

# Colossians 1:3-8

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[ 0 : 00 ] Please join me in turning to Paul's letter to the church at Colossae, the book of your copy of God's Word that we call Colossians. As we continue together our study last week looking at the first two verses, the salutation, as well as some of the background, the occasion for the writing of this letter.

It's of interesting note, not in any strange supernatural way, but I was listening to that album this morning as I was kind of doing my last note preparation and praying for the preaching this morning. Evan Thomas way. Very good stuff. And we continue Colossians chapter 3 and I'll read to you through verse 8. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing as it also does among you.

Since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and is to make known to us your love in the spirit.

[ 1 : 31 ] As we turn our minds and our hearts toward God's holy writ, let me remind you that this is God's word to us. It was written for his glory and our good.

We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands. Now, as Paul begins to write this letter, we know that he's writing it to correct some type of heresy that was going on.

And we talked at length about that last week, not knowing exactly what the heresy was, but being able to see some elements of some common heresy that was going on in the day.

Paul wastes no time at all getting to the very meat of his letter to the Colossian believers. And he begins, as he rightly should, with the gospel.

Notice the last half of verse 5. The word of the truth. The gospel. This is the good news of Jesus Christ. The very foundation from which all other truth is built.

[ 2 : 36 ] And so we should rightly understand the gospel as well as the outcomes of said good news. A wonderful historical summary of the gospel is found in 1 Corinthians 15 verses 1 through 4.

Where Paul says, Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preach to you, which you received and which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preach to you, unless you believed in vain or didn't believe at all.

Verse 3, For I have delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

That He was buried. That He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. Which Paul repeats twice, which is to say that God had preordained and planned this thing to come to pass.

That Jesus, the one they called the Christ, was in fact God's Son. And therefore, the work that was accomplished has veracity. It has meaning.

[ 3 : 49 ] It actually took its full effect in the world. The good news of Jesus Christ is that He came and died for the complete forgiveness of sins.

And then He rose from the dead so that those who believe in Him will live forever. We cannot have good news without bad.

And the bad news is that all of humanity has inherited the guilt of Adam. And we are guilty ourselves of living in direct opposition to the ways of God.

Do not take your sin lightly as little and frivolous. Everything that you have done that has transgressed the law of God has said to Him, I hate you. You are my enemy. I know what's best for me. I am king. It is of great offense to a holy God. God cannot tolerate your sin.

[ 4 : 50 ] And therefore, you are separated from Him. And you are cast away from Him forever if you die without the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came to save sinners of whom I am foremost.

And He rose from the dead that we may have believed in Him and have life in Him. The word gospel in Greek, euangelion, from which we get the word evangelize.

It's really just a technical term in Greek for good news. It was originally used as a term in relationship to battles. In some records of the past, there would be occasions when a certain city would fight against another city.

It was very common in Greece for the country to be divided up into these city-states. And each city-state would maintain its own army. And occasionally they would go to battle.

There would be these great battles. And everyone in the city would wait to hear the news of what had happened on the battlefield. The armies would ride out and they would go to battle. And everyone in the city would wait with this eager anticipation to find out who it was they were going to pay homage to at the end of this battle.

[ 6 : 02 ] No Twitter. No Instagram. There was no way for this to be updated except by messengers. And men would be sent back to the city.

Runners would be sent back to the city to declare what had happened. This was this euangelion, the proclaimers of good news.

This person would come running from the battlefield declaring, We have won. This is that word. Gospel. That we're talking about. The good news. The good news of victory over our enemy. The news of victory over sin. This is the reference Paul makes when he speaks of the gospel preached in Romans 10.15. When he quotes from Isaiah 52.7, he says, How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

He's saying those runners who come and declare victory over sin. And to fully appreciate that citation from Romans 10.15, let me read to you Isaiah 52.7.

[ 7 : 06 ] How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news. Who publishes peace. Who brings good news of happiness.

Who publishes salvation. Who says to Zion, Your God reigns. This is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And this is the way in which Paul begins his letter to the Colossian believers. So let's notice together five things about the gospel.

Number one. The gospel gives reason for thanksgiving. Verse 3. Paul writes, We assume that this is Paul and Timothy as the salutation notes for us.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. We give proper thanksgiving. We give thanks to the proper source of who you are in Christ.

[ 8 : 13 ] If my wife, Samantha, she hates it when I call her that, Sam, but for you guests, I want you to know, my wife's name is Samantha, gave me a present for my birthday. It wouldn't be proper for me to thank one of my sons for the gift.

Wouldn't be proper, would it? Caden, thank you so much for this wonderful gift. If Sam gave me the gift, it's proper for me to thank Sam for the gift. However, when one of my sons gives me a gift for my birthday, it's proper, after thanking them, to thank my wife, who is the real source of said gift.

The one who did all the hard work to actually load up boys and take them to a store and keep them from destroying things. It's proper for us to ascribe thanksgiving to the proper source, which is what Paul does here.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. God was and is the source of the church.

He was and is the source of the church. This is further driven in the last half of verse 6 of Colossians 1. Since the day you heard it, being the gospel, and understood the grace of God in truth.

[ 9 : 27 ] This gift given to us by God. The grace of God in truth. The gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul writes in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9, For by grace you have been saved through faith.

And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Not a result of works, so that no one may boast. And verse 9 is so very important for us to understand what Paul is trying to explain in verse 8. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. Many people want to say that Paul is referring to the grace given there. I would argue that he's referring to the faith. Because he goes on to say it's not a result of works, so that no one may boast. It is fully of God. Our salvation is monergistic. God himself acts upon us. You can rearrange these things to say that we're saved by grace through the gift of God, which is faith, and not as a result of our works. It's highly debated in churches these days. [10:36] By men that I think are worth listening to. But let me say to you, that the changing of our hearts happens before we place faith in Jesus Christ.

That regeneration precedes faith in Christ. That God works in us a new heart so that we can believe. And then we are justified by that faith. All of this being a work of grace in our lives. Regeneration, faith, justification, sanctification, glorification. Regeneration precedes faith. Happens in a moment. I don't really want to parse it all out. It doesn't really matter. Right? But we are incapable. We cannot do good things. We cannot be righteous. And faith would certainly be included in that category unless we are changed. So it's fully of God. Regeneration precedes faith. We must give Him much praise for the salvation of the Colossian church and for our own. [11:42] All of the glory. All of the honor is ascribed to Him. It all belongs to Him and the praise of His name. So that's number one. The Gospel gives reason for thanksgiving.

To the proper place. To God the Father. Secondly, the Gospel is believed by faith. First part of verse 4. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus. And what Paul is talking about here is a saving faith. Not just a mental assent to something. Not just believing and saying with your mind, Yeah, that makes sense. Jesus is the Son of God and came and died for our sins. But a saving faith. A faith that is preceded by regeneration. A faith that has as its object the person and work of Jesus Christ. There are many people of faith these days. Saving faith is faith that has as its object the person and work of Jesus Christ. [12:51] Charles Spurgeon tells a story about two men in a boat who are being swept towards a waterfall and their certain death. And at the same time, one is thrown a rope from shore by a group of men working to save him.

And the other sees a log floating by. And one jumps onto the log. The other takes hold of the rope. And the point of the story is that the object must be the correct object in order to save us. The man jumping onto the log did himself no service. He just got really wet before he went over the waterfall. The man who held the rope was saved because the object was right and it was proper. Charles Spurgeon again, and I'm going to throw a little addition to this quote in for you for free because it's very good. He said, So an encouragement to you to read Puritans, the old dead guys. As of them, he says, the old writers tell you, right? So the Puritans say that faith is made up of three things. First, knowledge. Then, assent. And then what they call affiance or the laying hold of the knowledge to which we give assent and making it our own by trusting in it. [14:28] So first, we must know something. The gospel must be preached to us. We must understand the state of our sin, separation from God, the need of a Savior. We must understand that Jesus Christ is that Savior.

We must have some knowledge of double imputation. That He takes away our sin and that He gives to us His righteousness. That that is what is required before God. We must have some knowledge of that. And then we must have some belief that it's true. But more than that, we must trust in it. We must take it up into ourselves. We must say, this is a truth that belongs to me. That I am saved by this great truth. So knowledge and belief and trust. How do you know if you have a saving faith? This is a question that we must ask as American Christians, particularly those who live and likely grew up in the Southeast. [15:32] Because we live in a place where so many, and I will use my quote unquote fingers, Christian leaders peddle cheap grace.

They would have you many places this morning. And this is tragic and saddening. Many places this morning, they would say to somebody, if you doubt that you were a Christian, let me draw your mind back to the day in which you made a decision.

The day in which you walked an aisle. Remember the card you filled out. Flip to the front of your copy of God's Word. Remember where you wrote down the date. Some activity on your part that saved you from the wrath to come.

And certainly, many people have been saved by such activity. There was, I shouldn't say by activity. They were saved in the midst of such activity. That God worked in that and used it to save them. But it is not the surety of your salvation. You've heard me say before, the fact that you have a birth date and you know the date does not prove to you that you're alive. You know that you're alive because you experience life.

[16:45] You know that you're alive and breathing and that you're working out activity. And the same is true of the Christian. Our work must reflect the fact that we are saved.

Our work does not earn us salvation. We're not found righteous because of the things that we do, but we will live in righteousness because of who we are. It's a great monergistic work of God on our behalf.

Now our sanctification, the continuing perfection of us being synergistic, we have a part to play in it. An activity to be carried out. The great marker of Christian maturity is obedience.

I know people who have been Christians for decades who don't show the maturity that some young believers do because those young believers are obedient with what they know.

So many of us are so top heavy. We know so much and do so little with it. The great marker of Christian maturity is obedience. However, obedience is the marker of any truly regenerative individual's life.

[17:55] And there are some who call this lordship theology, although those who believe this to be true would never call it that, and they condemn it as heresy. They think it is a works-based theology.

And beloved, hear me. I never want to cast into doubt your salvation unless it's necessary that I do so. I don't want you to come in here every Sunday and wonder leaving. Am I truly saved?

Is my life progressing in holiness the way it ought to be? I just don't know. I want you to have surety. I want you to hold tight to it. I want you to join with me even though I still sin, to be able to stand up under the condemnation, knowing that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

I want you to experience the seal of the Spirit on your life, where you can with confidence go before God, knowing that you are clothed in Christ's righteousness. But I also do not want you to be led astray.

I tend to be a half-glass-empty kind of guy, and I really don't like that about myself, and I try not to be. I don't want to believe what I'm about to say, but I think that most of the people sitting in churches in the southeast this morning think they're Christians, and they are not.

[19:11] I think that they are tares, and they're going to be weeded out and thrown into the fire one day because of this cheap grace idea that simply there's some assent given, some word spoken, and now you're a Christian.

Rather than seeing that our lives must be progressing in holiness to see that we're saved. Test yourself. Examine to make sure you're in the faith.

1 John 5, 1-3. John says, Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him.

Okay, so conveniently, many people stop there. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God. But let me tell you that the belief is not simply some mental cognition to the facts, but rather a belief that changes who you are.

It's that kind of belief. It's a trusted belief. It's a thing that so defines who you are that you live differently. The last half of that verse 1 says, And everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him.

[20:16] Verse 2, By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.

This is the proof of what we have said has happened in our lives, that we begin to live as we should. Not perfectly. Don't hear me saying that.

I still am in need of grace. Praise God, I can trust in the completed work of Jesus Christ on my behalf. W.E. Vine, in his book, *The Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, wrote, There is no evidence in your life that you have a saving faith.

Let me plead with you this morning to repent and believe. Put down your pride. I do not care how long you've said you're a Christian and you're suddenly realizing that you're not. Repent and believe.

Your eternal soul is at stake here. Do not let the cheap grace peddlers lead you astray. The Gospel comes by faith, by saving faith.

[ 21 : 34 ] Thirdly, we see this in the first part of verse 5, the Gospel gives hope because of the promise of heaven. The text reads, Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

The hope of heaven causes us to live for the eternal and not to be caught up in the trivial nature of the temporal. Just in case you're trying to write that down, I'll say it one more time.

The hope of heaven causes us to live for the eternal and to not be caught up in the trivial nature of the temporal. It fuels the daily dying that is necessary to follow our risen Lord.

Remember Mark chapter 8, as we just finished studying through Mark. If we want to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, we're going to have to take up our cross and follow Him. We're going to have to die to the things that we want, our self-direction, in order to follow Him.

And the hope of heaven is the great charge we need for that. That we know that one day we will eternally live with Him forever. We're living for the eternal, not for the temporal.

[ 22 : 45 ] There's a great example of that in Hebrews chapter 11. I invite you to turn there with me to verse 24. Hebrews 11 verse 24. Okay, I'm going to rock.

You'll get there. Ready? Verse 24. By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. You remember the story Moses put into a basket, found by Pharaoh's daughter, adopted as a son.

Verse 25. Choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. The writer of Hebrews giving his commentary on what's going on with Moses. Instead, going and being part of the Jewish people rather than living in the highest place of luxury, having everything that his flesh could have possibly desired.

The commentary of the writer of Hebrews says the fleeting pleasures of sin. Certainly pleasurable, but passing. Verse 26. He considered, and I love this, he considered the reproach of Christ.

[ 23 : 51 ] The reproach of Christ. Not that he knew who Jesus was, but this writer of Hebrews sees that all of the suffering of all God's people was part of the world's condemnation and rejection of the Savior.

He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. The eternal reward. Not to the temporal, but to the eternal.

Verse 27. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. Rather than worshiping the king of Egypt, Pharaoh, he worshiped God.

God. Jim Elliot is cited in Elizabeth Elliot's *Shadow of the Almighty* as saying, he is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Beloved, so many of us who claim the name of Christ live for the temporal. We get so wrapped up into the day-to-day fleeting pleasure of sin.

[ 24 : 58 ] The Gospel gives us hope because of the promise of heaven. It changes the way in which we live. Fourthly, last part of verse 4, the Gospel produces love.

The Gospel produces love. The text reads, the love that you have for all the saints is one of the things that Paul is thanking God for. Why is he thanking God for it?

Because it's a supernatural love. Notice verse 8. That Epaphras has made known to us your love in the Spirit. One of the fruits of the Spirit being love has been produced in them because of the work of God on their behalf.

And we see here in our text today the triad of Christian virtues. Faith, hope, and love. 1 Corinthians 13. So now, faith, hope, and love abide these three, but at the greatest of these is love.

You see that also in 1 Thessalonians 1.3 and 1 Thessalonians 5.8. The great virtue of Christian love.

[ 26 : 07 ] Let me connect for you that Christian love produces Christian unity. They're thanking God for the love that they have for one another.

This week, if you're part of a community outreach group, you studied the beginning of Philippians 2. You draw your attention to verses 2 and 3. Paul says, Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. This is the definition of love. That you seek the good of others before your own good.

John 17. I'll get you to turn there with me. John 17. I'll begin reading in verse 20. This is part of Jesus' prayer that has become known as the High Priestly Prayer.

I want you to note four verses of it. John 17, verses 20-23. And he prays, I do not ask for these only, he's talking about the apostles, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.

[ 27 : 37 ] Now, us. This is his prayer for all of us. Those of us who claim to follow Christ. Verse 21, that they may all be one. Just as you, Father, are in me and I in you, they also may be in us.

So that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me, I have given to them. That they may be one even as we are one. I in them and you in me.

That they may become perfectly one. So that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you loved me. Notice the repetition that's going on there. Verse 21, that they may be one.

Verse 22, they may be one. Verse 23, that they may become perfectly one. Jesus prays that we will be unified. Why? So that the world will know that Jesus is the Christ and that we are loved by God through Him.

Note again, the repetition. Verse 21, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. In verse 23, so that the world may know that you sent me and love them even as you loved me.

[ 28 : 44 ] It's meant to be a display of the way in which God loves us by the way we love one another. Jesus said in John 13, 35, by this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

This is the way that the world is supposed to look at us and say, what a peculiar people set apart for God. Look at the way they love each other. Not by signs or big fancy buildings or programs or kitschy t-shirts or cool websites.

Neat Facebook posts. By our love for one another. This is the defining characteristic of Christians together and how the world looks at us and knows we belong to God.

John writes in 1 John 4, 7 and 8, Beloved, let us love one another for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. How do we love one another? Paul writes in Galatians 6, 2, bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.

[ 30 : 03 ] He's talking about this commandment that Jesus has given that we should love one another. That we bear one another's burdens. And beloved, I will tell you that in most churches, including our own, there are many, many people who work to bear the burdens of others.

But that number is far too few. And those people are so very burdened by everybody else's burdens. That they often flame out very quick.

They get consumed. They have to take massive breaks in order to be replenished so that they can get back and bear burdens once again. There are single individuals bearing the burdens of many.

But the beautiful picture is that if we're all bearing one another's burdens, the load gets incredibly light. That we pick up the pieces of one another and function as a body together that way.

That means that you have a part to play. Whether you're part of this church or another and you're just a guest here today. That you have a part to play. You have a ministry in the church.

[ 31 : 09 ] The church growth gurus say that it's incredibly important to plug someone in to give them a job within the first six months of them coming to a church.

Right? You can't know somebody's character in six months. That's insanity. But this is what so many are doing so that people feel that they belong rather than saying to them you have a ministry. You have a ministry. It's to one another. This means that it's not okay just to show up on a Sunday morning. You can't just walk in at 1025, 1035, sit down and when we're done get up and walk right back out.

I know that sometimes that's what has to happen on a Sunday. I know the amount of time it takes to invest in people and to get to know people you have to do the work.

You have to. You have to find times and opportunities to get with the people of God so that you can display love. It's of vital importance in your service to the church and I guarantee you that as you do so your burdens will be bore as well.

[ 32 : 15 ] You will also be loved. It's a work. It is hard. It has been so many years since I ever went and fellowshiped with a new group of people. I can remember faintly, it's a dim light in my mind how strange and awkward it is to walk into a group of people that you don't know.

I know it's hard. I know it's hard. Do the work. Put in the time. Show up to the things that we're doing. We have meetings that are almost exclusively for the opportunity to be able to love each other in this way.

So what are some practical ways you can bear another's burdens? Just a few that popped in my mind. Help a brother move. Moving out at the end of the semester. Pick up a couple of boxes. Be available for a sister at any hour of the night or stay up late in prayer for someone. Show up to help with a project on the property here.

minister alongside someone. Service that somebody is doing in the community. Join them in that work. Partner with them in it. Give up your free time for the sake of the kingdom.

[ 33 : 30 ] College students, let me speak directly to you for a moment. I know that you feel busy. That's a real feeling that you're having. I don't want to totally negate the feeling that you're having. I know. It is finals week.

This is maybe the only week you really have an excuse. I know that the burden of it is laid on your shoulders and you feel so busy. Start getting into healthy church habits now. Serving others. Giving of your time because you only get busier. I don't really even know the word free time. Like what what is this thing free time?

Invest in the kingdom. Invest in eternal things. And listen, I'm not saying that you can't have hobbies and that it's not good and healthy to unplug from things sometimes and just have some fun. Sam and I are taking a vacation this summer.

We're planning on taking the boys on our first canoe camping trip. This is a good thing. Good for our family to be together. Good for me to be far, far away from a cell phone signal. This has value.

[ 34 : 30 ] But I can tell you this, that at the end of my life I'm not going to look back on my life and wish that I had done more whitewater paddling or rock climbing or played more golf.

I would never do that. Or played more video games. I think that most of us are going to look back on our lives and say, look at the time that I wasted.

I flittered it away on nothing rather than investing in my future. You have so much that you can give to one another. How can you know someone's burdens?

Ask. Everybody's hurting in some way at some time. Ask. And be willing to hear the answer. Ask somebody how they're doing and actually mean it.

When somebody says, I'm not doing that well, say, tell me about it. I wasn't just being cordial. I really want to know. How are you doing? And how can I help you bear up when things aren't going that well in your life?

[ 35 : 33 ] This all means that relationships in the church matter. That the church was meant to be relational. It's about people and not programs. Programs don't matter at all if they're not helping people be drawn together in love for one another.

They're pointless. The relationships matter. We do community outreach groups as a way to develop and to build those things. I've been visiting around those groups and I will tell you there are so many good, healthy things happening in what we're calling our COGS.

Fantastic things that are happening but there's so much more even still. In so many ways still they're program and not people driven. We need to be bonded together.

We need to be, as I love Kyle Webb says so often, a faith family. Connected that way because we're connected by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The world should see the gospel in the way that we love each other. If we have a hope that produces love then people should see it and they should want to understand it. Peter exhorts in 1 Peter 3.15 to always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

[ 36 : 51 ] His suggestion here is that if you are living as believers ought to live, people are going to ask you about the hope that you have. What is this thing that has made you so different and changed you?

And he's suggesting that you have an answer for that. That you be ready to give an answer to such a question. How many of us are being asked that question? Many of us struggle in evangelism because we are peddling a product that really hasn't worked for us.

There's not all that much different about who we are. There's a chance there's nothing different about who you are. We need to throw ourselves into Christian love for one another.

This will overflow in our evangelistic efforts. Look, briefly, I'm going to read this to you fast. The early church, Acts 2, 42-47, and they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers, and awe came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

[ 38 : 12 ] Here they are doing all this activity together. This is early church. Everything they're doing is about being together and doing things together. Right? Loving each other the way believers ought to love each other. And then it's finished off.

Verse 47, the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. It was being put on display so that people were attracted to it or repelled by it.

That'll happen as well. But many, many were attracted to it. If you're not living in a relationship with the church, begin. Repent. Believe.

It's time to start. If you are, just keep it up. Keep plugging away at it. I know that it's not easy. The toughest thing about Christianity are Christians.

We're people. We're a mess. Right? In great need of grace. Even though we've been delivered from sin, our flesh still exists. There's a battle going on within all of us.

[ 39 : 09 ] Praise God that the victory has been completed and the good news has conquered. We need one another to work out our sanctification. So that was number four.

Number five. I'm almost done. Number five. Notice in the first part of verse six. The gospel has and is completing its task.

Paul says, this gospel truth which has come to you as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing. Paul is referring to the known world, the beyond, the Jewish population, the whole world is what he's referring to here.

It's bearing fruit. It's increasing. It's doing the thing that it's set out to accomplish. God is ultimately the source of the power in the gospel.

And he is accomplishing his will and his purpose. Jesus says in Matthew 16, 18, I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

[ 40 : 14 ] The gospel makes advance in the world. We don't hold back hell. Hell shudders in front of the gospel. The gospel is going to overwhelm and knock down hell and its dominion.

I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The gospel has and is completing its task. But the gospel has and is completing its task through the work of faithful ministers.

God uses us as his means to accomplish his ends. Verse 7 and 8. Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.

He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

The gospel has and is completing its task through the work of faithful ministers.

If you were here last week, you've heard this. If you weren't, Paul did not begin the church in Colossae. It was started by a man named Epaphras who likely had traveled to Ephesus some 120 miles to the west, had heard the gospel, became a believer, and as a disciple of Jesus Christ should, he went back and began to preach the gospel and establish disciples which led to a church, a gathering of God's people.

[ 41 : 37 ] people. Earlier I referenced the words of Paul in Romans 15 where he says, citing Isaiah 52.7, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.

Just before this, he writes in Romans 10.14 and the beginning of verse 15, hear the rest of that. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?

And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

And then he says, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news. There's a real practicality to the way in which people come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. They must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ preached.

There are stories all over the world right now about people having visions of Jesus and coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Don't believe it for a minute. Maybe some of those things are happening and leading those individuals to ask questions of those who can preach the gospel to them.

[ 42 : 45 ] But the way that the gospel of Jesus Christ comes to the minds and hearts of individuals is through the preaching of His Word. God is raising up an army for that very purpose.

Beloved, that is the purpose of our church and the purpose of every individual in it. The primary way in which we glorify God is by the making of disciples.

This includes so much about our Christian living. But this is the drive and the point. Believers in Jesus Christ bring about, work toward, strive for faith in other people.

Ultimately and finally, this is all a work of God. While we recognize, along with Paul and Timothy, that God was the ultimate source of the Colossian church, we must also recognize that He graciously involved Epaphras in that process.

Not because God is somehow incapable apart from us. That God can't accomplish exactly what God sets out to accomplish. He did not need Epaphras, but He loved him.

[ 43 : 54 ] And because He loved him, He included him in the great work of the gospel advancement in the world. The same is true of us. He doesn't need you, but He wants you.

He wants to bless you by involving you in His kingdom advancement. We get to experience who God is as we go about the work of making disciples.

You want to know why many of you are not growing in your faith? It's because you're not actively working out the things God has told you to do. You're not actually seeing Him. You're not beholding Him as He works in the world. I would strongly suggest that you do so.

It will bless you beyond measure to see that God changes people. It will encourage you that He can still change you. You sometimes feel trapped in your sin.

It could be because you're not seeing God as work in other individuals. Paul later in his letter to the Colossians speaks of making the gospel fully known to the Gentiles.

[ 44 : 50 ] And then he says in chapter 1, verse 29, For this I toil. For this I labor. I work hard. Struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me.

The great promise of Matthew 28, 18-20 which is known as the Great Commission. Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age.

Note that the command to make disciples is incapped by a statement of power and by a promise. Jesus says, All authority that doesn't exclude anything.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. I have a people that I have redeemed for myself. My completed work on the cross has been accomplished. There is a people that I am seeking in the world.

[ 45 : 57 ] So, go find them. I have all authority. It's all been given to me. All dominion belongs to me. And there's a purpose I'm going to work out in the life of your church and in you as an individual.

So go and make disciples. and in the promise that He will be with us to the end of the age. Beloved, we have nothing to fear in advancing the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

As God is for us, who can be against us? And so, in summary, I just remind you once again, the Gospel gives reason for thanksgiving.

The Gospel is believed by saving faith. The Gospel gives hope because of the promise of heaven. The Gospel produces love. And the Gospel has and is completing its task through the work of faithful ministers.

[ 47 : 03 ] Let's pray together.