

Authentic Christians

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[0 : 00] Let's take your Bibles then this morning and open them to the Gospel of Luke, Luke chapter 12.

And our text for this morning is verses 8 through 12, so I want to read that first of all. A passage that speaks so strongly to Christians, to believers.

So let me go ahead and begin reading, starting with verse 8. Verse 8.

Now when they bring you to the synagogues and the magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer or what you should say.

For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that hour, that very hour, what you ought to say. Now, of course, this past Friday, America celebrated her 238th birthday.

[1 : 45] Birthday as an independent, sovereign nation. And you know your history. It was July 4th, 1776 when the Continental Congress adopted, signed the Declaration of Independence.

And so, that was 238 years ago, this past Friday. And we celebrate that birthday of our country every 4th of July, don't we?

And it's good that we do. It's the right thing to do. I hope that you did. Now, when a person celebrates a birthday, it's generally accepted or expected that, you know, that you receive a gift or two.

And with the kids in here, if there are any still left, it's usually more than two. And so, you know, it's birthday, and so, you know, you ought to have a gift, right?

Well, I would ask the question, what would be the very best gift that we could give to our country? Very best gift. I mean, the best of best gifts.

[3 : 02] What would that be? And I would tell you that it is the one gift that America needs more than any other single thing. And not just America, but any nation, and all nations, need this particular gift.

And it's a gift that you can give. Every one of us here. Possibly every one of us in this room. Well, the answer to that, I believe we can find in this passage that I read just a moment ago.

There are three parts to the text. That's convenient because it's always pretty much understood that a sermon ought to have three points. And so, this particular passage lends itself quite well to that.

And so, there are three kind of movements, three distinct, definable parts to this passage. And I don't know if you noticed, but there is a common denominator in all three of these parts.

And it is the tongue. Did you catch that as I read it? It's the tongue. Or, more specifically, what a person says.

[4 : 12] I mean, just look at it. Verse 8. Whoever confesses me before men. That's something you do with the tongue. Well, not just the tongue, but ultimately it's the tongue.

And conversely in verse 9. But he who denies me before me. Again, what a person says. Or the testimony of a person's life.

Verse 10. And anyone who speaks. Speaks. To him who blasphemes. Again, the use of the tongue. What a person says. Verse 11. Do not worry about how or what you shall answer. Or what you shall say.

Again, the tongue is in view there. In verse 12. The Holy Spirit will teach you what you ought to say. So, it's very clear, isn't it?

[5 : 07] Everything in this passage is connected to what a person says. What you speak. Or, to put it this way very clearly.

To their spoken testimony. That's the idea in this passage. That runs throughout the entire passage. Now, of course, what you say is indicative of what is in the heart.

Ultimately. Though we can say things that are not true. And say things that are not necessarily indicative of the heart. But the overall idea is that what we speak is what's in the heart. Again, the old adage. You know, what comes up in the pump is down in the well. So, what we say is what is true of our heart.

And so, what is Jesus getting at here? In talking about what a person says. Or the testimony of a person's life. He is saying, what is, or asking, what is your outward, overt, audible, spoken testimony of your faith?

[6 : 22] That's something that we ought to pay close attention to. Not just what we believe to be down in the heart. But what you say with your lips. And also, in a sense, because they're so connected.

What you live with your life. Both things are in view here. And so, here's the application I want to make of this truth in this passage. What America needs more than anything else.

Is. Quote. End quote. Authentic. Christians. Not just Christians in name. We've had plenty of those throughout our history.

Plenty of those today. Not just Christian in the culture. The kind of Christianized culture. We've had that.

Almost since our inception as a nation. Though it has been waning quite a bit in the last decade, I would say. Kind of beginning to deteriorate. It vaporized because it wasn't real to begin with.

[7 : 25] We're not talking about a Christianized culture. What America needs more than anything else. Are Christians who are authentic in their faith. Authentic.

As the Bible describes and defines authenticity. And the proof is in the pudding. That is, the proof is in our overt, observable, audible, public testimony of Christ.

That is, I'm talking about here, what we say with our lips and what we say with our lives. That's what America needs.

So that's our subject this morning. On this kind of 4th of July holiday. We're kind of still in that way of thinking, in that mode. This is the subject.

And again, there are three kind of separate, definable parts of this text. And the implication for each one of them is, what is the testimony of an authentic Christian?

[8 : 25] That's what we ought to be. And that's what America needs us to be. What is the testimony of an authentic Christian? It's kind of a, so to speak, positive way of approaching this passage that has some pretty disturbing, pretty negative things to say.

And we're going to touch on those as well. But to turn this into a positive. What is the testimony of an authentic Christian? And here's the first one.

And these are really very simple. Jesus is Lord and Savior. That's our testimony. Unashamed testimony. That Jesus is Lord and Savior.

There is no other. No other. In a kind of tolerant culture in which we live. That wants to give equal footing and recognition for all other gods and faiths.

Our testimony, an unashamed testimony, is that Jesus is the only Lord and Savior. He's the only one. Only Lord. Only Savior. And it's Jesus.

[9 : 36] That's our testimony. Now, I would say to you that this testimony presupposes a solid belief in at least five highly politically incorrect truths.

Counting that one. But it presupposes some others. That number one. The God of the Bible. Not just God in some kind of generic sense.

But the God of the Bible is the one and only God. And Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus the Christ. Is his unique one of a kind son.

And number two. And number two. All are born sinners. Alienated.

Completely separated from God. And therefore under his righteous wrath and eternal judgment. That's a real warm fuzzy. That's a real warm fuzzy, isn't it?

[10 : 35] Would you say that's a politically correct state or truth? Certainly not. And I would add a third one. That Jesus of Nazareth. His death and resurrection.

Is God's only provision for sin and condemnation. Only one. There is no other.

And number four. Repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ. Is the only way to receive salvation.

To receive eternal life. The only way. That's really narrow, isn't it? And then number five. And this is the main point of verses eight and nine.

There will be a final. Now listen to this very carefully. This is the testimony of an authentic Christian. There will be a final judgment for all.

[11 : 36] And Jesus will be the determining factor as to whether one will be accepted or rejected. Now that is about as unpolitically correct or politically incorrect you could possibly be.

And really, we take all five of those. None of these truths are acceptable to an unbelieving world. None of them. But this last one is clearly the most unacceptable.

And this is what Jesus is saying in verses eight and nine. Look at it again. I say to you, whoever confesses me before men. Him, the son of man.

That's Jesus. Jesus will also confess before the angels of God. And conversely, in verse nine. But he who denies me before men.

Will be denied before the angels of God. No in between. There's no middle ground. There's no other option. There's not a little of one and some of the other.

[12 : 46] It's either one or the other. You confess me before men. And I will confess you before the angels of God. Now, if you deny me before men, I will deny you before the angels of God.

Now, the first thing that we need to know about these two declarations of Jesus is that Jesus is pointing to something out in the future. He's talking about something out in the future.

He's pointing to the final judgment. That's what he's referring to. And the repeated phrase, angels before the angels of God, is the tip off about that.

It's a clear reference to the final judgment of the wicked. For example, Luke 9, 26. For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his own glory.

That's future. And in his Father's and of the holy angels. They're all going to be there. All going to be involved there. Another example would be Matthew 16, 27.

[13 : 47] For the Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels. Again, a reference to the final judgment. And then he will reward each according to his works.

Another example, Matthew 25, 31. When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the holy angels with him. Then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him.

Final. It's judgment. It's judgment. And how about Revelation 14, 10. Those who deny Christ shall drink. Now get the imagery of this. Disturbing. Shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.

Drink of the wine of the wrath of God. Which is poured out full strength into the cup of his indignation. Wow. He shall be tormented.

That is those who reject, deny Christ. Shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels. And in the presence of the Lamb.

[14 : 51] Which is, of course, Christ. And other examples we could pull from. Examples even in the Old Testament. See, those who were listening to Jesus say these words. Now the disciples were his focus.

But there were, remember from last week, a myriad, tens of thousands of people standing around, seating around, pressing in. They could hear these words as well.

And so to his disciples and to the Jews who were present there. It was very clear that Jesus is referring to the final judgment. They understood that that's what he meant.

And what then is the criterion for a person's acceptance or rejection at the final judgment? What is it? It is acceptance or rejection of Christ in this life.

There is no mistaking that from the Bible. You can deny that if you want. But it's clear from Scripture. The criterion for a person's acceptance or rejection at the final judgment is acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ in this life.

[16 : 03] And who will be the judge of that? Jesus will be. It's all about him. He's the crux of the matter. It's all about Jesus.

And those then who persist in this life to deny Jesus as Lord and Savior will one day hear him say, I never knew you.

Depart from me. You who do unrighteousness. Practice lawlessness. That's Matthew 7.23, by the way. Now listen.

This is our confession. This is what we believe and this is what we confess to the world. Jesus is the only Lord. Jesus is the only Savior.

Acknowledge him and he will acknowledge you at the judgment. Deny him and he will deny you at the final judgment. It's all about Jesus. It's all about him.

[17 : 00] It's what you do with him. This is our confession to the world. What you do with Jesus in this life is the deciding factor.

It's the criterion for your eternity. Now that's not politically correct, is it? Definitely not. I mean, listen. If a person acknowledges Jesus at all, many in our world just acknowledge him as a good man and a moral teacher. And that's it. That's as far as they go with it.

If they acknowledge him at all. And to many in our world today, Jesus proclaimed a gospel of peace and love for one another.

And that's just the extent of his message. Or that Jesus taught us to care for the poor and to care for the oppressed.

[17 : 58] And that is just as far as they'll go with it. That Jesus, that we rather should follow his ideal of self-sacrifice. That we should follow his ideal, his moral example.

And that's really all that the cross is about. A kind of moral atonement view. We're just to follow Jesus' example of self-sacrifice. And that is as far as they go.

But he is certainly not Lord in any supreme sense. He's not God. And he is not the sovereign judge. My sovereign judge.

He's not at all. Certainly not. And he is certainly not the only way to heaven. That's what people believe. Many people believe about Jesus today.

If they believe anything about him. Or acknowledge anything about him. And you know, we live in a country and in a world where the true Jesus is denied every single day.

[18 : 57] And denied by most. And rejected. You may pay him some lip service. Give him some kind of credit.

Give him some kind of admiration. But deny him. Absolutely deny him and reject him as the one and only Lord and Savior. And many, even in our country, blaspheme him.

But the question is, because I'm speaking to God's people, is what is your confession? I'm not talking about what you believe.

I hope that you believe that Jesus is the only Lord and Savior. But what is your confession? But what is your confession? To the world around you? What is your testimony?

About him? What do you say with your lips? And what do you say with your life? Because the two must match.

[20 : 04] Jesus is Lord and the only Savior. And that testimony is what America needs more than anything else. We live in troubling times, don't we?

I'm not talking about economics. We're troubled about that too and other issues. But I mean troubling times morally. Just think about it.

Adrian Rogers used to say, What used to slink down the back alleys in America and now struts down the main streets. And it's not just wanting to be accepted.

It's wanting to be praised. We're to admire people who choose an immoral path. Be it homosexuality.

Gay marriage. Or transgendering. Come on. What's going on?

[21 : 09] Or other issues like, still abortion is an issue that we have kind of forgotten about it. Mandated health care that takes tax money to pay for contraception for teenagers and children even.

Not only that, but to pay for adults who think that their immoral lifestyle should be subsidized by the government. What? Are you kidding me?

In America? Absolutely. Legalization of marijuana. We could just go on and on with the list. And so what do we need to do about this?

How do we feel like we've got to do something about this? What do we do about it? What is the answer? What is the answer? A different president? A different Congress?

Godly, God-fearing justices to serve on our high courts? Is that what we need to do? Laws to abolish abortion? Laws to make illegal gay marriage?

[22 : 16] Laws to abolish, or rather, to reinstitute prayer and the Ten Commandments in the public forum? Is that what we need? What? What do we need?

What do we need to do? What does America need? Authentic Christians. Authentic Christians whose unashamed testimony with word and life is Jesus is Lord and He is Savior.

Trust Him. There is no other. Authentic Christians whose plea to a lost world and a lost community is acknowledge Him, don't deny Him.

Believe in Him. Confess Him. Bow and submit your life to Him as Lord and supreme ruler of your life. That's our testimony and that's what America needs.

Here's something else. Authentic Christians, this is what America needs, authentic Christians whose unashamed testimony is the gospel of Jesus Christ is true.

[23 : 32] It's true. The good news about Jesus is absolutely true. It's interesting how we see this in this passage, a rather troubling passage, by the way.

But let's just understand here at the front end that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus. You ever thought of the gospel in those terms?

I mean, the word gospel is used in so many different ways that it has become meaningless. I mean, you have to define what you're talking about when you say gospel, you know. That's the gospel truth. What does a person mean by that?

The gospel is the revelation of the Holy Spirit, the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

And it's contained right here in this book. In fact, that's what this book is all about. It's about Jesus. It's the testimony of the Holy Spirit of Jesus, concerning Jesus.

[24 : 38] And it's a testimony that you can accept or you can reject. And many do reject it. And, though, if you reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus, the full revelation concerning Jesus, if you reject that, then salvation is not possible for you.

That's pretty disturbing. I mean, there's no forgiveness of sin then. Once you receive the full revelation of the Holy Spirit concerning who Jesus is, and if you absolutely, persistently, willfully reject it, then there's no salvation for you.

Wow. No hope. Only the certainty of eternal wrath. Now, that's basically what verse 10 is all about. That's what it's saying. Look at it. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, that would be Jesus, of course, it will be forgiven him.

But to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. Now, I'm well aware that this passage poses a good many questions.

[26 : 06] But its meaning, really, I think is pretty straightforward. I think it's pretty clear. It's not really complicated. Though many have tried to make it, I think, too complicated.

Let me tell you what it does not mean, and then I'll tell you why I say this. It does not mean criticizing, blaspheming the Holy Spirit or this unpardonable sin.

It's not criticizing someone's ministry or preaching and saying that it is a work of Satan when in reality it was a work of the Holy Spirit or a true work of God.

That's how a lot have defined this unpardonable sin. That's really not what it is. Now, that's a pretty serious thing to do. Don't misunderstand me. That's not the unforgivable sin, unpardonable sin.

Or, let me add this one. Before, prior to your salvation, the unpardonable sin is not blaspheming the name of Jesus and saying that His work and ministry was bogus and that it was just simply some kind of religious hoax.

[27 : 18] Now, that's not a good thing to do. That's not the unpardonable sin. Now, listen to me. If either of those two that I just named constitute the unpardonable sin, where would that leave the Apostle Paul?

The Apostle Paul. He was guilty of both. As a Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus, he was guilty of both of those things. And yet, Paul was graciously forgiven and gloriously saved and greatly blessed as perhaps the greatest missionary that has ever lived.

none of that, but what about the Apostle Peter? What about the Apostle Peter? He denied Jesus three times, didn't he?

I mean, he even swore on it. He took an oath on it. I don't know the man. That's what Peter did, and yet Jesus saved Peter.

In fact, no sooner had the words come out of Peter's mouth, his words of denial, not only did the cock crow, but Jesus looked at him.

[28 : 35] Peter repented, and he was saved. And what about one of the thieves on the cross? What about him? You know, initially, both thieves, one hanging on each, crucified on each side of Jesus, both thieves initially cursed Jesus and mocked Jesus, and yet one of them eventually believed.

Remember? Having mocked Jesus, cursed him, and then he believed. He said, this man truly is the Savior. And Jesus said, today you will be with me in paradise.

You see, and this is exactly the point, I think, of the verse. People can and do reject Jesus, and a person can reject Jesus and be saved.

Gloriously saved. Forgiven and saved. It happens all the time. And if it is unforgivable to speak against Jesus and reject Jesus as Savior, then no one could be saved.

No one could be saved. But, and here's the meaning of the verse, I believe, the Holy Spirit is the one who reveals the truth about salvation in Christ.

[29 : 54] Christ. The Holy Spirit is the one who testifies of Jesus. Jesus said in John 15 and verse 26, but when the helper comes, and he's going to define that as the Holy Spirit, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, that's the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of me.

The Holy Spirit will testify of me. How? How does the Holy Spirit testify of Jesus? Well, in Jesus' day, prior to the New Testament being written and completed, and then the full canon being completed, prior to that, the Holy Spirit did this through the prophets, revealed the truth concerning Jesus through the prophets, through John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets. He did so through the preaching and teaching and proclamation of Jesus as He walked this earth and also the apostles and initially some of the close associates to the apostles, and He did so through signs and wonders.

That's what the miracles were all about in the New Testament. They're not repeatable. They were there to confirm the truth of the gospel until it was finally written down for us. And this is how the Holy Spirit testified concerning Jesus as Savior.

Today, how does He do that? He does it through the Word of God. The full, complete Word of God. He testifies to salvation through Jesus Christ through the inspired writers of the Bible, both Old and New Testament.

[31 : 33] The Bible says in 2 Timothy 1.21 that the writers were holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. They're born along by the Holy Spirit.

And so what they wrote was God's Word and it was completely without error. It's the full testimony of the person and work of Jesus Christ and how man must respond to it.

It's all written right down here in God's Word. It's the revelation of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said in John 5.39 You search the Scriptures and in them you think you have eternal life, but these are they which testify of me.

That's the Bible. And so listen, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is to having once received that truth to be persistent in rejection to the testimony of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

That's the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and it's just like the Pharisees in Jesus' day. In fact, I think they were in view primarily when Jesus spoke these words. I mean, from the very beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, the Holy Spirit testified to the true identity of Jesus.

[32 : 46] Do you remember where? It was in the Jordan River at Jesus' baptism when the Spirit in the form of a dove came down upon Jesus confirming His Messiahship, confirming He is the Redeemer, the Deliverer.

And they all witnessed that and yet rejected that. And they had the Old Testament prophets which were written about Jesus.

The testimony of the person and work of the Messiah. They also saw the evidence revealed by the Holy Spirit throughout Jesus' ministry.

They heard the preaching of the Gospel and the teaching of the Gospel. And they heard the message of grace and mercy and forgiveness in Christ and Christ alone.

And they also witnessed the confirming miracles that were done by Jesus and by the Apostle. You see, the Holy Spirit to that group of people there, the Holy Spirit to the Pharisees and the Jews of the day, the Holy Spirit had graciously given them the full testimony of Jesus Christ and salvation in Him, but they rejected the testimony of the Holy Spirit, therefore they could not be saved.

[34 : 02] There's nothing else. what more could they have? God had given them the whole thing and they blasphemed the Holy Spirit in that they persistently, determinately, willfully rejected the revelation, the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning Christ.

Christ. This is serious. And I think we have a couple of references in Hebrews that speaks to this. For example, Hebrews chapter 6.

In fact, turn to it. Hebrews chapter 6 verses 4 through 6. Hebrews 6, 4 to 6.

I want you to see this. I hope you have the Bible with you. If you don't listen very carefully. It's a disturbing passage. Disturbing for, I hope for no one here, but it is disturbing. Here's how it goes. For it is impossible. Now mark that word. Impossible. It is impossible. [35 : 20] For those who were once enlightened. What's he talking about? Those whose eyes have been opened. Opened to the truth.

The revelation of Christ. It's impossible for those who were once enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift.

Now mark, they only tasted it. they did not receive it. Only tasted the Savior. Only tasted salvation. And have become partakers of the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? That is the Holy Spirit is gracious to move in their lives. To move. To bring the gospel to them.

To reveal through miracles and signs the truth of the gospel. They partook of that. And have tasted the good work of God and the powers of the age to come.

[36 : 22] That is, they heard the preaching and witnessed the power of God in Christ. If they fall away, after all of that, if they fall away, the implication being it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.

They came right to the very edge, but instead of repenting. They had everything they needed. The full revelation of God. And they came right to the very brink of repentance and faith.

And instead of repenting, they turned from it. Rejected it. If they fall away, turn away from it, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, to bring them to that point again, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

This is a disturbing passage of Scripture. I wish we had time to just really unlock and dig into every part of this. But what I've said is sufficiently clear. But there's also another passage.

Hebrews 10 in verse 26 says something similar. Look at that. For if we sin willfully, willfully, and in the context willfully reject the gospel, that's the sin that he's referring to here.

[37 : 50] Willfully reject Jesus, the gospel, if we willfully sin. After, after what? After we have received the knowledge of the truth.

That is, there's been the illumination of the mind. The Holy Spirit has provided the truth, revealed all that you must know about Christ, and even opened the mind to understanding, to understand it to be true.

If then, after you have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.

Put that together. In fact, let's reverse the order makes a little more sense in our way of logic. If you have received the full revelation of concerning Jesus, the full testimony of Christ, concerning Christ, you understand it, it's right there.

But then if you willfully reject it, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, no possibility for salvation.

[39 : 19] It's frightening. Let me go on. But a certain, instead, what? A certain fearful expectation of judgment, a fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries, that is, those who reject the knowledge they have been given.

Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. That's how things were done in the Old Testament. And that's bad enough.

But listen to this. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy, who has trampled the Son of God underfoot?

You've been given the full revelation of God. It's right here in this book. And everything you need to know that testifies to the Messiah, Christ, and His work at the cross, His true identity and His work, and then instead of receiving it, you throw it on the ground and trample on it.

Per se, trampling on the very cross of Christ. And to put it even worse, counting or accounting the very blood of the covenant, that is the blood that Jesus shed on the cross, to count that, to regard that as something unholy, common, worthless.

[40 : 56] and here's the connection with what Jesus said in our passage, and insulted the Spirit of grace. That's the Holy Spirit.

This is the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. The unpardonable sin is to have received, been given and received the full testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning salvation in Christ Jesus alone, but then to willfully, persistently, determinately, reject it, then you cannot be saved.

Not will not, cannot. I'm not supposing to be able to tell you who's done that. I don't have any idea.

I'm not privy to that. But I will say that I suspect that millions of people in this country have already committed this sin, unpardonable sin.

And I think there are millions and millions, countless, who are even now in danger of it. That's why it's so crucial that we proclaim the gospel.

[42 : 23] I mean, just think about it. America has been, more than any other country perhaps in the history of the world, has been given the full testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning Jesus Christ.

who he is and what he has done and how you must respond to that and are commanded to. Our country has been given the full thing.

Bibles by the billions in our nation. I probably own 50 myself. I guess I need to share those.

Churches on nearly every corner, there are more churches than Walgreens.

Some places more churches than gas stations. I'm not sure. Walgreens gas station, I think they're vying for the most places.

Think of the churches in our history of Christianity in this nation, the witness of the church in this nation. Nearly since its birth, and it continues on and the gospel preached 24-7, cable and satellite and radio and internet and it's just everywhere you can't even miss it.

[43 : 42] Saturated with the gospel. That's not a bad thing, that's a good thing. The problem is that we've been so saturated there's many who have received this gracious revelation of Christ and concerning salvation in Christ and have willfully rejected it and so what more can be done?

What more is there for many? Once you have taken that step, what more could God say? What more compelling revelation could you now be given?

There is no more. This is frightening. And I say that there are countless millions of people in this country and just this country alone are on the verge of committing the unpardonable sin.

And so what does this country need? It needs authentic Christians who unashamedly speak and demonstrate with their lives that the gospel is true.

It's true. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is true. That's what America needs. One more. Authentic Christians or America desperately needs authentic Christians whose testimony, unashamed testimony, is that the word of God is my only message, my only defense.

[45 : 16] God is my God is my God that's it. And so really Jesus is telling us not only to be unashamed but to be unafraid. Unafraid.

Look at verses 11 and 12 very quickly. Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities do not worry about how or what you should answer or what you should say for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

We don't have a lot of time left to really dig into this but let me just point this out. We should as authentic Christians we should always be ready and reliant.

Just remember those two words. We ought to be ready and reliant. Ready to do what? To testify for Christ. Always ready to testify for Christ. At any moment, any time, spur of the moment, ready to testify for Christ.

At the same time, reliance upon the Holy Spirit to lead us in what we should say, how we should say it, to give us the courage to say it, and the power to say it. And that's what he's talking about.

[46 : 28] Now, this is not an excuse to be unprepared, you know, to spend some time prepared. It's not an excuse. Jesus is not saying that we don't have to study the Bible.

Far from it. I guarantee you, I don't come here on Sunday morning, you know, just, well, I'll just see what God has to say in his word. I have spent hours preparing to do that.

And I should. And you should spend a lot of time studying God's word. He's not saying we don't study his word. He's not saying that we shouldn't know scripture.

He's not saying that we shouldn't prepare ourselves in some way to share the gospel. We're to do all of that. The Bible's pretty clear on that point. Paul said, 2 Timothy 2.15, be diligent.

That is, study diligently to present yourself approved to God. A worker who does not need to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth.

[47 : 28] Paul also said in 2 Timothy 4.2, preach the word. He's speaking to all of us in that sense. Preach the word. Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort with great patience and teaching.

1 Peter 3.15, always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, but to do it with gentleness and reverence.

Very clear from Scripture. And yet, nevertheless, Jesus here in our passage is not talking about preparation. He's not talking about that here. Even though that should be a part of our normal discipline of life.

Jesus is talking about a readiness of spirit and heart and courage that would grant you the strength to testify of Christ.

That's what you're to be ready for. And Jesus is talking about a reliance upon the Holy Spirit to grant you a strong testimony of Christ regardless of the situation, whatever it may be.

[48 : 38] You remember, no doubt, a number of years ago in Colorado when a couple of crazed teenagers went on a shooting spree in a school in Columbine shooting murdering students and teachers.

And no doubt you remember one point they said to a group of female students, do you believe in God? And one of them said yes and died.

That was their testimony. One word, yes, at the point of a gun. Would you be ready even at the point of a gun to give that testimony?

We're living in a time when we must be ready to give a testimony of Christ. If life and death were in the balance, would you be able to say, yes, I am a follower of Christ.

I'm a follower of Jesus. For Jesus is the only way to salvation. You can mock me, you can fire me, you can sue me, you can find me, you can put me in jail, you can kill me.

[49 : 57] But I am a follower of Jesus Christ and he is the one and only way to salvation. That's what America means.

And this is not speculation, this is not theory, this is where we are today. I mean, Hobby Lobby was willing to shut their doors for what they believed. And what we're talking about here is something far more important than just simply, you know, a view on contraception.

We're talking about the very gospel of Jesus Christ. Would we be willing to give our lives for that? America does not need just a restoration of Christian culture.

What does America need? Christians! Authentic Christians. Real Christians. The real deal. Who are living out their faith every single day.

And who are unashamed and unafraid to give testimony of the transformative message gospel of Jesus Christ. Unafraid. That would be the perfect birthday gift for America.

[51 : 15] Are you willing to give it? Amen.