



REVIVAL MEETS RESISTANCE

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Libin Abraham

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Libin Abraham 0:00

Today you've heard about how Jesus is moving, and the kingdom of God is expanding even through resistance and persecution. And sometimes on this side of the ocean, for us to be out of sight is to be out of mind. And I want to just give us a snapshot of the condition of the global church and the persecution that Christians are facing around the world right now today there are 388 million Christians who face high levels of persecution. That's almost the size of the population of the United States of America. So imagine every person in America. That number represents somebody around the world, facing high levels of persecution-that's imprisonment or death. Last year, 67,843 Christians were beaten, threatened, or abused in some way. Last year, 224,129 Christians were forced to leave their homes. That's the size of Frisco. Imagine everyone in Frisco living. That number represents somebody who had to leave their home because of their faith. Last year, 25,794 attacks were made of Christian homes, businesses, and places of worship. And last year, 4,849 Christians were killed for their faith, martyred. That's only the ones we know of, and there are many more in places like Nigeria and other places who've paid the ultimate price of their life for the same gospel we believe in and sing in, and for preaching the same gospel we preach here in Carrollton, Texas. So it's worth asking the question: Why is spreading the message of Jesus often met with so much resistance? Why is the gospel met with hostility? And I think there's kind of one simple answer: It's because there is no uncontested ground. There is no uncontested ground. There is no city that's neutral. There is no country that's neutral. There is no life, no soul that is neutral. There are spiritual forces who are claiming rights, who are claiming claiming ownership of regions, territories, and the lives of people. And Jesus came into the earth 2000 years ago to literally liberate women and men, people, families, souls from the domain and kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God. That's why when Jesus stepped on planet Earth, his overarching message was not, "Hey, a new religion is in town. His message was not a new political order is in town. No, no. His message all across the Gospels is the kingdom of God is at hand. And today, the message of the church and the mission of God is the announcement that the true King has come. There is a true eternal King who has entered our story, who's died on a cross, who's risen from the dead, and He is inviting us to life with Him. As we heard from our brothers in India today, I want us to actually look quickly at the story of the Book of Acts, this early movement of believers, and there is this pattern we consistently find from the beginning into the end of Acts. And here's the pattern: revival leads to resistance. Can you say that with me? Revival leads to resistance. That's the story of the church over the last 2000 years. Revival leads to resistance. Conversions are met with confrontation. Baptisms are followed up by beatings. Miracles are followed up by arrest. When a revival sweeps across a city or a town, riots and resistance is naturally the next thing to come. You'll see this. Acts 17, Paul and Silas arrive in a town called Thessalonica, and they begin to preach about the resurrection of Jesus. Believers come to faith in Him. A church begins to form, and notice how revival led to resistance. Acts 17 verse 5 says, "But the Jews became jealous, and they brought together some wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city. For success, these men who have turned the upside the world upside down have come here too. This is their testimony, man. These guys have turned the world upside down, and they've shown up to our city. And Jason has welcomed them. They're all acting contrary to Caesar's decree, saying there is another king whose name is Jesus. See, they mistakenly thought that this person that the disciples were preaching about was another contrary king to Caesar that would test his rule.

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But they mistakenly also understood something that is at the heart of the gospel, which is there is a true King, there is another King who rules on the throne of the universe, and His name is Jesus. He is a King who has come. The reason why Christians kept getting in trouble in the first century, in the first few centuries, is not because they came and told the people,

"Here's how you live the most comfortable and best life now. That's not why. It's not because they told everybody, "Here's how you can be a better person, how your mood can be better, or your behaviors can be different. No, no, they came into cities and regions with this one message that Jesus is Lord, that's the most consistent preaching of the early church. Jesus is Lord, and if Jesus is Lord, that means Caesar is not Lord. If Jesus is Lord, that means money isn't God. That means culture isn't Lord. That means our own desires or fears or feelings. That's not the Lord of our lives. Jesus did not come to coexist with other lords in our life. No, no, no. Kingdom advancement meant kingdom displacement. As the kingdom of God arrived into a city or into a family or into a life, it displaced other kingdoms. So, as the light of Jesus entered the earth, it drove out darkness. As the love of Jesus entered alive, it expelled fear because perfect love cast out fear. There are no uncontested ground. So, as the kingdom of Jesus moves in, spiritual war breaks out because forces of evil that claimed rights to a life, to a city, to a country, are now losing their grip. Our brothers and sisters that are here around the world-they're experiencing spiritual warfare in some real, tangible ways-and you ought to hear their story, but don't think for a moment that spiritual war doesn't exist in America. Oh, it does. That same adversary there is at work here. He hates it when men and women come under the lordship of Jesus. They surrender their hearts to King Jesus, and one of the greatest spiritual tactics of the evil one is to convince us that he's not real, or the spiritual war doesn't exist. No, no, no. We don't fight against flesh and blood, but we do have a real adversary, forces of the evil that we work. But how many of you know Jesus is victorious and He's building His church, and nothing can hinder and stop the plans of God on the earth. Here's the pattern of Acts of how revival leads to resistance. In Acts two, the Holy Spirit is poured out on the church, and 3000 people are baptized in the name of Jesus. I think I'd call that a revival. Amen. Acts three, Peter and John are meeting a man who's been lame since birth, and they preach the gospel. They raise him, and he starts walking, and a whole crowd gathers, and they begin to talk about how Jesus, whom they crucified, is now risen and He is Lord. Well, revival begins, and people begin to place their faith in Jesus, and trouble stirs up. In Acts four, as a response to what happened in Acts three, verse one of Acts four says, "While they were speaking to the people, the priest, the captain of the temple police, the Sadducees confronted them because they were annoyed that they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. So they seized them and took them into custody until the next day, since it was already evening. So here Peter and John are the first of the disciples to be arrested in Acts three and Acts four, then in Acts chapter five, the other apostles are arrested because when Peter and John were let go of prison, they were told, they were commanded, don't speak of Jesus. But they came out of prison, and guess what they did? They kept talking about Jesus. So trouble spreads. The other apostles are arrested, and by the time you get to Acts seven, Stephen is martyred, the first martyr of the early church. But then that stirs up more trouble, and by the time you get to Acts eight, all of the believers are now scattered. They're all experiencing persecution, and they're having to scatter.

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But what happened as the church scattered is that on their way, the Bible says they kept preaching the gospel. The enemy thought he could stop the church by scattering the church, but what he was actually doing was that when the church was scattered, the seeds of the gospel were being scattered, and it was producing a harvest of salvation. And people now were pushed into other uncontested or contested regions, and they were bringing the news of the kingdom of God, and revival continued to spread. Fast forward all the way to Acts 16, you have the church birthed in a city called Philippi. Here in Philippi. The first convert was a young lady who was a business leader. Her name was Lydia. She comes to know Jesus, and then a Roman jailer comes to know Jesus, and then a slave girl who was demon possessed. She comes to know Jesus. Let me just tell you, you would have never put these three in a small group together in first century. By no social norm should they be hanging out, but yet they became the first believers of this church, but then trouble was stirred up. See this young slave girl; she was demon possessed, and part of that possession was that she could predict the future. So, if you guys saw the advantage she could be as a fortune teller, and so she became the cash cow to a few men who exploited her demon possession for their financial gain, but now that Paul has expelled the demonic force from our life, guess what? She can't predict the future, and now they're losing money, and so they throw Paul and Silas into prison because their means of exploitation has come to an end, they're beaten and thrown into prison. It's been said that when Paul came into a new town, now he was getting the city tour. He would ask the tour guide, "Hey, show me the local prison, because I know that's where I'm going to end up tonight and sleep tonight. Eventually, Paul gets out of prison and then gets to in Acts chapter 19. He gets to Ephesus. Ephesus had such a spiritual demonic stronghold, witchcraft and idolatry rampant. But the gospel was preached, and people begin to trust in Jesus, and they begin to openly repent. Literally, as they're hearing the gospel preached, they're standing up in the crowd confessing sins, and they go back to their houses, and they brought books of witchcraft, and they bring it to the city center and light it on fire. They're saying we don't need witchcraft, we don't need these magic books because we're trusting in Jesus. I read last week that the one of the top questions asked on AI, whether it

be ChatGPT or Cloud, wherever, is people using AI as a tarot reader and trying to predict their future through AI. Let me just tell you, don't invite other voices into your life to predict your future. Don't trust in AI. Don't trust in crystals. Don't trust in nothing for your future except the Lord Jesus, you hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. You be guided by Him. You be led by Him. You have direct access to the Creator of the universe. And here, these books of magic and witchcraft are brought to the city center, and they're burned. And of course, riots and resistance follow. Ex 19 verse 28 says, "When they heard this, they were filled with rage. This is a city; they were filled with rage and began to cry out, 'Greatest Artemis of the Ephesians! So the city was filled with confusion, and they rushed all together into the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's traveling companions. So they bring these men into the amphitheater, and the Bible says for two hours they were just chanting, great as Artemis of the Ephesians. Riots and revival go together. Resistance often precedes the move of God. See, the gospel is not something neat and safe you keep within a church building. No, no, no. The gospel is disruptive to earthly thrones and spiritual forces. It's not something to be kept in a little box, tied up and secured. No, no, it is disruptive to every rival throne out there. And if nobody is disturbed by our Christianity, we should really be asking: Is our Christianity disturbing anything at all? No one's bothered by it.

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We should be asking, man, is it actually a living, breathing movement of God? I'm not saying be obnoxious. Don't be that person who gets up on an airplane with a megaphone to an already captive audience and tell them they're flying to hell. Now be winsome about how you lead people to Jesus. Don't need to be unnecessarily offensive or rude, but if we are following Jesus and are faithful to this gospel, our obedience to Jesus, our faithfulness to the gospel should be disruptive. It should actually create resistance because there is no uncontested ground. The light of the gospel, the kingdom of God goes forth. What I see in the book of Acts is that the gospel it comforts the broken, but it confronts every rival throne. The gospel comforts the broken, but it confronts every rival throne. It comforts the sinner, but it confronts the sin. It welcomes the outsider, but it confronts prejudice. It it comforts the person who has been taken advantage of or exploited, but it confronts the person who has gained from their exploitation. It comforts the person who has been led by fear. And it confronts those who are taking advantage of the fear for their own gain. The gospel tells the rich that their money is not God. Tells the powerful that they are not sovereign. And the gospel invites us, me, you, all of us, to look in our soul and see if there is a competing Lord in there, that is rivaling for the throne of Jesus. Is there someone else that is contending for the role of Jesus? And it invites us to daily surrender our life to the lordship of Jesus Christ. I know we have amazing leaders from around the world, people who are making a global difference, and I hope you'll get to be here tonight and see them, and tomorrow and Wednesday night hear the stories of the one, and many of them are living through seasons of riots, resistance, and persecution. I got to see and hear some of their journeys yesterday afternoon, and it's remarkable what Jesus is doing. And I want to just offer a word of encouragement in this theme because you're living in the middle of it, I don't want you to think that your resistance is anything but the evidence that God is moving. If you're feeling resistance, it's actually a great sign that the kingdom of God is advancing. The enemy never fights a descending army; it only fights the movement that is moving forward, so the very resistance or persecution or the difficulty you're in is evidence that God is at work. He's moving into regions that have been a stronghold for the enemy, and He's bringing light. He's bringing freedom. He's bringing worship where worship didn't exist. So the resistance is evidence that God is at work, and if you're living in a season of persecution or resistance, I want to just point back to the prayer in Acts four, and I pray that this prayer in Acts four frames your prayer and builds your faith as you're here this week. Peter and John are arrested, and they are commanded not to preach of Jesus. They go after being released. They go straight to the church prayer meeting that's happening, because while they were in prison, the believers were praying. They came to the church that was gathered for prayer, and they said, "Look, here's what we've been told. We've been told to never preach Jesus again, to never proclaim the gospel. Imagine if you're in that prayer meeting. If you're a member of that church, you have just seen your pastors get arrested. You've seen what they did to Jesus, making him a public a public spectacle through the crucifixion, the most gruesome form of torture. And now you've heard that same government leaders and religious leaders telling you you cannot speak Jesus, what would you be praying? Some may pray, Lord, keep us safe. Others may pray, Lord, remove those in charge, remove those in power. Others may pray, Lord, vote some people out and vote some people in. Others may pray, Lord, give us safety, but that's actually not what the early church prayed. Here is what they prayed in Acts four, verse 29 to 30. And now, Lord, consider their threats and grant that your servants may speak your word with what?

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With all boldness, while you stretch your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus, then he goes on, and this yeah. So this is the prayer: Give us boldness. Now they don't deny the threats;

they say, consider the threats. They're real. This is what they said that they'll do, but they didn't pray for the threats to go away. What they prayed was in the midst of the resistance, in the midst of the threats, give us boldness. They did not ask God to give them a smaller mission or a safer life. They asked God to increase their courage, not to lower resistance, but to increase boldness. They knew the powers are out there that could be a threat to them, but they believed in the power of God that could save the sinner and heal the sick. So they said, "Give us boldness as you stretch out your hand and you heal the sick and you save the alive. So, partners all around the world, as you go back and you step into boldness, we have the outstretched hand of God healing the sick, saving lives, and redeeming all those in your city. Don't ask God to lower the resistance. Ask Him to increase your boldness. And I know that here in America, we're not facing the same kind of persecution yet, at least that our brothers and sisters are facing around the world. But for all of us who preach and herald the gospel, believe in it, give our life to it, they will. Some resistance. It may come in different forms and shapes. It may be lack of a job promotion or or social ostracization. It may be something else. But there's some resistance. Here's a question I want to ask you to consider: Have I allowed the possibility of resistance to keep me from obedience and trust? Have we allowed discomfort, loss of privileges-have we allowed resistance to keep us from obedience and trust in Jesus? Because God's invited you to a mission. Every Christian is called into the mission of God. This isn't a mission for some; it's a mission for all. And for you, it may be walk across the street and and bring the good news to a neighbor who belongs to an entirely different world religion. For you, it might be to share your faith with a coworker or friend to tell them what Jesus has done in your life. For you, it might mean to to mentor an international student to bring them into your home or take them under your wings and be a light to them. It might be to engage locally with one of our mission partners or go on a mission trip. Last year we had 14 mission journeys. It might be to give generously to the mission of God, the work of God financially as stewards of the resources God has given you. I don't know what your mission looks like, but often the mission of God will lead to resistance. But don't let resistance hold you back. But ask God for greater boldness and courage as you step in. Here's how the book of Acts ends. I want to read to you the last verse of Acts. Just imagine with me all that the gospel has faced in the book of Acts, the gospel was met with religious opposition, political opposition, with riots, with demons, with storms and shipwreck, with martyrdom, imprisonment, false accusation, betrayal-you name it, it saw it. But the gospel went forward, and now we get to the end of the book of Acts, and Paul has arrived at Rome, the center of the known world. Now he's in chains, but he's in Rome. And notice how Luke ends the recording of the Book of Acts, Acts 28 verse 30 to 31. Paul stayed two whole years in his own rented house, and he welcomed all those who visited him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all. Say with me: all boldness and without hindrance. I love that phrase, without hindrance. When Luke concludes this narrative of the early church. He doesn't end with a concluding remarks. He doesn't say greet so and so and I'm done with writing. No, no, no. He ends with the gospel moving forward without hindrance. Paul has chains on him, but the gospel has no chains.

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Paul is hindered, but the kingdom of God is not hindered. And for two years in a rented house under house arrest from Rome, Paul is teaching the gospel, and the gospel is going forward without hindrance. And here's why: resistance does not have the final word. Resistance is not the end of the story. Through resistance, through persecution, through riots and opposition, the gospel goes forth without hindrance. It cannot be limited. And today we are here in 2026 because the story of Acts hasn't ended. It hasn't concluded. This same gospel is moving in our city and moving around the world without hindrance, and you and I are invited into this mission. This week we will honor and celebrate our global leaders and missionaries around the world. But the goal, the ultimate goal of this week is not to applaud our missionaries. It's to remind us that we are a missionary people. So we, our ascending church and as sent people, we've been sent into our city, our schools. Would you stand with me? We're going to end our time by singing and praying for revival, revival that might lead to riots and resistance. Baptisms may be met with beatings, conversions may be met with confrontation, but resistance never has the last word. The gospel goes forth unhindered, and maybe you're here today, and you have actually resisted the God of the universe, and you just stepped into service. But today, can I just tell you, the God of the universe, the King came looking for you. He died on a cross, lived a perfect life, rose from the grave, and today He's asking for your heart, your devotion. You don't have to make Him Lord; He's already Lord. But you get to receive Him as Lord of your life. So surrendered your heart to Him, and for the rest. Of us, we're not invited into a safe Christianity. No, we're invited to an exciting story. It has challenges, as you've seen and heard today, but this gospel goes forth unhindered. So let's ask God for revival, not just one that we can sit back and watch, but when we participate in a kind of revival that disrupts evil forces and rival thrones, a kind of revival that is so radically transformative that it literally turns the world upside down. Though there are no uncontested grounds, that this kingdom takes ground and moves head unhindered. Would you pray? Would you sing this over our city and over our world?

