



Message **Transcript**

Labor of Love

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Well, thank you so much for choosing to worship with us today. Would you do me a favor and help me welcome our Broomfield campus this morning who's worship been along with us? It's so great to have you, and as we continue our worship today, let's go before the Lord and pray. Lord Jesus, thank you so much for your living and active word that's among us. Lord, we just give you praise, glory, and I honor for who you are. And Lord, we are so appreciative that every time your book is opened up and faithfully proclaimed that you speak directly to us and the only way we won't hear you is if we turn our spiritual ears off. So Lord, right now we just confess any known sins that we have before you knowing that in the blood of Jesus those are covered and washed away.

And Lord, our prayer today is that we would hear you and hear you clearly on everything that you want to say to us. And now all of God's people who are praying would say that you desire to believe what Jesus says about himself, what he says about you and to put into practice the very things that he shows you, will you agree with me this morning by very loudly saying the word amen? Amen. I've lived long enough to know that good things don't just happen without a little bit of work. Even if you're a professional or Olympic athlete and you've been gifted a certain way, work is still required for you to achieve in your trade or in your craft for what you're able to do.

In the business world, there is work that has to go in for you to be successful in business. Good families don't just happen. Good families require work on your behalf in order to see them realize like that. And as we've talked about to all you ladies before, even prior to a child coming into the world, it doesn't just happen. There's a labor that

proceeds that child coming in. Work always proceeds what that looks like. And when it comes to the church of Jesus Christ, good churches don't just happen, they require work, they require effort. And what we're going to learn about this morning is what kind of effort the church needs in order to be a good church. Like how do we have good churches? What is required of God's people for that?

And Paul is going to write to the Colossian church telling them four ways that they should be engaged in seeing their church become a good work. It's his labor of love to the people in Colossi. And so in your Bibles, I want to encourage you to open up to Colossians chapter two this morning, we're going to look at the first seven verses, Colossians 2:1-7. Please get your eyes on the copy of your own scriptures. They're under every other chair here in Inglewood. Raise your hand in Broomfield, they'll bring you a copy. Read God's word this morning as I read it out loud and then we'll unpack it together.

Here's what Paul says, "For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged having been knit together in love and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is Christ himself in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument. For even though I am absent in body, nevertheless I am with you in spirit rejoicing to see your good discipline and the stability

of your faith in Christ.

Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in him having been firmly rooted, and now being built up in him and established in your faith just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude." And here in this short section of the scripture you're going to see Paul's labor of love for the church in Colossi, which is going to give us instruction and insight into what we should labor for in our church to see the church be all that Jesus Christ wants the church to be. If you're visiting with us this morning, this is what God wants to see in your local church where you go. These are all transferable because it's the word of God. And the first one he says is this, he says, "Labor to see Christ's church, be collectively encouraged and united in love." Notice what he says. He says, "For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea. I want you to know how I'm laboring." This is the same word that really comes out of the end of verse 29.

It's the same root word, where he talks about striving according to God's power that's at work within him. It's this labor that he has for the people that are in Colossi. Like Paul's heart and his innards are striving and laboring for them to be collectively encouraged and united in the love of Christ. That's what he's going to labor for. You say, well, how's he laboring? Well, he's in prison as he is writing this letter. He's never even met these people before. So how's he laboring? He's laboring primarily in prayer for these people that they would get this because the four ways he's going to talk about that he's laboring for this morning are essential in every local church and they need to get this.

So he's laboring. And now what's he doing? Not only is he praying, he's writing to them so that they get this. It's Paul's heart of saying, I'm begging you, I'm telling you you got to get this and that the church is about encouragement and unity in love. He says, "I'm laboring for you those who are at Laodicea," which is a nearby town, "And for all those who have not personally seen my face." Now, why would Paul care about all these other churches out there that he's never even met before? Here's why, because he is an apostle. And the gift of an apostle is not only to care for one local church is to care for many local churches. It's to see God's work done the way that God wants in every single church. That's a heart of an apostle.

The heart of an apostle is when you see some church over there you don't even know and you're hearing that they're going off the rails, it pains your heart if you have an apostolic gifting, because your heart is for the body of Christ. And so Paul is laboring from prison, praying for the Colossians, writing to them making sure I want you to get these four ways that you need to own. And as we said, the first way was to be encouraged and united in love. Notice this, that their hearts may be encouraged. Can we just talk about encouragement for a second? Encouragement is the idea of when you're dispirited, you're disheartened or you're disillusioned in your faith. The picture of encouragement here is a coach at halftime when your team is getting drilled, coming in and saying, "It's going to be okay," or it's a coach after a loss that says, "That was just one game," or it's a military officer after you've lost battle, but haven't lost the war and he's coming in and saying, "Hey, stand firm and be encouraged."

Now, why is that so important? Because if you've been in ministry for any period

of time, and I'm not talking about vocational ministry, I'm talking for those of you who have trusted in Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and savior, and you are now fulfilling his life being lived in and through you to help others grow in their faith. You, it's not a matter of if you'll experience being dispirited or disheartened or disillusioned. It's when you feel those things. It's going to happen to you if you're serving the Lord. And don't think it's strange when it does. So why is Paul writing? Because Paul wants believers to understand that it's normal for you to feel disheartened. It's normal for you to feel disillusioned. It's normal. And why is that so important?

Because in the church, sometimes we falsely think, well, I go to church and church is supposed to be the place I'm most built up and I'm feeling like it's heavy and I'm feeling alone and I'm feeling discouraged. So I did a little research this week, because I wanted to see what some studies said about how many pastors feel discouraged. And I looked at a number of different statistics. The lowest number I saw was 70% of pastors at times feel discouraged, disheartened or disillusioned. And when I saw that statistic, I'm like, wow, 30% of pastors are liars too. Right? I mean, I'm telling you, there is not a Monday in nine years that I've been the pastor of this church that I haven't wanted to quit. I mean, if you're looking for a new employee and you can't find one, send me the job description on Monday, there's a 50, 50% chance I might take it.

That's how I feel every single Monday without fail. Like this, does the ministry you do, Jeff, even matter? Does anybody listen? If they are listening, how come they're not

engaged in small groups and how come they're not serving? And if they are engaged, how come there's so many interpersonal challenges in the church and how come this person's upset with this person and how come we can't all just get along? And why don't you go get yourself a real job? Every single week without fail. I know it's coming tomorrow morning. I don't know what time I'm going to wake up, but I know when I wake up, that will be the weight that's on my chest. And I also know it's not just for pastors. It's for anybody that's engaged in ministry. If you don't believe me, just find a place to serve in our church, you'll feel it soon enough.

If you're not in a small group, get in a small group, you'll feel it soon enough. If you're in one and you don't feel it, start leading one, you'll feel it soon enough. Anytime you take further steps of faith, the enemy will do anything in your ear to dispirit you and dishearten you to get you to say enough of this stuff already. And why is Paul writing them? Because he's saying the church must be the place where the greatest love of encouragement ever takes place. Now what's encouragement? Encouragement is when you're encouraged at the depth of who you are, not what you do. Like I'm not telling you this so that we leave and say, Pastor Jeff, I love your messages, that's why we come here, great. I'm talking about who are the people in your life that if you never did what you do still love you the exact same way.

That's encouragement. That's walking alongside. That's why Paul's saying that it's so important that the church exhibits that at the deepest levels, the church should be known as the most encouraging place on planet earth. It's God's people gathering to build one another up, right? So we'd be encouraged in our hearts and what else

would we be? We'd be united in love. We'd be knit together in love is the way that he says it. What does this mean? It means that because we've trusted in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of our sins and we all share the same father as we've talked to about many times, we're family. We're family, we're brothers and sisters in Christ and we are to be united in the love that God has for us. And how much does God love us? He loves us an infinite amount. And how much does he love everybody else in the body of Christ? An infinite amount.

So how are we called to treat everybody in the body of Christ? Infinite, sacrificial, giving beyond myself, this hurts me so much to love you like that kind of love. And Paul says, "I am laboring and I'm striving and I'm trying to get you to see that the reason the church will be known in the world is when you're known as the place that encourages your socks off and loves you at depth that nobody else does." Right? That's what the church is. Now, preaching is important or I wouldn't do it. The Bible tells us to preach the word it's important for your soul. Worship is important. It's what we're going to do for all eternity. But if we do all those different components, but we don't have love, we are a noisy gong and a clanging symbol. We are nothing.

If the only thing you can tell people about outside these walls is I like my pastor, he preaches well, or I like the music, that's not enough. What they want to know is what am I going to get treated like when I walk through those doors and will there be anybody there that cares about me and will they love me even though they know that I do these things and I'm not even believing this yet? Will I truly be loved? If you can authentically say absolutely and you could sit right next to me and I'll demonstrate that

to you, that's when the church is what the church should be. So Paul's laboring for that. He's striving for that. He's saying, "Hey, it's radical love. It's loyal love." It means even if you don't love me, I'm still going to love you. And I can tell you on the authority of God's word in 30 years of ministry experience, that you will love people that will hurt you I promise you.

If you never had that experience, just keep breathing air, it's going to happen, right? But I'll also tell you this, you will reap what you sow. Don't stop loving because if you do love even people that hurt you, God will raise up some other people to come alongside of you and show genuine love to you. Don't ever stop loving. Don't get hurt to the place that you say I'm done with that, I'm done with them, I'm done with love, I'm living my own life. That's what happens when you listen to people talk. Sometimes they say, I love Jesus, I just can't stand the church. Here's what they're saying is I love some people that weren't loyal to me. That's what they're saying. It wasn't the church that hurt them, it was individuals within the church that didn't love them and they feel the pain. And so we walk alongside and say, I could tell you as pastor, I know exactly how you feel.

I can give you over 1000 examples by name of people that have treated me the same way. And it hurts. And it never gets easier, but don't you dare stop loving people, right? That's what Paul's saying. Now what makes Paul an expert on this? Because he was hurt by everybody. People within the church hated him. The Corinthian church didn't even want him. They're like, "He's not good speaker, what's he think?" People outside the church were trying to kill him. I mean, there was nowhere he went that he

was genuinely loved except by the Lord Jesus Christ. And I just want to tell you, if you feel isolated and alone, that's one of the enemies plays for you to feel like you're the only one that feels this way. And loneliness has nothing to do with the amount of people that are around you. You can be in a gigantic crowd and feel incredibly lonely.

Loneliness has to do with the feeling when you feel like realize or not, nobody really has your back. Nobody's really going to stand with you. And if you don't keep doing what you're doing, they're going to walk away. They don't really love you. It's that fear of feeling lone. You can be in a marriage and be lonely. You can be in a church and be lonely. You can be in community and be lonely. The only way to fill that's with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I don't know if this is true of every single biblical character because I haven't done an exhaustive study, but I can point out a lot of biblical characters that felt alone. How about David after David was anointed king as a little boy, now what did he spend the majority of his early life doing? Trying to flee from King Saul, who twice tried to throw a spear through him. Right? Tried to kill him. Right? Do you feel alone? Yeah.

Some of the best Psalms we have in the book of Psalms come from David's heart when he felt all alone, but was trusting in the Lord. Why so downcast oh my soul? I hate life came out of his loneliness. Did Jeremiah ever feel alone? Here's how Jeremiah said, "Lord, how come I can't be like all the other preachers out there that are just preaching nice things so that everybody wants to come to their church? How come that every time I open my mouth, it's judgment and eminent judgment that's

coming on the people?" And here's what God says, "Because I never talked to those pastors and I never gave them that dream and I never gave them that vision, but you preach my word." If you preach the word, you're going to feel lonely. I feel lonely. Right? How about Paul, did he ever feel alone? He felt alone his entire ministry. How about Jesus? Did Jesus ever feel alone in the garden of Gethsemane or on the cross? I mean, I think he felt alone. I mean, we can go on and on and on.

When you feel alone, this is why Paul's encouraging the Colossian church, when you feel alone, let's make sure our church becomes that church where we're encouraging and loving people at the deepest levels. So ready for the application? Because I know what some of you are thinking, I can't find anybody at BRAVE Churches like that. I've been looking all over for people who love me and nobody's loving me like that. You're missing the application. Here's the application, be that person to other people. You didn't hear me. I'm saying you become that person for other people. You radically love other people so much that people want to be around you. Like when more and more people just become that person, then it's contagious because then that's just the norm of the culture that radically loves everyone else.

That's the loyal, radical love. Who does that emulate? That's the Lord Jesus Christ and how he loves us and it's translated then in how we love one another. So Paul is writing them and he's laboring and he's striving. He said, "Church, you're doing a lot of good things, but listen, you need to be known by the way you encourage and build one another up in love in such a way that the people in the body feel it." Right? That's the truth, labor to see Christ church collect encouraged in love. Why is this so

important? Because this is the heart of Jesus. On the night that Jesus was betrayed three times as he prays this recorded prayer we have in John 17, he prays for oneness, perfect unity, the same unity in the body of Christ that he had with his dad.

In the third time, he lists this is in John 17:23, he says, "I in them and you in me that they may be perfected in unity so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you have loved me." What's the telltale sign of the world knowing that Jesus Christ is alive? The way the church loves one another. Not talking about each other behind their back, not talking about what they don't like in church, not talking about all the imperfections that all the people have, because they're myriad, because we're all sinners and we've fallen short of the glory of God, but no the way in which they talk and the way in which they act and the way in which they feel and the way in which they live is radical, loyal, love to people that don't deserve it. That's how the world knows, right? That's how the world knows better.

You better believe it.

Labor to see Christ church collectively encouraged and united in love. And let me just tell you about this. When we talk about this, you will not meet anybody that's authentic, that will tell you, "Save it on me, I'm so encouraged and I'm so loved, I don't need any more of that. Give that to someone else's spirit." You'll never meet that person if they're truly being authentic. Secondly, he says this, "Labor to seek Christ church confidently believing in Christ alone for all understanding wisdom and knowledge." Labor to seek Christ church confidently believing in Christ alone for all understanding wisdom and knowledge. Middle of verse two, "Entertaining to the wealth

that comes from the full assurance of understanding resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is Christ himself in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Now he talks about wealth and treasure. Now at the end of chapter one, we talked about this last week. I'm going to read it because I want to see who was here. Help me out verbally if you were in verse 27, when he talked about to whom God will to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Okay, good. Let it go. I mean, when you hear about this wealth, this riches, this treasure, what's he talking about? He's talking about the same concept that the gospel is not simply a get out of hell free card. It's not just about making sure you don't go to hell and get punishment. The gospel is this, that God loved you so much that while you were dead and an enemy and lost, he came, he was God in flesh. He is God in flesh. He died on the cross according to the scriptures, he was buried. He was raised according to the scriptures and he is the way, the truth, the life. No one comes to the father except through him.

And when you trust in him alone for the forgiveness of your sins and you've exchanged your sin for all of Christ's righteousness, here's what happened, the third person of the Trinity, the holy spirit, he came to live in you. All the riches and wealth and treasures of Christ's glory in you forever and ever, and ever amen. Now, a byproduct of the holy spirit living in you is no one can snatch you out of God's hands and you belong to him forever. And he's a down payment guarantying your inheritance

in the saints and you for sure will be in heaven, but that's a byproduct of what's even more exciting, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Whoa, that's the gospel. Like when I'm sharing the gospel with somebody, it's not just that I want to get them out of hell and get them into heaven, so pray this prayer so you go to heaven, because I don't want you to go to hell. No, I'm telling you of all the riches and wealth and treasures stored up in Christ, he's willing to deposit in you.

All you have to do is give him all your sin and he'll give you all his righteousness and you can have all of him from this moment on forever and forever amen. Amen. That's the gospel, that's flat out exciting, flat out exciting. The gospel is not believe this way instead of believing that way. It's believing that the God of the universe in dwells you.

Come on preach. You're exciting.

Good. So we may attain to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding. What's the full assurance? Full assurance of understanding means I know that I know that I know. I know that I know that I know. Now, there's these three words being used here. There's different definitions for them. There's other people that might teach them a variety of different ways and it's okay, but here's how I think about it. Think about knowledge like this. When we talk about knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Knowledge is this, knowledge is truth. Knowledge is knowing what the truth is. It's knowing what you are supposed to do. Okay? Wisdom is the God-given ability to apply that truth to make it known. So for instance, men love your wives like Christ love the church. That's knowledge. You know that. Wisdom is the lifelong

expression of learning how to do that better than what you currently do.

Wives, submit to your husbands in everything. That's knowledge. Wisdom is the lifelong experience under the power of the spirit learning to do that on a daily basis and get better at it. Understanding is the result of days, months, weeks, and years of applying truth and wisdom and then you grow in your understanding. If you want to see somebody that has understanding of a marriage, find somebody that's known truth and applied it in wisdom for about the last 30 years and they have all sorts of understanding about this topic that they didn't have before. If you want to learn what God says about resources and money, find someone that knows the truth of God's word, that in wisdom has tried to apply it and now over the years has incredible understanding about how God's economy with money works. That's knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

Now why is this important? Notice what he says? I don't want you to miss this. He says, "It's resulting in the knowledge of God's mystery." Mystery we talked about last week is what we didn't see in the Old Testament that has now been revealed that is what? Christ himself. That's the mystery. Okay? There's nothing else you need. I mean, let me just pause right there at the end of verse two. It's Christ himself. That's the mystery that's been revealed. You don't need to add anything else to Jesus. If you have Jesus, according to scripture, 2nd Peter 1:3 says you've been given everything pertaining to life and godliness. You have every single thing that you need for every circumstance and situation that you will ever be in. You don't need to look outside. If Christ is in you, you look within. He's already there and he already has all knowledge,

he already has all wisdom and he has all understanding.

He wrote the book. You say, "Well, why do I need this book then? If I have the holy spirit living inside of me, why do I need this book?" Because from Genesis 1:1 through Revelation 22, all of it is inherent. There's nothing wrong. And for the last 6,000 years that we've been on this planet, God has been revealing to people exactly how we are to relate to him and to one another. It's tried. It's true. It works. When the holy spirit is in you and you read this book, it's different than when you read this book and the holy spirit's not in you because these things are spiritually discerned and a person who is not saved cannot understand this book. Only a person who is saved can understand this book. Why? Because a person who is saved is no longer dead, they're alive.

They're no longer lost, they're found. They're no longer an enemy, they're a friend. And the holy spirit of God is inside of them. So when they read this book, the holy spirit of God gets all up inside like, oh this awesome, this is how we're supposed to live because the holy spirit has answers for everything you're going through. Right? So here's why it boils down and why it's so important. I mean, think about this. And by the way, this is side now, I got to catch a breath before I have a coronary up here, but this is why relationships and ministry are so important because all ministry is relationships. Your family's relationships. Church is relationships. It's all relationships. I mean, we can get knowledge from God's word.

Sometimes God uses other people to help us with wisdom and understanding. I

mean, think about these questions that you'd like to ask people or think about if somebody asks you these questions. Yeah, I see I'm supposed to love my wife like Christ love the church, but how do I really do that? And how do I do that when she's upset with me and I'm the one that caused it? Not that that's ever happened in our marriage since last night, but how do you really do that? Right? And how do you really respect your husband in a way that he really understands and how are you really supposed to steward your resources in and through the church? And how do I really do that? And does it really work? If I do, does God really supernaturally bless that? And I want to love my kids the way God loves them and I want to discipline them the way God would discipline them, but sometimes I feel like I'm too strong in the discipline and other times I feel like I'm too merciful in my love.

And what's the balance? And how do I do that? And what's that look like? And oh, by the way, what's purity look like as a single man? What's purity look like as a married man? What's purity look like as a single woman? What's purity look like as a married woman? Like how do I work that out? Should I really be on Facebook? And what should I be posting? What shouldn't I do? And how should I do that? And how do I really understand God's word and how come I just... I'm trying to, and I know I'm safe, but it's just hard for me to understand. And how do I really share my faith because nobody's really ever shown me how to do and how do I pray? And here's the final question I would ask, especially if I was in your small group, after you give me all your great answers, have you screwed up on any of that stuff?

Because here's what I don't want to hear, well, I got saved when I was 18 and

since that time, I mean, I've been reading my Bible and praying, sharing my faith. And I can't really remember the last time I sinned and I have this perfect marriage with this perfect wife that respects me perfectly all the time. We have perfect kids and they always do what we ask because that's what the Bible teaches. And who wants to be around that inauthentic person? Nobody. I mean, I've learned wisdom by doing what God wants and I've learned wisdom by not doing what God wants. It's way better to learn wisdom by doing what God wants. And when you're around people and you ask them what didn't you do? And they tell you it's like this, "Oh good, thank you for paying for that for me. I don't want to pay for that real estate twice." I won't do that. Right?

There's a lot that we can learn. That's why relationships in the body of Christ can help us grow in a way that's significant. Now notice this, verse three tells us in Christ in whom are hidden... How many of the treasures does your Bible say? All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, all of them, which means this, you do not need to look outside of Christ in his word to find any answers to anything that you need.

That's right.

Because some of you didn't hear me and some of you don't believe it. I'm telling you you don't need to look outside of Christ, Christ's body and Christ's word to get answers. His word and himself are sufficient for everything you need. Okay. Here's the lie of the enemy. Yeah, you got Christ. Here's how many born again people, I mean, truly saved people think, Jesus is good for my salvation, I trusted in him, I believe he died in the cross and rose from the dead. Now that I got that thing taken care of, now I'm going to move on to bigger and better philosophies in life and learn how to live in

this world in a really, really good way. I was one of those people because people like that, the Bible's okay for salvation but when it comes to this world, you need to go to the self-help section in the bookstore.

I used to do that. I've read them all. I've read every Tony Robbins book. I did that as a young believer. I've read the habits of highly affected people so much, I could tell you almost every word of that. I know what all the self-help teaches, but here's what it teaches, you'll hear one word that's pretty consistent with all self-help books besides the word you, you'll hear this legacy, legacy, leave a legacy. There's a song by Casting Crowns. If I can share the first verse without crying, I'll share it because the first verse basically sled everything. I grew up believing. And here's what he says, "Make it count. Leave a mark, build a name for yourself. Dream your dreams, chase your heart above all else. Make a name the world remembers." That was my life even as a Christian.

And he goes on to say this, "But Jesus is the only name to remember." See, here's the problem we have in Christian circles. Yeah, Jesus is going to heaven, now I got to go live and make my name known because if I'm really important in this world, then people will know that Jesus is important. Wrong. Here's what legacy is, legacy is a way for secular people to define how to make their life count when it doesn't. That's what a legacy is. Now, if that's being harsh, that's just me being a prophet. So I'll tell you this, if you're living for legacy, let me tell you how long your legacy will last. By the time after your funeral, people are done eating fried chicken and church beans and a little bit of ham, your legacy will be over and nobody will care. Do you know why?

Because you're dead.

And the only people that will care about you at all are the people that were close enough to you that you loved in your family. That's it. Nobody will care about your life. Well, I was a great business person. How many great business people have died in the last year and you don't even know who they were? That's not a legacy. It's stupid. Let me tell you what legacy is. Legacy is saying this, legacy is saying that the most important thing for people to do in this world is make a name for themselves. Let me tell you what this world is according to the Bible, this world is perishing. This world is gone belly up. This world is sinful. For Christians, listen to me, this is the only hell you will ever know. And the only reason you're here is to be an ambassador for Christ to share and live the gospel. That's it.

Because what difference is going to make when you die, if you taught people how to live their best life in hell? And if you're teaching non believers to do that, maybe that's okay because for non-believers this is the only heaven that they'll ever experience. So if you're teaching them to leave a legacy, wouldn't it be more important to tell them you might leave a little bit of legacy on the earth, but if you do, here's what you need to know. You're going to spend eternity in hell and nobody's going to care either. And the only thing that's going to matter is that you didn't trust Jesus, right? Here's the truth. And here's the gospel that we called not to leave a legacy or a mark. So people think, well, Jeff was a good father and Jeff was a good pastor and Jeff was a good preacher. Here's the only thing I care about, Jeff loved Jesus and he lived his life so that people would know that Jesus is worth living. And that was nothing good in

Jeff and he was the first to admit that, but he lived for Jesus.

And if God could use Jeff, he can use anybody, right? That's the legacy you want to live, right? This is why Paul's saying because here's what happens in church all the time, I've seen it, "Well, Pastor Jeff, I really like your preaching, but our marriage is in trouble so we're going to go see a professional." "Pastor Jeff, I love your preaching, but our finances are out of whack. We're going to go see a professional." "Hey Pastor Jeff, we love you, but we're not getting along in church. We're going to go see a professional." Jesus is the professional. He has answers for every one of life's situations and problems, right? You don't need to go to Oprah Winfrey and Dr. Phil and get self-help or read all these other books. It's not a good use of your time. What you want to do is you want to live for Jesus. And here's what Paul is proclaiming church, I not only want you to be so encouraging and united in love, but I want you believing that in Christ alone, you have everything that you will ever need for your whole life.

And when we read that, here's what we should say, whoa. I'm not against other religions, there's just no other religion that promises what I find in the gospel. I'm against other religions because they're man made up for people that want to feel good about themselves rather than giving glory to God. That's why I against other religions. It's not like we're putting them on even ground and saying, well, Jesus is here and Buddhism's here and Hinduism's here and Confucius ideas are here and Self-Help is here and Oprah's secret is here and they're all pretty good, which one do you want? It's there's Jesus and all the rest are poo. Right.

Come on, amen. I like it. That's right. [inaudible 00:33:19] homosexuality.

Right. That's the truth. That's as vulgar as I'll get on a Sunday morning. Okay. All right. So let's keep going. So Paul's laboring to see this in the church that Christ is sufficient and love is necessary, but now let's labor to see Christ's church courageously standing against false teaching. Notice what Paul says in verse five, "For even though I am absent in body," meaning I'm not with you, I've never met you, I'm in prison, we've never even seen each other's face, "nevertheless, I am with you in spirit." I mean, I've heard about you and I'm praying for you and God is revealing things about you as I pray for you rejoicing to see what? Your good discipline and the stability of your faith in Christ. Right? And notice what he says in verse four because I skipped it and I didn't mean to skip it.

He says, "I'm telling you that Jesus is alone because I say this so that no one will delude you with persuasive argument." I've underlined twice in my Bible the word no one. I'm telling you Jesus alone is worth it so that no one will persuade you with a diluted argument. Now, why is that important? Because the best heretics in the history of the church are extremely persuasive and always biblical 100% of the time. Now, we live in a culture where we think there's only a couple religions to choose from. You can be Jewish or Mormon or Catholic or a couple others out there. I mean, but there's just not a lot of choices, but like in India you have 3000 gods. I mean, there's a myriad of gods you can serve in our culture as well. Right? And here's the problem with false teachers and false prophets.

Everyone's persuasive and everyone's biblical. So how do you know what to

listen for? Paul's saying, "I'm urging you so that no one will leave you astray." When you're listening to someone, here's what you need to ask yourself, are they championing the word of God? Are they talking about the riches of Christ's glory being in you? Are you being challenged to allow the holy spirit to glorify the resurrected Christ in all that you do? Or are you just been given platitudes about something that makes you feel good about yourself? That comes nowhere out of the Bible. Is it a pastor or a preacher that's walking through the Bible or just pasting some scriptures here and there that help make his argument? Do you see this argument that's being made throughout the entirety of scripture or is this this person's idea where you're like that person's awesome. They are so good.

She's such a good speaker. He's so persuasive. I've never thought about anything like that or is it, where did he get that? Oh my goodness, he got it right here. That's all the treasures of wisdom and now I got it right out of the Bible. Paul's saying, "I'm saying this so that no one, not one will dilute you with a persuasive argument." Now watch this, "For even though I'm absent in body, I am with you in spirit rejoicing to see your good discipline and stability of your faith in Christ." Good discipline is the word order. It's a military term. It shows the lining up of people for battle. And the second word is also a military term. The stability is a military term showing the entire flank. Here's what he's wanting the church to be. He's wanting the church to be people that are lined up for battle, all standing firm on what? The truth and their faith in Jesus so that when attacks come, they're not listening to any of it.

And in every generation, I can't tell you what the next Heresy's going to be. I just

know it'll be. Like recently, it's been that nobody goes to hell and love wins and all this kind of garbage, but it'll be another one and it'll be another one and it'll be another one and it'll be another one. But if you know the truth and you stand on the truth and you ask people, where do you get that in the word of God? And is that true in the word of God all the way through the word of God? If it's not, we reject it outrightly. When you have people standing like that, God does a great work. Amen. And that's what he's looking for because the gospel's more than getting you into heaven. It's information and truth about who Christ is because he wants you to be built up in the faith.

Now, why is this important? 1st Timothy 4:1 tells us, "But the spirit says that in latter times," which is by the way where you're living ever since Jesus rises from the dead, these are the end times, "some will fall away from the faith paying attention, deceitful spirits and doctrine of demons." Now what are the doctrine of demons? Doctrine of demons goes like this, how do you know that the word's really true? Where did every doctrine of demons start? It all started back in this place called the Garden of Eden and in the Garden of Eden, after God told them who he was, was walking with them, created a perfect world, created them in his image, who shows up on the scene? Satan takes the form of a serpent. And what does he do? He begins to entice Eve and he asks her this question, did God really say that?

In other words, what Satan's strategy? To question the word of God. Can you really believe that this book is true? Here's my answer. 100% yes. We'll do a series on it next spring. We're going to walk through so that you can own it from God's word. Yes. That's all Eve had to say. Yes, of course, it's true. What's he get her to believe?

He gets her to believe this, that there's secret knowledge out there that God didn't tell her that if she had access to would make her life better. Are you listening to me?

Yep.

Every heretic out there has secret knowledge that nobody else knows because of their special trip to heaven, because of somebody appearing to them, because of something they know that if you knew this information, you would be better for it. Satan goes on to not only ask, did God really say that? What's he eventually say? God said the day you eat of this fruit, you will surely die. What does Satan say? You surely will not die. So now you have Satan totally against God's word. That's what he does all the time. If you start to listen and you feel like, well, there's this book out there called The Secret. And maybe that's some knowledge that the Bible doesn't have. Here's what I tell you. It's just garbage. I mean, you don't need to read them. I mean, you can burn it. You can use it as toilet paper. You can use it for whatever you want. It's a better use of the book, right? That's all it. It's garbage. Anytime somebody promises you secret knowledge that nobody else in the church or from God's word has ever known, it's garbage every single time.

So don't listen to it. Stand on the truth. Every heretic out there, if they start talking will testify about how an angel appeared to them. That's how Mormonism got started by the way, that's why it's false or how different things happened or they had this encounter or this. And let me tell you something that the church isn't telling you, garbage. If you can't find it here, it ain't true. This is truth. Jesus said that word is truth.

Listen to what Paul said. Paul said in Galatians 1:6-10, he says, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him. That's Jesus, who all the fullness is in, who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel, which is really not another only that there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

There's one gospel. There is no other. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to what has been preached, he is to be a cursed. As I have said it before, so now, so again, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be a cursed." Anybody preaches a gospel different than what you're getting in this book, let him be damned. That's what Paul's saying. He says, "For now, am I seeking the favor of men or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still striving to please men, I would not be a bond servant of Christ." If a preacher is faithful with the word, there should be many times where the preacher is preaching something that would be for the culture extremely unpopular.

You're not listening because you don't have to preach. There are times where I know I'm standing in this pulpit and I'm sharing things which are extremely unpopular with our culture because the word of God is true and the culture is wrong. And we live in a culture nowadays that wants to get rid of this book, that wants to tell everybody this is a fundamentalist old fashion, keep it out of the state, keep it in your own closet, keep it back here. You're messing up our culture. We're so progressive now, we know more. No you don't. You're dead in your transgressions and sins. You're hell bound and you don't know Jesus and you need the gospel as much as anybody. And I will not shut

my mouth and I will continue to proclaim it regardless of the consequence. That's been the history of the Bible everywhere.

Well, the Bible's going to be dead, the Bible's going to be dead. Nobody's going to read that anymore. It's only the best selling book of all time, right? I mean, if you want to mess up somebody's life, I mean, most people that say they don't like the Bible have picked out like five scriptures that they don't like, and how does that work? I challenge you, if you're here today and you're like, I don't know if I believe any of that stuff, just start in the book of Matthew and just read through the entire New Testament, praying this prayer, Lord, if this book is really real, then I want to know it for myself. You will not even get to the book of Revelation before you'll be on your face worshiping God. And it won't be because somebody told you to believe it, it'll be because it's true.

Believe it, right? You can own this book. And why is this important? Well, because the world thinks they're so smart. I mean, everybody in the world thinks they're so smart. Here's what God says about smart people in the world. 1st Corinthians 1:25, "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men." The smartest man is a fool compared to God. All right. So you don't need to worry about this person that came up with this new doctrine and this new thing, Pastor Jeff, you probably never heard of it. Well, if it's a heresy, maybe I haven't. But if it's true and I haven't heard of it, then God's word will back that I haven't heard of it yet. And it'll be all over the place. You'll find it in the New Testament all over the place.

Church, can we outrageously stand firm against false teaching? Most of us don't

know who false teachers are because they're on TV and they're on the radio and they're everywhere in our ears. And we assume because they act like sheep that they actually are. But Jesus says not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord will enter my kingdom. Think about what they're telling you. Are they calling you to repentance? Are they calling you to faith? Are they calling the hard walk or is it an easy this is for you. It's so great. The world is awesome. Take what you can go, keep marching to hell and I'll affirm that for you. That's a false teacher. A true teacher would say enter through the narrow gate for wide is the road and broad as the way that leads to destruction and many will find it, but narrow is the road and small is the gate that leads to life and few find it.

That's the gospel. The gospel is in Jesus and in Jesus alone is salvation. What are you hearing preached? Own it. All of it's in Christ stand firm and false teaching. And then finally this one, labor to see Christ church continually growing by taking steps of faith. Labor to see Christ's church growing by continually taking steps of faith. Notice what he says, "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walk in him." Well, how have we received Christ Jesus as Lord? Here's how you receive Christ Jesus as Lord, to exchange all of your sin for all of Christ's righteousness. It's not Jesus. You're going to have some of my sin or Jesus says he want you, but I'm going to live in my sin. No, you repent. And repentance means I'm changing.

So I'm giving God all my sin and I'm receiving all of Christ's righteousness and I want all of you to come in and dwell in me. I want you to live in and through me and in

the same way you received him, so what? So walk in him. I love that. I love that. In the New Testament, we hear about a walk. People say, how's your walk with Jesus? Are you walking with Jesus? How's your walk, right? No one in the New Testament is your sit. How's your sit with Jesus or how your stand with Jesus? How's your study with Jesus? How's your walk with Jesus? I got news for you. Many of you know this already, but I'm saying this to let you know Jesus Christ is alive. So when the living God comes in you, he's alive. He's not just coming in as oh yeah God's in life. He's alive. So in the same way you received him as Lord, so continue to walk in him, which means allow Jesus to take steps with your life by faith. That's what he's saying.

And in verse seven, he goes on and says it like this, having been firmly rooted, and now being built up and established in your faith just as you were instructed and overflowing with gratitude. So we see the word faith at the end of verse five, we see the word faith in verse seven. Faith is trusting God for what he wants to do and then walking in it. Now, walking is a beautiful thing. All of you who are parents or grandparents that have watched your kids or your grandkids learn to walk, know what a glorious thing that is. And when a kid learns to walk, what do they do? I mean, they first start and they're starting to climb up on things and waddle and maybe take an arm off or do whatever.

But what are you looking for? Like those first one, two or three steps where they're like waddle, waddle, clunk. And what do we do when that happens? We celebrate, don't we? And then we go pick them up and we're like, "Hey, do that again." If you can do it once, you can do it again. And they do the same thing and they waddle,

waddle, bump. And then what do we do? We never get tired of this. We keep walking with them until they can walk by themselves. Did you know them? Like I've never met a parent that shamed their kid for falling or discouraged their kid and say, "You know what? Your brothers and sisters are pretty good at this, you're obviously no good. Maybe we'll get a wheelchair for you." I mean, you never do that. I mean, I've never seen a parent bring a kid into kindergarten or first grade that's like holding onto the desk for dear life and the teacher's like, "What's wrong?" "Well, my parents told me I was terrible at walking and I don't want to give it a try because I don't want to fall and fail."

Now, let me play that analogy out because you're like, what kind of a silly analogy? That's how many people are Christians and they hang on to Jesus, but I can't take a step because what if I take a step and I do it wrong and what if I fall? You're going to fall. You're going to go down hard. And that's why you have to listen to the voice of your father that's like, "I am so proud of you. Wait to take that step. Let's get back up. I'm going to be the one to help you up and now let's continue to walk." Here's what the enemy does when you fall, he's the one who's shaming you. He's the one who's whispering you, you should have known better. You're never going to get this. You're lousy. You're no good. And everybody's better at walking than you are. You're terrible. You're lousy. You're not good over and over and over.

Get up and keep walking. Take steps of faith. Well, Pastor Jeff, what if I take a step of faith and I start serving in kids ministry or I start leading a small group or I start like serving in the cafe and I like blow it. You have my 100% permission to blow it. I

would rather see you take a step of faith and blow it than have no faith and sit on your tush. Just go. Move. Do something. And the more you walk, the stronger your faith legs get and the stronger they get, the more you'll take another step and then you'll be jumping and leaping and going for it. In the same way you received him as Lord, so walk in him. Like having been firmly rooted, I love that. He's going to use an agricultural and an architectural analogy. Having been firmly rooted, that's an agricultural analogy. It means that it's a parable of the soils. If you're truly saved, you're saved.

Your roots go down into good soil, you're his, nobody can take that away from you. You're firmly rooted. I mean, up above the soil, it may wither at times, you may get burned by the sun at times, you may be tired at times, you may be sick at time. You're not going anywhere. You're firmly rooted. And what? He says this, and now being built up in him. That's architecturally. That is, as your soil is rooted. Now God's building something in and through you and in and through his church and established. Establish means this, it means to be certified. It means, well, you know that you know that you know that this is true. When I was about 10 years older or maybe even younger, my grandfather went into the hospital. I knew he was in the hospital. And when I saw him the next time when he got out of the hospital, he lived in Chicago at the time and I was a diehard Chicago Bears fan at the time. And he told me that his hospital bed was right next to Walter Payton's bed in the hospital.

And Walter Payton had been heard at the time. So he had a business card and he said, "I got Walter Payton's autograph for you." Now, the funny thing about that was even at the age of 10 or however old, I was I'm like, "That's your handwriting." So it

was Walter Payton, but I knew it was my grandfather's handwriting. I knew it was. And I didn't need to ask. Somebody needs to certify that. I mean, somebody needs to check that. It's just, I know that's not a real autograph. Established means it's certified. It's like with Walter Payton's picture right next to it, pointing at the card as he's signing it, that's what it means to be established. And who's the one who establishes you or confirms you? It's God. As you continue to take steps in faith, God will establish you. He will confirm in you that you know, that you know, that you know not only are you a believer, but that you're walking with him. That's the joy of the Christian faith.

And how do you have that? Like once you're established, even when it's hard, what are you doing at the very end? You're overflowing with gratitude. You can take whatever you want away from me. I mean, I hope that God doesn't, but he can and I'll still love God. I love God. I love God. I mean, I love my family. I love my wife. I love my kids. I love this church. If all that went away, I still love God. I love God exponentially more than any of those blessings that God's given me the privilege of stewarding while I'm on the side of heaven. I love God. It's scary to even say that, right? But it's true. But I love God. And I'm overflowing with gratitude. Now, what does this mean? Do we see this anywhere else in scripture? I mean, 1st John 2:6, he says, "By this, we know that we are in him. The one who says he abides in him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked."

Well, I'm a Christian, I just don't walk like it. Well, then you're not really abiding in Christ. Because if you abide in Christ, you will walk the way Jesus wants you to walk,

right? And why is this so exciting? Because for many of us we've stopped taking steps of faith not because God said stop, but because we've decided to listen to the enemy more than we've decided to listen to God. And everyone here has fallen, but Jesus is the one that says, "I'll pick you back up, just keep walking, keep doing this, right? Just keep going, you can do this." A number of years ago, I wanted to run a marathon for the first time. I've ended up running three and I run is a very exaggerated word, but I finished three. But I remember when I was talking to people before I got started, I'm like, well, how do you run one of these things?

Like, what kind of shoes do you need? What kind of clothes do I need? And what kind water bottle? And do I need to carry some gel packs with me? And they all kind of laughed at me and say the same thing like, "Dude, you just need to run." Like when you can run like three miles at a time, five times a week, then come back and talk to me then we'll talk about some of the other things and how to extend and how to do all that. Why is that analogy important? Because for some of us like, well, how do I learn to read the Bible? Read it. How do I learn to pray? Pray. How do I learn to share my faith? Share your faith. Well, I don't want to do that. I was kind of waiting for somebody else to do it for me.

That's why you're not growing. And if you don't know how to read or pray or share your faith, here's an idea, ask someone in the church that you deem more spiritual than you and ask them to do it with you. Say, "Hey, I got a friend that I want to lead to Christ, but I don't know what I'm doing, would come with me so that I can have you there when we share our faith?" Now, most Christians will give you some platitude

answer about how they're too busy that week to do that but what they're really saying is I've never done it either and I don't know what I'm doing. I'm being serious.

Or when it comes to reading the Bible, ask somebody that's a little more skilled in the faith, "Hey, could you read the Bible with me because..." Or, "These are questions that I have so that, hey, I'll read this, but then let's talk about it together so I can grow in this." Or, "Hey, I've heard about Pastor Jeff talking about prayer, but I'm not sure I know how to pray, will you pray with me? Will you teach me how you prayed and how to grow?" I mean, that's what the body's for. Because Paul's not talking just to individually, he's talking to the whole church. He's telling the whole church that he is laboring and he's striving for them to be encouraging and loyally loving one another to believing that Christ alone is sufficient standing against all false doctrine and to be a group of people that are constantly taking steps of faith.

What does that mean? It means that we need to constantly be taking steps of faith. It means that if we really believe what we say we're believing, we're putting into practice the very things God's showing. You say, well, how do I know what to do? Because as you were listening to God speak to you today during this message, he was probably showing you one thing that you needed to take a step of faith in. What's the one thing? And here's what he'd say, "Just do that. Just do that. Just be that." And so that's what we want to be. We want to be that group of people that do that. Amen. It's exciting stuff. This is not about you going out here and performing for Jesus, this is about the fact that if you've trusted Christ, he's in, he'll do all the performing for you. You just have to allow him by continuing to walk. And if you've never trusted in Jesus

Christ to be Lord of your life, then here's the challenge, let him be Lord of your life.

If you say I'm not ready that today, then I would encourage you, just start in the book of Matthew, read through the entire New Testament, asking this question, Lord, are you really who you say you are and how do I need to respond? You won't even make it through the entire New Testament before you realize Jesus Christ is Lord. Do it for yourself. His word is living and active, sharper than any two edge sword. It will cut you at a level you didn't even know you could be cut. Amen. So let's end by praying today. Lord Jesus, we give you all the glory and honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we ask that during this time today that you would have your way with us. For some of you that are here today saying, "I don't know if I've ever trusted in Christ, what would I do?" Here's what you tell him, Lord, you're not the Lord of my life. I may have prayed some prayer, I may have been religious at times, but there's never been a time where you've been my life.

Lord, I pray now that you would take all my sin, all those shameful things that only you know and nobody else does. And I want all of your life in me, put that in me and then help me get established by reading and studying and walking with people that genuinely love me. And if that's who you are in Christ, you are a believer in Christ, then here's the prayer. Holy spirit, I just pray that you would show me how I can magnify the Lord Jesus Christ in and through my life. And because you're in me, show me the step of faith I need to take for your great glory. And Lord, we give you all the praise, all the honor and all the glory in Jesus name, amen and amen. Can we give God some praise this morning?

