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## Resilient

### Part 3 – Refusing to Throw in the Towel Pastor Ted Cunningham

If you're joining us in the middle of this series, we are talking about resilience and what it means to withstand or bounce back from difficult conversations, difficult circumstances, how to bounce back from insults. Today, we are going to take it another step, but I have to ask. How many of you did the homework from last week? Do for a few what you wish you could do for all. And the students are like, "I don't need homework from church, Ted.

I think we all go, when we think about throwing in the towel... Who loves the Rocky movie series. Whose never even heard of the Rocky movie series? But we go to Rocky IV when Rocky is about to throw in the towel. People are screaming at him to throw in the towel and Rocky has to live with the guilt – *Would Apollo still be alive had I thrown in the towel.* When I think about this term like Rolling with the punches or sparring a few rounds... Every week, I meet people who are ready to throw in the towel like, *I've dealt with this long enough. I shouldn't have to put up with this anymore. It's time for my mental and emotional health to take a break and get a rest, so I'm just going to quit and be done.*

I think up to this point, we've said clearly that there are good reasons to quit a job, maybe to walk away from a friendship or to leave a church, but we're talking about those trivial reasons that we often give to quit and to be done.

Today, as we talk about withstanding and bouncing back, we want to make sure it's not just about you, it's not just about me. Yes, I may need to take a break or press pause for a little bit, and yes, your mental and emotional health is important, but ultimately, it's not important just for you. It's for God and others. So, the ultimate lesson that we are taking today as we talk about refusing to throw in the towel, the ultimate lesson in resilience for us today and in this series is **bouncing back to glorify God and serve others.**

If you bounce back, if you go through a difficult circumstance or a situation and it's all about you and just about you being cared for at the end of it, you've missed the whole point. If it's just about me, I have failed the test. I want to be one of resilience who can go through the difficult, hard, painful, trying seasons of life. I want to be one who can handle suffering, knowing that we've never been promised a life free of suffering. Follower of Jesus, You will suffer. What I want you to see today, as travel companions, is your Christian faith and suffering.

This may not be why you came to church today. You want a way out of suffering. You're done with suffering. You don't want any more difficult situations. Here's the good news. You will only have to suffer in this life. That's it. Do you know what we are promised? It won't go with you into eternity. So, you can stand on that truth. Don't stand on the truth, as I see all the time online... I don't know how much whining you see online. I see a lot of whining online. And then I see other believers come online to try to comfort and do a terrible job comforting because they start saying, "No one should have to go through this." Where are you getting that? They'll say, "I'm sorry you're going through this." That's okay to tell somebody. "How can I help?" That's a good thing to say. But to give this false hope or false promise that God never wants you to go through this, and when you come to Christ, everything is going to be sunshine and rose pedals... Some of you are like, I had a friend invite me here today for the first time and this isn't at all what they told me it would be like. *I was told pushups out in the courtyard after the service.*

You'll get your Pushup and I want everybody to enjoy a pushup. For those who don't know what I mean by pushup, it's that toilet paper roll holder with sherbet in it. They are out in the courtyard waiting for you as we talk about moving up. But we want to pass this test. We want, at the end of our life, to be able to say, "I was able to stand. And when I did get knocked down, I bounced back, and I bounced back stronger." To glorify God and to help others.

Paul says this in 2 Corinthians 12, **9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight...** Remember scripture used synonymously the words delight, contentment, joy, and happiness. I find joy, I get happy, I am content **...in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

You grew up singing the hymn. I don't think you can call yourself American without knowing this hymn. We've all sang it. "Through many dangers, toils, and snares, I have already come. Was grace that brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

How long do I have to keep this resilience up? Until the Lord returns or calls you home. And his grace will sustain you. So, today, as we talk about truth, as we talk about grace, we are reminded of this in Acts 13 and 14, as we jump into this great text, that God has always grown the church on the backs of suffering believers and leaders. He's always grown the church on suffering believers. And I hope this church is always known for being a church that speaks truth clearly and boldly. I hope we are always known as a church that stands on the Word of God and we're not ashamed of it, we don't back away from it. Again, follower of Jesus, the culture, as it drifts away, as it gets more and more... I can't think of a better term than kookie, we shouldn't be shocked. It's going to continue to go that way. Some of you are wanting it to get better. I don't think it's going to. But what I do know is the truth doesn't change. So, we stand on the one who delivers this promise to know that he will be with us through all suffering.

We dropped my son off at Liberty University this week for college. I wrote a letter. It was just one page. I got this idea from one of the deans at Liberty who said, "My dad dropped me off at college 30 years ago and he had a prayer written out because he knew he'd get choked up. My dad was a Baptist preacher. He pulled that prayer out and it was three points, all alliterated in his prayer."

He said, "My dad the first one, got verklempt, couldn't finish the prayer, handed it to me and asked me to get out of the car and read it on my own."

There are some parents in here right now that probably dropped somebody off this week and maybe you're experiencing that. I wrote in the letter, I said, "Carson, you're at a school that's very diverse. It's diverse ethnically, it's diverse denominationally, and there are a lot of different thoughts and opinions that you are going to bump up against. You're Mom and I always wanted you to leave our home with Jesus as your source of life and scripture driving the bus... period. You're going to come up against some denominational clichés in your classes. Just roll with it. you're going to have some people that get passionate about non-essentials. No matter what happens, keep Jesus as the source of your life and scripture in the driver's seat.

And may that be true of each one of us here, that no matter where culture goes, no matter how far it strays and drifts, we shouldn't be sitting there going, "I can't believe it, I can't believe it." We continue to say we will stand on truth, and we will speak it clearly and we will speak it boldly. And that will bring with it suffering. That will get people coming at you from all over the place. You'll want to say, "I can't take it." If you're not careful, you'll back away from truth. If you're not careful, you'll back down. You'll get knocked down by somebody who posts some mean insult to you online. It's time to get up and keep proclaiming the truth.

In the debrief today, somebody asked me that I should probably warn those of you who are passionate about the message up to this point. Don't be a jerk. That's not what we bounce back to. We bounce back to bring glory to God and to serve others. And to speak the truth and to know our conviction.

As we are going to see today, the church has always been growing. If you have your bibles, I want you to turn to Acts 13. In his book on Paul, his biography on Paul, he traces through all of Acts in this great book. He gives one of the best definitions of resilience that I've seen up to this point in our study. He says, "A ministry that lasts..." I would also say, a follower of Jesus, a Christian that lasts. "...Is one that relentlessly perseveres through periods of enormous persecution." What a great definition of resilience for us. "One who will not back down, will not stop when knocked down, will get back up and continue to preach and proclaim."

Do you know what you are going to see today in these two chapters – Accts 13 & 14? They taught about Jesus, they preached the Word, they met in synagogues. They never stopped. The more hits they took, the more they kept going. And the more people came to know Christ. That's why we don't back down.

Let's jump into Acts 13: 1-3, **1 Now in the church at Antioch...** You are going to see two Antiochs on that map. We are going to look at that map in just a moment. **...there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.** (who is Paul) **2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."** **3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.** And we see at the beginning of the journey, and you'll see on the map in just a moment on to Cyprus.

**4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues.** And this is key to begin with. **John was with them as their helper.**

So just imagine someone alongside them to encourage them on the journey, to carry luggage on the journey. We all love a helper on the journey. I'm sure you're getting back from summer vacation and your small children were of great help carrying the luggage through airports and through theme parks, but we all like to have that helper, especially on a long treacherous journey, which is what they set out on.

Last week, I encouraged you to download this map. Some of you did. I know two people downloaded the map and read through Acts 13 and 14, so I did for two what we can't do for all. But in Antioch, they are sent. They go through, and John is with them. This is important because this picks up where we spent time last week and the end of Acts 15 when Paul and Barnabas decide to go on a journey, but then they get into conflict over whether or not to take John Mark. They have a sharp disagreement, the scripture says. But they begin here in Cyprus, on their journey, and John Mark is with them. And here's what we read in continuing in this passage in the City of Antioch.

**13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.** Here's one of the first observations we want to see today. Not everyone who starts with you on your journey of faith will end that journey with you. Not everyone who has been of great encouragement to you in the past will be there for you at all times. I think everyone in here, if you've walked with the Lord for any length of time, you've felt some betrayal. You have felt some hurt from someone that walked away from you. Here's where it's really hard. It might have been someone who led you to Christ who is no longer there with you. That's the first thing. And I want you to see... I want us all to make some observations on the map. From last week and now into this week. Paul and Barnabas were both committed believers in Christ Jesus.

Paul and Barnabas were both mature believers. As we read in the Jerusalem Council's letter last week, they both shared the same message. At the Jerusalem Council, they were settling the debate over whether or not a gentile needed to be circumcised. And there, Paul and Barnabas shared the same message, and it is solid. It is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. That is where salvation comes from. So, they shared the same message, the letter said they risked their lives together.

So, there was a bond between Paul and Barnabas, but what I want you to see today... and this map and we are going to read through this journey. I want you to see, as they journey north, the hardship and the persecution gets intense, another observation we need to make. Sometimes we think the longer I go in the faith, the easier it will get. Don't buy that line from a preacher. Some of you have walked with the Lord for a long time and the obstacles and the pressure and the hardships and the suffering and the trials have never let up. It's been a challenge. I imagine it could let up and one way it can let up is for you to walk away and not do what you are called to do. But we are talking about following Christ and sharing the message and standing on truth.

Now, going back to the text in Acts 13, we read, **13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. 14 From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down.**

We obviously can't read it today, but he preaches a message, he shares the gospel, he shares the good news of Jesus. And what we read in Verse **44 On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.** Is that they were invited back and on the next sabbath, almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. I think this is important. I have a friend today at a much larger church north of here. He is doing an entire series on the Mega church. The reason he's doing the series on the mega church is because he said, Barna's research shows that only 6% of Americans trust big churches. We live in a season where trust in leaders is at an all-time low. That's why our call to live above reproach needs to be at an all-time high. He said we're addressing this because sometimes people see a big church and they just automatically think bad. They think it's just a show. But another observation from our text today is when you preach the gospel and when you stand on truth, people want to hear it. People are starving for truth. And in this case, you can say it became a mega church gathering. The whole city gathered to hear.

They wanted to hear. People are like, "I'm not here today to hear, I'm here for the pushup." I don't believe that, I really don't. It goes on to say, **45 When the Jews saw the crowds...** These crowds were larger than theirs. **...they were filled with jealousy.** Do you see that today in the church? We see it all the time. That's why you'll hear accusations come at people. "Well, that church is just all about the pushups and the fun and all of that in the courtyard". What happens in the courtyard today is what we call fellowship. We eat together with glad and sincere hearts. We enjoy one another. And we can enjoy one another in the Lord.

I need some of you to brace for impact because we've got another Super Bowl coming up. And I know some of you are fired up when we do fun things around the Super bowl. That's why we're no longer calling this a service; we're calling it a gathering. Do you know why? It's because when we gather, we fulfill all five purposes of the church. We worship, so if you thought you came to a worship service, that's part of it, but it's not the only thing we do when believers gather. We fellowship – We enjoy the company of one another. That's why it's okay to play a game with one another. Discipleship – becoming more like Jesus. That's a purpose of our gathering. Ministry – we serve needs.

There are people that walk in here today with real needs. We hope that this church is meeting needs. You just gave an offering to meet the need, and guess what? Benevolence will go out today. Evangelism – we hope people come to know the Lord today. We just had a baptismal gathering... We're trying to use that language because some people walk into a *service* and think this is exactly what's supposed to happen, these two things. There is a lot more going on than you think. And there is a lot more that's supposed to happen in the purposes of the church when you and I gather. And it is okay that when we are practicing and trying to be healthy with the five purposes of the church, that the church grows. But guess what? We are still going to take the hit. Some of you I know take the hits from family and friends.

They saw the crowd and they were jealous so, **They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him.** Here it comes. We're going to take you out.

Verse 49 - **49 The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.** Through teaching, through preaching, and through suffering. **50 But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and**

**expelled them from their region.** So, they've been deserted by John Mark, they've been kicked out. Have you ever been kicked out of some place. We won't get into that right now.

**51 So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. 52 And the disciples...**Look at this. This is resilience. In all of that abuse, persecution, desertion, the disciples **...were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.**

Wait a second. So, I can suffer and be filled with joy? Absolutely. With Jesus as your source and scripture driving the bus. Proclaiming the truth

Let's move on to Iconium because it's going to get a whole lot worse. We are here to encourage you on your journey today. Whatever you're going through, it could be a lot worse, and it probably will be.

Acts 14: **5 There was a plot afoot among both Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, to mistreat them and stone them. 6 But they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe...**I think this is important. We say it all the time around here. You don't have to show up to every fight you are invited to. We have a clear example of understanding harm is coming to you and you can get out of harm's way. This is why... I don't know if you see it all the time with people that just demand answers out of you. Do you know anybody like that? That's some of you in this church too as well, some social issue will hit this week and you'll be like, "Ted, I demand you speak to it." Nah. I don't have to address that right now. Let's just keep preaching Jesus. There are times we have to get into it, but we don't have to let the agenda of the church be directed by the news cycle. It just doesn't need to happen. I've gotten caught up in that in years past and it hasn't benefited us or led us to being a healthy church. But when Jesus is at the center of it all, it's interesting. That's where we see health. That's where we see growth. So, this plot is to take place and their like, Okay. They found out about it and fled. Walking away is not always a bad thing. **...Lycaonian cities of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding country, 7 where they continued to preach the gospel.**

Now, when we get to Lystra, things get really bad but there are two parts here to this story. I want to spend a little bit more time here in Lystra. **8 In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. 9 He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed 10 and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. 11 When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!" 12 Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. 13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.**

So, what you get... in just a short period of time... Have you ever heard the expression, "The Honeymoon is over." A friend of yours can take a job and they love it for week or two and then it gets bad. What do we say to them? "The honeymoon's over. You've just got another 50 years ahead of you after that, but I hope you enjoyed the honeymoon." That's what we mean when we say that. And here, they are being treated and placed on a pedestal like gods. And Paul and Barnabas are like, "Whoa, whoa, none of this. No, you're missing it." They had to get back to preaching and declaring the gospel.

Here's what's interesting. As soon as the honeymoon is over, the rocks begin to fly. And if you're a leader here, you get this. You can be praised one minute and cursed the next. You can be applauded one minute and shot down the next. You can be placed on that pedestal and then the same person who did it can kick it out from underneath you. That's what happens.

Chuck Swindoll puts it this way. "One moment, you're taking a bow and the next, you're ducking. You're dodging the tomato or worse, stones. Once the honeymoon is over, the rocks begin to fly." And that's what we see as we continue in this story.

**19 Then some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium...** So, they came from the North. **...and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead. 20 But after the disciples had gathered around him, he got up and went back into the city.** I talked about this last week, that's not what I would do. If you were to stone me today and drag me to Nixa, I'm moving on to Springfield. I've made the decision. I will ask John Lindell for a job in a heartbeat, and say goodbye, shake the dust of my boots, and move on. What does he do? He goes back into the city. Apart from Christ on the cross, can you think of another example of resilience? "They weren't successful yesterday, let's see what they got today." I'll bet they still had plenty of stones gathered around. **The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe. 21 They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples.**

This is why daily reading plans can be great, but also a challenge for us because sometimes we're just plowing through the scripture. This is so important and a great example for us of resilience in the text. They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. What did they do after that? **Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch...** Some of the greatest persecution they've ever faced. "Hey, let's go back and strengthen the brothers there." I hope you see this. The first trip, then after he's beaten and left for dead, second trip. Now let's do the third trip. That ain't the end of it. I'm just saying, "I think they've heard the message. Let's trust them to get it spread around a little bit. Let's keep going.

**22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.** I hope you hear that today Now, this isn't saying in order to be saved you have to go through hardships. What it is saying is until the kingdom of God is established here, physical, literal. Until Christ is revealed, until the Lord returns or calls you home, you will face suffering for the truth. You will face suffering. And the call today is for you to join in that suffering. The call for you today is to be resilient in that suffering and in that difficulty and not back down. If you do get knocked down, you get back up. Not just get back up to keep going, you get back up to go back to what knocked you down.

Let's go back to the map one more time. I've added some red. So we went through Cyprus, they were deserted, abused, persecuted, plot to mistreat and stone them, flee, come down stoned and left for dead. I just want to point something out. Does anybody see this journey from Derbe to Antioch right there. I will swim from here to here to get back to the church I know that loves me and sent me. But what do they say? No, let's go back to all of those places where we were extremely persecuted. Not only that, but we also need to set up some elders. They need some leaders in those churches to help guide them and direct them through this time. That is called resilience. And to take you back to the

passage... and this will be the last verse in this text today. Now go back to Acts 15: 36 where we read, ***36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas...*** This is after the Jerusalem Council. ***“Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.”***

In the top of your bible, it may read in a paragraph heading – Paul and Barnabas – Sharp Disagreement. I was always taught that if you really want to understand the Bible, you have to put yourself into every story, and this week I did. I had a 14-hour road trip to Liberty this week with a radio that didn't work so that's why you're getting everything that you're getting. So, what I want you to do this week after all that we just looked at and all we just studied, and going through the map, I want you to put Paul, Barnabas, and then write your name. Put yourself in this story – sharp disagreement. I put myself in it.

So, Paul says, “Let's go back and visit.” There's not a doubt in the mind of Barnabas. He doesn't have a moment where he's like, *No, let's not do that*. I would just sit there for a moment and listen to Paul and Barnabas disagree over whether or not to take John Mark. I couldn't care less about John Mark. Whether he goes with them or not. After they get done in their dispute, I think I would be like, “I just want to bring up really quickly that we were abused, mistreated, and, Paul, you were stoned and left for dead. And guess what? I think they are going to be more people mad the next go around. You're actually proposing a fourth time going back to some of these Cities, walking back into these cities. My suggestion is we don't go. I'm being honest.

But isn't that how we all live our lives today? *That's just too hard, too difficult*. I see it all the time. The amount of whining online. I don't know if that wears you out, but that it absolutely exhausts me. I can't believe it. Listen, I can encourage you and get you back to a place of mental and emotional health for the purpose of glorifying God and serving other, not yourself. The reason you think so much about yourself and you spend so much time on yourself gets you into that mess in the first place. You want the antidote to selfishness? You want the antidote to constantly being focused on yourself? Just start serving other people and helping other people. Join them in their journey.

In his book on Paul, Chuck Swindoll, says, *“Over the years, I've observed that people who know who they are, who possess a clear sense of their mission, and who understand God's plan and purpose for their lives are people who experience genuine fulfillment. That doesn't mean they don't face extreme obstacles. (Of course, we will) Rather, it means they have learned to face those challenges in ways that transform obstacles into opportunities.(for the gospel) Rather than stumbling over them, they press through them.”* And that is our prayer for you.

In just a few moments remaining... And when I say a few moments, I mean six minutes and 37 seconds. Let's talk about a reliable game plan for resilience, let's talk about what to do when you suffer for the sake of Christ. I hope you understand that in the context of the text today. We're not talking about relationships where a spouse or a child is experiencing abuse or violence. You know we're not talking about that, but it's almost like today that qualifier needs to be put out in every message. We're talking about when you take a stand for Christ, and you give your life to Christ, and it is all about Christ and bringing glory to God and serving others. There will be hardships, you will suffer, and I don't see it stopping any time soon. But I do know what I have been promised, so let's look at that reliable game plan to encourage you.



**1. Consider the sufferings of Christ.** We looked at this the first week. We want to add to it today, Hebrews 12: 3, ***Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners...*** So, Paul and Barnabas are not the first to experience this opposition. ***...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*** Remember when you get to verse 4 it says ***In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.*** I don't know what you're going through, but just be reminded you have not shed blood yet for it.

In 1 Peter, we read, Don't just consider the sufferings of Christ, join in. Make up your mind to join in the sufferings ***13 But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed...*** Filled with hope and joy and delight and contentment ***...when his glory is revealed.***

If you view life as a marathon... I just know the day when we are face to face with Christ, I just picture myself taking this big exhale. That's why Paul says, "I've run the race. I've run it. And your race doesn't end until the Lord returns or calls you home. So, consider the sufferings of Christ. If you are a follower of Jesus, you have entered into that. Consider it, enter into it, and be overjoyed.

**2. Comfort others with the lessons you've learned.** Don't just make the comfort you've received from God about you, about your health and wellness. Get healthy, get whole, be well, but for the purpose of glorifying God in your body and in your life, and to serve others. He says, Praise be to God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any troubles with the comfort we ourselves received from God.

**3. Just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.** That you are promised. That you can be guaranteed of today. The suffering will not end, and the suffering is actually going to on to bring greater glory to God.

Travis Brawner, who is on our teaching team and an elder at our church, believes that this series is a galvanizing series for our church. Who are the ones that are ready to go and stick it out and bounce back for the purpose of Christ. So, comfort others with the lessons you've learned.

Dropping my son off this week, as you can imagine, it's been emotional. I've learned as a dad... or my kids have reminded me as a dad to not turn every moment into a teachable moment. Those are all the kids going, "Ted, could you say that one more time." You don't need to turn every moment with your children into a teachable moment. Sometimes, you can just be with your kids. And I was nostalgic.

Amy and I met at Liberty and now we're dropping our son off at Liberty. I had a book of lessons I wanted to give him in our last week together there. I just held it back. And then as the home sickness kind of sat in for both of us and saying goodbye... I've made fun of parents for years with this telling them to suck it up. My son doesn't usually ask me for these life lessons like this. My daughter does, but my son doesn't. He goes, "Can you tell me of a time you felt like this?" That was my opportunity for those 30 lessons I had banked. I was like *I'm going to share them all right now.* Nope. I go, "I got dropped off at college once in Chattanooga, Tennessee, across the street from a drug house. The first lesson we got in the dorm was all the streets we weren't allowed to walk down. It was pretty rough. A

lot of times I take people back there to see it and they're like, "I can't believe your parents let you stay here."

So, I was able to go through all the emotions. I think sometimes we need to give people a lesson when they ask for it even. I look around at all the blossoming almond trees in this room, the gray hair in the room. Again, I say it. You're probably in the most influential season of your life. You have so much to offer people who are going through difficult times and hardships. I don't want to come down on you, but I do want to say, don't waste the rest of your life whatever days or years you have remaining.

Some of you are in the first quarter of your life in your 20s and 30s, some of you are in the second quarter, maybe your 40s and 50s. Some are in the third quarter in your 50 and 60s, some are in the fourth quarter, your 70s and 80s. a lot of people are in here in overtime. I want you to use the seconds you have left on the clock to comfort others. Don't waste it. encourage somebody this week. Don't join in on the whining. Don't offer false hope. Don't tell them something the Bible never promises. Stop making up your coffee cup, bumper sticker Christianity promises. It's nonsense, utter nonsense. Go with the truth of God's Word, period. And encourage them.

**4. Call on others prayer support.** There is plenty you and I can do to encourage one another, and it starts with prayer. 2 Corinthians 1: 10-11, ***10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*** Someone this week needs your prayer. They are going through a difficult season. Don't give them false hope or lies that you found online. They don't need meme theology, they need the Book's theology, they need the Book's teaching. Give them the truth and encourage them and pray for them.

As I walked through the school of business at Liberty... And I heard this all the time in the 90s and it is now up on the wall, painted in big letters. And I love that it's in the school of business and government. It's something we heard from Dr. Fallwell as students at Liberty all the time. "Nothing of eternal significance ever happens apart from prayer."

This week, I want my life to be about bringing glory to God and serving others and I hope you join me in that.

Father, thank you for our time. Thank you for what you continue to do through our church and in our community. Persecution, sufferings, hardships, trials, all of it can knock a person down. For the one who has placed faith in Jesus, I pray that today is the day that they commit to the resilience and the stepping up in their faith, trusting in you, leaning on the brothers and sisters in Christ here in this community, around the world, that we would encourage one another in the faith.

For the one who has never placed faith in Jesus, that today would be the day they see that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through him. We pray this in the authority of the name of Jesus and everyone agreed and said... Amen.