

Facing Your Threats

Building Core Strength

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Bible Text: Acts 20:28-31

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I would like to begin by thanking you for your fantastic service this week. I know some of you have been praying and some of you were moving chairs and tables. Some of you were cleaning and some of you were serving in the resource center. Some of you were hosting individuals in your home. On behalf of our entire staff I wanted to say thank you. I also just wanted to let you know that the Lord did some incredible things this week. I know many of us had the privilege of having some very significant conversations over and over again. We would just be standing out in the hall and somebody would walk up to us and want to talk and it wouldn't be five seconds before tears are running down their face and they are just wrestling with some serious and significant issues. And so thank you for your service.

And, in fact, I wanted to read a couple of encouragement cards. We make these available to our conference guests if they want to encourage someone, maybe a speaker or a person who served them. And there were several of them that just end up in my box that are actually for all of you. And so I wanted to read a couple of them.

Here is the first one by a lady who says, "I am so thankful for the time and service of all the volunteers, the man who helped me find my nametag, the woman who drove me across the parking lot when it was so cold."

Now just remember last week. Last week was not cold. This morning was cold. Last week was not cold. So where do you think she was from? Yeah, like way south. I will tell you where in a minute.

"The folks who man the trashcans at lunch." And then she writes, "And on and on and on." But she has more room. She realizes there is a back to this card so she just decides to go on. "You have made such a difference. Thank you for smiling." Isn't that cool? "Thank you for smiling and helping out joyfully." And then she just says, "Well, you know, while I am thinking about it, the people who handed me my daily newsletter, the guys who moved the chairs, the folks who handled audio and video and the kind faces in the break room." And now this is a lady from Texas.

Here is another individual who wrote: “Wonderful job.” Again, this is to all of you. “Wonderful job. You have blessed us with your warm welcomes, your generosity, your kind service and all the beautiful ways you modeled Jesus to us. Thank you.”

So I just wanted to thank you personally for all that you did this last week to make that conference possible.

Well, our annual theme is planning to grow. And what pastor Viars has begun having us think about is one passage of Scripture that sort of sets the tone for this.

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance.”¹

And he has helped us tease out this whole idea of planning into three categories. The first one is to continue to discuss, refine and implement our discipleship process. Then, number two, to organize and launch our new cluster of ministries at Faith West. And then, finally, to work together as a church family to develop our next five year strategic ministry plan. And so in order to begin sort of this year, what he decided to lead us in is a series entitled “Becoming a person with a plan.” And as since, we have been working on a biblical theology of planning. And we then sought to apply that specifically to ourselves, to our homes, our family, to our church and then potentially to our work place. And so as we go on throughout this series and even this morning I would encourage you to write down a few notes as we are going along and how does this need to apply to the issues of planning in my life.

So what he has done is led us in Proverbs six to help us see that God is interested in us planning, to help us see that the end goal of our plans is conformity to Christ and to bring glory and honor to God, that some things are more important than others. And so I have to not be controlled by the tyranny of the urgent, but I need to be planning and thinking about what needs to get my time. And then there are strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities.

And so this morning we are going not add another piece to this biblical theology. And with that in mind I would like you to turn your Bibles to Acts chapter 20 where we are going to be considering facing our threats. Acts chapter 20. That is on page 110 in the back section of the Bible in the chair in front of you. Acts chapter 20 we are going to begin reading in verse 17.

Now as you are getting there, I want us to remind ourselves that, first of all, Paul is a missionary church planter. So here is what he does. He goes into a city organizes a church service, wins a whole bunch of people to Jesus and then he leaves. In fact, normally he only stays a very short period of time. The normal protocol is Paul goes in, has a service, gets beat up, whipped, stoned, something like that, then goes on to the next city. And he continues to do that on and on through three missionary journeys. And just get some perspective on how far he travels. Here is a little map. On the middle right, all the way on the right there is a little city. It is called Antioch. It has a little start on it. I

¹ Proverbs 21:5.

realize it is a little hard to see. But he travels from there all the way like to the center of the map to Corinth and then out all the way back down to the bottom right which is Jerusalem. He covers a huge amount of distances traveling in this third missionary journey. But one of the locations in which he hits is called Ephesus and there he stays with that particular group of people for a period of three years. And it is time for him to leave. And so what we enter into in Acts chapter 20 is a very touching scene. Let's look at the Word and see how it is described.

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

"And now, behold, bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."²

With the time I have remaining I would like us to consider five truths from Acts chapter 20, verses 28 to 30 that can help us face our threats. And one of the first things we notice immediately is we actually have to guard against ourselves. That may sound a bit strange, but I think verses 28 and 30 remind us of one of the axioms we like to say around here. You are your greatest marriage problem. Right? We have to guard, first of all, against ourselves or, as pastor Viars sometimes reminds us, judgment begins with the household of God. In other words, before we start looking at others, we look at ourselves first.

² Acts 20:19-31.

And we see that clearly in the text. First of all, be on guard for... and the next word is yourselves. And then at verse 30 it expands upon that yourselves and it says:

“...from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”³

So there is always the potential that from within ourselves could come a threat. We are actually, our own church or our own families are harmed. Now we need to highlight some specific areas of threat. In other words, what does that look like? What are the threats, more specifically? The first one is the threat of doctrinal error. That is what we see in verse 30, that they will be speaking perverse things, the text says. In other words, there is times when we might convince ourselves or our church could be convinced of something that is actually wrong. And it doesn't take a lot of error before destruction follows.

You know, that is one of the reasons why it is so important even as a church for us to elect leaders who are committed to the truth. Because just a little bit of theological error can create an awful lot of havoc. It is why our ministries, like the counseling center or the seminary or the school are under the collective wisdom of the pastors and deacons. Part of our diligence is not simply electing leaders to their positions because they are popular or because they are great guys. But rather because they are men who know their theology and are committed to it.

The same thing is true in a family. You know, watch a husband think that faithfulness to corporate worship is showing up 10 minutes late to one service a month and you will see a family where rebellion is right around the corner. Or watch a parent who never misses a service, but who doesn't live out what they heard in service the rest of the week and you will see a family where the spiritual temperature is rapidly declining. Or watch a child think that his parents are dumb, make too many rules or submission is only required when they are seeing something that they want and we will see a family that is about ready to explode. Watch a church decide that progressive sanctification really isn't all that cool anymore or that the sufficiency of the Scripture isn't really all that great and the spiritual temperature of the church slowly but surely declines.

You know, that is one of the reasons why we have Faith Community Institute. And if you have your program, inside it is a little brochure regarding FCI. And I would like you to take that out for just a minute, because I want to highlight a couple of classes in particular that help us deal with this particular threat, the threat of doctrinal error. You will notice, for example, if you open the thing up, all of these cool, color coded classes. And look at the purple ones. Foundations of Faith. Here is a series of five classes, an overview of Christian living, for example. Then that course leads to difficult questions or the overview of Christian doctrine and there is a course in the overview of the Bible and overview of Bible study. And the purpose of that is to help us get our theology right. Then, of course, there is a whole series of other courses like keys to a better marriage or to better parenting or biblical forgiveness or the counseling series that being to help us

³ Acts 20:30.

take those truths and put some feet to them so that we are living them out. And I would encourage you to sign up for as many FCI classes as possible and to invite your friends to do the same.

One of the things we want to be cautious of is any hint of doctrinal error. And one of the ways to prevent that is to continue to educate ourselves in the truth.

Now there is actually another danger that we find specifically in the church of Ephesus. And that is the threat of lost priorities. The church of Ephesus actually gets a fair bit of press time in the Bible. It is discussed not only here in Acts chapter 20, but there is a book written to the church, that is the book of Ephesians. And then after that, there is actually a letter written to the church that is recorded in the book of Revelation about 30 years or so after Paul's meetings with this elder group. And listen to what it says in Revelation two.

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.'"⁴

And, you know, at some point later after the book of Revelation the church at Ephesus actually died. So apparently they did not heed the warning over the long term. And yet what is so interesting about the Revelation text is God says to them, "Look, you paid attention in part to the warnings that I gave you through my apostle Paul 30 years before. You were doers. You didn't tolerate evil. In other words, maybe you learned to solve problems biblically. You put people to the test to properly evaluate them. You endured. So there are a lot of things that you did right. Except here was the problem. You lost your first love."

All of those things weren't about Jesus anymore. And so it is possible, according to this text, to serve without having loving Christ as the center. Notice it is possible to do that. That is a threat for us, too, because we have a lot of wonderful things, don't we? We have community center. We have vision of hope. We have Faith West. We have a Christian school. We have a counseling center. We have safe haven. We can be in all kinds of service ministry opportunities, but if we don't serve with a love for Jesus, with a heart committed to Christ first and foremost, we can actually be in a fair bit of trouble. That is one of the reasons why we have Bible reading plans at the welcome center. And if you haven't started one, this might be a really good time to start. Just because it is not January first doesn't we can't begin. So I encourage you to pick one up. It is also one of the reasons why the worship team has produced a CD. There is a pre release of it already where there is three songs available. You can get that in the welcome center or the

⁴ Revelation 2:1-4.

resource center. And the purpose of those two things is to help us draw our attention to Christ so that everything is being done, whether it is ourselves or whether it is in our family or whether it is in our church or even in our work place so that Christ gets first place in all of it. Because we understand that it is possible to be like the church at Ephesus that just they were doing a lot of right things, but they weren't doing it out of a love for Christ.

Well, I think it would be helpful if we also highlight a number of other threats that aren't necessarily tied to the church at Ephesus particularly, but the Word of God highlights them, such as this: the threat of pride. You know, James 4:6 says:

“But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.’”⁵

I think it is fair to say that when one person gets in their mind that they don't need to listen anymore that they don't need to acknowledge wrong or they don't need to accept responsibility or they don't need to make changes, then they become a huge challenge to everyone around them. That type of stubbornness creates conflict, hard feelings and general discouragement. And more importantly, here is what God's Word says. When we get arrogant then he is the one who begins to oppose us. It is not just someone from the outside. It is not someone who just doesn't like us. God says he lines up against us. So it is pretty tough to accomplish anything meaningful when God is the one who is opposing.

And, you know, the events of this last week could lead our church to a place of pride. We could think that, boy, isn't it cool, isn't it something that we got to have all these people come here and think we are all this and think we are all that. Or, as pastor Viars likes to say, that we are all that and a bag of chips. But here is the reality. That is a threat. And that is why we talk so much about repentance and we talk so much about the need for forgiveness, both to ask for it and to grant it. And it is also one of the reasons we talk about the importance of serving so much, because it is good for us to at times to pick up trash, push a broom or clean a bathroom to remind us that we should not think more highly of ourselves than we should. One of the threats to our own personal lives, to our families, to our church is the threat of pride.

There is also the threat of foolishness. Proverbs 10 puts it this way:

“Wise men store up knowledge, But with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.”⁶

That may sound strange, but there is a line between aggressiveness and foolishness. There is a reason that football teams do not throw a 40 yard pass on every play.

You remember Picket's charge at Gettysburg. I happen to be a history fan. A number of individuals were calling out to Robert E. Lee saying, “Look, do not do this charge. Do

⁵ James 4:6.

⁶ Proverbs 10:14.

not do the charge. It will fail. We cannot break that line.” Robert E. Lee decided that his army had never lost before and so it wasn’t about ready to lose now. And he decided to push that. Thousands died and the wagon train carrying the wounded lasted 14 miles.

You know, in our families and in our personal lives and our church we want to be aggressive. But we don’t want to be fools in the process, because that only impacts our own selves, but it impacts those that we have the privilege of leading.

Now on the other side of the equation there is the possibility of being foolish, but there is also maybe more likely the threat of laziness. Proverbs 10:26 puts it this way:

“Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, So is the lazy one to those who send him.”⁷

That is a powerful imagery, isn’t it? Vinegar to the teeth, smoke to the eyes. It is possible to get to the point where personally we just kind of rest on our laurels. And so we stop pushing. We stop being aggressive.

And one of the things I enjoyed so much this week was watching some of the folks who were serving, especially those who had done a fair bit of serving over the years. You know, you could tell by the color of their hair. And it was neat to see that. But it was neat to see that, yes, on some ... on one hand there a bunch of young people running around, but it was also neat to see that there were some older individuals who were just giving up their time and effort and energy in order to serve others. They weren’t just saying, “You know, I have done this for 25 years and so I don’t need to push anymore. I am done.” That was neat.

You know, as a family sometimes we as families can struggle with this issue of laziness. You know, parents, you know how sometimes it is when you have your first child or your second child. You are really diligent. You discipline. You teach. And most importantly you remind yourself. You never ever give up. So maybe I lost the battle today, but tomorrow is a new one and I am going to start again.

And then the later children come and you age a little bit and you pay a little less attention and you focus just a little bit less and the next thing you know it, those latter kids are angry, bitter and frustrated and the older kids are irritated at you because they cannot believe all the things their siblings are getting away with. Really? Like you put us in prison for that.

As a church, you know, we are a third of the way through the capital campaign. And the vast majority of those who have made commitments are keeping them and, in some cases, even going beyond their commitments. But, you know, as the building is built and the ministries get going and the wake of the sacrifice gets longer, you know, it is one thing to give it once. It is another thing to give it twice. And then it... just over time it just begins to wear on you a little bit. We can convince ourselves that things like this. We can’t

⁷ Proverbs 10:26.

finish. Or maybe it is not needed anymore. The building is up. The ministries are going. Maybe we don't have to finish the giving part of this. All of those are threats. They are threats of laziness just creeping in and removing some of the diligence that was necessary. Well, here is another one, the threat of perfectionism. Paul says this:

“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”⁸

Paul did not think of himself as perfect, not even close. Even though he was perfect in the sense that Christ had given him his righteousness. But Paul was far too self aware to think that he was selfish in his actions. But what does he do? He keeps going. So, guys, can I talk to you for just a minute? You know, God has made you the spiritual leaders of your home. And here is one of the threats. Since we don't lead Bible studies every week or every day of every week, we should just quit and not worry about it. That is perfectionism. Or that our children don't always sit through our conversation very well. You know, they are distracted by the ceiling fan or their feet or someone else's feet or whatever they get distracted on. So we just decide, you know what? This isn't working. You know, they are not paying attention. So I am done. That is perfectionism. Or sometimes we make a bad decision because we are not perfect and we hurry our family through it and so we just decide we shouldn't lead anymore. That is perfectionism. Or, you know, we think our wife is smarter than us and so she should lead. That is perfectionism. And so if we take a perfectionistic view about our family, we will be tempted to crawl in a hole. You know and that same thing would be true at the church.

I think many of you know that on our best day we are a B- organization in part because we don't adopt the philosophy that we have to be perfect before we try. We just start stuff, right? Put together a few plans in 15, 20 minutes and then off we go. We will try it. Give it a try. See if it works. Perfectionism is sometimes the enemy of accomplishment.

There is also the threat of resource constraints. Pastor Viars mentioned last week of the story of the counseling ministry as a whole. But the conference has a history all to its own. Some of you will know that back in the olden days Doc Smith and pastor Bill Good were traveling the mission field counseling missionaries, doing some training. And at some point they realized, you know, we just cannot be on airplanes going to every field. And so they started a conference which was called the missionary conference. There were like 48 people here and over a period of years the conference was blessed by God and at some point Doc Smith and pastor Viars got together and said, “You know, we just cannot handle everything anymore. What we really need to do is bring some other people to come and help.”

We are bound by our resources. And so individuals started getting invited, like the Paul Tripps of the world, the Elise Fitzpatrick of the world, the Stuart Scotts of the world and on and on that list goes. Because they believe that in some ways the conference was

⁸ Philippians 3:12.

being restricted by some of the resources. And yet in this last week over 1700 people were here. Hard to believe that.

Now not only are there are threats from the inside, that is ourselves, we have to guard against ourselves recognizing that we can be the cause of our own harm. But Paul also highlights, to the Ephesians elders that there are some attacks from the outside. Notice how he puts it.

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.⁹

And so there are times that attacks come from the outside. And I am just going to highlight two of them. I could probably hit a dozen, but I will just hit two. The first one is the threat of materialism. This happened to Paul himself when he said:

“Make every effort to come to me soon; for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.”¹⁰

I think it is clear that even in our society we are threatened by the issue of materialism. There is a desire for every one of us to get pushed into that concept. Well, there is another one. Maybe more substantive is the threat of humiliation. This happened again in the book of Hebrews.

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.¹¹

Now that is persecution on steroids when someone just walks into your house and says, “Oh, by the way, you don’t own it anymore. Get out.”

But I think even today we don’t face that kind of persecution. But we do face humiliation because some people think we are crazy. I mean did you know if you believe that God created the heavens and the earth in seven days you are crazy? Did you realize that? One person in our newspaper likes to write that if schools teach creation we will have to lower our academic standards in order to do so. Really? Or believing that marriage is between one man and one woman, that is not exactly the most popular thing these days, is it? Or believing that God exists or is active is not exactly on society’s high profile list. And so there is pressure. There is pressure of being made fun of or humiliated. And that can

⁹ Acts 20:28-29.

¹⁰ 2 Timothy 4:9-10.

¹¹ Hebrews 10:32-34.

constrain our outreach, because we are afraid to talk to someone. We are afraid to witness to someone, because, after all, they might think we are nuts.

Well, that is a lot of threats. And one of the dangers is to get all bummed out, discouraged and depressed. But, you know, if that was the case, then we would be missing a huge part of what Paul teaches the Ephesians elders, because notice this. In addition to the threats we have to recognize our position by God's grace. Notice how he puts it.

“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.”¹²

In other words, what Paul is highlighting to them is: Look. God has put you in a particular position. This is the place that God has placed you. And so you don't have to back away. You don't have to run. You don't have to cower in fear. God has put you in a particular place. And there is no doubt that that was originally directed to the Ephesians elders.

I think each of us can apply that reality to the fact that if we are husbands, we are husbands by the grace of God. If we are parents, we are parents by the grace of God. We are teachers by the grace of God, bosses by the grace of God. In other words, if God's grace has put us into that spot, if we have been put there by the Holy Spirit then maybe God's grace is also able to sustain us in the midst of it, that because there is grace there is comfort, that because there is grace there is confidence, that because there is grace there is security and because there is grace there is a hope for eternal reward. So we don't have to waste God's grace. We don't have to minimize God's grace. We can recognize that just as Romans 5:20 this, “Where sin abounded, grace did abound more.”

And so we are not hindered by our threats. Do we need to recognize them? Of course, we need to recognize them. But at the same time recognize that it is God's grace, both personally for you as an individual in your personal plan, for you and your family plan, for us as a church, potentially even in your work place.

And we also find what God has done for the Church, that is in Acts 20 verse 28. Notice this last phrase.

“...to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”¹³

Again, that gives us a measure of confidence, some security, some hope that the Church belongs to Christ. And how he got there is pretty amazing, because Romans 5:8 reminds us:

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”¹⁴

¹² Acts 20:28.

¹³ Ibid.

So, yeah. Are the threats real? Of course they are real. But so is God's amazing grace. He has purchased us with his own blood. We were actually singing about that just a few minutes ago.

So if we take a careless approach to our threats, could we be like the church at Ephesus? Sure. Thirty years from now it could be a very different place, not good. But here is the other side. Threats can drive us to the cross. Threats can humble us and remind us that this is the work of Jesus. Threats can help us remember that our strategic plan is a tool to glorify God. Threats can help us remember that if it were not for God's grace, we would still be lost. He didn't come to die for us when we were all good. He died for us while we were yet sinners. Threats help us remember that if it were not for the blood of Jesus you and I would be in a world of hurt. Right now. And so if you are a Christian, you can see that in this text there are some real and genuine threats that were coming to the Church. There was also some real and amazing grace that was coming as well. And that is why we can plan personally. That is why we can plan as a family. That is why we can plan as a church. That is why we can plan even in our workplace to honor the Lord.

Now if you are here and you would say, "You know, I don't have a relationship with Christ. There has never been a time when I confessed my sin and trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior." Then I want to encourage you for just a moment the grace and the blood of Christ that we have been talking about, that we have been singing about this morning can radically change your life. In fact, you can be free from the greatest threat that exists in the world and that is that the threat of your sin would bring upon God's wrath on your life. And if you will humble yourself and you will confess yours in to God and rely and trust on the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as your only hope of eternal life, then you can be free from that threat, the threat of suffering away from the presence of God forever.

Well, we have seen so far that there are threats personally, there are threats corporately. But there is one more resource that God has brought to the table. And it is identified in verse 31. Remember the truth that you have learned.

"Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears."¹⁵

The Ephesian elders had teaching from Paul for the period of three years. Today we have the written and revealed Word of God. So God has loaded us with resources. So let's identify the threats to our personal growth to the spiritual health of our family, to the health of our church, to the beginning of the ministries at Faith West, to the five year strategic plan for us as a church family. But let's not be crippled by them. For God is bringing some wonderful and amazing resources to the table. And I think if we commit to following Jesus as our first love, if we will commit to following his Word, if we will commit to seeking to please him in all that we do, then it is pretty exciting to consider

¹⁴ Romans 5:8.

¹⁵ Acts 20:31.

what God might have us to do in the next five years. After all, in 1985 no one thought that the conference would bring 1700 people to Lafayette, Indiana in the winter. Five years ago we had planned to do something at Purdue, but it wasn't what is going on right now. Maybe if we ask, God will give us the same answer that he gave Solomon.

Remember when God says to Solomon, "Solomon you can have whatever you want. Ask for it and I am going to give it to you." And Solomon said this. "God, I want wisdom." And here is what God said, "Because you have asked for something good, I am going to give you a bunch of other stuff, too." In other words, his answer to Solomon's prayer was, yes and more. I am going to give you not only what you asked for, but I am going to give you more simply because I am able to do that.

By God's grace, let's consider our threats and ask him and we will see. Maybe he will choose to give us, yes and more.

Let's stand together for prayer.

Father, thank you for your grace. Thank you for your Word. Thank you that we can apply this not only to our individual lives, to our families, but also to our church. And we would pray that you would guide us and you would direct us. That you would help us as we seek to please and honor you in Jesus' name. Amen.