

# Word of Encouragement

## By Ron Hafer

Bob Cavallo:

This morning I'd like to introduce to you a man that uh, is a man of prayer, he's a man of God.

Uh, his spiritual life is dynamic, and uh, it's a man who I greatly respect. I'd really like to introduce to you this man, but, we weren't able to get him so.

[Laughter]

Um, no. Um Ron Hafer graduated from Talbot in 19--

[Coughs]

--um, and besides for being my boss, he's also uh, one of the nicest guys um, you'll ever meet and I really mean that. And uh we're really going enjoy having him speak this morning, so let's give him a welcome as he comes.

[Applause]

Ron Hafer:

I'd like to uh, warmly thank Bob Cavallo who used to be an intern in the chaplain's program.

[Audience laughs]

I think we should have a word of prayer, what the Lord will be leading to-him to next.

[Audience laughs]

Thank you so-for the opportunity, uh I want to speak to you this morning from this passage of Scripture on the concept of a gift of encouragement, or a word of encouragement. In my twenty-four plus years at uh Biola and around Talbot seminary, in my notes, in my counseling time at-at this point of the year in the office, and Dr. Brooks probably has sensed the same in his years here, uh there can be a letdown--not that there is or that anyone here is at all discouraged--but my notes say uh, under-underscore the concept that there could be people that are down just a little bit, and maybe speak to that issue. My w-I I ran a story by my wife.

[Clears throat]

And asked her for permiss-permission to uh tell it on her this morning. You say "Did she give you permission?"

[Laughs]

No but I want you to know I ran it by her, which is at least partial. No she did, she actually did. My wife, I have a, a wife Hilda and then daughters Heidi and Heather. Hilda, Heidi, and Heather. My sons Hans, Harry, and Herman--no.

[Audience laughs]

Same old one liners, I know. Neil, Neil says it's still happening. But in my notes I'll say they chuckled a little, so to continue to use that. My uh my wife, unlike myself, uh has a serious side to her. She is the kind that after 25 years of marriage honestly says to me things like "Are you really that lighthearted? Do you ever, do you ever seriously think of the world as God sees it?" And you know I-I say to her "Lighten up honey" Like you know. It balances out. There is a point, I actually don't know how many years ago but probably about 15 years ago, we had moved from one uh, smaller home to the home that we're in now and uh, had been praying that God would give us ministry. My wife is a teacher, uh and teaches that God bless the little rug rats and the ankle biters and she loves them. Uh, she's a very timid woman.

[Clears throat]

So in at one point in our lives, where, at this point in our lives, where uh I kind of had settled in-- and this was in my youth--into uh youth camps and conference speaking. Now I do more adults and grandfathers for God type thing you know.

[Audience Laughs]

But at that point I was-and she was she was really looking for the Lord to give her some opened doors of ministry, and we're praying together about this. She decided what-that for a block of time, I don't know there was three or six months. Now this is a timid lady. She loves the Lord with all of her heart. She is the wind beneath my wings, that'd make a great song. No it's already been done. And really a tremendous support. So she decided, for I think a three month period of time, that God giving her the strength, every person that came to our door or that she came in contact with in a kind of in a normal setting, that she would she would share Christ. I don't mean a-a-a gospel track. You know or a quick verse and run, but I mean really an overt uh opportunity to minister.

Uh the uh kitchen sink, uh the trap in the kitchen sink, uh got messed up. And we prayed about it and had my neighbor come over to help. You say "why-why didn't you help?" Because mine is a spiritual ministry.

[Audience laughs]

My neighbor, act-actually because I don't have any idea and I think I was out of town who knows. Well my neighbor who is now 85 and uh, a rather timid Christian but much more open in his faith now, likes to reflect on this story. He-wh-they were working on the sink. I was out ministering to the world, when a lady and little child came to our door. The lady had a basket of stuff, and an armful of uh literature. And my neighbor said to my wife, when we were fairly new in the neighborhood so we didn't know him that well, well enough to ask him to work on the sink

however. He said "You're going to have a visit from one of the religious fanatics, they come to my door all the time." And my wife thought "No not now." But she really felt that the Spirit of God was nudging her to uh share her faith in Christ.

So she kind of wiped the grease off of her hand she said, went to the door opened it and before the lady and her little child could say anything my wife said "Hello there! We're uh, it's nice to meet you. I'm Hilda Hafer, but we're working on the sink right now and let me just tell you a few things. This is a Christian home. See the fish there that stands for Jesus Christ the Son of God. We-I don't mean that we just go to church, we know Christ as Savior and Lord of our life. We're happy with our church. We know Jesus we love Him, we know that He's coming again and we- and we're not looking for any change of religion whatsoever." The lady said "Well I'm from Avon."

[Audience and Ron Hafer laugh]

So, true story. So Hilda bought, after she bought everything that the lady who was selling, of course, went on back to the sink. Well, uh an amazing thing happened when that lady returned. That lady said "I'm a Christian." She said "In my sales, uh opportunities," for however long she'd been doing that, she said "No one had ever been as aggressive as you were with me." and she said "I'm in a--" she said "I'm going to, God giving me the strength, I'm going to even if people don't buy the product, I'm going to let them know that I'm a Christian somehow some way." And I-that really fired my wife up. Uh, the neighbor who uh basically was intimidated by these

religious people next to him, you know coming and going with Bibles and young people in their home all the time, he he began to open up.

He's 85 now, and we have-we know that he's a believer, and he's actually become quite overt in his faith. I am convinced, because the scripture says so, and because Christian experience teaches this, that as iron sharpens iron so one person sharpens another. And those who have the courage to give a word of encouragement can see God do wonderful marvelous things. An amazing thing happened to the little Apostle Paul on his way to the city of Ephesus. Acts 16, uh, he hits downtown Philippi. Uh, and r-by the grace of God, uh begins to witness for Christ. Uh, a riot a riot broke out, which uh doesn't always happen with those of us that are faithful in the ministry, on occasion, but not always. The apostle Paul and uh his buddy um who was better known for singing in prison at midnight than anything else, Silas, were thrown into prison. There is this humongous earthquake, of course I'm reflecting this quickly because your Talbot seminary students and you-you already know these things so we're we're just reflecting and reviewing, and uh, and the Spirit of God, uh. You-it's OK to smile, but to chuckle at that is a little obvious you know--the Spirit of God

[Audience laughs]

--decides decides, because they're praising God at midnight, the Spirit of God decides just to invade the prison uh, by an earthquake. Only those in Southern California can appreciate this, there is this humongous earthquake, all the jail doors pop open. But the prisoners are saying "What good is an earthquake with the door open if we still have our chains?" Then Dr. Luke says

"And then the chains dropped off" and the guard-the prisoner decides--the uh prison keeper--decides that he's basically going to take his life uh, because his prison is gone, his means of support. And he figures the prisoners are gone. But uh the apostle Paul yells out from the dust in the darkness of the dungeon. It's not that alliteration I hadn't thought about that, and he says "No do-don't take your life, don't don't plunge through, uh we're all still here." And then and then had-there's this glorious moment in the scripture which is called uh "plucking ripe fruit" or "a ripe opportunity for witness". If this ever happens to you, take my word for it, on the basis of scripture it's an open door.

The man comes running. He falls at the feet of the apostle Paul and he says "Tell me how to get saved." That's an open door folks.

[Audience laughs]

The guy gets saved, his wife gets saved, his whole kids all of his kids get saved, they're baptized. The uh story kuh-kind of concludes with uh the original jailers being challenged by the Apostle Paul to just to kind of get off his back and really the chapter concludes with uh with the apostle Paul kind of having carte blanche, an open door to go and do anything he wants. And uh so the testimony of Christ is there. So you have this great testimony of the uh-of the gospel, the entrance of the gospel, into uh into Europe, which is by God's grace because many of us have our ethnic background there.

The next chapter, the apostle Paul uh finally makes his way to Athens, downtown Athens, and it's kind of one man against the entire city. But once again you have this little, and I say this with fondness for all little preachers everywhere, but you have this little rag tag Jew, kind of beaten up and and uh kicked around, who hits downtown Athens and he doesn't look like much. And then he has you have the brain trust of Athens, uh up on Mars Hill, and the Holy Spirit of God, through Dr. Luke once again, gives us the story where the apostle Paul is, his heart was just torn uh with a lack of unbelief and all of the gods.

So there's the kind of the showdown on Mars Hill in uh in chapter 17 where this little ragtag, beaten up, battered little Jew for God just stands and not only preaches with phenomenal power, the power of the Holy Spirit, but he incorporates into that message uh some quotes from their own uh, from their own historians and their uh their poets and I'm sure those people were sitting there on Mar-Mars Hill with the roofs of their mouths being sunburned thinking Well this little guy doesn't look like much but I mean we've got power coming here." Now that-very honestly the chapter ends saying that just a few responded, but let's face it. This this one little man with free flow of the power of the Holy Spirit of a God in his life, has really taken on the city and uh, God has honored his life.

But, after those incidents he gets to uh, he gets to downtown Corinth and there are probably some reasons why, he's down, and discouraged, and a little bit despondent. First of all he's left his uh his junior varsity Timoth-Timothy and some of the other little uh guys that his buddies that have been tracking around with him, they've been left behind for a number of reasons. I think another reason why he was a little bit down and discouraged, probably, is that in the flow

of ministry, this should bring you great hope, in studying, and proclaiming the Word of God, and uh taking on the enemy, it can it can wear you down. It's not by power nor by strength, but not by strength or power, but by My power says the Holy Spirit of God. And the apostle Paul who absolutely operates in the power of the Holy Spirit, he's he's kind of running down. He's kind of running out of energy. Can we have all of those who are--no-- running out of energy stan--. In my years here, uh in the college and even during my seminary years, a quite quite a number of them, I noticed that it's it's easy to become weary in well doing.

I also noticed that it doesn't take very much for me, and perhaps for thee, to get a word of encouragement that just kind of fires you up. It's kind of like, I'm a runner. I'm not a good runner but I'm a regular runner, and there's something they tell me, what the good runners call it kind of a second wind where the endorphins kick in, whatever those are, and you can kind of run forever. I've never experienced that, but as a runner I've read that. I think that the gift of encouragement, a word of 'hang in there' is like that in the body of Christ. And I don't know, but I would rather suppose that in this room that there are uh, it would be simplistic to say two categories but now that I've said it I'll stay with it. Those who really need the word of encouragement, and those who can be an encourager. The Apostle Paul, Little Small of Tarsus, was not, it wasn't unusual for him to experience a kind of no name people who entered his life and who really kind of picked him up.

Reflect, seminary students, on uh, a way back into Acts chapter 9, when kind of the the ayatollah of the day, uh a Christian hostage-taker, a Christian killer, named Saul of Tarsus is going from place to place imprisoning and taking the lives of Christians. Uh God enters the picture rather

dramatically, knocks him off of his uh, off of his camel, or his horse, or his wingtip sandals on the road to Damascus, and in what the Holy Spirit of God says is a "blinding light brighter than the noonday sun. " We're talking a bright light. G-the Lord Jesus speaks to him, gets his attention, and has him go back into the city. Uh, a-a guy named Ananias, we know nothing about him other than the fact that he's probably a deacon at the local church and he loved Jesus, wanted to be open to the Lord. "Lord, what do you want me to do?" Maybe in his devotions that morning Ananias said to the Lord "Lord, not much but just use my life in any way you want to." The spirit of God said to him "Well here's what I'd like you to do, Ananias, go go down the street called Straight knock on condominium number six." That's the Hafer-ized version, you won't find it in your Ryrie study Bibles. Is this a little kind of a local thing. "And the person, now get ready because the person who answers the door, uh it-well it'll be kind of a challenge, uh because the one who who's staying there is is Saul of Tarsus." And Ananias says "Lord, maybe you have another assignment board." But he goes, he knocks, Saul is there. And this kind of no name to the world has a chance, humanly speaking, to point the Apostle Paul to Jesus Christ.

Don't you know, that in Small of Tarsus, in his testimony times when he'd sit, uh drinking matzo ball stew or whatever they did in those days with Christians you know after church and after the synagogue fellowship, don't you know that there were for-times when the apostle Paul would say "Well let me tell you somebody that was significant in my life when I was blind literally physically, when Jesus had knocked me off my feet, gotten my attention, and said to get ready for my ministry. God used a man named Ananias and I appreciate him." But that's not the only one, Acts chapter nine tells us that after the apostle Paul got saved, and we should identify with

this. One reason I love to speak in camps, and conferences, and youth if they'll still let me, in junior high camps, God bless them, who else will.

[Audience laughs]

One reason I like to do that, is these people get saved, and then they're so fired up they don't know how hard it is to be a Christian. And you see the zeal of new converts. Well this is this is Saul of Tarsus now the Apostle Paul but he's not known as that yet, hasn't written any of the books in the New Testament. He hasn't had a chance to to uh revise this theology. Basically he knows how to get saved, and he and he knows the difference between being a Pharisee of the Pharisees and someone that's saved by the blood of the crucified One. So, Saul of Tarsus hits the streets. He's ease-just about about a week old in Jesus, and he's arguing, and he's-he's challenging, and he's discussing, but it isn't going down very well. Because let's face it, if uh Hussein, if uh Saddam, if uh the ayatollah would come to your church with no no advance notice, and during a fellowship time and maybe testimony time they would stand and say, I'm not going to try to imitate their language because I couldn't anyway. But if they'd stand in church your church and say "I want you to know that I I've become a Christian, and I've decided to join your church." You'd just clap and applaud.

Well, you'd think wait just a minute because you see their back their background, their past, makes them just a little bit shaky. Well here is the apostle Paul standing on the street and he's saying "Well brothers now listen I know that I haven't-I don't have a great track record here. Yes Fred, I did imprison your brother. Yes Myrtle, it's true that maybe some of your relatives lost

their lives as a result, but now I've become a Christian. Enter, not Ananias because the Lord had a time for him, and enter a guy named Barnabas whose name means the 'Son of Consolation' the son of encouragement. Don't raise your hands, but how many of you have nicknames that by God's grace you've dropped somewhere along the line? I was I'll just tell you right now, I was for twenty-seven years of my life, I was Buster. I don't know why, I think my father had a dog and the dog died and he never got over it.

[Audience laughs]

But the son of encouragement you know, but this Barnabas, this Barnabas he he he heard that this brand new convert was having trouble with his credibility. And uh, if you've done some study on Barnabas, of course you have, I've been through these programs at Talbot seminary. You realize that this man, wherever you sliced him, he bled encouragement, and he bled consolation. So he came on the scene, uh he's been around a long time. Acts 4 tells us that he he just loved the Lord and he sold his land, distributed among the the needy Christians. Now here's somebody, he n-he's not the apostle Paul yet as we know him. He's not the writer of thirteen, yea even fourteen, books of the New Testament yet. He's not the greatest missionaries who ever lived. Yet he's a brand new ragtag Jew convert that people-who talks a lot. And Barnabas came on the scene and the Word of God says, and the word is literally "he took him in" as the Holy Spirit uh does with us to bring us beside. And not because of Paul's power and authority, but because of Barnabas. His love for Jesus, his ability to slice through the exterior and to see into the hearts of men and women, a heart that beat for God. Thank God for Barnabas. And he said to

the local church "I vouch for him. He's my man. And more importantly than that, he's he's God's man."

And so the doors begin to open, and it was interesting to me as I studied this first, uh thoroughly, in the Book of Acts as a student at Talbot seminary hundreds of years ago, that the Word of God says "So Barnabas and Paul went here, and Barnabas and Paul went there." And as Paul grew in his faith and the knowledge of the Lord you read of Paul and Barnabas did this and that. And there are many Christians today who know very little of Barnabas, quite a bit of the Apostle Paul. But it didn't bother Barnabas to get second rating, because he understood that encouragement and consolation was incredibly important. Are you uh at the point in your life in study for ministry at this point, where where you've been down just a little bit? Well the good news is, even the greats have been there.

John the Baptist is in prison just literally about to lose his life. One of his disciples comes trucking to Jesus and says "Well John, John's a little bit down and discouraged and he's wondering are are you really the messiah?" Jesus said a greater than John the Baptist had never been born. Jesus sent back the word to John the Baptist saying "Tell them how that the sick are raised, and the dead or raised, and uh and the lame walk, and people are coming to know Jesus Christ." It's possible in the ministry, this won't be my brilliant statement of the morning but it's true nonetheless, to get discouraged and down. And I want you to know that God knows that and that He's placed in His body, those--and although I'm preaching this this morning this isn't one of my strengths in my life. I'm learning this as I go along--in His body, if we will pick up the

challenge, as the Spirit of God encourages us to reach out and touch just one other life. I believe that God will honor that.

I was going to bring my-and I forgot to do it. I-I'm going to bring my little card it's just a thank you card, and it has a verse from the Scripture. If I was really a navigator, I'd have that verse memorized, I think it's from Thessalonians somewhere, and I copied it from uh, somebody else that was on campus, I only plagiarize from the best.

[Audience laughs]

And it really it's just a it's just a generic card, and it says "thank you very much", I really appreciate it's generic enough to where I can use it, uh, for almost anything that happens on campus. I'm not proud of what I'm going to tell you, but I'm going to tell it nonetheless, maybe open my life up a bit. When I made up these cards, Dr. Chase was the president at uh here at Biola, and Dr. Chase told me a story that had happened, uh at some other school that he had heard about, where a person on ca-campus sent out a-a-an encouragement card. It wasn't like mine, but uh something-and it just said "Good job, well done". It was generic. It was just that broad. It put the person's name on it, and put it in the mail. And what impressed me was that Dr. Chase said that there was such an overwhelming response.

So I did it. I'm not proud of it, and I'm not boastful about it, but the end result, I will not forget. I think that I sent out 200 or 250, I just went through uh the names, the list of the students on campus. We had uh, in the undergraduate maybe about twenty one hundred students and

something like that. And I sent those out, and uh for the next couple weeks, people just poured into my office. Very few, in fact I can't remember anybody who said "Why did you send that?" Most of them would come by and thank me, and then reflect on something they had done that they thought nobody else knew about or cared about. And it gave me an opportunity to pray with them. The reason I'm saying I'm not proud of that, because I'm I'm not really sure that that's the best use of a card or a person's time, but it spoke to me and said that in the body of Christ oftentimes even champion types are hurting.

You say how do you know that? Well verse 10, 9 and 10 of Acts 18 is God speaking to the Apostle Paul at this point in his life that he was really down. The Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, wouldn't that be nice. I mean if God was to speak to you I would like that, but it's OK. He said to the Apostle Paul quote "Paul do not be afraid any longer." The Apostle Paul? Afraid? Yes. "But go on speaking and do not be silent." The Apostle Paul actually considering at this point in his life, not speaking the gospel? Yes. That's why God spoke to him. And then God gave him a promise, "I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you." The Apostle Paul afraid of some other puny human being? Yes at this point. Discouragement can, it can uh take all forms. "I am with you. No man will attack you in order to harm you. For I have many people in this city."

Enter Small of Tarsus after Athens into a, what pastor Chuck Swindal calls 'cruddy Corinth', and he gets to Corinth and he's just down and discouraged. He didn't have his friends. I think he was emotionally depleted. The commentators who spend many more pages than you and I would explaining the meaning of these passages, most of the uh commentators feel that with-when the

apostle Paul hit Corinth, uh he was physically, and emotionally, and, perhaps, spiritually depleted. You bet your life that's possible.

Enter Aquila and Priscilla. No I didn't name my kids that, and maybe you might not have either. They're a couple who love Jesus Christ with all their hearts. They has this what-they had this one man suggested 'tents Inc.'. And it worked out very well. The Apostle Paul was a tent maker from Tarsus and in verses 1 through 4, as they found each other, I find it interesting that the commentators, several have suggested that from the time Paul met them, you can study the original language and check it out, till the time Paul is hitting the streets uh in full power, that that a period of time passed. Maybe for him to eat matzo ball stew from Priscilla. Maybe for them-maybe for him just to sit up and and have his back rubbed. And uh, the words of encouragement, maybe a long period of rest. All we know is, that as a result of the encouragement of this dynamic duo in that chapter, he gains strength and encouragement. Now his his team hits and they bring an offering. That's an idea.

[Laughs]

No. They bring an offering and he's encouraged with that, so that he doesn't have to work in tents incorporated, he can do what he's best at, he can be on the streets and in the synagogues, preaching and teaching the Word of God. Interestingly, at the end of the chapter, just in case we think that Paul is the only one who needs a word, there is this dynamic, golde- tongued order named Apollos. I wish that we had a picture of him in the scriptures, we we do, a verbal picture.

Hafer: Words of Encouragement

He is just phenomenal and the words just flowed. You say why don't we get people like that for chapel? Because it's a low budget program and it keeps us humble. That's why.

[Crowd laughs]

And Apollos has this phenomenal ability with words, but there's just one problem. Either he was barely saved and didn't understand the Holy Spirit, pay your nickel take your choice, or he was a guy you-who had a lot of the scripture, and he didn't know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, which I opt for. Aquila and Priscilla go to hear this fiery new preacher, and they hear him preach, and the Scripture says they drew him aside. I love that. And they and they and they cor-gently corrected him, they gave him a word of encouragement.

[Snaps]

He-he got so fired up with the Lord that he went on to do great things for the Lord, and Aquila and Priscilla just kind of the dynamic duo, quiet couple, faded quietly back into what they did best: encouraging believers to be faithful to the gifts that God had given them. I close my bible, my prof told me at Talbot "you do that and it builds false hope and also gives you five more minutes in your message."

[Audience laughs]

But this is the ill-illustration time you know. Uh, at the years that uh, Neal and I, Dr. Anderson and I, were students at Talbot, he was an honor student I was a sincere student.

[Audience laughs]

There was a, there was a little group, uh fellowship of about 50 people that were meeting in a home, and they invited me to come over and speak and I did. I figured oh, it's my kind of group, you know. And so, after f-me-uh-spr-preaching for them, just saw the whole bunch of them packed into a home a couple Sundays, I said to my wife "if that little group needed kind of a kind of a semi-preacher, I think I would enjoy doing that because they're really an enjoyable fellowship." So they invited me and uh, and uh Koinonia Bible Church, took me several years to pray about it because I couldn't say Koinonoin-Koinonia, but now I can. So for a four year block of time, it was really a privilege to minister to that little group. We did it-we didn't intend to stay uh little, they-people just stayed away by the thousands during that four year period. But in my ministry there, these people taught me a great deal. I was still doing quite a few camps and conferences, I shouldn't have during that time and I hastily tell you that.

I came back from Hume Lake on a winter uh, weekend conference, and my deacons had said "Why don't you just not do the Sunday night service?" Sunday night service for heaven's sake. Yeah we had them. But I had decided no I can do that, kind of in the energy of the flesh, which basically was what I was going on at that point. I remember standing, it's uh what is first baptist church now, at that point it was uh St. Christopher's Episcopal and Koinonia Bible, we were sharing the building. I remember standing before my my crew that Sunday night, 40 or 50

people, and I absolutely had I had nothing. I had a page of notes hastily scribbled from uh, the flight back from uh downtown Fresno and such, but-and it was in Philippians and I-it's my favorite passage of scripture, but I shouldn't ask it this, yeah I will. Have you ever been in that situation, where in the energy of the flesh, it's just bombing? After about five minutes, I absolutely had nothing to say, it's the only time I've ever done this.

[Faint laughter from audience]

It's not the only time I've I've never had something to say, but the only time that I've been this absolutely bottomed out. And I-as I was speaking, I had the feeling that God was saying to me "you hypocrite you are giving nothing." And I had the feeling, although my people weren't, that they were saying that with their with their looks. And uh, so my people remember it very well, the people from Koinonia. I took my little page, it wasn't even full page of notes. And after about five minutes, I just wadded it up, and I threw it on the floor, and I said "Are you are you guys as aware as I am of what a bomb this is?" And it got very quiet.

[Laughs]

And I said, I said "I'm I am uh, I am I apologize, I have not prepared, and I'm embarrassed uh for who I am and what I'm doing. And uh, this is no evidence of what powerful preaching should be." And actually just ready to--. Well a couple of ladies who were vocal in our group said "Oh, get those notes back. We were enjoying that. That wasn't so bad!" Then uh Deacons, they were all, well I was gonna say 'big guys' but at my size five ten is big alright? Two of, two these big

burly six foot type guys walked up, and they just stood be-by me. First of all, it was kind of like saying "you're not going anywhere."

[Audience laughs]

And then it was kind of like saying uh, uh "no-neither is anyone else." A Deacon named John Hussman said "how many of you have ever bought-burnt the candle at both ends? I want to see every hand up!" Everybody goes "Yeah yeah" "and how many of you have been discouraged and down? Yeah, right! Well you see that preacher?" And so then the other guy said "I want to tell you what I got out of it." They stood up there like that, so they just encouraged the little preacher for uh, a long time. I'll have to admit to blubbering like a baby. Then they said "this evening what God wants us to do is go from here to Polly pies and feed the little preacher, and just fatten him up, and get him rested up." So it's the only time it ever happened. They picked me up, literally, and carried me out of the building.

[Audience laughs]

Put me in the car, and uh took me to Polly pies, which by the way is a wonderful place to go.

[Audience laughs]

I thought, I thought seriously, for previous Sundays of-toward the end of the message going--

[Audience laughs]

But I didn't. But I didn't. The word of God tells us that the gift of encouragement, uh I-I don't believe is just a gift that's parceled out. We can all do that. A word of encouragement to a brother or sister who may not even look like they're down, uh could do a great deal to encourage people in the body of Christ. So I want to tell you something this morning. If you're one who needs a word of encouragement, here is a word. I could give you a pretty good one, but I'd rather give you one from the Lord. I'd like to tell you this.

Don't be discouraged. Don't be afraid of any man. Don't even consider being silent in your faith for Jesus Christ. Because, God the Holy Spirit is in us, just literally itching to burst forth in His power and authority for this reason. Verse 10, He has many people in your city. And now they're not wearing-running around with pagan on their sweat shirt, but in their hearts they're saying "help me, speak to me. Give me the word of Jesus Christ." Don't be afraid. Man can't harm you. God the Holy Spirit will flow through you, and me, as we reach out to our city with the strong words of Jesus.

Father I pray for these men and women and for myself, that we will be greatly encouraged by Your Holy Spirit, in Your power, in Your strength to go far beyond our comfort zone. Encourage those who are down Lord. Pick up the discouraged. Fire up the ones who've lost focus. Give us a fresh, new glimpse of the resurrected Christ in the open tomb. Flow through us, Holy Spirit of God. Do Your work in us, and help us to see the world as You see them, as Your precious son saw the world lost and dying. Help us to reach out. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.