



# **Message Transcript**

## **Celebrating the Gospel**

Jeff Schwarzentraub

What a great and exciting morning. And one thing that you need to know regardless of what campus that you're on, is today in Colorado Springs at 10 o'clock Fervent Church launches. Can we give God some praise for that? So in a minute, we'll do what we've been doing for a long time now, and that is, pray for Pastor Garrett, his wife, Bethany, their eight children, and what God is going to do there. We were talking this week on the phone and I was reminded of what it was like when we first moved to Denver and didn't know if anybody was going to show up and he was having those same fears.

I'm like, "Dude, you know at least at very bare minimum have 10. I mean, that's awesome." So let's be praying for him as they plant the flag for God's glory in Colorado Springs, what a special day that is. Would you pray with me this morning? Lord Jesus, we come before you, and, Lord, we ask that you would have your way. We specifically pray for our brother Garrett Graupner, his wife, Bethany, their family, and Fervent Church in Colorado Springs.

Lord, it is a delight to pray for them. Lord, we pray this morning as they plant here in an hour or so that we would see people saved today in Colorado Springs, Lord, people edified, people saying, "I found my church," people that can grow up as disciples of Jesus Christ, who can make disciples, who make disciples. And so, Lord, now we come to your word and we ask that as we open up your book this morning, that you would have your way with us, that you show us who we truly are, that we would own our identity. And we put into practice the very things that you individually and collectively show us.

And so, Lord, we're ready to hear you. And so now all God's people on both campuses who are ready to hear his word and put into practice, the very things he shows you agreed with me by very loudly saying the word amen, amen. About two weeks ago I went back to the eye doctor and I was dreading going. And the reason that I went back is that I knew I needed correction. I've worn contact lenses or glasses since I was 12. If 20/20 vision is normal, my vision is about 2,500, I can't see a thing.

But what was happening for me is with corrective lenses and glasses, I see you fine. But I got to a point where I couldn't read anything close up. And so I called my dad. I said, "Dad, did that ever happen to you?" And he said, "Yeah, I remember when I was 38 years old, I went to the eye doctor. They said, 'Everything looks good, your glasses are working great, just that you're going to need readers in a couple years.'" And my dad said, "Well, what on my chart tells you that I'm going to need readers?"

He said, "Because you're 38 and you're getting older and everybody needs them at some point in time." So about two weeks ago, I'm reading through that passage of the woman at the well, I remember it was 42 versus long. I couldn't read any of it, I'm just faking it. I'm doing it by memory and kind of figuring out I can't stretch it out far enough. So I was conceding, I'm going to the doctor knowing it's time for me to start... I'm trying to make a decision, do I wear glasses for the rest of my life or I put on readers every time to get the ones that snap or... I mean, I'm trying to figure it all out. My Pride's gone. I got to be able to read my Bible.

And I walk in and I tell her, "Okay, I'm here. I know I need readers. Just tell me

what I got to do, I'm ready to go." And she said, "Well, let's not worry about that. Let's just check your vision first." And so she pulls those things up to my eyes and she starts flipping different lenses. And she would say, "Which one's better, one or two, one or two? Is this better or is this better, one or two?" And she was going through and going through and going through. She like, "Let's do your other eye." She did my other eye.

I said, "So are we ready to reader?" She's like, "Just hold on a second." She's like, "I'm going to get you some context." So she went and got me these contexts, she's like, "Put these in your eyes, just let them settle for about five minutes, I'll be back in." And so I'm letting them settle and I'm looking around the room while they're settling. And I'm like, "I feel like I see pretty good." And she came back into the room and she said, "How do you see?" And I said, "I think pretty well." So she said, Tell me the lowest line you can read."

And I read the line, she's like, "That's 20/20 vision, you can read 20/20 from a distance." I said, "Great." Now she handed me a piece of paper. She said, "Read this." And I looked down and I read it perfectly. She's like, "That's 20/20 vision from up close." I'm like, "What did you do?" She's like, "I reset your vision." She's like, "I made one of your eyes a little bit weaker and one of your eyes a little bit stronger, and one of your eyes now sees further away and one of your eyes now sees close up. It's called monovision. And your brain is recorrecting. And now you can see 20/20 and 20/20 far away and close up."

She reset my focus, which means I don't have to wear readers when I preach yet, right? This series that we're going to be getting into today is from the book of

Colossians, we call it focused. And the reason is that Colossians unlike any other New Testament book is really setting a focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ unlike any other. Whether you're just visiting church, whether you're brand new to the faith, whether you've been walking with Jesus for a number of years, this book will highlight and focus who Jesus Christ is, the Gospel is, what he's done for you and how to be re-centered on that.

Because I find that the longer I walk with Jesus, maybe like you, it's easy to get blurred vision on certain things and this book is going to bring it back into focus. Paul is writing this as one of his prison epistles. He's writing it from presumably Rome to this Colossian church. And as he's writing to them, he wrote the book of Ephesians, Ephesus is a big city, Philippi, a big city, he's writing big cities most of the time. Corinth was a big city, Rome was a big city. He's writing to Colossians. Colossians is a small dinky Podunk town.

Nobody would've ever heard of Colossians, we wouldn't even know what Colossae was if Paul hadn't written this letter and if the Holy Spirit hadn't put it in God's word. I mean, this is how far and out of the way it is. I even wrote this down in case you want to find it, it was 10 miles east of Laodicea and 13 miles south of Hierapolis. And while those towns get mentioned, Colossae really doesn't get mentioned at all in the New Testament. And so Paul is writing to this group of people, telling them how it is that they can stay focused on Jesus Christ.

This series will take us through almost till Christmas and here's my

encouragement. If this is your home church, would you please read the book of Colossians as often as you can? I've practiced doing this just to give you an idea, even if you can't read, you can go online and listen to an audio version in less than 15 minutes, you can have the entire book done, which means this. You could read the book of Colossians every single day for this entire series. You could choose to read the book of Colossians once a week, if you're a decent reader, you can read this book in about seven or eight minutes, it won't take you very long.

But here's what I'd encourage you to do since you know where we're going verse by verse, read ahead, ask your questions of the Lord as to what it means. See if he answers them for you and then let the preaching center your faith and your focus on Jesus Christ as we go through the series. I'm pumped up, I've talked through a lot of books, I've never taught through the book of Colossians before, I'm excited to teach it. Some of the greatest doctrines in the Christian faith are in this book, you're going to love this book.

And so with that, I encourage you open up your Bible to Colossians, we'll be in chapter one, we're going to take a look at the first eight verses today. Colossians chapter one, the first eight verses I'll read him aloud, we'll unpack them together. Here's what he says, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God and Timothy, our brother. To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God our Father. We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints.

Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the Gospel, which has come to you just as it has in all the world. And it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, beloved fellow servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the spirit."

Now, as you read this, I'll be very candid with you. As I was preparing these sermons and kind of mapping out this whole book and what we were going to do, when I first was doing all this, I said, "The hardest part of this entire book to preach is to be the first date versus, and the reason being so much of it is just introductory material, so much of it is, "I'm Paul, and this is Timothy and we're writing to you and here's what's going on, we're thankful." And how do you really get hold of the fact that Paul was sending a letter to this group of people that he had never ever met before to encourage them.

And here's what he's doing, in these first eight verses he's giving you his heart, that should be our heart for what we celebrate of Christ's work through his church. In the 1980s there was a song that came out by a band called Kool & The Gang, you've heard it, even if you think you haven't. I'll give you the lyric. It goes something like this, "Celebrate good times." Then what does it say? Come on. It's the song that if you're at a wedding and nobody's dancing, they will play so that people will migrate to the dance floor and just kind of move a little bit.

I mean, people know that song, if your team wins the World Series or Super Bowl, that's what they sing, that's what they play. That's what's going on here, and what he's going to tell us about is so worthy of celebration that we should cheer for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because Christians, listen to me, no matter what's going on in your life, no matter what circumstances are, no matter how difficult it's become, here's the thing that's certain in your life, you have hope in the Lord Jesus Christ that can never, ever be taken away from you forever and ever, amen.

It's worthy of our praise, amen. It's worthy of our praise. Now that was kind of a golf clap, and I get it because it's Sunday morning. But later this afternoon, there's going to be people gathered about 11 miles north of here to watch the beloved Broncos play, presumably with a lot of cheering and a lot of screaming, hopefully not most of it before the game happens. And people are going to cheer and go wild. Why? Because they know what they're supposed to cheer for and they know what their heart is.

This is what Paul's saying, "This is my heart, this is what I celebrate, this is what I'm cheering for. And it's not just my heart, this is God's heart." So as we get into this today, we're going to talk about five elements that we should celebrate in the Gospel as believers in Jesus Christ. And the first one is this, this is when we should celebrate. We should celebrate the Gospel when Christ's servants are faithful to their calling, we should celebrate that. When we see Christ servants who are faithful to their calling, we should celebrate that.



Now here's how he starts, Paul, and then he says this, "An apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God and Timothy, our brother." Now Paul wrote 13 books in the New Testament, 10 of which he defined himself as an apostle. Now why put that out there? I mean, why tell people that you're an apostle? Because it was important for people to understand that for Paul, his gifting by the Holy Spirit and who God made him by the will of God dictated all that he did. When a believer is saved, God gives you for a certain purpose, and the purpose he gives you for is within the Body of Christ to make and mold more and more disciples of Jesus Christ.

He gave you gifts to build up other people so that other people would know who he is. Now the Bible points out five specific gifts that God gives to men for offices in the church, apostle, prophet evangelist, pastor, teacher. If you have those gifts, when God gives them to you, you can try to run from them, you can try to get around them, you can try to circumvent them, you can't get away from them. So what's this apostolic gift, what's an apostle? Apostle simply means this, an apostle is a pastor of pastors.

An apostle is someone who is going to take the Gospel where it is not known. In Romans 15,20, Paul says, "For it has always been my ambition to preach the Gospel where Christ was not known so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation." Why does Paul let them know he's an apostle? Paul's in prison right now. Basically what Paul's saying is, "It don't matter where I'm at, my gifting is always going to come through. And even though I'm in prison, I still am a pastor to pastors. I'm still excited about what's going on in the church. I'm still excited about what's being built and what's happening."

Paul's entire ministry was more than proclamation and prophetic words, it was more than evangelism, it was more than teaching, it was more than pastoring. It was apostolic, meaning everywhere he went, his mission was win people to Christ, build people up in the faith, send them out. Now when you have a church, it can be led by an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a pastor and a teacher. If it's led by an apostle, that gifting is going to pull out in such a way that that person either won't be there very long or will be trying to send people all over the world for the glory of God.

My number one spiritual gift is apostleship. Now let's be clear on this gifting, let's be clear on this gifting. There are no big letter A, capital letter A apostles anymore. Paul was a capital letter A apostle. When Paul wrote this book he meant the Holy Spirit inspired it and it's true, authentic, inherent scripture. The can has been closed, there are no apostles today that can dictate what the church should do, not one. Every apostle today is under the authority of this book, just like every prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher.

It's just that apostolic gifting is, "Let's go do this. Let's go take the hill, let's build everybody up, let's send everybody out, let's win more people, let's do this thing." And that's apostolic gifting. Evangelistic gifting, and if an evangelist leads a church, every single week is going to be the Gospel of bringing lost people to Christ, every single week, every single week, that's all we're going to do. And then go win more people to Christ, and that's all we're going to do.

If a pastor teacher leads a church, a predominant gifting is, "Let's just feed the

sheep, feed the sheep, feed the sheep, love the sheep, feed the sheep, love the sheep, feed the sheep, love the sheep." God uses all those gifts in churches for his glory. One is not better than the other, but when there's apostolic gifting, here's what you have, you have Paul in prison saying, "I'm still leading the church from prison." And I get really excited when I hear about churches springing up and new people getting saved and new people getting built up, that's what Paul does.

Here's what he's saying when he's talking about being an apostle, he's saying, here's what fires me up, "when I hear about people who love Jesus Christ, who are using their gifts to the glory of God in his church, to win more people to Jesus and to send more people out I'm fired up and it doesn't matter where I am, because that's my heart." When you're part of a life giving church where people are using their gifts for the glory of God to win people and build people and send people it worthy of God's applause.

Because here's the truth, we only have time and space to do it. At some point in time there comes an end for all of us. Either Jesus Christ comes back and raptures us, or we get to go through our normal course of life and at some point die and then go meet him. And it's only in this time, only in this life that we are gifted by the Holy Spirit in such a way to go win people to Christ, build them up in the faith and send them out. It's only for time and history. And Paul is writing to them as an apostle.

And who does he have with him? Timothy. Now Timothy's been a pastor in Ephesus, and who's he calling him? Our brother, who's brother? Our brother. Well, you've never met Paul or Timothy, so why are we brothers in Christ? Because this, we

share the same Father, because when we all trust in Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and savior, here's what the church is, listen, listen, listen, the church is more than just a place of gathering. It's more than a place of just hearing the word, it's more than just a place of learning some rituals or learning to pray, but here's what it is, we're family, we are a family.

Anybody here have a little bit of a dysfunctional family, anybody? If you didn't raise your hand, you're the dysfunction. Everybody has a dysfunctional family, it's made up of sinners. We're all dysfunctional. I mean, if you're looking around like, "I don't know what he's talking about. There's nobody dysfunctional in my family." It's you. So here's the point, everybody's a little dysfunctional, every church is dysfunctional because we're made up of people. I mean, you can't find the non-dysfunctional church, we're all brothers and sisters, brothers, and sisters fight, parents and kids fight.

I mean, we got to wrestle these things, but guess what? We can celebrate the fact that God is still getting his Gospel done through his dysfunctional family, amen. And that's what he's writing about here, he's celebrating that. And this again, we just came out of this series called Discipleship. I mean, this is Christ's love compelling, this is not Paul like, "I got to do this job. I'm an apostle, so I'm writing you a letter because that's my..." There's Christ's love in his heart compelling him so much because he's so excited about what he's hearing and notice what he's hearing.

Who's he addressing? To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at

Colossae. Saints and faithful brethren are not two different groups of people, they're one and the same, it's just different ways of saying the same thing. Everybody who is born again by the Spirit of God is a saint, you are a holy person through new birth, you've been given a new identity, a new title, a new identity, a new heredity. I mean you're different, you're fundamentally altered from the inside out. You're brand new, you're a saint in Christ.

Guess what you also are? Faithful brothers in Christ. I mean saint defines your position, faithful brothers defines your relationship in the church. I mean, it's the same thing. And what Paul's been hearing about are people have trusted in Christ, they're in Christ, and notice those two words in Christ, that means to be in the realm of Christ, that means I belong to Christ, that means he's my Lord, that means I'm with him and he's with me. And everywhere I go, there's Christ because Christ is in me, the hope of glory as we'll read about as we keep going.

And he's fired up about this. So he's writing this Colossian church, the saints and faithful brethren Christ who are at Colossae, and here's what he says, "Grace to you and peace from God, our Father." Grace always proceeds peace. So grace would've been the Greek word of greeting, charis, grace, God's power, the Gospel through Christ. May that all be yours and what? Peace, the Shalom, the Jewish word, that in Christ you can have peace. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, all of God's power through his Gospel and all of God's peace belong to everybody who's trusted in the Lord, they're they're all yours.

And Paul's fired up about this. Paul is so fired up about it, he's never even been

to Colossae. He's hearing about it through Epaphras, he's hearing about what's going on. And even while he's in prison not knowing what's going to happen to him, what's he doing? I'm celebrating. It is amazing, even when I'm in prison, I'm hearing about your church and people are getting saved and you're bearing fruit to the glory of God. Awesome, that's what the Gospel does.

Church never, ever, never, ever get tired of hearing stories about the Gospel. Keep your heart tender so that if you hear stories about the Gospel or someone that gets saved, don't ever get cavalier about that, "Yeah, people get saved, I guess, they get saved at our church, they get saved." We're talking about a life that was destined for hell that is now a child of God. A person that was never going to experience Christ, that you're now going to spend eternity with. Praise God, it's worthy of our celebration. Amen, it's worthy.

And that's why it's so important that we celebrate this when Christ servants are faithful to their calling and when you're faithful to your calling, it's not about the building and it's not about the place and it's not about where you sit it and it's not about whose group you're in, it's about, is God working through me to see people built up and won to Christ and sent out on the mission field for his glory? That's what it's all about, it's about Christ's work in us and we should celebrate when we see Christ servants who are faithful to the calling.

And BRAVE Church, there's a lot of celebrating we need to do around here. There's a lot of people at BRAVE Church that are faithful to Christ calling in their life.

I'm not talking about a few people, there's a lot of people at BRAVE Church that are faithful to Christ calling in their life. I mean, there's a lot of people at BRAVE Church that take time to put Jesus Christ first. There's a lot of people at BRAVE Church that pour into other people's lives.

There's a lot of people at BRAVE Church that find places to serve. There's a lot of people at BRAVE Church that endure hardship and uncertainty. There's a lot of people at BRAVE Church that say, "Because of Jesus, I'm willing to do." There's a ton of people at BRAVE Church, I as your pastor celebrate that, God's doing a great work here in our church. If Paul were writing to our church, he would say the same thing. Praise God for what he's doing among all of us, amen. We should celebrate when Christ servants are faithful to their calling.

By of the way, just on calling, let me just tell you this. "Well, what's my calling? What's my calling? What's my purpose? What's my..." Here's your calling, here's why God has you on the earth if you're saved, to do your best to glorify him and make disciples who make disciples, who make disciples, that's your calling. Now where he leads you and how he does that may be unique. "Well, what's my gift? I don't know my gift. How do I discover my gift?" There's myriads of ways you can discover your gift. You can take spiritual inventories online for free, you can ask us at the church.

I find that the best way to discover your spiritual gift is to get in a community of people. When you're in a community of people, you will discover other people that can do things way better than you and they do it so consistently. If you don't have the gift of hospitality and you're in a small group with people that do and you go to their house

and they're like, "Hey, welcome. Our refrigerator's yours, here's some more food. Have some fun, come over anytime you want," You'll be like, "Wow, these people are amazing."

They have the gift of hospitality, that's who they are. They're not trying, they're just being who they are in Christ. If someone has the gift of encouragement, every time no matter what the temperature in the room is, they're always going to find something good to say about somebody and build them up. If a person has a gift of prophecy, no matter where we are in the story that person's going to insert an element of truth into that story, it's who they are.

And you'll discover your gifting as you start seeing it in other people, because you'll see, I don't have that, I don't have that. Somebody will say to you, "Wow, do you realize that every time that you get fired up, you talk about this?" We were in a small group one time and we were all going around, talking about each other, what we appreciated about each other and it came to me. I didn't know what the word evangelist meant, I didn't know what that word was. I was two years into my faith, I never heard that word. And everyone around said, "Well, Jeff, you have a heart of evangelism."

I'm like, "What's that even mean?" "You like to tell people about Jesus." I'm like, "We're all supposed to tell people about Jesus." "But that's what you would want to do for the rest of your life." I'm like, "Absolutely. If I knew Jesus was Christ was coming back today or tomorrow I would go out and just preach in the streets until he got back



until I fell over." And they're like, "Yeah, none of us would ever want to do that, that's just you." I'm like, "Well, what's wrong with you?" And nothing was wrong, nothing was wrong with them, that's the whole point.

And what happens in churches when we all think we have to have each other's same gifting to accomplish the same purpose, that's where we get all messed up. If we go out and share the Gospel on 16th Street and only seven people show up and they're like, "What's wrong with this church?" There's nothing, but God's given seven people a heart to go out and do that kind of evangelism. Or if we have a care group and only 15 people show up for the care group and because it's all mercy people are like, "Well, what's wrong with this church, only 15 people?" No, it's like mercy gifts believe.

So at the end of the day, this is not a compelling, you have to do this and this and this, you can't do it all. There's certain things that God is super charged through his Holy Spirit in your life that you can do at a supernatural level. And there's other things that no matter how hard you work at for the rest of your life, you just can't do. I don't do spreadsheets, I don't do them at home, I don't do them here, I don't care. I don't care about the letters Excel, I don't care, I don't do them. It's not me, somebody else can do that, I'm good with that.

And when you get comfortable with who you are and who you're not, you can celebrate God's work in others. God didn't give anybody all the gifts because only Jesus Christ had them all. Because if you had all the gifts, then you need to be worshiped. God gave you all your strengths, he gave you all your weaknesses, you

don't have to figure it all out. Other people will come alongside of you and help you discover. Wow, you're really, really gifted at that. And you'll think, well, that's not even hard, that's not even a big deal. I'm going out to share my faith on 16th Street, how hard is that? No big deal.

But for other people they'd be biting their nails and freaking out, so rather be who you are. Here's another reason we should celebrate, we should celebrate when Christ people pray regularly for other churches, we should celebrate when Christ people pray regularly for what? Other churches. Now watch this. Paul's never been to Colossae and yet what does he say? "We give thanks to..." Who? Who's he giving thanks to? Read in your Bible, who's he giving thanks to? We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.

Who's he praying for? Other churches. Celebrate God when you're part of a community that prays for other churches. I mean, we started this message by modeling that, but that wasn't the first time we prayed for Garrett. I was on the phone with him and his wife last night. We've been praying for them for over a year. People in our church have been praying for them over a year. We commissioned them at our last first Tuesday, had our whole church pray over them before they were... I mean, we pray for other churches.

And oh, by the way, we prayed for Ryan Hughley when he planted in Salt Lake City. And oh, by the way, we've been praying for CB who's planting Beacon and launching in just a few weeks. I mean we're praying for us things. And oh, by the way,

it's not just people in our network. I pray for all the churches that I become aware of in the Denver area and pastors that I know around the country and the reason I'm not going to tell you which churches I'm praying for most is because if I tell you, they be, "Well, you forgot about that church, you don't care about them."

I do care about them, but on my way in, on my drive in, I pass about seven different in churches that I know the pastors of that I pray for on my way into church, that God would be glorified in their church, that people would get saved in their church, that people get built up in their church. Do you know why? Because there are so many people that need Jesus that we don't need to be the ones that corner the market. We can't do all the work ourselves.

Paul's celebrating because in this Podunk town of Colossae, the Gospel is taking root, bearing fruit and multiplying and he loves it. And guess what? Your pastor, I love it. I get excited about it. I get excited when I hear about little churches that are doing it well and big churches that are doing it well and medium-sized churches that are doing it well and people that do it differently than us that are doing it well and very liturgical ritualistic churches that are doing it well, and organic churches.

I don't care, let Jesus be the center of it all, let's be a church that pray like that. And BRAVE Church, amen. And BRAVE Church, we are a church that does that. I'm not talking about your pastor, I'm not talking about our elders, I'm not talking about just our staff, I'm talking about, we do that. Part of it for me came out of, I just saw prayer work very early in my young days as a believer when I would pray and God would answer and I'd pray and God would... I started praying more, but it really was in 2005.

Kim and I were out in New York City, helping out with the Billy Graham crusade, it was going to be his last crusade. We got invited out by the Billy Graham Training Center to go out in the streets and share our faith and to be part of that and to be counselors for it, and it was an awesome time. And one night while we were there, you've heard me tell the story, they said, "Hey, we're going to go to a church tonight for a prayer meeting." And there were 18 of us that were in this group.

And I remember thinking, okay, so we're going to Brooklyn and we're going to this prayer meeting. We'll probably walk in, they'll probably take us to some basement in this little church, because it was called Brooklyn Tabernacle and the word tabernacle sounded ancient. So I'm like, "Okay, so there's going to be this little small prayer gathering. Probably be like 50 people there, we'll bring another 18. They'll be so excited, they'll be 78 people there, it'll be great." That's what I'm thinking.

And I walk into this building and there's 3,000 there praying and praising so loud I can't talk to my wife in her ear, and I was blown away. And this went on for two hours, went on from 7:00 to 9:00. And when these people prayed, they prayed like they actually believed that God was actually going to do something. It wasn't the, "Lord, if it's your will, could you do something tonight?" It was like, they passed out prayer request and people were waving them over their head and screaming loudly and doing all this stuff. I'd never seen prayer like that before.

But it was so powerful that there was something in my heart that says, "Want that." I remember they read something, I won't get the exact details right, but I

remember they read something because they meet every Tuesday, not just first Tuesday. And they read this deal that said something like this, "Remember we read this email last week about praying for one of our missionaries in Nicaragua that got assaulted by the gorillas and taken off and he was threatened with his life and all this stuff, and we prayed last week for that, remember that?"

Let me read you his email this week, and he read this email of this guy that had written back what God had done, how he had saved some of the gorillas, how he had done this and everybody's cheering and screaming and I'm bawling my eyes out. I'm like, "I've never seen anything like this in my life." Prayer works. The reason we gather on first Tuesday is we are growing in our ability to seek the Lord and his presence and his power because prayer is the spiritual activity that drives everything good about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And when we're not praying just for us and just for our needs and just for what I need and just for my job and stuff. And we start praying about the church and the Gospel and Jesus, what you can get done in the world, God begins to move and things begin to happen. We prayed for other churches during our services, not embarrassed by that, it doesn't bother me if other churches get bigger, more fervent. I mean, great, if we can play a role in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, let's do it. Let's make the biggest kingdom impact for Jesus Christ that we ever can, amen.

So I was moved by this, it was a number of years later. I was in Charlotte, I happened to be with Kim and Charlotte one day and it was an afternoon on the weekend. We're trying to figure out what do you do in Charlotte on the afternoon? We

don't know anybody, we don't know where to go. And we had been told, "You should go to the Billy Graham Library." So we went to the Billy Graham Library thinking it was just going to be kind of a historic tour. And it is, I mean, you can see Billy Graham's original home that they've reconstructed and then there's this whole tour you begin to take.

And I think both of us thought, well, this is going to be more of like a shrine to Billy Graham and his great ministry that he had. But as we started walking through the library, it was really a testimony to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and all that he had done. And you walk through this whole thing and by the end of it, they really give the Gospel and I wanted to get saved all over again, it was so moving, it was awesome. And then you leave and come out and there's people that are ready to pray with you.

And this woman came up and asked me, "Would you like to trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior?" And I said, "I'm already a Christian, but that was so moving. I think I want trust in him again, that was awesome. And thanks so much for what you're doing, this is really, really cool. If you get a chance to go, you should go sometime." And I said, "But I will take your prayers." And I said, "I pastor a church out in Denver Colorado, and I'd love for you to pray for me."

So she laid hands on me and she began to pray for me and it was so powerful and so moving and I was like, "This woman knows God, she knows the Holy Spirit, she knows how to pray." I mean, it was just like, oh. And I looked at her and I said, "That was awesome." I said, "Where are you from?" She goes, "Well, I'm from Brooklyn." I

said, "Do you go to Brooklyn Tabernacle?" She's like, "Yeah, that's where I went my whole life." I'm like, "Of course, you did."

And she's like, "I knew Pastor Jim, we grew up together, we were good friends." I'm like, "Yeah, I saw the DNA of discipleship in someone who had learned how to pray that prayed everywhere they went." We celebrate that, we want to be a praying church. And I would say this very cautiously, but very truthfully, all churches to some extent, probably pray. I grew up in a church that prayed, the pastor prayed before he preached, there were some prayer requests that went out.

There were some people in the church that prayed, usually in a liturgy there might be a prayer here and there, but I would also say this, there are very few churches in our country that are praying churches. And by praying churches, I mean where they devote themselves to it, that staff prays every single week together, that elders pray every time they get together together, that we're praying in and for each other all the time, we're praying for prayer, we're a praying church. It means everybody's engaged in the ministry of prayer.

We should celebrate that when it happens, we should be about the ministry of prayer. Paul's celebrating the fact that he's doing that. Now look at this in verse three where he says, "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ praying always for you." You see prayer and thanks go together so often in the New Testament. I mean, think about what else Paul wrote. First Thessalonians 5:16, 17, and 18, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks for this as God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Thankfulness is truly thankful when you're thanking God for it. Thankfulness when it's converted to prayer is when you're truly thankful. I mean, just think for a moment of the people that you're thankful for in your life and ask yourself this question, it's rhetorical. How often do I thank God for that, how often do I intercede for them? It's one thing to tell somebody else thanks, which is important. "Hey, thanks. You did a great job. Hey, thanks." I mean, affirmation is a good thing.

It's a whole different level when you're thankful for your mom and your dad and you're so thankful for them that you pray for them. And you thank God, "Thank you for my mom, and thank you for my dad. Hey, thank you for this person that stepped in because I didn't have a mom and a dad and God thank you for..." You're thanking God for his sovereignty in developing circumstances that you can be grateful for. When I first went into the ministry, we had to do 24-hour period of solitude as part of our training, which for me felt like 23 hours and 50 minutes too long.

I mean I'd never done 24 hours, I mean, you couldn't talk for like a whole day. Never had done that in my life. And I'm like, "Well, what are we supposed to do?" They started giving me these exercises that I could try and journaling that I could do. And just sounded so boring to me, I'm like, "I just got to spend 24 hours by myself not talking, never done that." I said, "I feel like a monk or something, you know what I mean?" But I remember I was out on the ice, there was this frozen lake and I just started journaling.

And I started saying, "God, just I want to thank you for some people in my life."



And I started writing this list, my mom, my dad, my sister, my other sister, my brother. I started writing this list and filled up this whole first page and so then started a second column and filled up the whole first page and flipped it to the back and started writing and then I started crying. And I thought to myself, I said, "God, I never chose to bring any of these people in my life but you did before the foundation of the world. Thank you, God, for the people you placed in my life when I didn't even know I needed that person."

That's what Paul's saying, that's what he's talking about. He's thanking God for their faithfulness, he's thanking God for what they're doing, he's thanking God. And when your thankfulness turns into prayerfulness, it's a whole different level because you begin to see how God's orchestrated every relationship that you have. You begin to see how God knew what you needed before you even knew that you needed it. And Paul is writing to them and he's thanking them because we should celebrate when Christ people pray regularly for other churches and for other people, it's what the norm should be, amen.

We should also celebrate number three, we should celebrate when Christ's Gospel is taking root in the heart of people, we should celebrate when Christ's Gospel is taking root in people. Notice why he's giving thanks to God, notice why he's praising God. When did he start? Since we heard of your faith in Christ and the love which you have for all the saints. What's he talking about? He's talking about faith, there's a specific kind of faith that is saving faith. Saving faith is faith in an object, it's faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have faith in a lot of things, if you ate breakfast this morning, you had faith that the food that you were putting into your body wasn't going to poison you. If you went to a restaurant and you ate there, you have faith that that food is good and it's not going to hurt you. If you keep money in a bank, you have faith that that bank is good enough to hold your money and keep it secure. If you didn't believe that you wouldn't go eat there, you wouldn't put your money there, you wouldn't do those things.

When it comes to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, so often we'll hear people say stuff like this, "I have faith, I have great faith. I'm I'm super spiritual, I'm just faithful." It's not you. It's not your subjective you and how much I believe. I mean, if somebody said to me, "I totally believe I can swim across the ocean. I have total faith I can do it without any help." I don't care what their faith level is, my objectivity says, "No, you can't." Faith is in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel is this. I mean, and here's where the center comes and you're going to see it in the whole book of Colossians, we're going to see it come to fruition. For many people, they think Jesus is good, but let me just tell you here's the Gospel, let's start there. Jesus Christ is God's one and only eternal son who came to this earth, born of a Virgin, suffered on a cross, died for your sins, was buried in a grave and rose from the dead. He and he alone is God and there is no other. That's what faith means, faith is a rejection of every other false world religion.

If Jesus Christ is Lord, which I believe in proclaiming that he is, then nobody else can be Lord. There's no other room on the throne for the gods of the universe. There's

the God of the universe, the Lord Jesus Christ. So to say, "Well, I believe in Jesus, but I'm also Hindu and I kind of believe a little bit in that." No, no, no, then you don't believe in Jesus. You believe in Jesus to the exclusion of all other gods, that's called saving faith.

Saving faith is not, I believe in Jesus and if I continue to do good works, or if I go to church every Sunday, or if I join a small group like Pastor Jeff wants me to do, or if I... There's no additions to it and no subtractions from it, it's Jesus and him alone, that's the Gospel. And what Paul is telling them is, "I'm celebrating the fact that you have faith in Christ." Which by the way means this, anywhere you go in the world, no matter who you're talking to, no matter what their skin color is, no matter what their background is and no matter what their religious beliefs are.

And it could be somebody in your neighborhood, or it could be somebody from ISIS like, "How would I share the Gospel with an ISIS person?" The same way you would tell him that Jesus Christ came as the godman who died for their sins, who was buried, who rose from the grave, who's offering you his life and you need to give him your full allegiance. That's how you share the Gospel with anybody, right? We're sharing the person and work of the God, man, the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you're willing to turn from your life all and to it all over to him, that's called saving faith.

That's what it is, it's turning from your sin and turning to Christ, that's saving faith. And Paul is celebrating you have faith in Christ, which means I know you don't believe in anything else, you believe in Jesus and in him alone, which means, church, listen to me. When was the moment that you could say you celebrated that? When was the

time that you didn't say, "Well, I grew up in it. I kind of always known it. I've been to church." No, no, no, when was the time that you said, "I'm done with my life, I'm done with my sin, I'm done with everything. I want Jesus and I want all of him and I want all of him now."

Not a trick question, well, those are just those super spiritual people. No, those are everybody who is born again. That is everybody who is a Christian, every single one. When was that for you? Paul's celebrating for them that he's hearing about their faith in Jesus Christ. And here's how you know and the love which they have for how many of the saints does it read in your Bible? And the love that you have for all the saints in Colossae? No. And the love that you have for all the saints.

When you're converted, because Jesus Christ comes into your heart, you will have a love for Christians like you've never had a love for Christians in your life. Case in point, my testimony, I thought Christians were some of the weirdest people, not people that went to church, but those hyperspiritual ones that talked about being born again and, oh, you got to have a testimony and when did you get saved, weird, Christians are weird. I don't want to hang out with those weird people.

And as a dude, the guys I knew that were Christians I never wanted be anything like those guys. They were just quirky to me, I'm like, "That's not me." Until I got saved, and once I got saved, I had a love for those guys like I'd never had before, because we shared something deeper than sports, we shared something deeper than school, we shared something deeper than conviction, we shared something deeper than our

political belief, we shared Christ and I love them.

If you're truly a Christian, when you meet Christians around the world, you'll have a love for them. It doesn't matter who they are, it doesn't matter where they're from, it doesn't matter whether they're male or female, it doesn't matter what part of the world they live in, it doesn't matter what their skin color, you'll love them. When you're a Christian and you hear about other Christians being tormented for their faith, it'll break your heart. When you're a Christian and you hear about Christian marriages that are falling apart, it'll break your heart.

When you hear about Christians that are struggling financially, it'll break your heart because they're your brothers and your sisters, they're your family. And what's Paul saying? He's like, "It's so worthy to celebrate because I've heard about your faith in Christ and I've heard about your love for all of the saints. I've heard about your love for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis, I've heard about your love for everybody you're coming into contact with."

And it's Paul's way of saying, "I want you to know I'm in prison and I love you too, and I'm so excited about what Christ is doing in your life." Amen. When you're saved, and one of the evidence of being saved is a love for all of God's people. You may have times where you disagree with God's people, you may have times where you're like, "I wouldn't do it the way that God's people are doing it over here." That's fine, but there'll still be a love for them, a love for God's people, because of why?

Verse five, notice this, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven of what you

previously heard in the word of truth, the Gospel. Remind me again really loud and out loud both campuses. Gospel means? It means good news, the word of truth, there is no other Gospel. Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father, except through me." While the invitation is open to the world, it is completely exclusive in that there's only one way. There's a narrow gate, there is a narrow way and there is one entryway and it is the Lord Jesus Christ and he's the only way into that gate, amen.

He's the only one that can do that, amen. So here's what he's saying, he's saying, "Here's why we love all this, here's why we're celebrating all this, here's why we're celebrating your faith in Christ and here's why we're celebrating your love for all the saints because of this, the hope laid up for you in heaven."

Now Paul loved to talk about faith, hope, and love. First Corinthians 13, faith, hope, and love abide, but the greatest of these is love. I mean, faith, hope, and love. Faith, hope, and love. Belief in Christ alone, love for one another, and what? Hope, but what's hope? Hope is a certainty that you're anchored to. It's a certainty that you're anchored to. That's what hope is. Believer, listen to me, if you trust it in Jesus Christ, there's a certainty that you're anchored to, regardless of what comes your way, what's going to happen this week, next week, whatever you deal with, there's a certainty that you're going to be with Jesus Christ and all of his saints for all eternity, that's good news.

That's worthy of celebrating. Now the older I get, the more real I see it become. I mean, the longer I pastored, the more opportunities I've had to hold the hand of

somebody on their bedside in hospice and talk to them. And it's really interesting, we had a girl on our staff that did part-time admin for us that passed away within the last month. Sweetest lady in the world, loves serving and several of us got to visit her in the hospital.

Some people got to see her way more than I did, but I got to be there with her and hold her hand and she loved Jesus. She said, "I'm just nervous, scared." I'm like, "Well, what are you scared about?" She's like, "Well, I've never taken the journey." I said, "I've never taken the journey either, so I can't tell you by experience that it's going to be awesome, but I can tell you by the word of God and by faith, it's going to be the most incredible journey you ever take.

And when you take it, you won't want to come back here and you won't be thinking about Pastor Jeff or our church. And you won't be thinking about your son or your daughter that are right here that you love so much. You'll be thinking about Jesus Christ in all of his glory and how awesome he is and how worthy of your praise he is." And she went to be with the Lord. My grandma, who was 104, I got to hold her hand earlier this year, her question to me was "Jeff, why am I still here?"

And I told her, "Because of me, because I love you and I care for you and seeing who you are and the way you prayed for me all these years still moves my heart and we love you, and we're going to miss you." But I know that both those women are standing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, happier than they've ever been. I mean, the word of truth, the Gospel is not just for the here and now. I mean, it can't

just be for the here and now. Paul said if the Gospel is for this life only we're to be pitied more than all other men.

I mean, if the Gospel is just a message that says how to be happy and successful and prosperous it's failed on every single level. But if the Gospel is about the glory of Jesus Christ, and regardless of what you endure in this world, he's worthy of your glory honor and praise. And if you endure till the end, there is great glory and great honor and great praise awaiting you and there's an inheritance in all the saints that's beyond anything you can ever hope for or imagine, then that's worthy of clinging onto for the rest of our life.

And that's what he's saying. It's worthy of that, it's worthy when we see him. And BRAVE Church, the Gospel is taking root in a lot of people here, it's taking root in a lot of people here. Christ is coming to many of your hearts and he's growing your heart, which is why he gives us a fourth reason when we should celebrate. And we should celebrate when Christ disciples are bearing fruit and multiplying. When Christ disciples are bearing fruit and multiplying, notice what he says, he talks about this Gospel which has come to them.

He says this, "Which has come to you just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit." What does this say about the Gospel? The Gospel is the Gospel, is the Gospel, is the Gospel, is the Gospel, it comes in the same way every time. The Gospel doesn't always come from the same person, the Gospel doesn't always come from the same place. Not everybody was saved in church, not everybody was saved through a preacher, but everybody was saved through the Gospel when somebody



brought them the Gospel.

They were either taught it, they were either raised in it, they either saw it until the fact that God got a hold of their heart and they owned the fact by faith that Jesus Christ was Lord, it comes to everybody in the exact same way. There's nobody in heaven that's going to be there and be like, "I don't know what you're talking about, I never heard about Jesus. I never heard about any of this stuff. I'm just excited." There's none of that, it all comes through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, his shed blood on a cross, his broken body on a cross, his death for all sin and his resurrection from the grave, and that's what we celebrate.

And notice he says about this Gospel, "It is constantly bearing fruit and increasing even as it has been doing. And you also, since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God and truth." Let me tell you something. You'll hear story upon story, upon story, upon story. I'm just going to protect you from this because I've read lots of books that will say, "The church in North America's dying, the church in North America is bad. It's so horrible, it's going to go away some day, it's never going to be here."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is continually growing and continually advancing and is always bearing fruit, that's what the Gospel does. The darker, the times become the more glorious the Gospel can be. I believe that our best days of sharing the Gospel in our country are right around the corner. I believe they're right now. I'm glad I get to live in this generation. The darker I see the world become, the more I say, "Jesus, you're

the only hope for this mess that we're living in."

I love the Gospel of Jesus Christ, don't believe the lie that there are no Christians or it's minimized. God is doing a work in his church even in North America, he is doing it and it is constantly increasing and bearing fruit. Now here's the deal, how do you know it's bearing fruit? In a brand new believer because the moment that you were saved, that's fruit, the moment that you were saved there is wow, that's awesome. I mean the very first sermon that Peter preached 3,000 people got saved and baptized. We're like, "Whoa, that's a fruit started."

And there's some element in the Gospel that everybody who's a believer will bear fruit. Why? Because Christ is in you, the hope of glory. If you go back and read John 15 carefully, here's what you'll see, you'll see the God's desires for us. There are some who bear fruit and then in verse two, it says, God prunes those who are believers, so you'll bear even more fruit. And then in verse seven and eight says, "If you abide to me and my words abide and you ask whatever you wish and it will be given to you because it is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit."

There's different levels of fruit that you can produce based upon how rightly related you are to God. I mean, all Christians in some way will bear some fruit, they just will because they're in Christ and Christ is doing the work. You've heard my stories when I was in college, I wasn't totally walking with the Lord, but there were times that God used me to lead somebody to Christ or there were times that God was growing my faith. I mean, I was bearing some fruit because I was a Christian.

But when I started getting under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and started submitting to him more and started yielding to what he was doing and allowing him to prune me back, I started bearing more fruit. And then when I began to pray and started praying like this, "Lord, not my will, but your will be done and whatever you want to do in my life and wherever you want to lead me and whatever job you want me to have and whoever want you want me to marry and however much money you want me to make, it's all yours. I don't care anymore. It's all your..."

Then I started burying much fruit. Now here's the thing about fruit, fruit spoils. Did you know that? So you can't say, "Well, I bore much fruit." It spoils, you have to be connected to the vines so that the fruit can keep producing. So just because you produced much fruit, much fruit compared to what? The fruit that I previously had. So if I bore fruit and now I'm taking a step tomorrow and I have the same amount of fruit, I might still be bearing fruit or I might be getting pruned.

I mean, at the end of the day, there are ways that we can position ourselves before the Lord to allow him to prune us, to allow him to have his way with us, to seek in prayer until we are comfortable with him doing that. And when we do that's when we begin to bear more for fruit and much fruit. It's the same story as the parable of the soil, where the worker goes out, Jesus goes out and casts the seed into the soil. And some falls on the hard ground and some on Rocky ground, but the seed that falls into good soil, what does it produce? 30, 60, or even 100 fold fruit, more fruit, much fruit.

Every time the Gospel gets into the heart of a believer, there's fruit that bears.

And then there's more fruit and much fruit, which means this, no matter how much fruit you think you produce, let me tell you something, BRAVE Church, you can produce more fruit, the Lord will allow you to produce more fruit. And the cool thing about producing fruit is you don't make fruit, the vine makes the fruit. You're just attached to the vine, the more you're attached to the vine, the more you allow him to prune you, the more you allow him do is work in your life, the more fruitful your life can become.

Which means there's never going to be a time in your life where you say, "I produced so much fruit. I couldn't produce it." No, no, no. If he's growing you and growing who you are, there's always ways to allow the Lord through prayer and pruning to become even more fruitful than what you are right now. Don't ever believe the lie that you've arrived. There's no end to the school of discipleship. You do it until the day you die. And I'm just telling you this, BRAVE Church, because some people think we're super Christians, whoever those might be or pastors or this or that, they can produce a lot of fruit, but I'm just ordinary.

There's no ordinary in the kingdom, you've been saved by the same Gospel and you can produce fruit, more fruit or much fruit every single one of you. Here's what we don't like about that, we all want to produce much fruit, but here's what we don't like. I don't like getting pruned. Well, pruning's fine, cut away. You don't get to tell the vine dresser what he gets to prune. You don't get to tell the vine dresser who he brings in your life to mess with your life. He gets to bring all that where you're completely uncomfortable a lot of the time and saying, "All right, this isn't what I would've picked, this is what you picked, but I'm surrendering to you, Lord. I'm praying that you have

your way, because I want to see you produce fruit in my life."

And when you do that, you get excited when you see it produce in other people's life. Because the only way to produce more fruit and much fruit is to allow God to work on your heart in such a way where he humbles you and continues to mold you and then you think you're humble and he humbles you more. And then he molds you and then you think, now I've really arrived. And then he humbles you some more and you know this, and then everything's good and then he brings this person in your life which doesn't like you.

And then it never ends, and will you allow the Lord to prune that way and will you pray that way so your heart is God? Because when ask whatever you wish that's when you're to a place that you're praying like this, "Lord, whatever you want is what I wish. And I'm so close to you, I know what you want and I'm praying your will for my life and whatever you want done that's what I want done." And God answers that prayer, amen. And then it multiplies.

Notice this, it's been doing it since the day you heard of it and understood the God of grace and truth, just says what you learned it from Epaphras our fellow bond servant who is also a faithful servant of Christ on your behalf. How many people in here are named Epaphras, anybody? I mean, if you're looking for a good biblical name, then you don't want your son to have a name that everybody else has go with this one, this is a good biblical name. We're going to see him again in Colossians 4:12, notice who he is.

Epaphras, who is one of your number, means he's from Colossi, a bond slave of Jesus Christ, which means he's given up his freedoms to serve the Lord, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you and his prayers that you may stand perfect and fully assured in the will of God. Epaphras knows that your believers he knows or that, but he labors in prayer because he wants to see you presented perfect in Christ, he wants to see you bear much fruit in Christ. Epaphras presumably got saved by the Apostle Paul, we don't know.

Certainly he was one of Paul's disciples, who Paul is now sending back. Epaphras would've had to travel maybe up to 1,000 miles or more to get to Paul, to be disciplined by him, to be sent back. And we say traveling, we're not talking about, he got on a plane, flew United. We're talking about, he walked to be with Paul in prison just to get everything he could so he could take it back. Here's what happens, when the Gospel is bearing fruit, God is raising people up to start sending all over the world, that's what he does, it's what he does.

I'm telling you, there are some of you young men here that God is going to call to preach the word and lead churches. I know that with my whole heart, I prayed for that before I even became your pastor. I know he's doing that, there are some of you here, I know there's scores of college students here. Listen to me, college students, I know you're here for a period of time, you may not live in Denver for the rest of your life, totally cool. Learn all that you can and grow all that you can so that wherever God leads you, wherever you marry, wherever you go, that you're living for him with all the fullness of who you have.

That God's going to bring people that we can build, win to Christ or build up in Christ and send out to do whatever he wants to do. And Paul's saying, "That's exactly what's going on. That's how you know the Gospel." Paul's in an apostle, Timothy's a pastor, what's Epaphras? He's a slave, he's a bond servant of Jesus. He didn't have a title, he didn't have one of those fivefold giftings. He's just ordinary. And that ordinary man brought the Gospel to a group of people that are now walking in Christ and he's helping lead a church.

Please don't ever say, if you're a Christian, "I'm just..." And fill in the blank, if you're a Christian, you are a son or daughter the most high God gifted by him for incredible service, amen. It multiplies, it multiplies. And that's what Epaphras is doing, is multiplying the Gospel. We should celebrate when there is fruit bearing and multiplying. BRAVE Church, we should celebrate, it's happening all over the place. From day one that I stood in this pulpit and said, "We're going to be a church planting church." When that was just a vision and act faith to today where we planted two churches and a third one on the way.

And now we've helped plant churches overseas and Romania, and soon to be South Africa and potentially UK as of this week and potentially Germany, and guys it's just happening and we're going to get to be a part of all of that. And some day you're going to sit here for a conference where it's going to pastors from all over the world that are going to come here and they're going to preach and tell you what it's like to share the Gospel in Germany and in Asia and in South Africa. And you're going to say,

"How do in the world do we get to be a part of this?"

And when we do mission trips, you're going to go to those places and you're going to share with people that are actually sharing the Gospel in their context, in their way with their people. And you're going to say, "Glory to God, he's doing it all over the world and we're a part of this." That's what church is and that's worthy of celebration. There's nothing that fires me up more than hearing that. And then finally, this fifth reason for when we should celebrate God, this fifth element, is we should celebrate when Christ's love is evident.

Because what has Epaphras informed Paul about as he travels the 1,000 miles? He said he also informed us of your love in the Spirit. Our Spirit bears witness with your Spirit that your children have God. I mean, when there's a genuine move of God in your life, there's a genuine love for God's people that's not just felt among Christians, people feel it when they see us together. I love this testimony, I love this testimony. I don't hear it all the time, but sometimes I'll hear people tell me, "When I walked on your campus here, when I came into church it was like I felt this presence of love or your church you can tell your people care."

What is that? That's the Spirit of God in God's people that genuinely love one another and the world is craving that. And when we see that we should celebrate that. When you see Christ love coming together, breaking down all the other boundaries that the world has set for us saying no, "But because we're in Christ, we're together we're brothers and sisters. We love one another, we love one another, we're committed to one another. That's what Christ does.



And that's exactly what Paul's talking about here, that we should celebrate that because God has poured out his love in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. It's genuine love, it's not fake. You can tell the difference, right? Tell the difference from fake love and genuine love? "Yeah, brother, good job, praying for you this week." Versus, "Pastor, I was praying for you this week. I put you on my heart, I was praying for you all Wednesday." I can tell the difference, and I love that we're a praying church.

And I love that we're a church that celebrates the Gospel, I love that we're a church that's sending people out, and I love that we're a church that's taking people all over the world. I love that because that's worthy of celebration. Just two weeks ago, Kim and I got to go on short trip to Maui and spend the week together. It's kind of like a second honeymoon, it was awesome. In case I can promote other things besides Brooklyn Tab and the Billy Graham Library, I'm promoting Hawaii today too.

So when we were flying out from Denver to Phoenix and out to the island on the plane from Phoenix to there was a Little League World Series team making their way back from Pennsylvania where they had just played and finished fourth place all the way back to Maui. So I sat with 12-year-olds all the way on the trip, it was awesome. Eating Doritos, making fun of each other, poking each other, all this kind of stuff, it was awesome. We sat next to the short staff. I was asking them questions, "What was it like? Did you get to meet major leagues, did you get to do all?"

"Yeah, I got to do this." "And that's awesome, congratulations, that's every kid's dream, I wanted to do that when I was 12." So we get off the plane, but before we get

off the plane, when the plane lands, the pilot comes on and says, "Hey, I just want you to know you've been traveling with the fourth place winners of the Little League World Series from Maui this year." And everybody on the plane cheers. And they said, "Because of that, we're going to bring them home with water cannons."

I'd only seen that done one time, but it's basically they baptized the plane, they had these two fire engines out there and water cannons are shooting over the plane, everybody's cheering as we're going through. And then we get off the plane and Kim and I are walking ahead of this group because they're all waiting for their coaches and they're all behind us. And we walk down the airport and then we go down this flight like this little escalators, teeny little escalator.

And as we're coming down, there's like scores of people, maybe not as many as they're here, but there were scores of people, moms, dads, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, signs, banners, you name it. And it was like, they were all anticipating, they wanted to put it up. And then Kim and I are coming down like, "Oh no, I'm not going to do that, it's just you." And so we came down the escalator and we turned to the left, we go get our baggage and all of a sudden you just hear this eruption, this cheers, you turn around and you see all these parents and they're cheering for their son.

They couldn't go because it was too expensive for them to fly out. And you see moms just bawling as they're trying to hug their kids and you see all these signs and brothers and so it was awesome. It was awesome. And I was like, "I want some of that. I mean, I want to go back in and get it." That's what the Christian Church is. That's what we crave when we're saying, "You're my brother and you're my sister and

oh man, you're in Christ now and how can I help you grow?"

And Hey, one day guys, when we cross that finish line and Jesus is standing there in all of his glory with all the saints that have gone before him, it is going to be the most glorious reception we can ever be a part of, that is the hope that is laid up for everybody in heaven who has trusted in Jesus Christ for his or her sins alone, amen. It's worthy of celebration, it is worthy of celebration. And if you take this message and you boil it down to one word that's in every single point of the five that we celebrate is Christ.

It's all about Jesus Christ, without him we don't do any of it. Without Jesus there is no Gospel, without Jesus there are no disciples, there are no followers, there's no people, there's no fruit, there's no... It's all Jesus. So where we're going to end on both campuses today is by taking the Lord's Supper, because that's a reminder of who we are in Christ. Remember the moment that it went from just being head knowledge and you knew about Jesus to, "I know he's my Lord and savior now," remember that moment? That's what the Lord's Supper is about.

Remember that time where after you became a believer, you'd sin so bad you didn't think God could forgive you anymore? That's what the Lord's Supper is about. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that all your sins are forgiven. So I'm going to pray for us, for both campuses. I'm going to ask you when the elements are distributed, you hang on to them until we come back together and we will take them collectively. I want to remind you, if you're gluten-free, there are purple cups that you

can take. Please take two cups, there's a wafer in one, there's juice in the other, take both, they're stacked on each other, but if you're gluten-free, please take a purple cup.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thanks for your Gospel. Lord, thanks for what you've done in my heart and the heart of so many in this room. And thanks for what you're doing in the heart of those here right now who would say, "Jesus, right now I repent of my sins and I trust you as my personal Lord and savior. And I want you and only you to be the Lord of my life." Lord, as we take these elements, as we hold them in our hand, help us be reminded of the Gospel and what you've done in our hearts. We give you all the praise in Jesus' name, amen.