get outside of those parameters there is danger and severe consequences.

What parent worthy of the name parent doesn't allow their child two or three years old out in the backyard to play without some kind of confinement?

Do you have a fenced in yard? Or do you just throw them out there and say have at it wander off do what you please? No, no. The child finds safety and security in parameters and God has established parameters for human behavior.

[26 : 28] He loves you. He wants to protect you. But how many of us resent that protection and insist on our freedom, our liberty to our dismay and often to our destruction?

God isn't interested in raining on your parade. God isn't a bully who wants to prevent you from having a good time. God loves you and has taken all kinds of measures to protect you.

That's what needs to be kept in mind. I have a series of questions I want to propose to you. But before we do I want to read if you will follow along on the reverse side of what we read earlier from Thessalonians.

This is from Acts chapter 4. And I want to emphasize this idea of boldness. We have a message. We have the panacea. We have the antidote.

But we are so timid about giving it out. And largely because we suspect it may not be well received. But do you know has the truth of God ever been well received?

[27 : 37] No. Jesus said to the religious establishment of his day which which of the prophets did not your forefathers persecute?

And why did they persecute them? Why did they imprison them? Why did they kill them? Why did they try to shut them up? Simply because they spoke the truth.

That's it. That's the whole thing. They just spoke the truth. It was what people did not want to hear. It made them uncomfortable. It offended them. Sometimes, many times, people have to get mad before they get saved.

A lot of times they have to be turned off before they can be turned on. And this is a message that we have to give. And it is not an e... It is a message that we should find joyfully to give.

It is a message that we should eagerly give. But we tend to withhold because we're afraid of what the response will be. Keith, I think you have a CD back there.

[28 : 43] Is it? Christianity Clarified 17. It's right there someplace, right in front of you. 17? 18?

Put that on, would you? Let's do track 17. It's only about three minutes long. This was made a couple of years ago. It will be released on 20 radio stations by probably December of this year.

Put on track 17. Let's listen to that a moment. 17.

The Bad and Good News of the Gospel There's no question as to the meaning of the word gospel found throughout the New Testament. It means good news.

Usually, it is found in the context of telling this good news to others. The Apostle Paul expresses it in 1 Corinthians 15 when he says, Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

[29 : 59] Christ died sounds like bad news. Anybody dying sounds like bad news, and especially Christ dying. Yet, it was his dying and the reason for his dying that makes the good news good.

In reality, and the way it all plays out is, the good news is good and real because the bad news is bad and just as real.

The bad news is connected to our sin and is what prompted the need for the death of Christ. Can we see how these are a complete package?

One is meaningless without the other. We really can't provide a reason for the good news until we see the reality and effect of the bad news first.

And they need to be thought of in that order. First, the bad news, then the good news. If we omit the bad news of our sin, we rob the good news of its reason for being.

[31 : 07] If we reverse them, it's like taking medicine before you have an illness that would require it. Perhaps in large part, our problem is our reluctance or unwillingness to tell people about sin.

Well, who wants to hear that? Even if we know it to be true in our heart of hearts, we still don't want to tell people that.

It's mighty uncomfortable. We risk offending them, turning them off, or just making them plain mad. But most people get mad before they get saved.

And what makes them mad is that which offends them. Telling the truth about the bad news cost many of the biblical prophets their life because people in their audience didn't want to hear it.

they still don't. Nothing has changed. They persecuted those they didn't kill. They killed John the Baptist. They killed Christ.

[32 : 16] They killed Stephen. All for the same reason. They all told people the truth. And it made them angry. When people couldn't get at the source of the message, which of course was God, they did the next best thing in their minds.

they killed the messenger. Do you see why we are reluctant to give people the bad news? It's not likely to cost us our life, but we may endure criticism, sneers, angry looks, folks talking about our offensive judgmentalism behind your back.

So be of good cheer. You're in great company. Get on with it. Bad news and good. And in that order, thank you.

That was made a couple of years ago and I'm sorry to say that nothing has changed. That's the way it is. And I'd ask you to turn before I have some questions that I want to submit to you.

Ask you to turn to Ephesians if you would please. Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians chapter 5. Ephesians Be reminded please that the apostle here is talking to Gentiles, not Jews.

[33 : 44] He is talking to Gentiles who previously were pagans, but they responded to the gospel that Paul preached when he was there. And he is now writing this letter back to them and reminding them, if you want to, we won't look at chapter 2, but in chapter 2 he reminds them of their previous position being apart from Christ.

And in verse 3, we'll just jump in here. He says, Do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you as is proper among saints.

It is, saints are operating and functioning on a different standard. There must be no filthiness and silly talk or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.

For this you know with certainty that no immoral or impure person or covetous man who is an idolater has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

And then he could also add, And such were some of you before you came to faith. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

[34 : 54] Now look at verse 6 again. Because of these things, these immoralities mentioned, the wrath of God comes. And the only thing that can forestall the wrath of God is the grace of God in the gospel.

But because God loves people and does not want to subject them to his wrath, he has provided for them his grace. And his grace is that which empowers and forgives and sustains and gives everything that a human heart could possibly need.

But it's contained in that gospel. It begins with that gospel. And if the gospel is not imparted and imbibed by the individual, then the result, of course, is not there.

Therefore, do not be partakers with them, for you were formerly darkness. That's what you used to be. Remember? Before Christ came in, that was your life.

But now, but now you are light in the Lord. walk as children of light. And all Paul is saying is, be what you are.

[35 : 59] Be what you are. For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

And, here's a verse that keeps me awake at night. Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead, even expose them.

how do you do that? Very carefully. Hmm. At least, that seems to be the consensus among Christians.

Very carefully. In fact, what we need to do is devise some way of communicating the truth of the gospel to unsaved people without offending them or upsetting them.

We need some slick way of doing it so we can penetrate them with the truth and they won't even know they've been stuck.

[37 : 14] How can we do that? You can't! Give it up! Forget it! It can't be done. Not only that, but we aren't even supposed to try.

We are to deliver this message with boldness. Look at this sheet, if you would, from Acts chapter 4. This is in connection with the healing of that man who was lame at the gate.

Peter and John, silver and gold, have I none such as I have. In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk. And this guy who had been a cripple, hadn't walked a day in his life from the time he was born, 38 years, 40 years he'd been like that.

And he gets up and starts jumping up and down and everybody gathers a crown. And they ask and they set them in their midst, Peter and John, and they say, by what power or by what name have you done this? And Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost.

That's tantamount to saying, Peter, who is of a mindset that he has no better sense than to speak the truth, filled with the Holy Ghost, said, you rulers of the people and elders of Israel.

[38 : 29] Now listen, he's talking to the intelligentsia. He's talking to the shakers and movers. He's not addressing a bunch of nobodies. He's talking to people who are in power.

This is truth to power. And who are these guys, Peter and John? They're a couple of unemployed fishermen. If this day, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole?

Well, let me tell you. Be it known unto you all and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him, doth this man stand here before you whole.

This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which has become the head of the corner. This is a quote from Isaiah 28.

Neither, oh, here's that exclusivity brimming, neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.

[39 : 42] And verse 13, do you see the word boldness there is highlighted? When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, what in the world gave these guys that moxie?

Well, it was being filled with the Spirit of God, and in addition to that, it was simply because they knew what they knew, and they could not deny it.

They knew what they had seen with their own eyes, the risen Lord, and they were not about to. Peter says, hey, I've been down this road before. Three times I said, I don't even know him, but I'm not saying that anymore.

I not only know him, but he's my Lord, and he is the only way to salvation. They saw the boldness of Peter and John. And they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men.

I love that. You know what that means? That means there's opportunity for us all. I mean, these are ignorant men. These are unlearned men.

[40 : 49] No PhDs here. And ignorant men, they marveled, and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

What a compliment. Does anybody know that you have been with Jesus by what you say to them? Beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against this.

But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves. Hey, come on, fellas. Let's have a little huddle. We've got to talk about this.

So they pulled these guys out from the crowd, this hoi polloi, shakers and movers. They put their heads together and they say, what are we going to do with these guys?

For that indeed, a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem.

[41 : 53] Oh, the evidence is out there in spades. The witnesses are stacked up. There's no way we can deny.

You know the impression that one gets in reading this is if there were some way they could deny it, they would. They want to, but they can't.

The evidence is so overwhelming. There's no way that they can say, ah, it didn't happen. No, no. Everybody knows better. Manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem and we cannot deny it.

And that it spread no further among the people that have straightly threatened them, shut them up, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. There's no room for Jesus on this campus.

[43 : 01] But Peter and John answered and said unto them, well, whether it be right in the sight of God to listen to you more than unto God, that's something you'll have to be the judge of. All we know is this.

We don't have any choice but speaking to things which we have seen and heard. There's just no way we can be silent. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them because of the people.

For all men glorified God for that which was done. And look across the page, if you will, at verse 29. They prayed as a result of the treatment they received.

And they prayed and in verse 29 they said, And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word.

Well, now, wait a minute. Isn't that the very thing that got you in trouble to start with? Your boldness? Your big mouths? Your refusal to shut up?

[44 : 00] Isn't that what caused you all these problems? Yep. And you're coming back for more? Yep. Why? Can't help it. We know too much. And we know what we know.

And we know what the need is. And we know what the solution is. And we care too much to dummy up. That's what they're saying.

You realize what the real motivation of this is? Walking into a furnace of fire like this, of opposition and ridicule and rejection and threats and everything.

Why would any normal person do that? Because you care that much. You're willing to put your own life and your own reputation at stake because you care for these people who couldn't care less and who reject you for telling them what you're telling them.

What's wrong with you? Do you have a death wish or something? I wish there were some way we could all get infected with this kind of caring so that by life or by death, Jesus Christ should be magnified in my life.

[45 : 26] Can we care that much? Can we care that way? Or, oh, I have to be careful. I have too many responsibilities to fulfill.

I have to. That's tentativeness. That's backpedaling. That's selling out.

That's what it is. It's selling out. We don't want to pay the price. We don't want people giving us that strange, quirky look as if to say, yeah, what planet are you from?

Or you really sound judgmental. Are you one of those Bible thumpers? Who wants that kind of criticism?

Who wants to be labeled like that? We want to be thought of as suave and cool. dignified and controlled and, you know, go along to get along.

[46 : 41] And all the while, the world around us is perishing. And too many of us just don't give a damn, do we?

Verse 27. Barnabas. I love this. And by the way, I'm running a little bit over. If anybody's on a tight schedule, if you're in a hurry to get with the lunch bunch, excuse yourself and feel free to leave.

No one will think you're rude. We'll just think you've got a medical condition that you have to address. Okay. When Saul came to Jerusalem, he asked, say, to join himself to the disciples. He wanted to.

Saul was now. Saul of Tarsus was now one of the boys. He's on the other side now. And he thought, boy, it'd be great to catch up with those other Christians and learn from them and tell them what's happened to me.

It says he attempted to join himself to the disciples, but they were all afraid of him. They didn't trust him. They believed not that he was a disciple.

[47 : 51] Maybe he's a mole. Maybe he's a plant. He just planted here to get all these Christians together so they can have one big Christian roundup and catch us all at once. Ah.

But Barnabas. I love this guy, Barnabas. He's called the son of consolation, the son of encouragement. That means that Barnabas apparently was the only guy who had any faith or confidence in the reality of Saul's conversion.

And I can just see old Barnabas coming alongside Saul of Tarsus, putting his arm around him and saying, tell me, brother, how did it go? How did you come to know the Lord? And I think Barnabas believed every word he said.

Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and he declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way and that he had spoken to him and how he, that is Saul, had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Ooh. Isn't this the same guy whose disciples he tried to destroy? Yep. Same one.

[49 : 06] What about this gospel? Does it have that kind of power? It certainly does. And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Grecians, but they appreciated the message so much they stood in line to make a confession of faith.

Well, he went about to slay him. When you can't stand the message, kill the messenger. Hmm. Which, when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, sent him forth to Tarsus.

What they were saying was, hey, we've got to get this guy out of here. They're going to kill him. We've got to, we've got to ship him out because it's too hot here now. I've got some questions that I want to share.

I'm not going to keep you, but I want to give you the questions so you can be thinking about them because I want you to answer them next week. Okay? Here is the question.

Which is to be the foundation of one's worldview? Is our worldview, which is the way we view ourselves and the world, is it to be established by and as a matter of our faith?

[50 : 26] Then our politics develops out of our faith or moral belief system? Or is our worldview to be established by and as a matter of our political persuasion?

In other words, does our faith govern our politics or does our politics govern our faith? Can these be completely separated?

Should they? Does being a Christian have any bearing on where our political convictions lie or should it? Is one to be the horse and another the cart and which is which?

And if we believe what we say we do, how can we not be bold in proclaiming it? If we really believe this stuff about Christ being the only way, about God loving you and Christ being the sacrifice for our sins, if we really believe that, what else is there to be but bold in proclaiming it?

And by the way, speaking bold means speaking, I look the word up, in the Greek and in the English, it means to be forthright. It means to be open.

[51 : 48] It means to be uncluttered. It means to speak plainly and clear. This is what Paul was saying, what he meant when he says, when I was among you, he said, I used great plainness of speech.

I spelled it out. I didn't couch the truth in some esoteric hard to figure out terms so people were wondering, what is he really saying?

They didn't have any doubt as to what I was saying. That's making it clear. Being blunt. Being forthright. Now, you don't have to do that in an angry or nasty manner, but you can do it in a convicting manner that gives the impression because the impression ought to be given that you know what you're talking about.

You know who you are, what you are, and what you were before Christ came into your life, and that's all you're doing is sharing that gospel, that good news. If we believe about the lost, what we say we do, how can we not be bold in proclaiming it?

How many of you walking down the street two o'clock in the morning, don't ask me what you're doing out at two o'clock in the morning, your wife is pregnant and she's having a craving and you've got to go out and get, you know, whatever that is.

[53 : 16] And you walk by a house that's on fire. Good grief, the flames are leaping out of the attic. And you stand there and you say, hmm, it appears to me that these people may be in danger.

I shall walk up the sidewalk and knock on the front door. I hope I'm not disturbing them.

They may become angry because I'm knocking on their door at two o'clock in the morning. What do you do? You start screaming. You're yelling, fire, fire, someone call 911.

And you try to wake the neighbors and you try to wake those people. And are you afraid somebody's going to say, what's that crazy guy out there doing? Not hardly.

Somebody's going to be profoundly grateful because you're really raising a ruckus. Well, it's a ruckus that deserves to be raised. But these people, listen, this is only for this life.

[54 : 27] We're talking about an eternity. We're talking about people's lives being in jeopardy for eternity. And we've got an antidote. We've got the answer.

We not only have the answer, we have the only answer. And we are timid with it and backward with it and apologetic for it. Because we're scared to death of what somebody will think of us for bringing it to their attention.

And we don't want the discomfort. May God help our miserable souls. And I'm talking about mine as well as yours.

I've passed as many opportunities to share the gospel as you have. And I won't mind telling you I'm not proud of it. so be comforted when I point my finger at you I'm pointing three of them back at me.

If we believe what we say we do about what the gospel has done for us how can we not be bold to proclaim it? If we believe what we say we do about the condition and destiny of the lost how can we not be bold in proclaiming it?

[55 : 54] These are questions that are on my heart and mind right now. But if you think I'm willing to bear them alone you're sadly mistaken because as your pastor I just dumped them on you.

And you can carry them along with me because that's what it's all about. Let me ask you this question. How much difficulty do liberals or radicals have in being bold?

And they don't have anything to say. But they say it with big mouths and a lot of conviction. Twelve years! Twelve years the planet's got and then it's all going to be burned up.

It's all coming to an end. We are toast in twelve years. And you know they get on television and they say that without cracking a smile. They say that with great sobriety, great earnestness, great conviction.

And the experts sit back and say, that's really powerful. That's something we really need. Are they not sold on the message that they wish to have it imposed on everyone by law if they can?

[57 : 10] They lobby, they march, they demonstrate, and they demand. And we just kind of shake our heads in disgust for proclaiming something that is so unscientific and so disproven and so unbelievable that our precious gospel can go begging for an expression while that kind of nonsense is given the front page.

global warmers have no problem in being bold in their dire warnings. All social scientists and so-called experts who are opposed by other experts have but a temporal cause to champion.

We have an eternal cause. Should not our boldness match or even excel theirs by virtue of the permanent consequences and the validity of the message that we have?

Do we really believe what we say we do about this gospel of God? is it reflected in what we do in order to proclaim it?

I think when push comes to shove we need to recognize that God's long suffering may be very close to coming to an end.

[58 : 37] I'm not a prophet. I'm not making any predictions. I'm just saying God has his limitations. He had them for Nineveh and he sent Jonah. And he may very well have them for the good old U.S.

of A. Because while we have a glorious, glorious history for which we can be extremely proud and grateful, we have abandoned so very much more than our forefathers ever thought would be possible.

We've just walked away from what many of them fought and died for. And we've said it's not that important. But it really is.

All of this is to be motivated by our love. And we are we are put in a position to decide whether or not this thing called biblical Christianity really has the answers and is really worth proclaiming.

and what people think of you or say of you or ridicule you is completely incidental. Doesn't mean a thing.

[60 : 09] And besides, if these same people who ridicule or criticize or complain, if one day they do come to faith, it may very well be because of the seed that you planted that they resented.

and you may have the joy one day of them looking you up and saying, you may not have heard this, but because of what you said, whenever it was, got me to thinking.

And listen, we are not responsible for converting anyone. we are only responsible for telling them. Our shoulders aren't big enough to be responsible for people's conversions.

And we're not responsible for answering all the questions and objections. Many of them can ask questions we don't have the answers to. And you know what you should tell them when they ask questions that you can't answer? You say, gee, I don't know, I don't have an answer to that.

But I'll tell you what, I'll do my best to find an answer and I'll get back to you. You don't have to know all the answers because you don't know all the answers. Is this thing, does this really matter?

[61 : 26] Is this really serious? Or is Marv just making a big case out of this? Well, that's something that each of us will have to answer for ourselves.

But I know one thing. I'm going to make some changes in my life. starting now. And I'm not interested in trying to lay guilt trips on anyone.

If you don't want to disseminate the gospel, if your heart is not in it, if your will is not bent to this, forget it. Just forget it.

Just go on your way. Mind your own business. If this has any merit, I tell you, you know what's the toughest thing about preaching this stuff?

Toughest thing about preaching this stuff is that now I'm under obligation to do it. Or you can just put me down as a grade A hypocrite.

[62 : 47] I don't know if it will make any difference in you or not. But it sure will in me. And it has. Think about those questions, if you would, please.

I've got more questions for you next week. If you got the nerve to show up. Let us pray. Our Father, this is a really serious business.

And so often we as believers just take for granted day in and day out the salvation that we enjoy and that we are so grateful for.

And we just lose sight of the fact that there was a time when we were in that pit from which we have been dug. And we were just like those to whom we are now called to go.

And we are so glad that someone came to us. Someone loved us enough to tell us the truth. May we go and do likewise in your power with the love of Christ that compels us in his name.

[64 : 00] Amen. Amen.