FBS “Missions 401: To the End of the Earth—The Gospel on Offense & Defense” 3-19-17

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**Intro.** She’s a successful news anchor today & an evangelical Christian, but her faith has surprised her. She grew up in an Episcopalian home in Alaska, but relied on her parents’ faith through college. At that time she wavered between atheism & agnosticism. As a young adult, she considered having an open mind to be one of the best qualities a person could have, so her boyfriend challenged her to consider Christianity. She would give it a hearing, but she didn’t think anything would come of it. She began attending Redeemer Presbyterian Church in NYC, pastored by Tim Keller. She was intrigued by his deep thinking sermons, but turned off when he mentioned Jesus. After some time, however, she realized atheism was wrong & there may be something to Christianity. Another friend, Eric Metaxas encouraged her to join a Bible study & shortly thereafter, she believed in Jesus. Her name is Kirsten Powers & she was a commentator at Fox News. Tim Keller’s balance between sharing the gospel (on offense) & defending the faith (on defense) borrows from the Apostle Paul. We can also think of offense & defense in many sports—baseball, basketball, football, soccer, lacrosse, volleyball, tennis, golf (people defend & protect themselves when I swing a club!). As we continue our series “Missions 401: To the End of the Earth,” we look at Acts 24-26 & “The Gospel on Offense & Defense.” (read Acts 24:10-21, 24-27; 25:8-12; 26:1-29)

Theme: Evangelism & apologetics

Background: After Paul finished his 3rd missionary journey, he returned to Jerusalem where a Jewish mob beat him. Roman soldiers spared him & protected him in jail. When they discovered Paul’s life was in danger, they sent him to Caesarea by the Sea.

**Homework from Last Week:** How many of you shared the gospel/your faith this past week?

**Overview of the Narrative:**

* The Jewish leaders kept trying to pressure the Roman leaders to do away with Paul or send him back to Jerusalem. Paul responded with the same story every time, because he was a man of integrity (we may be tempted to change our story when pressured to make ourselves look better, but not Paul). Whether he was before Ananias the high priest, the Jewish leaders, Felix the governor, Festus the governor or King Herod Agrippa II (Herod the Great’s grandson), Paul remained faithful. Every time we see Paul challenged by religious & political leaders, we find him both sharing the gospel & defending the gospel (offense & defense).
* Paul defended his faith in the resurrected Lord & shared the gospel of hope. As Christians, we must defend our faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ & share the good news of Jesus, Who brings hope.
* **This text presents at least 3 elements in defending & sharing the gospel:**

**1. Be clear in your hope about the resurrection (24:15, 21; 25:19; 26:23; cf. 23:6)**

* The heart of Paul’s message is the once-crucified-yet-risen Lord Jesus Christ—that was his hope & that must be our hope, because Christ’s resurrection is the firstfruits of the believers’ resurrection in the last days (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:23)
* Whether we defend the gospel from people who criticize it or question it or mock it or we share the gospel with those in need, we must be clear about our hope in the resurrected Lord & our future hope in our own resurrection

Illus: “I serve a risen Savior, He’s in the world today, I know that He is living whatever men may say”—not just because He lives within my heart, but because He rose from the grave, the tomb was empty & He was seen by many

**2. Be faithful in your witness to others (24:24-27)**

* For 2 years, Paul faithfully witnessed to Felix about the gospel—faith in Christ Jesus, how one is declared right with God through faith in Jesus, self-control (once you surrender to Jesus) & the coming judgment (what will happen if you don’t surrender to Jesus by faith)—Paul could have given up, but he was faithful in his witness
* Sometimes we tell someone about Jesus & they don’t want to hear it, so we give up on them, but we should be faithful in continuing to tell them. We never know what all is going on in their lives so that they may become softened to the gospel, but if we give up on them, they may be open to a cult or some other world religion

Illus: We have several couples in our church who have been married over 50 years—that requires perseverance & faithfulness (even if there was a moment of unfaithfulness, they worked through it)—just as long marriages display faithfulness, so must we demonstrate faithfulness in our witness to others over time

**3. Be persistent in calling unbelievers to repent & believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (24:24; 26:18, 20, 27-29)**

* Paul wasn’t simply clear about the hope of the resurrection & faithful in his witness, but he was also persistent in calling unbelievers to repent & believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—part of sharing the gospel is telling people the need to repent & believe
* As in the last couple of weeks, I want to give you a couple of ways to share the gospel. One is an outline you can tell, the other is a picture you can show:

**The Roman Road for Sharing the Gospel:**

**1. God is Creator (Romans 1:19-20)**

**2. Mankind is sinful (Romans 3:10, 23)**

**3. Sin leads to death (Romans 5:12; 6:23)**

**4. God loves you & sent Jesus to die for your sins (5:8)**

**5. If you believe Jesus Christ died & rose again & surrender to Him, you can be saved (10:9-10, 13)**

**6. Those who are saved are no longer condemned (Romans 8:1)**

**7. Those who are saved should share this good news & live surrendered to the Lord (Romans 1:16; 10:17; 12:1-2)**

* As to showing the gospel, my friend Jimmy Scroggins of Family Church in West Palm Beach has developed the **Life Conversation Guide: 3 Circles** (go to lifeonmissionbook.com/conversation-guide)—turns everyday conversations into gospel conversations. 3 circles can show this on a napkin or an app. The first circle is God’s Design, which speaks to every area of our lives. We have problems, however, called Sin which leads to the 2nd circle of Brokenness. We try to leave the brokenness on our own, but we don’t get anywhere. The only way lasting change is going to happen is to repent from our sin & believe the gospel, the good news of Jesus who died for our sins & rose from the dead. Then, God allows us to recover & pursue God’s Design for our lives & share that message with others.

**Conc.** So whether you use either one of these approaches to sharing the gospel or the others I’ve mentioned over the last couple of weeks (personal testimony, gospel outline, 3 people or drawing of God, sinner & Christ), let’s make sure that while we are on mission for our Lord, we take “The Gospel on Offense & Defense.” This series is “To the End of the Earth” & we are part of the end of the earth from the gospel going to Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria & the end of the earth. Be clear about your hope in the resurrection. Be faithful in your witness to others. Be persistent in calling unbelievers to repent & believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In a few months, we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. It all started with an Augustinian monk who wrestled with the justice of God, knowing he could never be good enough. Then he read & meditated on the verse: “The just shall live by faith” & he realized the only way to live & be declared right with God was by faith in the completed work of Jesus Christ. He challenged the Roman Catholic Church to modify their beliefs, but when they refused, he protested & started a renewal movement in Christianity. Martin Luther came to know the faith & then began to defend it & share it. None of what I’ve talked about today can happen if you aren’t in the Lord, if you haven’t surrendered your life to Jesus. Won’t you do so today so you can start this life on mission for the Lord?