

## I. Introduction

- A. You are hearing my words today, because somewhere, somehow, somebody told you about a person named Jesus Christ. You heard of his birth, his life, his teachings, and his death. You heard of his resurrection and ascension to glory. You heard of his summons to all the world, Come unto me and I will give you rest. And you are still considering his claims—or else you wouldn't be here—or you have actually made up your mind and believed in him.
- B. And when you believed, in that very moment, everything changed. God saved you, forgave you, washed you, joined you to Jesus, adopted you, secured you forever, justified you, redeemed you, liberated you, regenerated you, indwelt you, renamed you, renewed you, empowered you, blessed you, and predestined you for heaven, where he will glorify you, unveil you, honor you, embrace you, dignify you, reward you and enjoy you forever and ever.
- C. Until that day, he is sanctifying you, empowering you, motivating you, purifying you, perfecting you, standing beside you, with you, in you, guiding you, protecting you, maturing you, growing you, and in all the best ways, using you for purposes far beyond yourself.
  - 1. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)*
- D. Salvation is a really big deal, don't you think?
- E. It is more all-encompassing than most Christians realize.
- F. And for you, it all started because somewhere, somehow, somebody told you about the Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King named Jesus. Where would you be if you didn't have Jesus?
- G. Subtract Jesus from your life and what kind of person would you be today. I've seen you. You're pretty rough with Jesus. It's hard to imagine you without him. Same for me.
- H. Aren't you thankful for the people who told you about Christ? For the people who taught you, answered your questions, spent time with you, and prayed for you? Thank God for them.
- I. There is that great unbroken chain of people who have delivered the life-saving antidote of the gospel in thousands and millions of conversations across the millennia.

## II. The Dog

- A. A man woke up one morning to find a sick old dog in his backyard. The poor thing was just skin and bones, shivering in the cold air. He brought the dog in and fed him. Warmed him by the fireplace. Talked to him and comforted him. Day after day, he took care of the dog, and slowly that old mongrel put on weight, and the life came back into his eyes.
- B. The man grew fond of the dog, and the dog grew fond of him. They grew a bond, and an affection... and the dog was truly man's best friend.
- C. One day, the man woke up, and the dog was gone. At first, he was heartbroken. But then he was angry. He thought This is the thanks I get after all I've done for you? Such an ingrate. I should have never taken you in.
- D. So the man went through his day, heartbroken that his canine friend was gone and angry at the ingratitude.
- E. But that night, as he was getting ready for bed, the man's heart skipped a beat when he heard a scratch at the door.
- F. He debated on whether to answer. Maybe he should teach the dog a lesson. Finally, his soft heart got the better of him.
- G. He swung upon the door, and sure enough, there was his old friend, bright eyed and bushy tailed, that tail wagging so hard he almost turned himself inside out. But there was something else too.
- H. His dog had brought another dog with him. The poor thing was just skin and bones, shivering in the cold air. He brought him in and fed him, and warmed him by the fireplace.
  - 1. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)*
- I. Evangelism is one dog telling another dog where to find comfort forever.

## III. Comfort

- A. My message today is part three in our series Comfort from Above. If you have Jesus Christ, you have a place to turn that the world can never know. You have an omnipotent, omnipresent, compassionate, supernatural, and transcendent source of comfort and peace far beyond the reach of the ragings of earth and the powers of hell. In part one of this series, we considered The God of Comfort. In part two, we considered The Promise of Comfort. And today, in Part Three, please think with me about
  - a) **The Mission of Comfort.**
- B. This great unbroken chain of people who have delivered the life-saving antidote of the gospel in thousands and millions of conversations across the millennia... each link in that chain, each person, was at one point needy and desperate, and broken, and lost. We all were. We all were sinners in need of a Savior. And thank God, we found that Savior because he found us.
- C. Here's the main thing I want to get across today. We are not to be the final link in the chain. None of us. Not me. Not you.
- D. Yes, God comforted us. But that comfort was never meant to stop with us.
- E. It is now our Mission to comfort those who are in any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
- F. God intends you to join the great cloud of witnesses to the saving, delivering, comforting power of the gospel of the grace of God.
- G. The comfort of the gospel sets you on a mission for the rest of your life. Go get that scrawny looking, spiritually starving, flea-infested soul over there, and lead them to a lavish feast of grace.
- H. They need that, but you need it too because your own comfort will not be finished until you've rounded out the circle of evangelism.

## IV. Evangelism is Opposed

- A. In our culture today, there is a war today on evangelism. But it is indirect.

- B. They are not yet saying; you cannot preach Christ. But they are saying you can't pray. You can't carry your Bible, you can't speak a word for Christ or for truth.
- C. Evangelism today is broken. It is broken on purpose. It is broken by the enemy of every unsaved soul—by the devil himself.
- D. Satan hates evangelism.
  - 1. Why is our culture so ticked off by Christians who share their faith? Because Satan hates evangelism.
  - 2. Why are students graded down when they use their God-given free speech to express a Christian worldview? Because Satan hates evangelism.
  - 3. Why are speakers canceled and sometimes mobbed because they hold to biblical standards of morality? Because Satan hates evangelism, and he is bullying believers into silence.
- E. The devil hates the gospel. Every person who gets saved reduces by one the population of hell, and that makes Satan—and his minions—spitting mad.
- F. This is the war we are in. It is the war that Christians who actually care cannot avoid.
- G. One of my favorite old-time preachers said,
  - 1. **"It is urgently needful that the Christian people of our charge should come to understand that they are not a company of weaklings, to be babied, fed by hand, nannied, nursed, and comforted, the minister being the head physician and nurse – but a garrison in an enemy's country, every soul of which should have some post of duty, at which he should be prepared to make any sacrifice rather than quit it."** -F. B. Meyer
- H. It can be hard to accept this. We don't want to be fighting all the time. We don't want to come across as mean-spirited or unkind. We don't want to be known for what we're against. We don't want to be harping on sexual behaviors or seen as being narrow-minded or intolerant. We don't want to be called haters.
- I. So there is a growing number of Christians who want to keep truth flexible. They say that we can't be certain. We can't be sure. They are against the uncompromising claims of Christianity.
- J. The idea that the truths we believe should be kept flexible and the claim that they are not all that certain and sure is attractive to some people... especially to younger generations of Christianity.
- K. But if we are going to be faithful to Jesus, we have to listen to what he says about eternal life.
  - 1. *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."* (Matthew 7:13-14)
- L. There's nothing flexible about salvation. There's nothing flexible about eternal life.
- M. There is no compromise here. There can't be.
- N. Evangelism is not optional. Getting people saved is not optional. It is the greatest of all our mission.
- V. Marching Orders
  - A. Toward the end of his life, the great Apostle Paul went on trial before the Roman ruler of Palestine.
  - B. Paul was on trial for his life—a time when we might choose our words carefully.
  - C. Paul shares the testimony. He tells how he persecuted Christians. He tells then of his shocking realization that this Jesus Christ, whom he persecuted, was Lord of All, the unrivaled Master and Commander of the universe.
  - D. Then Paul makes a remarkable statement, summing up in a single verse, a clearly articulated MISSION STATEMENT for his entire ministry and life. God was sending him to the nations—
    - 1. *...to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus. (Acts 26:18)*
  - E. Paul envisioned the nations of the world as caught in the grip of Satan. He visited city after city, village after village. In every case, the situation was clear. The people he met in the marketplace and malls, the people he debated in schools and homes, the people he taught in synagogues and churches, they were—one and all—trapped by Satan.
    - 1. They were demonized. Bewitched. Seduced by the doctrines of demons. Spellbound and Hellbound.
  - F. Compounding the problem was the fact they didn't realize it and when warned about it, denied it.
  - G. This is the story of every community and sports team and workplace and classroom and neighborhood and family gathering represented by every person hearing my voice today.
  - H. The world outside of Christ is under the power of Satan but won't admit it.
  - I. This was everything to Paul. This was the main thing. This was the only thing. Opening blind eyes, and turning hypnotized people from the power of Satan to God.
  - J. The burden of my heart as a pastor is that on the deepest levels, absolutely nothing has changed for us today.
    - 1. The devil is equally cunning.
    - 2. Our neighbors and friends and family—the people we work with and go to school with, and golf with—are equally spellbound and blind.
    - 3. Those who do not know the Lord, no matter how loving and decent and woke and active in the church, are equally in a desperate and urgent need. Every single person who does not know the Lord remains today in a condition of desperate and urgent need to turn from Satan to God.
      - a) And we're supposed to tell them. This is the Mission of Comfort. In the culture today, there is a war on evangelism, but it isn't only in the culture. There's a war on evangelism in the church too.
- VI. War on Evangelism in the Church
  - A. The church is so distracted by tinkering with behaviors and emotions and experiences and so full of pious virtue signaling with good works, social ministries, and social gospel efforts...
    - 1. ...when the only thing that matters is a new heart, and a new creation from an old salvation effected long ago by the blood of Christ.

- B. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to deliver people from the heartbreak, nihilism, despair, violence, hedonism, and all the broken philosophies of a society hellbent on erasing God from their knowledge.
    - 1. If you want to really fix society, get people saved.
  - C. The most cunning schemes of the devil will evaporate into nothingness before the preaching of the Cross of Christ.
  - D. And every single Christian in all the world is called by God to collaborate to make this happen.
  - E. But it's not happening.
- VII. Evangelism is broken.
- A. A study by LifeWay studied churches in America and found how many churches were what they considered evangelistically effective. Seven percent. That number has stayed flat for over twenty years. Ninety-three percent of churches are not evangelistically effective.
  - B. And do you know what the single biggest differentiating factor is? Question: Does your church prioritize evangelism? Churches that say yes tend to be evangelistically effective. Churches that say no are not. It's not a matter of location. It's not a matter of theological depth. It's not a matter of machinery. It's a matter of priority. Is getting lost people saved important to you and to your church or not. Because if it isn't, I'd suggest you change churches, or change pastors, or change something.
  - C. God in heaven is shouting, FIX THIS.
    - 1. I did not save you, bless you, and grow you just for yourself. You're not the last link in the chain.
      - a) Among Southern Baptist Churches, the average is four people saved per church per year.
      - b) Among Christian and Missionary Alliance Churches, the average is two people saved per church per year.
      - c) The best one I found is the Evangelical Free Church of America, which sees 17 people saved per church per year...
  - D. Oh, did I tell you that 19 junior high students prayed to receive Jesus Christ this past Wednesday night? That 170 kids were there. Did I tell you that four Sundays ago, 56 men and women prayed to receive Jesus Christ right here in our church? Did I tell you that in our men's Alpha Christians Bible study, ten men prayed to receive Jesus Christ? Did I tell you that during COVID lockdowns, we had over 230 people saved? Did I tell you that over 517 people professed Christ in the last year? Did I tell you that last week, when we asked you to write down on a card the name of a friend who isn't saved so we could pray for them and ask God to save them this Easter... did I tell you that we provided 800 cards, and ran out, so we had to make some more?
    - 1. I can't wait to see what happens this Easter Sunday. By the way, it's not too late. We have more cards. We'll pray for your friend to be saved.
  - E. I am not boasting of us. I am not boasting of myself. My boast is in Christ. He is the Great Attractor. We're not better than anyone else. We're not smarter. We're not more spiritual or magical or mystical or wise or anything.
  - F. It's not me. It's not us. It's the gospel. The gospel is the power of God. You just have to be dumb enough to preach the gospel and invite people to be saved. You just have to care enough to make evangelism a priority.
    - 1. Not discipleship. Evangelism must be the priority. Not church planting. Evangelism must be the priority. Not fellowship, evangelism must be the priority. Not worship, evangelism must be the priority. Not supernatural ministry, evangelism must be the priority.
      - a) The greatest miracle God ever does is save a soul. And he's still doing it today. That is the only sign and wonder worth pursuing. Any church that simply makes evangelism a priority begins to see lost people come to Christ.
- G. The Priority of Evangelism
- 1. **The evangelistic priority follows from a right doctrine of REVELATION.**
    - a) If we want people to know God and experience him, then that is impossible until they are saved. Being in church doesn't make a difference.
      - (1) *"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* (1 Corinthians 2:14)
    - b) God cannot reveal himself to an unsaved person because they do not have the machinery to understand him.
    - c) Not even a full understanding of the Bible is possible.
  - 2. **The evangelistic priority follows from a right doctrine of GOD.**
    - a) The whole plan of creation and God's decrees and providence in this world have the grand object of winning for Christ the maximum number of people to present him the greatest possible tribe and the highest conceivable glory for all the ages long.
      - (1) *"Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession."* (Psalms 2:8)
    - b) All liberal Christianity is destroying the doctrine of God and neglects the Trinity.
  - 3. **The evangelistic priority follows from a right doctrine of SIN.**
    - a) I have read that up to 90 percent of doctrinal error comes from a defective understanding of sin. No blessing can flow to a sinner dead in trespasses and sin. No hope. No goodness from God. Nothing but...
      - (1) **"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1)**
    - b) Unless a person is born again, they can neither see nor feel any of the blessings of the kingdom of God.
  - 4. **The Evangelistic priority flows from a right doctrine of SALVATION.**
    - a) Salvation is not a sliding scale. It is an either/or—a defining moment in time. You are saved, or you are not saved.
      - (1) *"Nor is their salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."* (Acts 4:12)
    - b) We have no lasting blessings to give to a person besides this blessing that is the mother of every blessing called salvation.
  - 5. **The evangelistic priority flows from the right doctrine of THE AFTERLIFE.**

- a) Every human will spend eternity either in the presence of God enjoying the blessings of heaven or will be eternally separated from God in the lake of fire.
  - (1) *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life, and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."* (John 3:36)
- b) If we don't get this right, if we don't hold to this with all our hearts, then we have no right to claim the label of Christian.
- 6. **The only way to diminish the priority of evangelism is by distorting the most important doctrines in all of Scripture.**
  - a) Yes, this is objectionable. Yes, this gets us in trouble. Yes, the devil loves to throw this back at us and call us haters, narrow-minded bigots, and crazy people. So be it.
  - b) **I would rather be found a fool trying to rescue people from hell than be popular and well-liked, letting people slip unwarned into a Christless eternity.**
- H. Our country is in trouble because the church is in trouble. The church is in trouble because we have lost the priority of evangelism...
  - 1. And when we who are saved delude ourselves into thinking our salvation is the final link in the chain...
    - a) Then we leave the world around us in darkness. And we leave precious souls hijacked by the power of Satan.
      - (1) So they remain demonized, bewitched, seduced by the doctrines of demons, spellbound, and hellbound.
    - b) Don't ever tell me your church is such a loving church if you don't love the world for whom Christ died enough to make evangelism a priority... because the gospel of Christ—the message of a bloodied, dying, redeeming love—is so powerful that if you lift him up, God will draw all people unto himself.
  - 2. Oh, but your church has awesome fellowship, and everybody loves each other? I don't care if you're not evangelizing. Enjoy your pathetic social club. Oh, but your church has awesome worship, and everybody loves God? You don't love God the way he wants you to love him until you love the lost children Jesus died for. Oh, but your church has excellent Bible teaching and theology? If your theology lets you get away with apathy toward the plight of lost people, your theology is rotten to the core. Oh, but your church has amazing potluck dinners? I hope you choke on a chicken bone.
- I. Churches that do not evangelize are right where the devil wants them, and so are their pastors.
- J. There's a war on evangelism inside the church too. In Christian pulpits. In Christian denominations. In Christian colleges and universities. In Christian publishing houses.
  - 1. "O foolish \_\_\_\_\_! Who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?" (Galatians 3:1)
- K. As long as I have the privilege of standing in this pulpit, I will pester you, and prod you, and goad you, and bother you, and instruct you, and train you, and equip you, and mobilize you to contribute to your life to the salvation of lost people—that Pathway Church. I hope you're okay with that because it's the way it's going to be.

## VIII. Comfort

- A. I want God to comfort you. I want God to heal you. I want our church to play a vital role in patching you up, and making you whole, and healing your marriage, and putting your family back together.
- B. I want you to know the love of Christ and the joy of the Lord.
- C. Where you are hurting, addicted, or in pain, I pray our church, our people, will be right there beside you, loving you, and guiding you, and incarnating the grace of Christ for you.
  - 1. I pray that. I want that. We strive for that. We sacrifice and labor for that. May God comfort and keep you.
- D. But the comfort God gives you does not end with you.
  - 1. You are a witness. You are an ambassador. You are a missionary. You are a minister. You are a letter written in flesh. You are a holy priesthood. You are one sent of God. You are the hands of Jesus. You are the feet of Jesus. You are the wallet of Jesus. You are the voice of Jesus. You are his representative. His envoy. His calling card. His servant.

## IX. The Father's Heart

- A. I'm haunted by a true-life story I heard from Todd Adams, a missionary in Africa. He was driving over bouncy African roads when he stopped for an unexpected roadblock. Out of nowhere, his jeep was car-jacked by local thugs. They threw open his door, dragged him from the vehicle, and flung him to the ground. Todd watched as his vehicle sped off.
- B. Todd's two little kids were buckled in the back seat.
- C. Words can't describe the feeling of that moment. Todd told how the now distant jeep was suddenly forced to make a U-turn, racing back toward him, presenting his one and only chance. He sprinted toward the jeep as it sped past and jumped to grab the outside-mounted spare tire. He held on for dear life. As the jeep bounced across the pitted road, Todd clambered to plant his feet on the back bumper. He slapped a death grip on the roof rack. That's when he saw his kids inside.
- D. They were crying and screaming for Daddy. His heart was shattered. The carjackers knew Todd was on the back and tried to shake him loose. Todd wouldn't let go. Todd refused to let go. He had a father's heart. Todd's story had a happy ending.
- E. The carjackers got more than they bargained for, stopped the jeep, and fled on foot. Todd gathered his children into his arms and embraced them like never before.
- F. His words still haunt me. "If you don't know how urgently God wants his lost children found, then you don't understand your Father's heart."

## X. Conclusion

- A. I'm not saying that everyone is an evangelist. I'm not saying that everyone is a preacher.
- B. I am saying that you've got something, anything, to give to the cause and to join your heart and life and body, soul, and spirit, time, talents, and treasures to the greatest fight in history—the fight to recapture precious souls the enemy has taken captive.
- C. Has God comforted you? Pass it on.