

The Pharisees Test Jesus

by Efion Evans

The sermon explores the peace and assurance found in the risen Christ and our calling to be His witnesses in a troubled world.

Duration: 46:46

Scripture: John 20:19

Topics: "Pharisees"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the responsibility of Christians to alert others to the eternal danger they face and to share the gospel with them. He quotes John Calvin, who encourages believers to seize every opportunity to do good and spread the message of Christ, even if it means finding alternative ways to do so. The preacher then focuses on the love of God as manifested in sending His Son to be the savior of the world. He highlights the contrast between the corrupt and sinful state of the world and the purpose of Christ's coming to save humanity. The sermon concludes by reminding Christians that they are sent by God to pass on His message and speak about Him, just as Abraham's servant was sent to carry out his master's plan.

Transcript

And I trust that that really is a prayer in our hearts this evening as we've been singing those last few lines of that tremendous hymn, King Eternal. May thy mercy move our souls, thy grace to adore. Streams all flowing, love abounding, satisfy forevermore.

And may we prove something of that blessed satisfaction which stems from the Holy Spirit himself in our souls as we turn to God's Word together. And we do so to the passage that was read earlier by David from John's Gospel, chapter 20. We look particularly this evening for God's message at verses 19 to 23.

That's John's Gospel, chapter 20, and we are looking particularly at verses 19 to 23. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith to them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he showed to them his hands and his side.

Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then Jesus said to them again, Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and saith to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them. And whosoever sins you retain, they are retained.

The disciples, after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ and his resurrection, were met on that evening of the first day of the week with the doors shut for fear of the Jews. And it's true in a sense, isn't it, that you and I this evening are closed in, we trust, with God himself. But it may be also that those were not the only doors that were shut.

It may be true that the disciples had in their own hearts doors that were shut to Jesus Christ, that they were unbelieving about the purpose of his death or at any rate about the reality of his resurrection. And in their hearts, there was the sense of failure as well as of fear. And it may be true that someone here this evening, even though we are closed in, we are in service, we're in a building where we are singing hymns and listening to prayers and to a sermon and listening to the reading of the Word of God.

But yet it may be that doors within our hearts are closed to God. My dear friend, this evening let me urge you to seek the help of the Holy Spirit, to expose your soul this evening to the working of God's Spirit by his Word so that he will speak to us that Word which we all so desperately need. Because the disciples certainly were needy, weren't they? This was their state, it was one of fear.

They were afraid of the Jews, afraid that what had happened to their Lord and Savior might well happen to them as well. And so there was fear gripping their hearts. There was a sense of guilt perhaps because of their failure with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ.

After all, it wasn't only Peter who had betrayed him. The others too had joined in deserting the Lord Jesus Christ. There was that sense of guilt that must have possessed each one of them.

And on top of that, there was certainly a sense of unbelief, wasn't there? Because when you read the previous few verses, you read that the Lord Jesus told Mary Magdalene to go to the brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that He had spoken these things to her. And yet they were so unbelieving about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Unbelief, guilt and shame, fear and failure. My dear friends, this evening as we are in the presence of God, what is in our hearts towards the Lord Jesus Christ? Is there a sense of fear as we think of what might happen to us as Christians? Or is there a sense of guilt as we are aware that we are in the presence of a holy God? Or is there a measure of unbelief still gripping our hearts and keeping us from the Lord Jesus Christ? But here is the door. The doors which were closed, barred to the Jews, could not hold Him back because He is the risen Christ.

And He is the victorious Christ. And He is the sovereign Christ. And He is the one who is with us as well this evening, the same risen Saviour, living, speaking, sovereign, victorious.

But oh, how we need to feel in our souls something of that reality that He is a living Saviour. And that we are not here merely to teach, not merely to touch the truths which abide forever, but we are here to be touched by the living Saviour Himself. And that's what happened surely to these disciples as they met in that upper room.

But then the Saviour, as we know, returned to glory. And for those of us who are Christians, we are still here in this world, this world of sin, this world of rebellion, of unbelief. How are we to live in this world in

which God, by His providence, has seen fit to put us and keep us? How are we to cope with the circumstances, whether it's of fear or of guilt or of failure or whatever? How are we to cope with living the Christian life in the world in which we live? It seems to me that our Lord is answering those questions for us in this passage this evening.

Let me touch on three things then, which arise directly from these few verses. First of all, let's look afresh at the ground of our assurance. Our Lord Jesus spoke twice about peace, to remain with these disciples, the ground of our assurance.

Secondly, the constraint of our task, because our Lord goes on to tell the disciples, as my Father has sent me, even so also I send you. And that's the constraint of the task which faces us, that we are sent by none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And then lastly, thirdly, the source of our power, He breathed on them the Holy Spirit, receive the Holy Spirit, He says.

Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted to them. Whosoever sins you retain, they are retained. Well now, let's look a little more closely then at these verses this evening.

First of all, this the ground of our assurance. How can you and I be possessed with our Lord's peace in a world where there is so much turmoil? And in hearts where it may be there is a great deal of turmoil as well. What does the Lord Jesus Christ do for His disciples in a situation like that? Here they are, in those circumstances, in the grip of fear and failure, how does our Lord deal with them? Will you remember this verse, that He stood in the midst and saith to them, Peace be to you.

When He had so said, He showed to them His hands and His side. So there really is the ground of our assurance. This is where we derive our peace from.

There are the evidences of a crucified Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. And what do those wounds say? Well they say, for one thing, they say that His payment was sufficient. The payment for our sins.

Because we are told in Scripture, aren't we, that the Lord Jesus Christ who knew no sin was made sin for us. That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And here is the Lord Jesus Christ risen from the dead, having been crucified in weakness, He has been raised in power.

What does that tell us? Well it tells us that the payment that He made for our sins, the satisfaction that He offered was complete and perfect and sufficient in the sight of a holy God. And on the basis of that, you and I can have peace with God. We can be right with God.

We can be reconciled to God. We can be restored into fellowship with God. That's what it means.

There's the restoration of our relationship to God. And oh how true it is, isn't it, that when you and I come to appear before God, when we consider our relationship and ask ourselves, where do I stand in the sight of God? What about my sin? What about my guilt and failure? My failure to keep His law. My failure to be like Him as He is holy and perfect.

What about my guilt and shame? Oh well, says the Scripture. Here is the ground of this peace. It lies in the wounds of the Lord Jesus Christ, who offered Himself up without spot for our sins.

And so the Scripture tells us, doesn't it, that the Lord Jesus Christ was offered once for sins forever. When we were enemies, we were tied to God by the death. And that's the word of peace that Christ brings to us, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

My dear friend, this evening let me ask you, have you felt something of the impact of the death of Christ? What does it mean to you this evening? Have you that peace with God which stems from the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ? That He died for our sins according to the Scriptures? That He was wounded for our transgressions? That He was bruised for our iniquities? And the chastisement of our peace was upon Him? And that He was delivered for our offenses? And that He was raised again for our justification? There's the ground of our assurance. My dear friend, have you peace with God? Is it well between God and your soul this evening? And do you say, well thank God for those blessed wounds of Christ, which He suffered in my room instead, thereby reconciling me to God? I can't add to that, and I certainly don't want to take away from that. It is perfect and complete in every respect that Christ has died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

But then there is more than that, isn't there, in the peace of God? Because the Lord Jesus Christ reveals His identity to the disciples, it really is the risen Savior. And He now has been brought from the tomb to the upper room, and so there is joy for the disciples when they realize His presence. Their circumstances haven't changed, nothing is different in that respect.

But the Savior is there, the risen Lord, the one who was put to death on account of their sins, has been raised in the power of an endless life by the power of God, and He is there with them. The presence of God brings them such joy. And isn't that what happens in the midst of our circumstances, and trials, and difficulties, and problems, when the pressures are piling up upon us? What happens when the Lord's presence becomes more real to us? And then there is a peace, and there is even a joy in the midst of all our suffering.

And that desolation, that deadness, that defeat which you and I so often feel, is transformed because of His presence given to us. Let me direct you to Psalm 143. Ask yourself the question, have you felt something of what the psalmist felt in this passage? Psalm 143.

And look carefully at some of these verses. Here is a man in desolation. Here is a man surrounded by enemies.

Here is a man with a terrible sense of failure. The enemy, he says, verse 3, hath persecuted my soul. He hath smitten my life down to the ground.

He hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me. My heart within me is desolate.

Have you ever felt something of that? That as a Christian you have felt, well, that you have failed the Lord so miserably. And somehow or other you've been pushed from pillar to post. And the storm has been raging round about you.

And as you look back you will realize how much you have lived to yourself and for your sins and for your pleasures. And how much you have held Christ at arm's length as it were. And the sense of failure and of defeat and of desolation and of barrenness and dryness in your soul is overwhelming you.

That's what the psalmist felt. I remember the days of old, he tells us in verse 5, I meditate on all thy work. I muse on the work of thy hand.

I stretch forth my hands to thee. My soul thirsteth after thee as a thirsty land. My dear friend this evening, is there something of soul thirst in your experience? Do you pounce after God? Have you ever known what it is to be really thirsty? When your lips become dry and they begin to crack and your tongue begins to cleave as it were to the mouth, to your mouth, the roof of your mouth.

And the one thing that you desperately want is just that little drop of water to assuage your thirst. What are riches compared with that just little drop of water to slake your thirst? And my dear friends, here is the psalmist in the midst of his desolation and barrenness and defeat. Downcast as he is crying to God that God would reach out and touch him.

Hear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit tailor. Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like to them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning, for in thee do I trust.

And then he goes on, doesn't he? Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies. I flee to thee to hide me. Teach me to do thy will.

Thou art my God. Thy spirit is good. Lead me to the land of uprightness.

Quicken me, O Lord, for thy name's sake, for thy righteousness sake. Bring my soul out of trouble and of thy mercy. Cut off mine enemies.

Destroy all them that afflict my soul, for I am thy servant. Have you felt something of that kind of desolation? And the pangs of that kind of spiritual search, where you are longing for the very presence of God. Here is Christ subduing all that these disciples felt with his very presence.

And they were glad, we read, when they saw the Lord. There's peace in that sense too. And then there is not only peace with God and the peace of God, but there is peace in God.

In the face of death, his promise will be fulfilled. Isn't this what he told Mary and Martha? I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

He who lives and believes on me shall never die. What was he saying? Oh, he was talking about his own resurrection. And that in him you and I too will be raised.

And that we shall have a new body, a glorious body, like his glorious body. What's he telling us? Well, he's telling us that you and I need a new perspective on life. This world isn't everything.

It isn't the sum total of your existence or mine. You know, says the Lord Jesus Christ, there is an eternity that awaits us. There is a heaven to be gained.

There is a hell to be shunned. And so our Lord is appearing to these disciples to remind them of that very thing. Heaven, he says, is your home.

And my resurrection is an earnest of yours. And so you can have peace in the midst of turmoil, in the face of death at last, terrible enemy. You can have peace.

Peace be with you, he says. My dear friends, are you living for eternity? Is there that dimension to your life? As you go through your life day by day, do you relate not merely to circumstances? Do you relate to eternity? Do you relate to God? Do you relate to the living Savior? And in a sense, do you take that glimpse afresh day after day of his wounded side and hand and feet, reminding you that in him there is peace? That's where it lies. Do you remember how the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 tells us, if Christ be not risen, then we are still in our sins.

And it's true, isn't it? Here's the ground of our assurance. It's the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. It is not what I do, not what I have done, not what I am doing at this moment, not all my plans, not all my achievements, not all what I hope to do.

Put them all together. No, no, it is not that. That's not the ground of my assurance.

Peace doesn't stem from me. It stems from the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Not the labor of my hands can fulfill thy Lord's demands.

Could my zeal know respite? No, could my tears forever flow? None for sin can, all of those cannot atone for sin. Thou must save, and thou alone. That's where it comes from.

There's the ground of our assurance. But our Lord Jesus Christ didn't stop there. He knew that these disciples were to remain in this world.

And so he goes on, doesn't he? Peace, verse 21, peace to you. As my Father has sent me, even so send I you. As my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

The Lord Jesus Christ was sent on a mission into this world. That should stagger us, shouldn't it? Because after all we know what kind of a world it is. It's a world of corruption.

It's a world of greed and of selfishness. And as we heard this morning, of great profanity. It's a world of rottenness and degradation.

It's an unlovely world. It's an ugly world. It's filthy and it's devilish.

And you and I can see the effect of sin in men's lives. And we can see the mess that sin makes of men's lives. And yet you read here, as you read throughout the scripture, that the Son has been sent into this world in order to be our Savior.

Let me remind you of a passage from Isaiah. You'll find it in Isaiah chapter 61, and the beginning of that chapter. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.

He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted. To proclaim liberty to the captive. The opening of the prison to them that are bound.

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God. To comfort all that mourn. To appoint to them that mourn in Zion.

To give to them beauty for ashes. The oil of joy for mourning. The garment of praise for the Spirit of heaviness.

That they might be called trees of righteousness. The planting of the Lord. That he might be glorified.

Why did Christ come into this world? Why was he sent into a world of sin, and corruption, and degradation? Well here's your answer. That God might be glorified. Well how is God to be glorified in a world like this? Well it's in the salvation of sinners.

What did God send Jesus Christ to do? Ah says the Apostle Paul, this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. My dear friends this evening that is staggering isn't it? That Christ should have viewed this world of sinners lost.

That he should have left the bosom of the Father, and left the glory that was rightly his as the eternal Son of God, to come in order to rescue the perishing, and to meet up with sinners like you and me, in our corruption, and defilement, and pollution, and guilt, and shame, and degradation. In order to lift us out of the miry place. That's why he was sent.

That's why he came. And it was in infinite mercy that he came wasn't it? To rescue us from our sins. If you want the picture painted by the Apostle John this time, turn to 1st John chapter 4. And there you'll read a repetition.

And John seems to glory in this kind of thing. He's repeating something time and time again. First letter of John chapter 4 verse 9. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

And then go on to the next verse. Here in his love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And then on to verse 14.

And we have seen him to testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Do we need to elaborate a point like that? There it is. It's so simple, it's so clear, it's so profound isn't it? That God sent his Son for your sake and mine, in order to rescue us from our sins.

And now our Lord goes on to tell us, even so send I you. He sends us, the disciples, that's the ones he is speaking to here. He sends you and me into this world of corruption, and greed, and selfishness, and profanity, and so on.

And he sends us into this world, and it applies to every Christian, whatever his calling may be. Know that we might have more Christians in every area of life. More Christian lawyers, more Christian shopkeepers, more Christian farmers, more Christian crafts, more Christians in business, and in industry, and in science, and in medicine.

Because the Lord sends us according to our temporal callings, as the Father has sent me, so send I you. What business have you to be where you are, my dear Christian friend? I have this to say to you this evening. You have been sent there by the Son of God himself.

It is he who has placed you there in his wise providence, and he has placed you there with his own particular purpose. You remember in Matthew chapter 21, that our Lord was preparing to enter Jerusalem, and he sent two in order to prepare the way for the coming of the King. They were to get the ark, and the coat, and to say, the Lord has need, and that was enough.

They were only to pass on a message, that was all, but that was why they were sent. The Lord has need of them, that's what the Lord has said. Or do you remember later on, Simon Peter and John were sent to prepare the upper room for a feast.

You are to say to the man of the house, the master has passed, that was all. Now do you see how the Lord sends you and me? He sends us into the world to pass on his message, to speak about him. The Christian is one who is very simply sent to carry out Christ's plan, and to do so fully.

Remember Abraham's servant, who was sent by Abraham to find a wife for Isaac. And he carried out his orders absolutely to the letter, fully. He didn't swerve aside one jot or one tittle from those orders.

He carried out those orders. He had been sent. My dear Christian friends, are you concerned to know the will of God for your life, and to believe as the Lord tells you, that you are sent into that sphere to which he has called you, to pass on a word about the Lord Jesus Christ, about his uniqueness, and that this is the day of grace, and that there is peace through the blood of his cross, and that there is a heaven to be gained, and the hell to be sunned, and that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and that eternity will soon be upon us, and that we are already in the suburbs of heaven, you're sent, says the Lord Jesus Christ.

And Abraham's servant carried out his orders fully. Moses was sent, wasn't he? He was sent on a terrible task. He had to go back as it were to face the music.

He had to go back to Pharaoh. He had to go back to the Egyptian court, the last place that he would have chosen for himself, and yet that was where he was sent. And God said that he would be with him, and God said, just speak a word that I will give you, and so Moses went fearlessly.

Do you remember Jeremiah, how he was called by God and sent, and how he carried out his orders healingly? Listen to Jeremiah, O that my head were watered, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. Have you ever read the book of Lamentations, the Lamentations of Jeremiah the prophet? O what a load of grief was in his heart, O what pain there was in his soul when he saw the ravages of sin and unbelief and rebellion amongst the people of Israel, and how he cried to God that God would have mercy upon his people. O he said, that my head were watered, and mine eyes a fountain of tears.

My dear friend, you and I are sent, and you know what John Calvin once said, tears and prayers are our weapons, he said. If you and I are going to fulfill this tremendous commission, tears and prayers must ever be our weapons too. Do you remember Ezekiel, he was sent, thou shalt say to them, God said to Ezekiel, thus saith the Lord, and then later on in that book, when I say to the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thy hand.

And later on, if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, what responsibility he bears, because he has seen the danger, but he hasn't blown the trumpet, he hasn't alerted the people. My dear Christian friend, you and I are sent out in order to alert men and women to their eternal danger, and to show to them the objection that awaits them, and in the name of Christ to declare the gospel to them, we are sent. Again it was John Calvin who says, if God will not open a door, we must creep in through a window, slide in through the narrowest crack, rather than lose the opportunity of doing good.

Is that true of us? Are we possessed by this great commission of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we carrying out fully, fearlessly, feelingly, and fervently, as we've seen in these men of God? That's what it means. Ah, but you will say, who is sufficient for these things? You will say to me, perhaps you're not aware of my circumstances, you're not aware of my situation. Now my situation is different from every other Christian.

I face the most terrible temptations. Have you never read in the scripture, no temptation has taken you but such as is common to man? Have you never read about other godly men and women who face terrible trials and difficulties? How then can we carry this out? Listen to our Lord again, as He deals with these disciples. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith to them, receive ye the Holy Ghost, whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted to them, whosoever sins you retain, they are retained. The breath of God is, of course, the Spirit of God. Genesis chapter 2, verse 7, you know the verse, from the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

Man became a living soul, the creative, life-giving power of God's Spirit, right at the beginning of time. And so man becomes a living soul. How is that? So because God breathed into him His breath.

Do you remember the picture in Ezekiel chapter 37, of the valley of dry bones, and how Ezekiel was told to prophesy, say to the wind, thus saith the Lord God, come from the four wings, O breath, and breathe upon these flames, that they may live. And here is our Lord Jesus Christ, demonstrating so clearly to His disciples, that they can do nothing apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what it means.

They can never carry out this commission. They can never live a godly life. They can never please God.

They can never live righteously and soberly and godly in this present world. They can never die in peace. They can never enter heaven, unless they have the Holy Spirit of God.

And you and I know, don't we, that every Christian has the Holy Spirit of God. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, as Paul in Romans chapter 8, he is none of Christ, he is none of Him. And so the believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but at the same time this scripture encourages us, doesn't it, to have more dealings with the Holy Spirit, and to go on to know God in an infinitely greater way.

Well how are we to know Him better? Well it's through the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit do? He takes up the things of Christ and reveals them to us. And then you and I are to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

Well how are we to have the love of God shed abroad in our hearts? Well it is by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. And then how are you and I to declare with authority and with conviction that Jesus Christ is a living Savior, that He is alive forevermore? How else, other than in the power of the Holy Spirit? My dear Christian friend this evening, let us acknowledge oh how we need more of the Holy Spirit. And that's what the Apostle Paul tells us, isn't it? Be filled with the Spirit.

Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit. Go on being filled with the Spirit. Go on more of God through the Holy Spirit.

And here is our Lord Jesus Christ breathing on these disciples and showing them that He is the one who can impart more of Himself to His disciples to enable them to carry out that commission. He is the Spirit of

God, isn't He? And all power is from Him alone. We heard it this morning, didn't we? You can't separate God's power from God Himself.

And you and I cannot experience the power of God unless it is an experience in which we are meeting with God Himself. Well what kind of a God is He? Well He is the Holy God. And what about the Spirit? Well He is the Holy Spirit.

He is the Spirit of holiness and of purity. And so in Him there is that authority to penetrate into our hearts and to deal with us in the very depth and to draw us sweetly to Himself. And to melt away the hardness of our hearts.

And to bring about fruitfulness in the barren desert of our lives. Who else but the Holy Spirit can do that for us? That's why the Holy Spirit has been sent in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's why the Lord Jesus said to these disciples, receive the Holy Spirit inside.

Recently we were on holiday near Cardigan and we had a very pleasant view in front of the window. It was the estuary of the River Tyree. And it's a tidal estuary at that point.

And so when the tide is out what you see is a number of fishing boats and motorboats and rowing boats. There they are all high and dry. And to move any one of those boats we would be a mammoth task.

There they are pointing upwards upstream. The tide has gone out you see. And they're all pointing in the wrong direction anyway.

And if you were to take muscle power to try and move those boats it will take more than muscle power I reckon. But when the tide comes in and gradually comes in and you can see things beginning to move, things beginning to stir. And the heaviest weightiest boat suddenly it's afloat.

And instead of pointing upstream you know what's happening. It's turning around and it's pointing down again. It's pointing towards the sea.

What's happened? Well it's a great power. The tide has come in. Oh my dear friends there are times aren't there in our Christian lives when we feel as if we're stuck in the mud of our own unbelief.

And there is so much barrenness. And we feel that it would take the dynamite of God's grace to lift us from our position. Isn't that what our Lord is saying here? That you and I should look to Him for the provision of His Holy Spirit.

Because there is power there to lift those boats. To move us. To stir us by His grace.

And you know that that same tide that supports so much wildlife in great profusion, the swans, the heron, the cormorant, the curlew and so on. Life is there because that tide has come in. And oh what resources there are to provide a livelihood.

There are the fishermen who put down their nets and catch the fish. Or there's the water sports and the tourist industry. You see the tide has come in and everything has changed.

And what a change there would be when the Holy Spirit from God Himself comes to our lives to deal with that barrenness, that heaviness, that disease, that desolation that is in our hearts. What life there would be. What manifestations of power there would be.

And how God would be glorified when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. What then are Christ's orders? Well listen to verse 23. Whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted to them.

Whosoever sins you retain, they are retained. It's not that we have power to forgive sins. No, no.

But we have the authority in the name of God to declare that in Christ whoever believes will have remission of sins. And we have that same solemn authority to declare also that whosoever is impenitent and will not believe, their sins will not be remitted. Those are Christ's orders.

Whether it's in personal evangelism or in public evangelism, we have Christ's authority to confirm forgiveness to any who believe. And what a tremendous thing that is. Listen to the Old Testament passages speaking about it.

The sin shall be removed from us as far as the east is from the west. Listen to Micah saying that God through his son the Messiah that would come would cast our sins into the depths of the sea. And listen again to Isaiah talking about God blocking out our transgressions and not remembering our sins.

My dear friends this evening what a tremendous commission. Not on our authority, but on Christ to declare to men and women, those with whom we move, our families, our friends, our neighbors, the ones we work with, the ones we have contact with, the ones we come across from time to time, casual acquaintances it may be, whenever the Lord opens that opportunity that we are to say well you know there is forgiveness in Jesus Christ to all who believe to have the authority of God himself to say so. Let me ask you this evening have you proved that? Have you experienced that forgiveness? And are you commending that Savior to others? And then you see our credibility with men is surely related to our similarity to the one that he represents and the nearness to him that we experience.

Here were these disciples in that upper room and with the presence of Christ what great blessing they experienced in hearing his word in seeing his person and in proving his power as the Holy Spirit was given to them. And isn't that to which you and I are called again this evening, called afresh by the Lord Jesus Christ. The realization that here in the assurance that we see, the grounds of our assurance are in him that he is a risen Savior.

And here is the task that he sets before us that we are sent by him individually and that here is the provision, the power for the task that he provides for us that he gives us his Holy Spirit. My dear friends are we living close to him? Are we proving daily his presence? Are we commending his grace? Are we showing him to others by the ways that he lives and remembering all the times that in that way God himself is glorified? Well may God grant that that shall be so for his name's sake. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22642.mp3>

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