

“CALLING OUT EVIL”

Isaiah 37:9-20, Luke 6:6-11, Acts 13:1-12

November 10, 2025

“Shortly after the communist revolution, a spokesman for the party visited one of the peasant villages and began to promote communism. He said ‘Thanks to the party, we have increased wheat production by 100 percent.’ One little man stood up in the back and said, ‘My name is Menski, and I would like to know where all that wheat is?’

“The next year the same official returned to the same village and began the same litany of propaganda, except in this case he said, ‘I want you to know by now we have increased the wheat production 200 percent.’ Little man in the back stood up and said, ‘My name is Menski, and I have one question. Where is all that wheat?’

“Third year came. Same official approached these people and began his same talk. And he said, ‘The communist party has increased the wheat production 300 percent.’ Little fellow stood up in the back. And the official says, ‘I know, you’re Menski, and...’ The fellow responded, ‘No, my name is Polaski and I have a question. Where is Menski?’”<sup>1</sup>

There are many people in our world today who are offended when we hold them to the truth. They are so interested in twisting the truth to their own benefit, and become offended when the real truth is lifted up counter to their proclamations or announcements. And, sometimes, it can be dangerous to call out the evil being told in order for the truth to be revealed. But we are invited to be people of the truth, who hold each other to the truth, so that others can become free to know the truth and find life as we all live the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In our Old Testament account today of Jerusalem’s deliverance from the Assyrian king Sennacherib, in Isaiah 37, we see that the king was living in a warped version of truth. While it was true that Sennacherib had been given the power to conquer many nations by God, when

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<sup>1</sup> (Charles Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998] pg. 588)

pride affected his attitude, he began to think that he was greater than God, and able to do whatever he wanted to do. He forgot the truth of where his authority and power and leadership had come from, and he let himself believe that HE was the god of the earth.

But King Hezekiah was quick to take the information to the Lord God Almighty so that He, the Lord, could deal with King Sennacherib. Hezekiah was quick to believe the truth about God being the one and true God, and that He was for Jerusalem and Judah. So Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, *“Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, You alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, Lord, and see; listen to all the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the Living God. It is true, Lord, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste all these peoples and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Now, Lord our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You, Lord, are the only God”* (Isaiah 37:16-20).

Hezekiah called Sennacherib out on the evil that he was doing, and the Lord heard Hezekiah’s prayer and brought deliverance to Jerusalem.

In our Gospel account of Luke 6, Jesus took the Pharisees and teachers of the Law to task for the evil that they were doing. They were taking the Law into their own hands and preventing anything from taking place on the Sabbath. It was to the point where the Pharisees and teachers of the Law were seeking to try to trap Jesus and try to make Him a sinner, and not the Messiah, in any situation possible.

So on a particular Sabbath, there was a need for healing in the life of a man whose right hand was shriveled up and useless. The right hand was counted as the strongest hand, so without

the use of his strong hand, the man could not provide for his family or himself, but was reduced to begging. So Jesus, having compassion on him, healed him right there in the synagogue, on the Sabbath.

How dare He break the Sabbath command not to do any work on the Sabbath! How dare Jesus help this man out on the holiest day of the week! Could not Jesus do this work on another day rather than the Sabbath?

But Jesus took the men to task. *“Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?’ He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He did so, and his hand was completely restored. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus”* (Luke 6:9-11).

Jesus called out their evil intentions, their wicked inaction, and their uncaring motivation. Instead of rejoicing in the healing of the man’s hand so that he could work once again and be a provider for his family, these hypocrites were offended that someone might do a good work on the Sabbath!

I like what Dr. Tony Evans says about this situation. He says:

“It’s amazing! People want objective standards when it comes to everything else, but not for how to live their life.

“But suppose you went to the doctor and he was getting ready to perform an operation and he said, ‘Now, I think this is where I need to cut. Other doctors have ideas of where to cut, but this is what I think. Let’s just check it out and see if I cut right.’ Is that the doctor whom you want?

“Suppose you went to a pharmacist and he said, ‘Well, I think this is the medicine you

should take. Now, the pharmacist down the street has another view, but this is what I think. Why don't you try it?'

"Suppose you got on a plane and the pilot said, 'Now, I think this is the button I'm supposed to push. Now, my engineer over there thinks I ought to push this button. My copilot over here thinks I should push that button. The flight attendant thinks I should push this other button. Well...let's try this button and see if it gets us off the ground.'

"No! At the doctor's office, you want truth. At the pharmacist's, you want truth. In the airplane, you sure enough want truth. You don't want a pilot saying, 'I think,' or a doctor saying, 'I think,' or a pharmacist saying, 'I think.' You're going to sue him if he thinks wrong. You want him to think right.

"Well now, if you can respect the truth of a doctor and the truth of a pharmacist, and you can respect the truth of a pilot, how come [Jesus] can't be trusted? He's TRUTH - [the] absolute standard of reality found in the Word of God."<sup>2</sup> And His Word is to be accepted as absolute truth for all of us. It's not given so that it can be twisted or manipulated to enable us to do whatever we want to do, so that we feel good about ourselves. His Word is Truth so that we might find Him, and follow Him, and serve Him, and Him alone.

That's the same thing that Paul and Barnabas faced on the Island of Cyprus. Listen to what happened when they called out evil. This is Acts 13:1-12. (READ Acts 13:1-12)

Barnabas and Saul are among five teachers and prophets in the Antioch church. They had spent a significant amount of time with the church in order to establish a firmly grounded congregation. They had the men from Cyrene in the congregation giving leadership so that the church might grow and be well grounded in Christian principles. This wasn't just a "fly-through-and-get-started" ministry. It was founded upon the true teachings of Jesus. And the

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<sup>2</sup> (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans' Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publications, 2009] pg. 333, #1005)

church was growing because of the work of the leaders and the people working together for Jesus Christ.

At a time of worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke through one of the prophets, indicating that Barnabas and Saul were to become missionaries to other parts of the Roman world. It wasn't just a desire that either one of them had, they weren't just saying 'I think we need to do this,' but it was the calling out of Barnabas and Saul by the Holy Spirit which began the Christian outreach to other areas. The leaders of the Antioch church then prayed over them, and laid hands on them, in order to confirm the calling of these two Christian leaders into extended ministry (13:3).

Now imagine, of the five principle leaders in the Antioch church, two of those five were now being called away. It could have been very easy for those in Antioch to argue with the Spirit about taking their leaders away from them. Yet, they recognized that even when Barnabas and Saul were being called to go elsewhere, the Holy Spirit was going to continue to work within the church in Antioch. So they "*sent them off*" (13:3) under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

From Antioch, they went west to the Island of Cyprus, teaching about Jesus Christ in all of the Jewish synagogues. They were speaking the Word of God. This would become the regular practice of Barnabas and Saul - to go to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles.

Now Barnabas' companion had been going by the name of Saul all this time because that was his Jewish name. He was named after the first king of Israel, Saul the Benjaminite, son of Kish. This Saul reined over Israel for 42 years, initiating the kingdom of Israel. Saul of Tarsus would have boldly carried the name of Israel's first king as he served the Jewish people.

But as the two missionaries began to move into Roman areas, Saul takes on the Roman

name that we most recognize with him with, Paul. He and Barnabas faithfully “*proclaim the Word of God in the Jewish synagogues*” (13:5). With John Mark as their helper, they covered the whole island, proclaiming the truth and Good News of Jesus Christ.

But it is at the city of Paphos that they came upon resistance. News may have reached the governor of the city, Sergius Paulus, of the work of Barnabas and Paul. Who knows what was said about them from folks in the city, but the governor desired to learn what this new teaching was that they are presenting. So “*he wanted to hear the word of God*” (13:7).

However, there was a magician in the company of the governor that Luke calls “*a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, who was an attendant to the proconsul...*” (13:6). Every time Barnabas and Paul spoke about Jesus, “*Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith*” (13:8).

You ever been in a situation like that where you are trying to tell someone something and someone else keeps cutting you off or contradicting you? You know how annoying it is. Or when you start saying something, that person breaks in and just takes over the conversation so as to keep you from telling the truth about what happened to you? They don’t want you to be able to say what is true, so they twist every word you say, or talk over you, or begin to accuse you of being cruel, or wicked, or stupid, or wrong. It’s super frustrating!

So when Pau had enough of Elymas’ interruptions and false accusations, he called him out before the governor. He “*looked straight at Elymas and said, ‘You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord?’*” (13:9-10). He let the Holy Spirit expose the truth about the situation and boldly called him out.

Elymas was a Jew, but he was so far away from following the Lord God of Israel. He

had turned from following the truth in his life, to accepting and following the devil. He was so intimidated by the truth that Barnabas and Paul were presenting that he did his very best to contradict everything they said. He saw his position being threatened, and when he thought that the governor was not going to need him anymore, he did everything possible to keep his job and convince the proconsul that it was Barnabas and Paul who were in the wrong.

We have people in our world like that, too. When we come telling the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it contradicts all that our society say is truth, so people do their very best to accuse US of being in the wrong. They run over us; they falsify everything we say; and they do their very best to make us look like the enemy that needs to be dealt with, or even eliminated.

Or they try to make it irrelevant. Or they twist it so that it becomes wildly different than what we have stated. Or they blatantly call it a lie, all is the guide of being right in the eyes of those who are listening.

I had that happen just the other day. There were some people right out here on church property protesting the events taking place in Israel. They held signs that said, "Free Palestine!" They were right out in front of our new Church sign, giving the impression to all those who passed by that their sentiment was the belief and understanding of the church. So when I confronted them, telling them that they were not allowed to be on church property and that this church did not agree with their stand, but rather supported Israel, the leader of the group was all over me. She got in my face, and did her best to schmooze me into allowing them to picket right there. She was telling me that Jesus calls us to love others and that we should let the people of Palestine have their own country and that Israel was the perpetrator of the war. Even when I reminded her of the events of October 7, 2023, she said Israel had it coming and that they were now in the wrong for protecting their own country. And then another woman came along and

accused me of being too close to this woman, and was telling me to back off and give her some space. (See where that was going?) I became the one in the wrong, even though I was proclaiming the truth.

Well, I didn't stand there and argue with her, I just said they were not able to be on church property. So they moved to the parkway. And then a police officer came along and asked if they had a permit to demonstrate on city property. Eventually they were restricted to just the corner sidewalk to hold up their signs and proclaim death to Israel.

Paul called out the false teachings of Elymas in order to bring him back to the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit fulfilled Paul's statement that "*the hand of the Lord is against you*" and blinded Elymas "*for a time*" (13:11). And the governor was so amazed at the power of the teachings about the Lord, he believed.

Folks, when you are sent out by the Holy Spirit of God, you have the power to stand up to those who are presenting false teachings. When you have the truth of Jesus Christ living in your hearts, God will give you the ability to call out evil and to let the truth be known. All you are asked to do is to follow Jesus, live according to His ways and be bold in your witness of the Lord Jesus. He will take care of the rest.

So don't be afraid! Live for the Lord and stay true to Jesus every day. Let's pray.

Father, there is so much false teachings that need to be corrected in our world today. There are so many who desire to make the truth of Jesus Christ into a lie, and to silence those who speak out for Him. Lord, give us the confidence we need to live boldly for You so that others might see the truth of Jesus through us. Grant us the same power You gave to Paul to confront evil and present the truth. Let Your Holy Spirit live in and through us so that we might be Your living witnesses of Jesus. This we pray in Jesus' mighty Name. AMEN.



