

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

DATE

July 30, 2017

SPEAKER

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SERIES

Planting The Gospel

PART

5

TITLE

Share Clearly

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 3:14-18



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It's great to see you, Providence. Hope you've had a great week and you've seen just some of the ways that God has been practical, tangible, real, and faithful in your life. It's been neat to see and hear story after story. It's really cool this month, almost every week, there's been several stories from you about just opportunities that you've had to share your faith and how God has opened up doors and how sometimes those times go really, really well and sometimes you feel like you sort of fall on your face and yet you're faithful all the time. I'm super grateful for that.

I want to ask you to look at 1 Peter chapter three this morning if you have with you a Bible. If you don't, there should be one in a chair near you. If you don't have one at home, please take that home as a gift. If you are a guest here at Providence, it's important that you know something about us. That is that we as a people don't believe that we're better than anybody in the world. In fact, we believe that we're all the same, we're all created in the image of God, and we're all fallen, which means that we've all made choices to sin against God, broke fellowship, and yet God loved all of us. What makes us different is simply that we believe in Jesus Christ and he has forgiven us of our sin. It's a joy as we, every single week when we gather, we sing to him and then we also look at his word because we believe that he wants us to understand and to know how to live in his world.

What we're doing, in fact, this Sunday is the final of five sermons on this series called Planting the Gospel. The idea there is it's birthed out of a hope that we really, really desire to see 1000 of us at Providence. I actually have the privilege over the next three years to share our faith in such a way that 1000 of us have the privilege to lead someone to believe in Jesus Christ. We know that's not up to us. All we can do is be faithful. As we're faithful to share repeatedly is that we would have just the unfathomable privilege of being in the spiritual birthing room when somebody comes and moves from death into life and when their sins are forgiven. Then, for us, in time, to continue to meet with that person so that we can actually disciple them so that they would be excited about sharing their faith with someone else as well.

You see, the instruction is so clear. Jesus rose from the dead and his followers looked him in the eyes and he said to them, "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe, to obey everything that I have commanded you." If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, this commission is for you. You and I, we're going to be held accountable for our participation in what he's asked us to do. Now, let's be clear. This is not the only thing that he's asked us to do. It's just the last thing that he asked us to do. It's not the only aspect of being a faithful believer, but it is an aspect of being a faithful believer. We want to be growing in our skill and winsomeness and how we go about sharing our faith.

What we've done over the last month is we've looked at four and now five different ingredients that are all essential, they're all valuable, they're all limited, though, but when they're added into the bowl together and they're stirred up, they become really effectual. In fact, winsome, even to those from outside who look in and wondering why do we live how we live. You can see what these five are. They're on the screen. The first week was that you and I would look back and have that conscious remembrance of when God saved us, when he gave us grace. That would propel us to live authentically, that through our lives that we would be an example to people of the goodness of God and the credibility of his word. We would be faithful and be praying for people and we would be faithful to be caring for them personally.

Some people ask, "Well, listen, if I do the first four, can I get like a hall pass from number five? If I just live a really good life and I really care for people and I pray for people, do I have to actually tell them anything? Is it really important that I speak clearly the gospel? Can someone else do that?" How I would respond to that is two ways. Okay, first of all, just a simple example from culture. Let's just say that you are a part of a company that invests in the next Superbowl \$5 million for one 30-second advertisement. That's what it's going to cost this next Superbowl, \$5 million per commercial. Your startup company has \$5 million. You're going to put everything into this 30-second ad and it's amazing. Your marketing people have done an amazing job. It's compelling, it's creative. It's so compelling that it actually causes people who are watching the game to like pause midstream with their nacho because they're just waiting in anticipation. What is the product that is going to give me that much joy and satisfaction in my life? I've got to know. All of a sudden, the commercial ends without any mention of what the product is that actually provides that kind of joy, satisfaction, and life change.

My point is this. You have to tell people the product. It's the same thing with the gospel. If we live differently because Christ is changing us, if we're caring in a different way because we see how Christ cares for us, if we really intend to be influential and effectual in the way that we're sharing our faith, well, we have to tell them who's changed our life and who is changing our life and who is forgiving us when we're living as though our life is not changed.

Perhaps you go in a second direction of why we need to share. That's simply because God says you need to open up your mouth and talk. Romans chapter 10 verses 13 through 17 says it like this. He says, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Let me just pause there. Look at that for a second. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Isn't that good news? Not some people, that every single person that believes in Jesus Christ looks up and says, "God, I need you," the promise is that that person will be saved. Every single person who does that.

Then Paul wants to ask the questions, “How does someone get to that place to where they look up to God and they say, ‘I need you,’ so that they can be saved?” He asks several questions. The first is this, he says, “Well, how then can they call on him in whom they’ve not believed?” That makes sense. You can’t call upon somebody that you don’t believe in. Then he says, “And how are they to believe in him of whom they’ve never heard?” You have to ask, “How are they going to hear?” “And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” You say, “Well, you’re the preacher so we’ll bring them and you tell them.” Right? What he’s saying here is this. As believers, every time we open up our mouth and even say the word, “God bless you. Hope you have a great day and the Lord blesses you today,” you’re actually preaching something. You’re proclaiming a message.

Then he sums it up with these words. He goes, “So faith comes from hearing.” Did you notice it doesn’t say it comes from seeing your example, from seeing how you care for people, for knowing that you’re praying for them? That’s not how faith comes. It comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. In other words, people will call upon the name of the Lord when they believe. They will. Some of them will believe when they hear, but someone has to tell them. Do we have to speak if we’re doing all the rest? The answer is yes, we do need to speak. We need to tell them who’s changing our lives. In a minute, I’m going to read this text, but first, let’s pray together. Okay?

Father, we come to you and we believe that what we’re about to read is true. Yet, every single one of us run the risk that, either because we’ve heard it before or because we’re distracted, is that we’re going to let this fall to the ground before it changes our life. Would you not only rescue this moment, God, would you rescue us? Would you rescue us during this time and help us to believe and apply this through our life? I pray in Jesus’s name, amen.

What does Peter tell us? Look what it says, starting in verse 13, 1 Peter chapter three says this, “Now who is there to harm you if you were zealous for what is good? Even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them nor be troubled, but in your hearts, honor Christ the Lord as holy. Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience so that when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good if that should be God’s will than for doing evil. For Christ who suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.”

What do we learn here? Three things. The first is this. God invites us to redirect our fears. I think it’s so fascinating that before any time the New Testament tells us to be sharing our faith, the New Testament pauses to address the central obstacle and that is our fear in sharing our faith. It really is an amazing thing because it’s sort of like shooting free throws at the very end of the game. I was a point guard so when we got fouled, I normally was the one who got fouled with the ball, so I went in and shot free throws. What you learn there is this. Shooting free throws is sort of like sharing your faith in that you have to deal at that moment with both form and fear.

If either one of those is missing, you're going to miss the free throw and you're going to miss the opportunity.

There is a form. There is a way to go about sharing our faith, but even those who know the way to share their faith, if they do not manage the fear in their heart, they're not going to let it come out of their mouth. In the same way, there's some people who manage their fear but they do it in such a way that's so brash and argumentative and haughty that even though they've dealt with their fear, their form is such that maybe nobody wants to hear. It's sort of interesting. It's been said that a gospel conversation often begins with a really nervous person talking to another really nervous person about peace. You're nervous. They're nervous about what you're going to do with this message and you're talking not only about peace but the Prince of Peace.

The fact is I can not think of a better teacher when it comes to managing fear than Peter because Peter's probably central life event that radically changed him was motivated out of his fear when he denied even knowing Jesus Christ, even to a little girl. Paralyzing fear. What we're told there is this. Jesus predicted it would happen. Before he was afraid, the night before, in fact, just a few hours before, Jesus looked at Peter and says, "I want you to know something. Before the sun comes up in the morning and you hear that rooster, you will have already denied me three different times." It's amazing that right after predicting that it would happen, and yet before it did happen, he predicted another event in the life of Peter. This is what he said. He goes, "Now, Peter, when you have turned back again," meaning back to me, "when you've confessed, when you've repented, when you've acknowledged that fear took over in your life, this is your life calling. I want you to strengthen the brothers."

It's interesting that from that point on, for the next 30 years of his life, Peter was strengthening the brothers. He was seeking to be an influence of courage to the church everywhere he went. 30 years later, a tremendous uprising basically takes place in the empire where people want to persecute Christians. It's made illegal to be a believer, to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ. Believers are literally scattered from their hometowns where they knew Peter as their pastor and they're scattered all over the empire. You can read this in 1 Peter chapter one verse one, where he's writing, goes, "Look, you're exiles. I know you're everywhere." Here Peter is. He's got a shepherd's heart and he cares deeply about where they're going because where they're going, there's no church. There's no strength. There's no encouragement. There's no help. There's no accountability. Peter writes a letter that's literally copied over and over and over and sent to all of these different towns and villages and cities and regions so that the believers there, they would be encouraged to continue.

He gets to this point in the letter and notice what he says in verse 13, "Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?" This is like when Paul says in Romans chapter eight verse 31, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Well, the answer is a bunch of people are against us and the answer to his question in verse 13, "Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good?" They've literally been shipped out of their hometowns, even away from their families, their language, their culture.

They're separated and scattered because there are so many people who want to harm them. In their context, it was illegal to share their faith in Jesus Christ. Peter, he is acknowledging that the cultural setting is ripe to bring fear to the church to keep them from fulfilling the great commission, to go and to make disciples of all nations.

He knows that answer is many, but he also knows that there is no one on this earth who can ultimately triumph over believers since God has not just the last voice, but the only voice on the last day and he has promised now about that day that everyone who suffers for the sake of righteousness will be protected and will be restored and vindicated. Matthew chapter five verse 10, Jesus with his own lips, he says, "Blessed are you when you suffer for the sake of righteousness." What that means is you suffer for your obedience to Jesus Christ. It says, "For you, for theirs, is the kingdom of heaven."

Peter knows, which is why he says, "Look, it's okay. You're going to be blessed if you suffer for the sake of righteousness." Then he says this, "Therefore, have no fear, nor be troubled of them." Then there's an interesting word. It's the word but. The but is a transition. What he's saying is have no fear, do not be troubled, "But in your heart, set apart Christ the Lord as holy." The word set apart, some of your Bibles say honor, some of them say revere. The same word is fear. Hear what he's saying. He's redirecting our fears. He knows we have fears. In fact, I believe he wants us to have fear. The question is who we're going to fear. He says, "Have no fear of them, but," let me just change the word, "fear the Lord Jesus Christ in your hearts as you see him as holy, as you see him as Lord." In other words, what he's saying here is this, "Fear Jesus and not man."

The question, Providence, is not if we're going to fear. The question is who we're going to fear. Fear always follows our lords. Whoever the lord is in your life, whether it's the scale that you step on, whether it's the mirror, whether it's public ideas of who you are, whether it's the need for compliments, whatever it is, whoever it is that you need their approval, that is your lord. You will spend your life fearing that lord.

Let me ask you this question: Have you ever had a man in your life who has told you that he wants to be your lord, that has demonstrated a greater commitment to your good than Jesus Christ? Let me tell you his commitment to your good. The Bible says that through Jesus Christ, you and I were created. You wouldn't be here if Jesus was not committed to your good. You wouldn't even be alive. You would have no body. Our bodies are a ball of dust that's kept together by a daily miracle of Jesus Christ saying, "Live." When he stops saying, "Live," you'll die and so will I.

This Jesus, after we rebelled against him, he made promises through the prophets on the earth that he would come and then he fulfilled his promise. Jesus Christ came and after living a righteous life, he died for you. He paid the penalty so that the wrath of God that was directed at you would be absorbed in himself. Has anyone else ever treated you this well?

Then he was buried and he rose from the dead. Then he extended you an invitation and me as well and he says, "If you'll believe in me, if you'll trust in me, I'll forgive you of all of your sin. I'll give you all of my righteousness so that you could stand before my father with no guilt. You'll be seen as absolutely innocent." Has anyone in your life ever been this good to you? Has anyone's approval of you ever been as important as his?

What Peter's saying is this. It's not a matter of if you're going to fear. Fear is a part of the game. The question is who you're going to fear. The application is this. Let's fear Jesus enough to run to him. Now, you may look at that and you go, "I don't understand that sentence." Let's fear Jesus enough to run to him. Let me explain what I mean by this. You see, a lot of us as believers, we struggle to understand how we're supposed to go about fearing God because we have so many messy memories of our fearing man. Some of us were bullied as a kid. We can remember the bully on the playground so when we think about that kind of fear and you think, "But wait. God's told me he wants to be my friend and I'm his son or daughter. My category for fearing is I fear that bully so how do I fear God?"

Maybe your dad. Maybe your dad was one that you feared, maybe in an unhealthy way. He didn't treat you right. He yelled at you or hit you. There's the natural fear about a father figure and how God the Father, he wants to be a father figure to you. The fear of God is mixed together in this pot of confusion in your own mind of how I fear my dad and, "How do I fear God in a healthy way that's different than that?" Maybe it's police.

Yesterday, I'm sorry, Friday, we're driving and our son, he has his permit so he really cares about not having a speeding ticket when he has a permit because then he has to wait to get his license and he just loves to drive. We're driving and he's driving us and we're on the highway. We're heading up to Lake Gaston. All of a sudden, he goes, "Oh no." I said, "What?" I'm in the back. Tammy's in the front and he's in the front, driver. He goes, "There's a police with his lights on behind us." Of course, he's 15 and so he's doing this number, of course, just looking. Of course, I'm in the back and I'm sort of looking. I see that he's in the other lane and there was this white car that just sped right past us and so I knew he wasn't coming for us. He passes us and all of a sudden Caleb goes (exhale). I said, "Hey, Caleb. Right now, what do your arms and legs feel like?" He goes, "They're numb. Why are they numb?" Some of us, you have to ask the question, if we fear the authorities like that and all of a sudden that convolutes, it messes up in our mind how are we supposed to fear God? When I think of God, are my arms and legs supposed to get numb with fear of punishment?

It becomes really difficult. A lot of people would say, "Well, fear in God, it means to respect him. It means to honor him." The fact is respect and honor people that we fear the wrong way too. To me, the best way to find the path of action of how do you fear God is to see the difference in the outcome. Hear this really carefully. This is really important and it can really help you. When we fear man, we naturally do things that run from them.

When we fear God, we naturally do things that run to him. Look at the outcome and then your behavior will show you if you're fearing God rightly. You see, there's nowhere that you can run on this earth away from him. If you fear him a little bit but you fear the world a lot, you're going to find yourself running away from God and not to God. There is no safe place in God except near God. There's nowhere you can run. There's nowhere he can't catch you. If you say, "I fear God," what it really means is this. How close are you drawing to God?

We see this played out in Isaiah chapter eight where I believe Peter got his language when he says, "But fear the Lord as holy." Isaiah chapter eight says this, "Do not fear what they fear and do not dread it. The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy." That's what Peter said, just 600 years later. "He is the one you're to fear. He is the one you are to dread and he will be a," what? A sanctuary. What's happening? Isaiah, this godly prophet, is at the city wall and he's looking at a foreign invasion coming to where he's at. All of Israel is terrified and Isaiah is terrified with Israel. God comes to Isaiah and he says, "Isaiah, listen to me. You're my prophet. I don't want you to fear what they're fearing. There's a guy right next to you and his legs are shaking because he fears them more than he fears me. Your legs are shaking. The reason is because right now you fear them more than you fear me. I'm asking you, Isaiah, to redirect your fears at this very moment. Don't fear what they fear. Fear me and you will find me to be the safest place in the world for sanctuary. There's nowhere you can run. There's no better place than to be near me."

What's interesting, every now and then, this good fear, this fear can be seen among people. I'm going to say one more story and then we're going to move on from this. I mean, many years ago, my boys were little. We're on vacation at a friend's house at the beach. It was a nice house and so I got the boys together. I said, "Guys, look, we're not going to play soccer in this house. There's a lot of stuff in this house that's expensive." I spent the whole day like, "No, let's not touch that. Let's not touch that."

The first night, I'm in bed. It's about midnight and one of my sons comes up and he says, "Dad." He wakes up and he goes, "I can't sleep." I said, "Why can't you sleep?" Walked him back to his room. He goes, "Well, I had the soccer ball in the house and I kicked it and I broke a wooden shutter on a window." I said, "Let's go look at it." There was a break in it. Of course, he's feeling horrible. He's got tears on his face. I said, "Listen, son. It's okay." I said, "I'm so grateful that you told me." Of course, he was put down to bed like three-and-a-half hours ago. I said, "Let me ask you a question though." I said, "Why tonight?" He goes, "Well, I couldn't sleep." He goes, "Here's why." It's so long ago. I still remember. He goes, "You know, I didn't like feeling like I broke it, but I didn't like feeling far from you even more." I didn't even know that he did it, but he knew that he did it. How do you fear God? Who are you most afraid of today? If we don't manage and navigate our fear, we'll never tell anyone what Jesus has done for us. Jesus serves us by inviting us to redirect our fears to a really safe place.

Well, the second thing I want you to see is that God invites us to prepare our story. He invites us to prepare our story. Look what it says in verse 15. He says, "Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that you have." Don't you love this? He's assuming that everything that we've looked at the last four weeks, all our remembering of grace, all of our care, all of our praying for people, all of our living authentically, is going to create an impression in someone's life that we are living with such distinction and hope that they're going to want to come and ask, "Why are you different?" So he tells them to be prepared with their story.

You say, "Now, wait a minute. It doesn't say that." Actually, it does. That's why it says the hope that you have. "Always be prepared to make a defense so that when anyone comes and asks you for the hope that you have," that's your story. That's your story that points to his story. The fact is isn't it true there's a lot of possible directions you can go? There's a lot of you like, "What do I say? The whole Bible, ultimately is one story called the gospel. Do I got to tell them everything, like all of Israel's history and all the prophets?" The answer is no.

The first thing you need to understand is that person who's in front of you is a person and not a project. It's someone that you want to interact with. Every time that you share the gospel, it's going to look a little bit different. We have to ask the question though is this: If it looks a little bit different, what's the most essential things that must be said even if there's different ways to get there and different questions that they have? It's sort of like Lucky Charms. It's like God's cereal. You got all these marshmallows and the marshmallows may change but there's always the standard brown stuff in Lucky Charms that's not that ... It's still really, really sweet if you take the marshmallows out. The fact is is that's the essential. Then whether or not you throw in stars or moons or rainbows, it doesn't matter. All of that always goes with what's essential. It's the same thing with the gospel. There's different things that you can say, but every time that we share the gospel, we always have to get to one thing. Paul tells us exactly what that is in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses one through five.

This is what he says. It's on the board. He says, "I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel." Now, what is the gospel? What are we supposed to say? That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared. In other words, the one thing you have to get to is the big three days. That's what I call it. His death, burial, resurrection, and he people saw him alive. You have to get there. Now, how do you get there?

It's really interesting, isn't it, that, first of all, you have a story. You have a testimony if you're a believer. Then, all of a sudden, you're told by me there's some essentials. Make sure you say this. You have to get to this. This is the central thing that people need to hear so that they can believe, so they call upon the name of the Lord, so that they'll be saved. Then we give you a little tool, three circles. In fact, it's in your little snapshot and then there's these little life conversation books that we always make available. In fact, they're there at Next Steps, that back desk, they're all there so you can grab as many of these as you want to. You have your story, you have his story, and then you have like little tools like this that are supposed to help you tell the story.

What I want to do is show you just real practically how do they all fit together. How does all this fit together? First, I would go back and I would remind you once again, don't forget that the person in front of you is a person. They have fears. They have questions, they have history. It's not a one size fits all. This is what I'm going to say. You're responding. You're involved in their life. As you care and interact and learn about them, you need to look for bridges. To me, one of the easiest bridges is our broken world because everybody feels it. Everybody sees it everyday. What I want to do is just show you or share with a little story.

I like to run. When it's too hot, I like to go to the gym. At the gym that I go to, which is the Y, there's a bunch of TVs everywhere. Those TVs, they just show all kinds of brokenness all the time. You got all the news stations so it's like, hey, this person got murdered and, hey, this is corrupt and this, and this, and this. It flows all the time. There's this big TV in the men's shower/locker room on the outside of it. I walk up and I'm just watching. There's another guy. He's sitting right here and just watching. We're just watching brokenness come at us. This is where we're at. Now, I've already talked to him several times just about who he is, his family, his wife, why he's so healthy even though he's a lot older than even I am, just about his interests.

I say, "You know, the world is messed up." I'm not even looking at him. I say, "The world is messed up, isn't it?" He goes, "Man, it sure is." All of sudden, it's helpful to have a little hook, right? This is what I said. I said, "You know, none of this made any sense to me until I was about 16 years old." I just sat there. He goes, "Well, what happened when you were 16 years old?" I said, "Well, let me tell you what happened when I was 16 years old. I was watching a basketball game on ESPN. Right in the middle of the game, a play died on the court. I had no capacity to put the puzzle pieces together of the complexity, beauty, and order in creation, the good things that I see and the brokenness that I also see. Those two pieces, they just didn't fit and I felt broken. I felt empty. That's what happened that night." He's like, "Wow." I said, "But then that night, that night is when the good news and true story about a man named Jesus Christ totally came to life in my life and he changed my life."

He's just sitting there. I said, "Can I tell you about it?" "Yeah, you can tell me about it. How long is it going to take?" I said, "It will take about 90 seconds. That's about all." He goes, "Yeah, go ahead." I said, "Okay." I said, "You know, it's interesting that the Bible tells us that God created a good world for our good and for his glory." If you're using a tool, you could put a circle. If you're at a coffee shop, you can circle God's design. You look around and you see complexity and order and beauty and all these sorts of things. I said, "This explains everything that you see with your eyes that looks so right with the world. You look at a strand of DNA. You look at a molecule. You look at a cell structure and you think, 'Man, such order. Such design.' Then the Bible says that we sinned against God by making choices and I sinned against God. This sin brought just a flood of brokenness into the world. It's interesting that every generation," that's what I said. I said, "Every generation tries to fix all this brokenness but all we ever do is create more."

I said, “This explains what you see on TV. This is what I saw when I was 16. This explains a guy in his prime about to go to the MBA and he dies on the basketball court. It’s broken. There’s nothing we could do so God did something for us. He sent his son and his son lived a righteous life. He died for my sin. He was buried in a grave. He rose from the dead. When he rose, he gave an amazing invitation that those who would repent, meaning they would turn from trying to be their own savior and they would just pay attention to God and believe in what God had provided for them, believe in his accomplishments, that they would be saved.” I would say I was forgiven of my sin. “God gave me his righteousness and allowed me to recover and even pursue his first design of how he wanted life to be lived, how we’re supposed to love one another, how we’re supposed to care for one another, how we’re supposed to think about everything.” I just say, “That night, I trusted Christ and he began to change my life.” It was very natural and it was just engaged with where we were at at the moment.

Now, we’re talking about sharing our faith, but let me just say something. Two points of application. First of all, those in the room who may not know Christ, let’s believe in Jesus and be saved. Even though we’re talking about how we share our faith, if you have never believed in Jesus Christ, you can do that today. In fact, the Bible says if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, that you and I, we will be saved. You can trust Christ. Then, Providence, for those of us who already know Christ, let’s prepare and then maybe even practice our story that leads to his story. If you would say to me, “You know, Brian, just not prepared right now to make a defense for the hope that is in me,” I would say that’s okay, but just don’t let that be the case three years from now. Be prepared. Get prepared.

That gets to the third and final thing. That’s this. God invites us to share with humility. When we do share, he says, “But do this with gentleness,” that’s meekness, “and respect and having a clear conscience, a good conscience.” One of the ways that we can do this is we can think about gentle answers to roadblocks that are inevitable. One of them that is absolutely inevitable is people are going to ask, “Do you really believe that everyone who doesn’t believe in Jesus is actually going to go to hell?” A proud affirmation normally shuts down that conversation. All of that conversation normally ends if you just say, “Absolutely, because Jesus says, ‘I’m the way, the truth, and the life and no one comes to the Father except through him.’” Now, you’ve answered correctly, but have you answered winsomely? I’m not saying that you lie, but maybe what you do is instead of answering that question then, you ask them a question.

You could say something like this. “Let me ask you something. That’s a great question, but do you believe that anyone has ever lived in a way that’s so bad that they’re not going to go to heaven?” “Well, yeah. Somebody. I mean, like Hitler. I mean, somebody like that probably hasn’t earned their way to heaven.” I say, “Okay. Well, let me ask you this then. One other question then I’ll answer your question. Where do you draw the line between good enough and not good enough?” All of a sudden, instead of just saying, “Yes, I believe that,” and that conversation is over, now, all of a sudden, you’ve opened a door so that you’re able to speak not about our line, like you’re so arrogant that you believe yours is the only way.

No, now we're talking about this. There's God's line and God's line says that every single one of us has fallen short of his glory, that none of us are going to go to heaven. That's what I believe. I believe none of us are going to go to heaven without one provision, and that is the provision that he gives to us. Now, all of a sudden, the exclusivity becomes a life preserver and not an offense. You see, the fact is nobody qualifies, which is why Jesus came. By way of application, look, let's reflect, let's reflect the goodness of the gospel that we are sharing.

Years ago, I remember I went to the hospital to visit two families, same visit. One just had a baby and the other was about to walk through a death of a family member. Standing on the outside of each of their two rooms was a person whose face, whose emotion, and whose tone, when I spoke to them, reflected the events occurring on the inside of the door. What I'm saying is there was symmetry. That person was an ambassador of what was happening inside without me ever having to go inside. My point is simply this. We're called to tell good news to vulnerable people. Our care and our tone should reflect the seriousness of the situation as well as the significance of the grace that God has given to us.

Let me close the whole series with this question. Why should any of us want to participate in this mission? That's what Peter asks and answers in verse 18. You see the word for? In other words, it's because. Why should we do any of this? Because Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God. See, Providence, our king is a pursuing kind of king. He's a reconciling kind of king. He has called us to be his ambassador, which means that we have to be a going kind of people, a pursuing kind of people, a reconciling kind of people. You and I have been rescued to become part of the greatest rescue mission in the history of the world. He's given us instruction on how to do that so let's be faithful. Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, as we, Lord, consider these things, we pray that you would give us understanding and you would give our hearts humility and that you would help us to deal with our fear, the apprehensions that we have of what to say. I pray, Father, that even this week that you would give us opportunities to open up our lips to tell people about your grace and your goodness. I pray now, God, that as we sing to you, Lord, as we have an offering, God, every week we pray this but we mean it, would you expand these resources, multiply what is given, so that more people can go and more people can hear the truth of the gospel? We pray, God, that what we sing comes out of a heart that is so full because of your grace that's been poured out to us. We love you and we pray this in Jesus's name, amen.



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