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Luke

Chapter 4 - An Unorthodox Power

The Holy Spirit

A Power Both Fearless & Elusive (23-30)

Luke 4:23-30: And He said to them, “No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’” And He said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. “But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. “And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these

things; and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, He went His way.

This is all about the Holy Spirit and the power of the Holy Spirit. What does the power of the Holy Spirit look like? It's not what you would think, and that's one of the things that Luke was going to convey in this. It's not what you would expect. It's not what you'd think. The power of the Holy Spirit. We see the power of the Holy Spirit come upon the Messiah.

At the very beginning of the passage, if you look with me in Luke 4, it says,

(Luke 4:1) “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...”

Then, being led by the Holy Spirit, and then you begin to see some of the results of that.

In fact, as you go on within that particular chapter, you begin to realize that the power of the Holy Spirit means power over the flesh. The power of the Holy Spirit means power over compromise, power over doubt in your life. It clearly is a power that permeates everything, and it proliferates as it begins to touch the heart of men. In fact, if you're walking by the power of the Holy Spirit, you will affect others around you as Jesus will do. What exactly is this power? Well, in many respects, as we looked at last week, we see this power being defined in terms of gracious speech and a sense of humility. If you think about it, it takes a lot of power to not be humble sometimes, and to be humble takes a lot more. So, when we come to this passage, we see it worked out. We see it lived out in the person of Christ, this great power of the Spirit of God.

If you look at the very beginning of Chapter 4, once again, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...”

And then as you come down further, you begin to realize in verse 14,

(Luke 4:14) “And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit...”

Then He states in verse 18,

(Luke 4:18) “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME...”

So, as we see His compassion and we see His love for mankind, we realize that the Spirit of the Lord is truly gracious, truly lowly and truly desires to serve. No doubt about it. Yet, as we come to this passage and we look at this passage, we begin to see a confrontational side of the Spirit of God. Unfortunately, I think when people perceive the Spirit of God, they perceive the Spirit of God as perhaps something that is less than confrontational, and yet nothing could be further from the truth. Now, we're not talking about somebody who's combative, but what we're talking about is somebody that will stand up for what is right and will speak up when it's time to speak up and is not afraid of saying what is right. We perceive, I think, oftentimes this spirit of mercy and the spirit of compassion and the spirit of grace, which truly God is full of, as almost in terms of weakness. When we perceive the spirit of grace, we perceive it, perhaps as a spirit of

something that is shy and timid and even avoiding confrontation. Once again, nothing could be further from the truth. This is not the Spirit of God. Where the Spirit of God is, there is boldness.

Just to reiterate this and to go to another book that Luke wrote by the power of the Holy Spirit, if you look with me in Acts 4, where we see the disciples, the apostles of Christ, proclaiming the word of God unapologetically with great power. If you look with me in Acts 4, it reads this way as Peter begins to display the power of the Holy Spirit and proclaim that the works of power was a result of the power of the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 4:8) “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit...”

See that phrase right there? That's telling us that this is the Spirit of God doing the work.

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them,

“Rulers and elders of the people,

(Acts 4:9) if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,

(Acts 4:10) let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified...

Oh, wait a minute. I think that's a little judgmental, don't you think?

"... whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health.

(Acts 4:11) "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you..."

Well, that's definitely judgmental, and the very fact that he's actually pointing out that they're the ones that are the sinners.

(Acts 4:12) "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

(Acts 4:13) "Now as they observed the confidence of Peter..."

So, what was the result of the power of the Holy Spirit within them? Well, obviously great confidence.

As it goes on, of course, nobody knows what to do with these guys because they're so confident. They're coming across like they own the joint, so to speak, and they say, "What are we going to do with these guys?"

So, they actually pull them aside, and it says,

(Acts 4:15) "But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another,

(Acts 4:16) saying, "What shall we do with these men? ..."

"We don't know what to do with them." Of course they threatened them, and Peter goes, "You can threaten us all you want to. We're not going to stop preaching."

That's what he states, if you look in verse 19,

(Acts 4:19) "But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;

(Acts 4:20) for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.

They threatened them a little bit further, but that's all they can do because they're not afraid.

It goes on, of course, they quote that great text from Psalm 2, and they go, "Why are the nations raging?" Because they can't do anything about this. They can't stop God. Unfortunately, we proclaim God in such a mealy-mouthed way that people think that they can walk all over us and probably they can because you're not walking in the power of the Spirit of God. If you were walking in the power of the Spirit of God, they would be afraid of you. Did you ever think of that? I mean, if it is God. Now, you want to make sure it's God and not just you going into your arrogance. Because if you go in and you say, "Well, they're going to listen to me because I'm somebody," well, I don't think that's true, and you're going to get raked over the coals and probably stomped on. But if it's the Spirit of God, you better move and you better do what He says because that's the power of God. It goes on, and it says within the passage that we know that God ordained all of these things, that He did whatever He wanted to do, and then you begin to see in verse 29,

(Acts 4:29) “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence.”

What's the evidence of the power of the Spirit of God in you? You speak with confidence. You're not apologetic about these things.

(Acts 4:30) “while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”

(Acts 4:31) And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”

The evidence is clear that if you're filled with Holy Spirit, there's going to be boldness. There's going to be confidence and you're not going to be ashamed. I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. It's the power of God.

So, Paul has to deal with this, especially when he's talking with Timothy because he realizes that Timothy has some problems oftentimes perhaps speaking up in difficult

situations. So, Paul turns to Timothy, and he states to him in 2 Timothy 1:7, "Timothy, I want you to know that God has not given us a spirit of timidity." Now, the word that he used is oftentimes translated "cowardice," which is letting us know that oftentimes one of the reasons why we don't speak up is we're just afraid. We like to use other names and tags on whatever we say. We'll oftentimes use words like, "Well, we didn't want to hurt their feelings, or we didn't want to cause a ruckus; we wanted there to be peace."

Recently, Connie and I were at a restaurant and were talking to one of the ladies that oftentimes that serves us at this place that we go to, and she will come to us with her problems and issues and doesn't go to church yet, but we're still telling her, "That's where you need to be." I don't want to go into much detail about it, but she was saying something to the degree of "I know that I need to do this, but I just don't want to hurt their feelings." And I said to her, "Well, you're just being selfish and thinking of yourself." Connie turned to me after she left, and she said, "I don't think she's going to want to serve us

anymore.” But I said that not for me, but for her. When we begin to think in terms of, “Well, I'm afraid I'm going to hurt somebody's feelings,” and we hold back the truth that could help that person, we become selfish. So, you realize that when Scripture tells us that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Christ and that He was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor and He was to actually proclaim release to the captives. One of the ways that you proclaim release to the captives is tell them to stop sinning; stop doing the things that they're doing, because the very things they're doing is what's destroying their lives and hurting their lives and hurting the people around them. “I'm afraid how they're going to respond.” Well, why are you thinking about yourself? We come to this passage and Jesus becomes almost abrupt. In fact, when I first read this, I thought, “Why didn't you just let it go, Jesus? You were going pretty well.” I mean, the way that it starts off, He goes into His hometown. He's in the synagogue. He comes in, the Book of Isaiah is handed to Him. He opens up the book exactly to the place that it needs to be, and He talks about the fact that “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, and I've come to actually proclaim the

favorable year of the Lord,” and you go, “Wow.” It says that everybody within the room is going, “Wow, what gracious things He’s saying and how wonderful the word of God is, that God came to save.” And it is a wonderful message. It's such a wonderful message, but it's not the whole message because there's another part of this and the other part is, “But you're not listening.” And the other part is that you're not dealing with reality if you're not applying this to yourself. So, as Christ finishes the reading and He sits down, it says all eyes are on Him and of course, at this juncture, they're going, “Wow, this is just really great.” But then they scratch their head, and they go, “Yeah, but this is Joseph’s son. He couldn't be that.” Because once again, they're looking at the outward appearance. At this juncture, everything to me is still copacetic. Everything to me is still ok. I mean, they still kind of like Him and are glad to have Him there. Jesus just can't let it ride and it's one of the reasons why I just like this passage so much. I mean, have you ever been sitting in a place, everything's going well and it's just a wonderful time together and then somebody makes this stupid statement, and you're sitting there going, “I just can't let

that ride”? Because in some ways it defames the Lord or in some way it misrepresents Scripture or in some way, by the very audience that surrounds you, you know that those people are soaking in whatever is being said, and they're perceiving that to be right, and the Spirit of God goes, “You can't let that sit.” So, Jesus doesn't, and He states, if you look with me,

(Luke 4:23) “And He said to them, “No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! ...”

Now, I don't know if they said exactly that phrase, but of course as you come to the time of crucifixion, they're all crying out to them and they said, “Look, You could heal others. Go ahead. I mean, if you're who you say you are.” But the phrase that Jesus uses is pretty interesting to me. Of course this is in the Book of Luke, and we believe that He's coming from more of a Gentile perspective, i.e. probably even more from a Greek perspective, even though He might be even Syrian in His background, but He seems to be stating a phrase that is not necessarily biblical, but a phrase that was used with the Greeks as

well as the Jews would take some of these phrases of the philosophers.

It's interesting as you go to Acts, which once again Luke is authoring by the power of the Holy Spirit, you see Paul going into the Areopagus and he's dealing with the Greeks in Athens. As he begins to deal with the Greeks in Athens, he sees the (altar) unknown God and he begins to use things about the unknown God. He says, "This God that you don't know about, that's what I want to talk to you about." So, he uses things that man has made so that he would direct them to God. He says, "I know that you see some ambiguity about God. So, let me see if I can explain this one to you, because you have no idea. This is the one that created all things." Then he says, "And as some of your poets say, 'In Him, we live and breathe and have our existence.'" Now, that was actually a wisdom of the world, so to speak. They knew that there was a God. The Stoics knew that there was a force in the universe that controlled the universe, and they called Him the "God of order," or the "God of logos." So, they perceive these things, and of course, John will use what they know, and

he'll segue into the truth of that. Well, it seems like maybe perhaps with the myth of Asclepius and the physician of the Greeks and the mythology of all of that, I won't go into the detail of the myth of Asclepius, but he was actually killed by another god, and he was the great physician that would even resurrect people. One of the things that was said in that myth was "If you are such a physician, why couldn't you heal yourself?" So, as Jesus is really dealing with them, He's confronting them with sayings that they know, and He's saying, "No doubt you're going to be quoting secular people and turning to Me and saying these things." Well, immediately, that's kind of offensive. It's sort of like when Jesus is talking to Nicodemus when he comes to Him and He goes, "Ok. So, let Me quote an Old Testament passage." And He quotes it, and He goes, "So, let me ask you something Nicodemus." Of course, Nicodemus is a scholar in the Old Testament. So, He turns and He goes, "So, how come you don't know and understand this?" Now, once again, what Jesus was doing was insulting this sage, this great man. We would say, "Don't do that." And Scripture would say you need to. Because there are times that you need to

speak up. Now, I know somebody's going to be walking out these doors and saying, "Pastor says that I could just offend everybody I want to and I have the Spirit of God on me to do it," but the point of the matter is that yes, our speech should be seasoned, as it were, with grace, and we should be proclaiming gracious words. There's no doubt about that, but we misunderstand and misperceive, and oftentimes think that by correcting somebody, we're not being gracious; by correcting somebody, we're not being loving; by correcting somebody, we're not being compassionate. Once again, correction is a part of this.

When you consider in the Old Testament, in Numbers 12:3, as Moses is actually being pounced on by those around him and questioned by his authority, God says, "Moses is the humblest man that walked on the face of the earth." And you're going, "I just don't necessarily think of Moses as being the humblest." When you read about Moses, you know he's not a pushover, but he is humble in the sense that he'll do whatever God says. Once again, the clarification of this is that we realize that

we're ambassadors of God. We're not ambassadors of everybody around us. My job isn't to make everybody feel good. My responsibility is to please God and to make sure I represent Him appropriately. Now, that's true humility. If you start acting in the realm of being afraid of people and you walk in the realm of, "Well, I don't want to hurt somebody's feelings," then what begins to happen is that you're actually running in the realm of selfishness and greed for yourself.

So, as you come to this, you see Jesus began to deal with them in a very confrontative way. If I could put it this way. He says, "You're going to throw out this phrase, 'Heal yourself.'"

(Luke 4:23) "... Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well."

Now, the phrase itself seems to lend itself to the point that and if you were to take this text, then you were to go into Matthew text that refers to this as well, it seems as if at this juncture His father is no longer with them because in the Matthew text it talks about His mother, His brothers and His sisters, but the father is

made no mention of which is telling us the father is no longer alive. He says, "I know what you're thinking, 'Why didn't You heal Your dad? Why did your dad die?'" So, it's very subtle in that sense, but yet twisted. He says, "I know what you're thinking. 'Do this in Your own hometown as well. Why don't we see the miracles? Even to Your own family, You didn't show these kinds of miracles.'"

Let me just emphasize this, as you go in and as you see Jesus rebuking Capernaum, it seems to convey that He did probably some of the most miracles that He ever did. He says, "As a result of My miracles, you're going to be condemned most because you saw the miracles" and what He's actually conveying is not only are they held more accountable, but the miracles didn't make them believe, and that's something that people have to keep coming back to. It's hard for people to believe. "Well, if You show more miracles then we would believe."

Capernaum is a good example of that. They were shown all those miracles and they didn't believe. So, it's not enough that He offends them in that regard; in other words, "You're going to come to Me one day and you're

going to say this.” And that's going to be obviously used as an indictment against them, and He says, “And I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, ‘I should be doing this.’” So, Jesus is kind of expanding their thought process in saying, “This is Joseph's son.” Because He's saying, “I know what you're thinking. I know what you're feeling.” In John 2, as you come to the end of that chapter, it says that different ones were coming to Him and wanting great things, but it says that Jesus was not entrusting Himself to these men because He knew what was in the heart of men. So, He knew where they were going. He knew what they were thinking. Oftentimes you're with people and you know what they're thinking when they kind of throw out these little remarks. You wouldn't necessarily say something like, “I know what you're thinking.” But Jesus would, and He's not afraid to open it up. To be ungodly in my statement, it feels like we're opening up Pandora's box, but what God is doing is He's revealing the truth. We think that the truth is bad. The world has gotten us to think that if we can just kind of suppress the truth in unrighteousness, that's a good thing,

but Romans says it's a horrible thing to suppress the truth.

(Luke 4:24) “And He said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown.”

Now, He gives 2 examples, one with Elijah the prophet. Of course, they revered Elijah in the greatest of way, and then also Elisha. What He begins to reveal is that both these prophets ministered to people that weren't of the tribes of Israel. The question is, why do you think they went to somebody that wasn't of the tribe of Israel to give benefit to them, and he didn't go to the tribe of Israel? Was it that there weren't people in Israel?

So, it reads this way,

(Luke 4:25) “But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months...”

That's a long time for it not to rain.

“... when a great famine came over all the land;

(Luke 4:26) and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath...”

Which is basically kind of a town.

“... in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.”

In other words, this is a Gentile woman, a Phoenician woman; to be more accurate, a Canaanite woman, and she lives in a town that at this particular day and age is actually where Jezebel came from. Jezebel married Ahab, the king of Israel, and her father was king of Sidon. So, her father, being the king of Sidon, she was a wicked person that worshipped 850 prophets that were following Baal and the god Ashtoreth, and Hamunram is probably one of the other gods as well. So, you have this widow that lives in this godless place of Sidon, or just outside of that in Zarephath and God sends Elijah to her, to this woman that lives in this horrible place with all these horrible sinners. The question is, “So, there weren't any widows in Israel that he could have gone to during the time of the famine, to help them?” Because as the story goes, he helped this particular widow. She was actually getting her food together, and he said, “Could you give me some food?” She says, “I'm just getting the rest of my food together and my son and I are going to eat.” She's a

widow. “My son and I are going to eat, and we're going to die. So, this is our last supper. So, I guess if you want to join us.” But God used him to elongate all of that, and of course Scripture says that they never went without food for 3 1/2 years and never ran dry. “So, why would God help somebody from this country rather than our country?” It's bizarre that the Jews would read something like this and not get the connection in the sense of, “Maybe Israel hasn't always been wonderful; maybe we haven't always been godly.” But anyway, the way that it reads is,

(Luke 4:26) “and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.”

Then, he gives his second example, as if that wasn't bad enough,

(Luke 4:27) “And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

Remember that particular story, where you have this Syrian and he's the captain of this great army and he has a

Jewish servant girl and she understands that he has this leprosy, but he seems to have a generous heart?

However, what is very interesting about Naaman is he has a lot of pride. Nevertheless, through the process, God heals this man through the prophet Elisha as he has him dip in some water that he probably wouldn't have normally dipped in. The passage is showing us that God was being gracious to an Assyrian. He was being gracious to this woman that lived in another country outside of Sidon, in that particular region where everybody seems to be more wicked than the Israelites, and God says, "Why do you think I sent the prophets there?" Why do you think God did that? There's only one answer, because there was a better heart there than there was in their own country. Now, what Jesus is saying is that you think that you're righteous, and Scripture will actually go on a little bit further, saying, "No great works were done in this city because they were not believing." And what Christ is going to point out is, "The reason why great works aren't happening is because you guys are worse than they are." Now, if you say that to somebody, that doesn't endear them to you, and I have found that fundamentally,

everything about the gospel is really highly offensive to people. I mean, if you were to proclaim it right. Once again, it's not because it's not gracious words; it's not because He's not merciful; it's not because God's not compassionate. All of these things you begin to see in the gospel, there's no doubt about that. However, the one big problem with our gospel is it says, "You're a sinner," and people don't like that. We're seeing people back away from the whole concept of telling people the truth about things; in telling them the truth, their perception is, "Well, I'm really being a nice guy. I'm really helping them out." Well, then, why didn't Jesus do that?

There's a passage, if you look with me in Matthew 15. Which you probably recall, in which Christ is with His disciples at the time. Pharisees and the scribes were always criticizing, certainly the disciples of Jesus as well as Christ Himself. Their first initial statement to Christ in Chapter 15 is,

(Matthew 15:1) "Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said,

(Matthew 15:2) “Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.”

(Matthew 15:3) And He answered and said to them, “Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?””

If you want to see the difference in this, it's very clear. They're saying, “Why do You transgress our traditions?” He's saying, “Why do you transgress God's law?” Once again, that's very combative and to such an extent that if you drop on down to verse 12,

(Matthew 15:12) “Then the disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?””

(Matthew 15:13) “But He answered and said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.’

(Matthew 15:14) “Let them alone...”

Now here again, I think sometimes the thought is, “Well, I’ve got to patch this up because they look like they're

pouting and I don't want to make them feel bad.”

Sometimes, when sharing the gospel, the very thing you want to do is make them feel bad. As old Doctor Bob used to say, “You’ve got to get them lost before you can get them saved.” And people have to come to an understanding that they need a Savior. Our whole gospel is about that. I mean, you read Matthew 23, and the thing that's repeated over and over again in that particular gospel is, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.” How many times did He use the word “hypocrites”? The point is that He's very aggressive, very abrupt about things, and our gospel is that way. Our gospel tells people that they're wrong. Literally, if you think about it, and because of that, it infuriates them. I mean, Jesus will say over and over again to the disciples, and even on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:10-11, He says, “You're going to be hated by stating the things that I'm going to tell you to state. I mean, they're going to come after you.” And you come to Luke 12 and He talks about the fact that the people are going to be really angry. They're going to want to kill you and then in John 15, as well as 16, He says, “I'm telling you ahead of time, they

hated Me. They're going to hate you." Now, once again, what's making people hate you? The answer is because you're telling the truth. You're telling them that they're wrong. People don't like to be told that, and if you think about it, you're telling that they're pursuing the wrong things and you're working for nothing. I mean, people work hard all their life. They get these degrees and pedigrees and you go and you say, "I just want to let you know that everything you're working for is for nothing." I mean, Paul would call it dung. I probably wouldn't use that phrase. I would use a little bit of grace, but you're fundamentally working for nothing. In fact, Jesus will say in John 6, stop working for food that perishes. Work for something that's going to last. Our gospel will tell people that they're not good no matter how good they think they are. I mean, when Jesus is talking to the one guy, he says "Good teacher," and He says, "Why do you call Me good? Do you know there's no one good except God? Do you understand that?" Nobody wants to hear that. In fact, Romans 3 couldn't say it more clearly, "There's none righteous, not even one." So, the problem is you've been

worshipping the wrong god. You're worshipping mammon. You're worshipping money.

I was talking to somebody the other day and they said, "I've just got to get this, and I've got to get that," and I said, "The more you worship money, the more you're going to be miserable." Somebody's got to tell somebody that they're doing something wrong. Jesus is very clear within the passage. How do you think they responded? Well, I think you read it before.

(Luke 4:28) "And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage..."

Now, what we know about this particular region, Galilean region as well as Nazareth specifically, is some of the ancient writings actually give reference to what kind of people live there. And what they said about these people is that they were quick and impetuous and unrestrained. They were fundamentally a very wicked people, of course, influenced by a lot of the nations around them being Galilee of the Gentiles. So, does that pan out?

Well, the passage reads this way,

“And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage...”

So, they went from, if you look in verse 15,

(Luke 4:15) “And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.”

And then you look at verse 22,

(Luke 4:22) “And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips...”

They went from going, “How wonderful He is,” to “We're going to kill Him.”

(Luke 4:29) “and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill...”

Which, from what I understand is about a 40-foot drop straight down, like a cliff area that kind of hung over the hill there in Nazareth, and they're getting ready to push Him down. What happened? Well, He made it out. It's pretty interesting.

It says in the passage,

“and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.

(Luke 4:30) But passing through their midst, He went His way.”

There are two things that I actually put within the outline here, and that is there's a power that is fearless in the Spirit of God, and there's a power that is elusive, and that's very interesting because you wouldn't think that the two would go together because you would think that elusive or in some way even evasive would almost seem kind of cowardice in that respect. As Paul would talk to Timothy, he would say, “Don't be ashamed and don't be afraid and don't be cowardice.” We know that God wasn't cowardice. If He were cowardice, He would have never brought up the whole issue and would never have been confronted about the things that they said or the things that they were thinking. But the fact that He was elusive is very interesting to me, and it shows a couple of things. One is it shows the power of the Holy Spirit to protect you. In fact, the way that Peter puts it is, “Who is there to

harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?" And his point is, if you're putting your life in the hands of God, He can take care of you. You see some interesting examples of this elusiveness of Christ and let me just sort of give you reasons why He was not sticking around for a boxing match because, at this juncture, I think some of us would go, "Ok, I'm in it for life now." And God says, "But it's not time." So, as we go in this, we're going to be seeing that God is not wanting us to be combative, obviously, as you look at the passage, and He's not wanting us to be presumptuous in the sense of, remember the devil says, "Look, if You are who You say You are, just jump off the cliff." Look, if You can get away from a fight, don't fight. Don't look for the fight. The point is that there's a time for this. There will be a time when He will go to the cross. In fact, He'll set His face like flint and go to the cross, but look, there are some hills literally not worth dying on, and He had not finished His course.

Let me show you a couple of passages that make reference to this. One is found in John 7. If you look with me in John 7, you'll see Christ really revealing that "This

isn't the time for Me to do what I'm going to do," and you realize that He's not impetuous in the things that He does. There was a time in this text in John 7, that many were seeking to once again seize Him, and it says this,

(John 7:30) "So they were seeking to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come."

What's interesting is, in this particular passage, nobody was laying their hands on Him because they felt a pulling back. It wasn't because He was able to hide from them, but it was because they just couldn't. Because if you keep reading in this text, He's still there and He's still talking and He's still conveying the truth and some people around Him are just getting more and more angry, but they go, "But I can't get Him." And there's something that's holding them back, and you realize that's the power of God. If God has a work for you, don't worry about it. I mean, if you can get away from this, God may open the door for you just to walk out and everything, but God may have you still there, and you're saying, "But everybody

looks angry.” And God goes, “That's ok. I'll just keep them back.” In this text, God was keeping them back.

In fact, if you look in verse 44, it repeats it again,

(John 7:44) “Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

(John 7:45) The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, “Why did you not bring Him?”

(John 7:46) The officers answered, “Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks.””

Of course, they get pretty upset over that.

If you look at the beginning of John 7, of course His own brothers are going,

(John 7:4) “For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.”

And He goes, “It's not time for Me to show Myself.” So, all of this Chapter 7 in particular is all about the time.

If you look in Chapter 6, in the passage, you read that many of the people, because of the benefits that Christ

was giving them, it says in verse 15, they wanted to take Jesus by force and make Him king. In that particular setting, Jesus made Himself elusive because He wasn't seeking the position of being the king of this world. He was going to be the King of all. So, it wasn't time. Once again, it wasn't the place. Is this cowardice? No, it's absolutely not. In fact, it's the strength of God. Quite frankly, if Christ wanted to act in accordance with His own safe keeping, He would have gone with the realm of when everybody was on His side and wanting to make Him king; He would have said, "This is a great time for Me to move." But instead, He forwent this. This reminds me and should remind you that when you get into a place and when you have to say something, you're not trying to elevate yourself. You're not trying to win an argument. You're saying something that has to be said for the good of that person and for the kingdom of God above all. In other words, you're not going to misrepresent the kingdom of God and you're not going to be silent when they're saying something against God. I've oftentimes thought about it in terms of my wife. I mean, if somebody was coming to me face to face and they were saying something against

my wife to my face, what, do you think I'm not going to say something? I would trust that I would do it graciously enough to where I wasn't slamming them to the floor, but I would trust that I wouldn't be neglecting my love for my wife above all. When you think of taking stands, when you think of being confrontive, are you going to let them talk that way about the One who died for you? Are you going to say nothing about that? Paul was very concerned that with Timothy having to lead the church at Ephesus, that he might pull back. So, Paul continued to remind Timothy of these things.

If you look with me in 1 Timothy 5 in particular, we actually come to a passage that deals with elders that are within the church. A very unique passage because in this passage he deals with the fact that there could possibly come a day and a time in which one who is in leadership is doing the wrong thing, and maybe accusations coming against him.

So, the way it reads is,

(1 Timothy 5:19) “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.”

(1 Timothy 5:20) Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.”

Now, is that an uneasy moment or what? Are you and I trying to avoid uncomfortable circumstances? This would be an uncomfortable circumstance. “You want me to call this guy out on the carpet in front of everybody?” He said, “Yeah, if you know it's true.” How do you think Timothy's feeling about that? Well, he's in probably one of the greatest cities, the city of Ephesus. They say the Areopagus was all marble, the streets were all marble, and it was this great place with lots of wealthy people. You have this little Jew boy, Timothy, that's in charge of the church in Ephesus. I wonder how he's feeling. Well, probably not good about it.

He says this,

(1 Timothy 5:21) “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias...””

Which means that you have to speak the truth. Now, let me bring this a little bit closer to home. You may have

children, young or grown up. If they're doing something wrong, you can't be silent about it, and you need to say something. One of the rules that we had in the house, I don't care how old you are, you cannot disrespect your mother in the house. What you do outside I can't control. I can't follow you around once you're out, but not in this house. You're not going to do that. You have to take stands and it's good for the kid. If a child is disrespectful, one problem is they're not going to live long, according to the promise. I mean, I'm not talking about you're going to get them. That may be true too, but they're not going to live long according to the promise. I mean, "Honor your mother and father," which is the promise that they would live long and be prosperous, so to speak. (Not trying to be Star Trek on you.) The emphasis of this is that you're actually doing them a favor. You're thinking of them. By allowing them to live that way and to be disrespectful, you're hurting them and by being silent, you're hurting them.

He says, "You have to do this without bias."

"... doing nothing in a spirit of partiality."

I wonder why he keeps reminding him of that. I mean, you're going to have favorites. I'm not going into much detail because they're my family but my daughter, they've been having a little trouble with one of the older ones and they've basically all moved out. The two that were with her are the two that they've adopted, and it's been a wonderful thing for them to have them in the house. But the kids are pretty much out of the house, but recently they had to take a stand with one of their children. The dad as well as my daughter, they held strong to their guns and that wasn't an easy thing. I told her, "I'm proud of you. You did the right thing." I said, "You don't have to worry. I believe he has good bones, but I'm proud of you for doing it." I remember thinking, I remember my daughter saying, "I enjoy this child more than any of the other children." And I'm saying to myself, "Ok, that's going to be a hard one to discipline. That's going to be a hard one to stick in your guns to." Do it without bias; do it without partiality.

It goes on and says,

(1 Timothy 5:22) “Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily...”

Because of course this could cause some problems and could cause you to have to do this more often than you would want.

“... thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.”

Then he states this,

(1 Timothy 5:23) “No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.”

Why is he sticking that in this text? The reason why is he's having stomach problems because he's having to be confrontive. That's the whole reason for the passage. What we have is somebody that has a tendency to be timid and has a tendency to maybe not be confrontive in a particular situation. So, what he's having to do is causing him great, great concern inside and anxiety inside.

(1 Timothy 5:24) “The sins of some men are quite evident, going before them to judgment; for others, their sins follow after.”

(1 Timothy 5:25) Likewise also, deeds that are good are quite evident, and those which are otherwise cannot be concealed.”

The passage is clear that “You're going to have to deal with some issues, some you're going to see maybe coming later; other problems maybe you can see right away, but you're going to have to deal with those problems, Timothy.”

He will end, if you look with me in 2 Timothy 4, this way, and of course, Paul is getting ready to go home with the Lord. He says, “The time of my departure has come,” and he's very clear in all of this. In 2 Timothy 4, he says this,

(2 Timothy 4:1) “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:”

Now the question is, why does he start off that way? The answer is, because Paul is showing that there's a greater

authority that he's responsible to. What does he tell them to do? Watch the text.

(2 Timothy 4:2) “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.”

In that phrase, there's only one that seems to be encouraging. The others are corrective. Which is saying that a lot of our ministry is going to be corrective. Now, once again, you can't do it for yourself; you can't do it because you're mad at somebody, “Well, I'm going to tell them what the right thing to do is.” Because once you do that, you miss the whole point; it's not the Spirit of God that's moving in you. But if the Spirit of God is moving in you, you're thinking what's best for them. I can't be quiet because if I am, that will hurt them, and it will hurt the kingdom of God. I'm not going to do that.

Obviously, we don't have time to do all of this, but as you go through the Gospel of Luke in particular, you'll see in Luke 7 and Luke 10, very interesting incidences. In Luke 7, Jesus will be invited to a Pharisee's house. So, the Pharisee is paying for the meal. I mean, it's his house. So, Jesus is

eating it. Jesus is a guest at the Pharisees' house. A woman from the street comes in and she begins to wipe Jesus' feet with her tears. Now, if you understand the context, here it is, it's the Pharisees house, he's being gracious by inviting Jesus over. He's feeding him. In the text, Jesus will insult the host. The woman from the street that wasn't invited, He'll elevate. He'll go to Mary and Martha's house, and He'll insult the host. He'll say, "Martha's not doing the right thing." She's doing all the serving. She's doing all the work. He says, "You're not doing the right thing. The important thing is the relationship. You've missed it, Martha." To Peter, His own disciple, He will say, "Get behind me, Satan." Think about that. Think about how confrontive Jesus was. There will be a time that He'll offend people in the sense of, "You're going to have to eat my flesh, drink my blood, and they say, "Ok, wait, we're Jewish, we're kosher. We don't do that stuff." And He goes, "So, this offends you." They go, "Yeah." He says, "Ok, goodbye." And then He turns to the rest, and He goes, "Do you want to leave too?" The point is, was He gracious? Yes. Was He loving? Yes. Was He compassionate? Absolutely, but that doesn't mean that

He was weak and that doesn't mean that it wasn't power that was moving Him and that doesn't mean that you and I should pull back from the truth and that doesn't mean that we should hurt somebody because we're afraid of what might happen. We only have One to please, and the power of the Spirit of God within you operates in that realm. What God would call humility, people are going to call arrogance. What other people would call perhaps critical, God's going to call humble. "Because you did what I told you to do." And this is one of the reasons why people will oftentimes hate us, because we're going to speak the truth; we're going to speak it in the love. I don't think you should say what you say just to argue or to win a battle here, but the Spirit of God should be so strong in you that when He begins to tell you, "You have to say something," you need to say something, and what a wonderful power that is.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks for the Spirit of God within us, and we ask that You

would work within us. We realize that the souls of those that we love are at stake and the very thing that we would think might help them is the very thing that would doom them. So, Lord, let us not walk in the relation to what others may think, but may we walk in accordance with what pleases You, knowing that whatever that is, that's best for everybody else.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, I'm asking you to walk in the Spirit, and it doesn't mean that you give people what they want. It means that you do what God says, and there's going to be boldness about that. There's going to be confidence in that, and though the words you long to be gracious and compassionate, you also need to be corrective and directive.