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Revelation

Chapter 14 - Revealing the Consequence of Choice Beckons Others to Follow (vs. 6-7)

Revelation 14:6-7: And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”

As we come to this passage in Revelation, of course, this unveiling is revealing to us, I believe, in many respects, what it means to make a decision. And I think that as we get closer to the last days, that the decisions that we make will be more marked. It'll be more clear. The clarity of them will just shine, because it'll be recognizable

because of the great darkness that surrounds us. And so, when one makes the one decision, you realize that you're going to stand out like a sore thumb. But I also realize that in these days that we're facing, there's a lot of trepidation and concern about the things that are happening.

And if I could just have you turn before we jump into Revelation into Romans 8, just this wonderful reminder that a verse that we oftentimes take for granted because we quote it so often. But how wonderful it is to know that God is causing things to work together for good to those who love Him. And as I was talking this morning about, in Offertory, about this particular time in which this book was written, as we were emphasizing the fact that here you have a book that's written at about 55, 56 A.D., and it was right after Nero had been placed in office in 54 A.D.; probably one of the most grievous times in Roman history, not only to the Jews, to the Christians specifically, but to the Romans as well, because he was obviously not a great leader to them and not beloved by them. It would be the Senate that would try to kill him towards the end, and then ultimately he would commit suicide to dodge

their bullet. But you have this personality, this leader, that you say absolutely does not belong in this position. And yet it is in this Book of Romans that we read in Romans 13 that God has ordained all authority and that we need to submit to that authority. But it's also in the context of this Romans 8. And I believe in many respects these words of comfort going to the Romans at this particular point in time was that we know that whatever is happening in the upper echelon, that God is causing all things to work together for good. And so, he writes that wonderful, peaceful passage in verse 28, and as my father often makes mention of his father, emphasizing, "And we know..." So, it's something that we have that it's of great confidence and great anticipation that God is causing somehow, all of this. And I can tell you this, that you're probably praying more. Right? Yeah. Because when difficult times come, you get on your knees more. So, you're already getting closer to God. That's a good thing. And so, there are wonderful and good things that are going to come through this. But what I love about this particular passage as it goes on is it's fundamentally saying, no one can separate you from God's love, which

means that nothing can keep God from loving you, which means that He just keeps giving you good and keeps encouraging you and strengthening you.

So, his statement is, if you look with me in verse 35,

(Romans 8:35) “Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”

(Romans 8:36) Just as it is written,

“FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;

WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.”

(Romans 8:37) But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

(Romans 8:38) For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,

(Romans 8:39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Now, we don't have anything to be afraid of. And we have many things to look forward to.

So, as we come to this passage in Revelation, in many respects, you come, and you say to yourself, "Well, things couldn't get any worse," and then they do. And so, then you come into Revelation 14, and you realize that in the midst of the worst of the tribulation, in the very middle of all of this, in which the beast has now taken control of the world, and most of humanity has subjected themselves and subjugated themselves to him, that it is at this point that light begins to shine. And what a magnificent picture it is, as in many respects, what I believe Chapter 14 is revealing is that when you and I make a choice, your position is accentuated. You stand out. And the evidence, of course, is in that.

Isaiah 9:2 talks about the people who walk in darkness will see a great light. What causes them to see the light so clearly? They're walking in darkness. And if you've ever been in pitch black and all of a sudden you saw a light, you'll know what I'm talking about. That sense of happiness and joy that comes into your life and finally

somebody is there, and a sense of hope begins to move within you. So, the passage is beginning to reveal a consequence of choice and how it affects, and nothing really shines so brightly as light shining in the dark and you begin to see the good work and the difference between right and wrong is clear. The difference between good and wicked, gracious and hateful, all those things begin to seem really, really clear. And now you go, "Okay, that's a Christian, that's not." And no place would you ever see it so clearly as at this particular time.

So, as we come into Chapter 14, we see this. We see the 144,000 standing with the Lamb, and the choice has been made, and they don't have the mark of the beast on them. Everything is so identifiable on their foreheads. Those that follow the beast, it's so clear that they're following them, and those that aren't are standing with the Lamb. And it's so clear that they're doing that. It is in that light that we have this seemingly obscure passage in which an angel flying through mid-heaven begins to proclaim the gospel.

In Matthew 24, Jesus talks about the last days, and He says, "And the gospel must be preached to all men." And I know that some people perceive that, "Okay, we need to go and share the gospel to all the world in order for Christ to come." That's not true. The text is saying in Revelation, God's going to send an angel, and all the gospel's going to be through all the land, so the gospel is being preached to all the world. What has already happened is, as you look, and I would say to you, you still need to be preaching the gospel. But we're not preaching the gospel to usher in the kingdom. We're preaching the gospel because God has told us, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel, and make disciples of all people." So, that's the reason we're doing it. And we believe that He's the one that's going to rescue us, not us ushering in things. But we also see within this how God has been so gracious in the midst of the hostility of the world towards God.

It backs up, if you remember, into Revelation 11, in which God sends the two prophets. And you have these two prophets that are displaying great signs. I mean, they can hold back the rain. They can do anything. And if

somebody tries to destroy them, they just breathe out fire, and they're gone. So, this is great power and great authority. But what they're proclaiming is the word of God, and more specifically, the gospel. We know that they are giving the world one more chance. But then they are killed by the beast that comes out of the pit, and the world begins to celebrate their death. I mean, these are the people that God has sent to proclaim the wonderful words of life, and the world just wants them dead.

Because, well, look, the gospel is very convicting, isn't it? Why is the gospel so convicting? Well, the word "gospel" means "good news," so you wouldn't think good news would be convicting. But the good news is good news to sinners. Okay, that's the convicting part. You actually have to admit you're a sinner to receive the good news. And that's what man doesn't like to do. He doesn't like to think that he's wrong and he doesn't want to stop doing what he's doing. Or as John 3 says, our whole problem is we love darkness rather than light because our deeds are evil. So, we have an agenda, and that is, there are certain things we want to do that we don't want to stop doing.

So, you see the hostility that is going on in that. But God in His graciousness still sends these two.

Now, as we come to this passage, He not only sends those two, but He has 144,000 as paragons on a hill with the Lamb. It's sort of like Elijah in the Old Testament, he goes, "I'm the only one, I'm the only one, I'm the only one." God goes, "No, there's 7,000 more that I've preserved." And so, it is God's graciousness in our lives. You know, sometimes you feel like you're the only one. But then God brings you into a body, and God goes, "No, you're not the only one." And then you begin to see the character and the nature of righteousness, because in that world, you're just not seeing that at all. And those paragons, you hold on to them. You go, "Truth does exist. Christ does change lives. And people do live differently." And what a wonderful thing to embrace. So, not only does He proclaim through the true prophets, but the 144,000 are given as that light set on a hill. And just once to re-emphasize this, that's what God has called the church to be, a light set on a hill. Far more than just preaching the gospel, we are to be living the gospel, and it should be in

such a way that it's noticeable to the world. Jesus will say to His disciples, "They'll know that you're My disciples because you love one another." So, the evidence is that which shines brighter than anything else. And once again, if you understand the concept of light, it doesn't do a whole lot of talking, but it does a whole lot of shining. And God has called us to live in such a way. Therefore, let your light so shine before men that they would see your good works and glorify God in heaven. It doesn't say anything about speech within the passage. So, that picture of the paragon is the message being preached. You can make a choice. You can make a choice for God. Christ will say, "Look, if you're not for Me, you are against Me." And I know there are so many people, they go, "Don't make me make a choice." You're going to be forced into making a choice. And that's what the end times do. It forces you to make that choice. But how clear it is when you see somebody raise their hand. You know, it's like Jesus saying, "Who's for Me?" And you've got millions and millions of people, and nobody raised their hand. Then one person raised their hand. How obvious could that be?

And so, God is calling upon you and I to do that. And how wonderful it is that He establishes those paragons for us. It is in the context of that we have the angel proclaiming the gospel. And it is in that order that Scripture wants you to understand this, that it has been the grace of God to send His prophets to demand. It is also the grace of God to change lives and to give testimony. And it is under that, and really with that preface, that we begin to see the gospel being proclaimed. Now, the point is that your lives are precursors to the proclamation of the gospel. And I believe this is the fundamental principle and the thing that God is unveiling. In other words, what makes the gospel valid? What gives it the veracity that God has ordained it to have? What makes it ring with truth? Well, when you can see it lived out. Paul will say to the Corinthians, "You're the letter, but not written on tablets of stone, on hearts." And that's why Hebrews says it's the living word of God. It should be living and active and something within your life that people can see the difference in your life. So, as we come to this passage and we see this other angel that makes reference to a

different angel, and once again, a proclamation of good news. And I think that's one of the reasons why it uses the word “another” or “different”. What makes this angel unique is that the angel is proclaiming good news. Up to this point, we've been having angels come out and proclaim some pretty bad news. But this angel is coming out with the gospel, the eternal gospel.

If you pick up with me in Revelation 14:6, we'll read, (Revelation 14:6) “And I saw another angel flying in midheaven...”

Now, the reason he interjects “flying” is that it has this sense of urgency. It kind of reminds me of the Book of Jude where it talks about snatching some out of fire, hating even the clothes that they wear. The point of Jude is that some things require urgency. And so, Scripture is wanting to interject within this passage the sense of urgency of this angelic being, “You need to change now.” And the time is coming so close to such an end.

“And I saw another angel flying...”

Where is the angel flying? In midheaven. The NAS really translates it probably the most accurate by using this particular word, “midheaven,” between heaven and earth.

There's an interesting passage in the Old Testament, I think it's 2 Samuel 18. And in this particular text, David is dealing with his son Absalom. Absalom has not only harbored tremendous hatred towards his father, and we won't go into all the details of that, but has rallied around his kingdom to fight and to war against his father, and he wants his father dead. There's no mistake what Absalom's goal is; it's to take over the kingdom and to kill his father. The heart of David will not let him fight his son. It just won't let him fight. Right or wrong, we won't argue or debate the morality of it at this juncture. He just can't kill his son. So, other warriors go out for David at this particular point in time. And as they're getting ready to go out, and as he's sending them out, in 2 Samuel 18:5, he pulls them next to himself, and he says, “Look, do this for me. Deal gently with my son. Now, you're going to war with him. I don't know exactly how that looks, because

you're going to war." But he says, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom."

"Just don't hurt him." I mean, that's what I'm hearing. "Don't hurt him." Well, what happens is that Absalom, in his process, is riding his mule, and according to the passage, the mule went under this thick oak tree, and Absalom has a lot of hair. From what I understand, if I figured it up right, every year he would have to cut his hair because it got too heavy. And they would weigh his hair. Now, a year's growth was 4 to 5 pounds. So, every year, 4 to 5 pounds of hair would come off of him. But the point goes on that he was handsome. And let me tell you, if God calls you handsome, you're looking fine. I mean, that's from God's eye. But the passage says he was handsome and there was not any defect in him from toe to the head, not any defect in him. So, I mean, everything about Absalom was saying, let's spare this guy. But more than that, it was the very fact that his father named him "father of peace," "*Ābyšālôm*," and Solomon will actually have a very similar name. So, it's telling us that he had great expectations for Absalom, but of course, turned

awry. And he wants him saved. But as he's riding his mule, he's riding through the trees and under this oak, and his hair gets caught in the oak tree. The Scripture tells us that the mule keeps going. But Absalom hangs there.

And to quote the text,

(2 Samuel 18:9) “... so he was left hanging between heaven and earth...”

The passage in Revelation is telling us that this is the final moment of decision, and you have a choice. And the difficulties that have come, the beast and all the things that have happened, and the testimonies that are now shining before you are a picture of humanity dangling between heaven and earth. The reason why it's describing the angel in the mid-heaven is it's a decision between heaven and earth, and there you are. You can sense the intensity of the moment, because the angel is crying out, “You have not much time, and you have no idea what's at stake. Heaven or earth?”

The passage reads this way,

(Revelation 14:6) “And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel...”

I like the way that's put, don't you? Because it's telling us that God has never wanted you to have bad news. The passage is making reference to the fact that this gospel has ever been on the heart of God. Good news has ever been on the heart of God. God wants good news for you. And from the beginning of time, before the beginning of time, it has always been God's agenda and will ever be His heart, that He would ever want you to have good. When we use the word that is used in the passage, *“euangelizō,”* it is the very beginning of the word, *“eu,”* that is making reference to that which is good and beneficial and virtuous and wonderful. It gives that wonderful picture. And then the last part, of course, is message. So, it's a good *“angelizō,”* where we get the word “angel”; it's the good message that God has for you. And it's ever been that. The way that it's put within the passage is that he actually uses 2 forms of the word, *“euangelion,”* which is the noun, and *“euangelizō,”* which is the verb. And so, the

way that it's put is that the heralding is the part of proclaiming the good news.

So, the way it reads is,

“... an eternal gospel to preach...”

Well, if you look at the word “preach,” that's still the word “gospel”. That's just in the verb tense. So, it's good news. So, God has given us eternal good news. That's the noun that is eternally being proclaimed good news. And that's the verb. And what a great picture this is of God proclaiming this and with great urgency, “You have no idea what's at stake,” but this never-ending, wonderful plan that God has for us that is being announced throughout the earth. Now, what's to be noted is, who he's preaching it to. And once again, the decision is yet to be made by certain ones still on the earth. And yet, he says your life is on the balances.

If you look in the passage, it says this,

“... an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth...”

Now, the Greek word that he uses to live is actually not really properly translated “live”. It is translated, if you were to actually properly translate it, “their home”. In other words, the point is that there are those that have made the earth their home. He's going to make mention of this, of course, with those, the saints, that he says, “those who live in heaven.” And he's not making reference necessarily in every case to those who are in heaven at that time, but he's making reference to those who have made heaven their home. And so, this particular passage is the same thing. It actually has the word “*oikos*,” which makes reference to home. So, he's stating in the text that the gospel is being preached to people that have claimed that the earth is their home. And God is saying, “Don't. Don't.” God has given you something better. Heaven. Here we are dangling.

So, to preach the eternal gospel to those who have made the earth their home, and watch what he says,

“... to every nation and tribe and tongue and people.”

I mean, he covers everybody. “Nation,” making reference to ethnic group. You know how people are divided into

ethnicity? So, in the different ethnic groups, you see people coming together because of that. But if you look at the next word that he uses, it's "tribe," which probably best is described as race. You know, you have certain races and people are clinging together because they're different kind of race. And then you have "tongue," which of course, some people are united because of language, or just because they know they have a common language. And then you have a "people," which is just anybody that gathers, that's like America. We're what you call people. We're not necessarily race or ethnic, but we come together and because we gather together, we become a nation or a people that is different. So, his point is that this gospel, it doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter where you're from. It doesn't matter who you're related to. It doesn't matter how you talk. The message has always been to whosoever will. This is an eternal gospel that has always been for everybody. People say, "Oh, it's just the Jews that God was interested in the Old Testament." That's not true. That's not true. Read Genesis 12 when He's calling Abraham. What does He call Abraham to do? Okay, He says, "I'm going to bless you,"

but keep reading, “And I'm going to make you a blessing to everybody else.” In other words, “I'm calling you out to say ‘Whosoever will.’” That's always and ever been the message. That's why you have Rahab the harlot, and why you have Ruth in the Old Testament. That's why you have people coming out and you're going, “Wait, that's a Moabite. That's a...” It doesn't matter, does it? Because it's always been the eternal gospel. Whosoever will may come. And the wonderful picture of the way that He's putting that, you can almost hear it in the message of the angel saying, “We're not leaving anybody out. We don't care where you're from. Stop clinging to...” And people have a tendency to cling to their organizations and their groupings, and he says, “Stop. This is about heaven or earth. And you have to make this decision now.” You can feel the urgency.

And he says in verse 7,

(Revelation 14:7) “And he said with a loud voice...”

That's the boldness, isn't it? “He said with a loud voice...”

Well, where the Spirit of God is, there's boldness. And look, you and I are not ashamed of the gospel, are we?

We're not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. We believe that it's the power of God for salvation. And Paul writes to Timothy, he says, "I don't want you to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me or of the imprisonment that I'm in."

It is with a loud voice. And the loud voice is not only emphasizing and boldly, intensely proclaiming. But the loud voice is saying, "You need to fear God instead of fearing man." The world will come and they'll shake their fists at you and they'll try to scare you to death. You know how you need to respond? Ladies and gentlemen, you should be afraid of God. You should be afraid that you're offending God by not putting your trust in Him. Did anybody ever think about that? They tell you, "Don't you know you're offending me?" Do you know you're offending God!?? I mean, if you think about the Pharisees coming to Jesus and they go, "You know, Your disciples are offending us." He goes, "Well, you offend Me." "Well, You don't keep the laws that we've established in our tradition." He goes, "You're breaking God's laws." We should be coming back because God is the One that

should be feared, not man. So, the declaration, and by the way, the word is "*phobeō*," where we get the word "phobic". Now, it doesn't mean that you're shaking every moment, but it does mean you do know who the one in charge is. And the one you don't want to insult is God. But I mean, the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

"And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory..."

In the Old Testament, the word "glory" makes reference to "wait"; in the New Testament, "*doxa*," where we get the word "doxology," "praise God from whom all blessings flow," is a homage; more specifically, is a reverencing before Him. But what you're virtually saying in worship, and as it came from the old English word, "worthship," or ascribing worth to God, is describing that He is the worthy One. He's the One that we should be trying to please. He's the One that we should be trying to obey rather than the world. So, it gives that sense of, "You need to worship." And you just see the power of however this is going to play out. And I don't know exactly what it's going to look like, but I do know that the power

of the heavens is going to be shaking and saying, “You know who you need to be worried about? And the one that you should be bowing to is not...” I mean, we've already read that they've been worshiping the beast. How is it that man will worship a beast and an image of a beast? An image? You can just hear the heavens going, “What are you doing? What are you doing?”

“... give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come...”

Now, “judgment,” “*krisis*,” is a very unique word that's used here. It literally means to separate. It is that picture of Christ as He separates the sheep from the goats. And it is the discernment of God. In other words, we're afraid of what man will think of us, aren't we? And man has a way of separating us and saying, “You guys go over here.” He says, “You know what you need to be worried about? You know what God's getting ready to do? He's getting ready to separate between light and darkness. God's getting ready to separate between those that are His and those that aren't. Those that will abide in heaven forever and those that will not. You make the decision now, because

He's going to make it.” You can almost hear a judge as he sits on his bench, and he says, “Are you going to do the right thing? Now, you have a choice.” And then you have a choice to listen to his judgment, and he'll begin to separate you, either for prison or for life. And the picture is given as the angel begins to cry out, “For the decision of God has come, and He's about to separate. Worship Him.” “Kiss His hand” is actually the word that is used, made reference to the fact of true worship, giving an admiration and an adoration. “Love Him more than anything else.”

“... who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.””

It gives that picture of the things that bring happiness, gushing out of things that bring joy. In other words, the very things that you're afraid of losing, forget about it. He makes them. He creates them. Come to Him who all blessings flow from. So, a great passage that makes reference to this.

What I wanted to talk to you about specifically in this, as far as the application of this, is what God is telling us about our ministry and specifically what He's telling the

churches about their ministry. In other words, what is it that produces the platform for sharing the gospel? And you really have to take in, in understanding verses 6 and 7, verses 1 through 5. And verses 1 through 5 are really the precursor or the setting of the stage of the preparation of the gospel going out. In other words, we want the gospel to go out in great boldness. We want to proclaim the gospel without apology. We want to proclaim that. But what has to happen first? And that's the key within the passage. What has to happen first is that you have to have a changed life that is standing by the Lamb.

So, there's just a few things, five or six things that I want you to mark down that are evident as a precursor to the proclamation of this angelic announcement. And that is this, first of all, write down Galatians 1:10. One, you cannot please man. When you have the 144,000 standing on the mount, they're not looking at what everybody else is doing. They're not concerned about what everybody else is doing. They're only concerned about one person, and that's God. So, don't be a man pleaser. You can't be.

Look, you're getting ready to proclaim the gospel. What's the gospel? Well, the gospel is the good news that Jesus saves you. Who is He? He's God. How powerful is He? You can cast all your cares upon Him. There's nothing that's too hard for Him. Nothing could ever separate you from His love. Okay, so how are you going to prove that if you're afraid of men? How can you proclaim that message? How can the gospel be announced if you're hiding and fearful about what everybody else is thinking about you? What are you saying? Well, what you're saying is men are more powerful than God. But if I just tell them what God says without any apology, what am I telling them? I'm not afraid of men. God is greater than you are. Well, that's what the good news is. God is greater than man and He loves you. See? If you think man is greater than God, well, just follow this out, He doesn't love you. So, I think the good news is better. God is greater than man and He does love you. See? That's the greater announcement. So, in the preparation, what you see are these 144,000, and they're unthwarted in their stand because they're only looking at the Lamb. They're not concerned about anything else.

The second thing that you see in the passage is, if I could take it from a text, it would be 1 Peter 2:12. And that is, keep your behavior excellent in the world. The passage makes reference to the fact that here they are, and they've not defiled themselves. And the whole purity thing is a part of who they are. Well, what Peter reiterates over and over again in 1 Peter is that it's about your excellent behavior, which is the platform for the gospel.

Let me give you an example. 1 Peter 3 talks to the woman, and she has an unbelieving husband. Now, if you read how she witnesses to him, without a word, by your chaste and respectful behavior; submitting as unto the Lord. So, what is the platform for the gospel? It's that your behavior is excellent. If your behavior isn't excellent, how can you tell somebody, "Good news, God changes your life"? And they go, "Haven't noticed any difference. Nothing different." But the picture of these 144,000 is that they are so unique and so different that you can tell that they've not been stained by the world. You can just tell. And people can tell. And this is what gives you a platform for the wonderful gospel of Christ.

3 is, don't be afraid. I've got to have you turn to this. It's Philippians 1, if you look there with me.

It says this in verse 27,

(Philippians 1:27) “Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...”

So, what do we know that we're trying to do? Proclaim the gospel of Christ. That makes sense, right? Okay.

“... so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm...”

Isn't that the picture of the 144,000?

“... in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

(Philippians 1:28) in no way alarmed by your opponents...”

You can't show fear. Can you imagine Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, “I'm going to throw you in the fire.” And them going, “Oh, don't do that, don't do that.” That would have just ruined the whole testimony, right there. Or Jesus kicking and screaming, going to the cross. It just would have ruined everything.

“In no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them...”

One of the greatest testimonies that you have is that you're not afraid. And you know it causes the world to go, “Maybe he has something here. Because by George, I'm afraid. But he's getting ready to have his life taken, and there's absolutely no fear maybe what he believes in is true.” And it sets the stage and gives you the platform for the announcement of the gospel. Without this, the gospel has less effect in the minds and the hearts of people because they have not seen that precursor in the testimony of believers.

And so, the passage makes reference to the fact, if you were to look in Revelation 14, to the great resolve, but a resolve that is fearless. And of course, as it goes on in Philippians 4, what does he say in verse 6?

(Philippians 4:6) “Be anxious for nothing...”

Because we're entrusting our soul like Christ, as Peter will say, trusted His soul to a faithful Creator in doing what is right. We actually believe that.

#4, I would say is sanctify Christ as Lord of your heart.

What is clear is that there's a love and devotion for the Lamb. There's no doubt about that with 144,000.

And Peter makes reference to this in 1 Peter 3. In fact, if you could just turn to that. Pretty soon you're going to know all the books of the Bible. There's just no getting around it. But if you look with me in 1 Peter 3, it says this in verse 13,

(1 Peter 3:13) “Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?”

(1 Peter 3:14) But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED,

(1 Peter 3:15) but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense...”

Now, I want to stop there. What causes you to always be ready to make a defense? It's that you made Christ Lord. It's that He's the One that you want to be the master of your life, and you're thinking that way. In other words, every decision you make, you're thinking, “Okay, did I

please God in that? Did I please God in that?" And what are you doing? You're setting the Lord apart to be the master of your life above everything else. You're saying, "You're the One in charge, not that other stuff, not those things, not those people." So, you've made Him the love of your life. And then people say, "Well, what do you feel about this?" You don't have to study what to say. You already know what to say because you're just sharing your heart. If it's on your heart, you don't have to try to psych it out and try to figure out what everybody else is thinking. You're not trying to please men. So, the only thing that you have is that "I just want to please God with all my heart." And so, sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart.

What's interesting is, if you look in Chapter 3, what's directly tied to this in verse 16 is a clear conscience, which is telling me that one of the most powerful things that you can have in evangelism is a clear conscience. In other words, if you're right with God, then you can boldly proclaim the gospel. If you're not right with God... I've yet to see somebody that's not right with God clearly and boldly proclaim the gospel. Because you can't be

transparent. You can't be real. And people can detect real, and they can detect genuine a mile away, if that's what they're looking for. Look, if they want to be fooled, they can be fooled. But if, in fact, they are looking for that thing that is real, they're going to gravitate. So, what a great passage when it begins to deal with that whole sense of good conscience. This is where the Spirit of Truth produces boldness. When we talk about the Spirit of God and it's bold within us, what produces the boldness? It's a clear conscience. The Spirit of God produces that clear conscience and why is this guy not ashamed? You know, remember when you received Jesus for the first time? And you asked Him to forgive you of all your sins, and you go, "My sins are forgiven. My sins are forgiven." And you never felt so clean at that moment. Now, 2 seconds before, you were just as filthy as you could be. But now you're just like so clean. And then you boldly go tell people, "You need to ask Jesus in your heart." And so, what was that? It was that clear conscience. "If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you of your sins and to cleanse you from..." Wow, everything. It's

a magnificent thing. So, sanctify Christ as Lord of your hearts, and it sets the stage.

And #5, If I were to quote anywhere, go to the Book of Jude. This wonderful verse in the midst of, you know, you're going to have people sneaking in, and they're going to be trying to ruin everything in the church. He says, "Just keep yourself in the love of God." What a great thing.

So, if you look in Jude 1:21, it reads this way,

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life."

Now, what you see of the 144,000 is this: They're not doing anything. They're not building a building. They're not collecting funds. They're just standing. If you were to interview them, it would go something like this, "Why are you just standing there? What are you doing?" "Oh, we're waiting for something." "What are you waiting for?" "Oh, you'll see. You'll see. Wow, will you see."

There's something that has to be within us in which it's all about our desire to be with Him. And if it ceases to be

about our love for Him and our desire for Him, then there are no strength and no power. Paul will say, "I'm going to get a crown." And then he turns to Timothy, and he goes, "And you can get a crown too, and anybody else can get a crown too, if you've loved His appearing." "That's it? Are you sure you don't want to add something?" No, that's it. Because if you love God with all your heart, you're going to serve Him. There's no doubt about that. But you have to stay steadfast in that love because you can be serving and not love Him. And it's that place that you need to be that gives you the strength and the fortitude to stand. If you didn't love Him, you couldn't stand there. But because you love Him, you can't leave Him. And when you proclaim the gospel, it is good news, but it's good news from Somebody that loves you. For God so loved the world. Now, how are you going to convey that if you don't love the God who loves the world? There's no way you can convey that. So, you and I need to keep ourselves in the love of God and waiting anxiously for His mercy. And certainly, we believe it's coming.

And then last but not least, as we prepare, we cannot be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. We cannot be ashamed. And so, now we proclaim the gospel boldly, don't we? We believe that it is the power. And when you hear and see this angelic being proclaiming with such dogma, you realize he actually believes the message. And you and I need to present the message in such a way that... Let me put it another way. Stop trying to talk people into heaven. You need to present it, "You're the lucky one, not God." God's not lucky because you surrender your life. You're the fortunate one that He loves you. And so many times we diminish who God is. Worship Him. And sometimes in the gospel, in our presentation of the gospel, it's almost like we worship man. "Oh, we just don't want to offend him." We're walking on eggshells, or something like this. I worship God. And if you want life, you'll worship Him too. He'll be at the forefront. Fear God. Kiss His hand. Be thankful that He would even consider saving you, and you'll be saved. Wonderful truth.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for Your words once again that reveal to us that even in the midst of the darkest hour, it is Your desire to proclaim, "But Jesus saves." And as we dangle between heaven and earth, we feel the necessity to make a decision now.

And if you've come today and you've been dangling, it won't be long. God has given you a time to make a choice. The choice is getting clearer and clearer; more accentuated than ever before. Make the choice. And for those of us who are believers, God has called us to proclaim this wonderful message in the darkest of hours, when men need it the most, the light begins to shine. But the light has to shine first before the proclamation comes. So, let your light so shine before men that they would see the truth and the veracity of what you say you believe and embrace the message as you begin to proclaim it. Take this time and pray and give your life to what is true. You pray in this time.