

Gospel Fruitfulness

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[0 : 00] Okay, this morning I am super excited. We are diving into a study of the new book of the Bible. Well, new for us. It's been there 2,000 years. It's not new to the Bible, but we are starting this morning.

We're going to be diving into the book of Colossians. It's a book in the New Testament, and I have been praying for us as a church over the last few weeks. I've been asking some friends to pray for us as a church, and I really have been praying that as we go through the book of Colossians, we'll get to see and understand something more of who God is and what it means to be a Christian, what it means to be infused and to find our life in Him.

And so for the next eight weeks, we're going to be looking at the book of Colossians. Now, if you're here this morning and you wouldn't call yourself a follower of Jesus, that's fine. You're so welcome. We're glad that you are with us.

And my hope for you in this series is that you too will understand more of what the Bible says about who Jesus is, what He came to do, and what it means for those that have put their faith in Christ.

And so whether you are a seeker or a skeptic or a follower of Jesus, I'm hoping and trusting that the next eight weeks is going to be good for us as a church. Now, what I'm going to do this morning is I want to take the next couple of minutes to explain some of the background to the story of Colossians, how it got into the Bible.

[1 : 24] Then we're going to hear, Christina's going to read Colossians chapter 1 to us, and then I'm going to preach the first half of chapter 1. Okay, so this is the story. So the year is around 52 to 55 AD, okay?

Over a three-year period, the Apostle Paul, the man who wrote much of the New Testament, is in the city of Ephesus in modern-day Turkey, okay? Chris and Fiona and a couple of others were just there last week or so.

So Paul's in this city called Ephesus. It's a major trading city. It's a major port town. And he's there preaching for three years. And he starts off in the synagogue, but pretty soon he's kicked out of the synagogue because he's telling everyone about Jesus.

And so what he does is he rents a hall in the city of Ephesus. And every day he's preaching and teaching and telling people about Jesus. And what he's specifically doing is he's showing from the Old Testament scriptures how Jesus of Nazareth really is the Christ, the promised Messiah.

But not only that, he's showing and proving from the scriptures how Jesus came to die, to bear the sins of the world upon himself. But he didn't stay dead. He rose again, which vindicates his claim that he really is the Lord of all creation, okay?

[2 : 38] So Paul's doing this for three years in Ephesus. Now somewhere in that time, a wealthy businessman, a Gentile, so not a Jewish man, a Gentile called Philemon from a town a hundred miles away called Colossae.

Have we got Philemon? Okay, here we've got Philemon. He's our wealthy businessman, okay? And so Philemon, he happened to be Chinese. How's that, eh? Okay, I'm not going to make a comment.

So Philemon is this wealthy businessman from a town a hundred miles away, a town called Colossae. And Philemon does a lot of business in Ephesus. And so he comes to Ephesus, he's doing business, and while he's there, he hears about this man called Paul that's causing a real stir and uproar in the city of Ephesus.

And so he goes to hear what Paul is talking about. And while he's there, he hears the message of Jesus, but not only that, he sees the demonstration of the power of God, because people that are sick are getting healed miraculously.

People who have been oppressed by spiritual forces and spiritual darkness are being set free. And so to his own astonishment, Philemon believes the gospel, and God enters his heart and changes him.

[3 : 51] And so over the next three years, he's discipled by Paul, and he travels between Colossae and Ephesus, you know, doing business. Now at the same time, there's another man who also comes from the town of Colossae.

This is a young man who's a bit more rugged, a bit more feisty. His name is Epaphras, right? Can you see Epaphras there? So Epaphras also comes from the city of Colossae, and he's doing business in Ephesus.

And while he's there, he too goes to hear Paul, he hears the message of Jesus, the Holy Spirit changes his heart, and he becomes a follower of Jesus. Now Epaphras goes back to the city of Colossae, and he starts telling everyone about what Jesus has done, that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Christ.

And his friends and his family start to believe the gospel and become Christians as well. Now Epaphras doesn't just go to Colossae. He goes to all the surrounding towns, like Laodicea and Hierapolis, telling everyone about Jesus.

And so pretty soon, there's this little church that starts to form in the city of Colossae. And this church meets in the house of Philemon, the wealthy businessman, right?

[4 : 59] Well, this goes on for a couple of years. Now, there's a side story, a little cameo that's happening here. Let me tell you about it. Philemon, the wealthy businessman, he had a big estate, and he had some slaves that worked on his estate.

And one of his slaves was called Onesimus, okay? We have Onesimus, here's Onesimus. And so Onesimus means useful. But actually, he didn't live up to his name because he wasn't very useful.

He was a runaway slave. So one day, he runs away from his master, Philemon, stealing some money in the process. So he steals some household goods, steals some gold, and he runs away.

Now that wasn't that uncommon, but it was dangerous. If you were a runaway slave and you got caught, you were in serious trouble. So Onesimus runs a thousand miles away to the city of Rome, okay?

And there he goes into hiding. It's a big city. No one's going to recognize him. He thinks he's a free man forever. Jump forward six or seven years later. Six or seven years later, Paul's no longer in Ephesus.

[6 : 01] He's been traveling around, and Paul finds himself in the city of Rome. But he's there arrested because he's been preaching the gospel. In fact, he's under house arrest, okay? So he lives in his own house.

He's under house arrest for two years. And while he's there for two years, people are allowed to come visit him and talk to him. And Paul tells everyone that he can about the wonder of Jesus.

And one day, he meets this man called Onesimus, this runaway slave. And he tells him about Jesus. God does something in his heart. Onesimus becomes a Christ follower. And then Paul puts two and two together and says, hang on.

Your old master, Philemon, is he in Colossae by any chance? I know him. And so Paul now knows his former master and this runaway slave, right? And so Paul writes a letter to Philemon.

There's a book in the Bible called Philemon. It's one chapter. It's very short. He writes a letter to Philemon saying, you'll never know who I've just run into in Rome. Your former slave, Onesimus. I'm sending him back to you, but this time receive him no longer as a slave, but as a brother.

[7 : 05] An amazing letter about how God changes people and changes relationships. Anyway, while Paul's in Rome, someone else comes to visit him. Epaphras, okay, the long-bearded guy.

Epaphras comes to visit him in Rome. And Paul hasn't seen him for years. And so he says, Epaphras, how are things going? How's Philemon and how's the church in Colossae doing?

And Epaphras gives him an update. And he tells them this. He says, things are going great. The church is doing really well. The church, they love Jesus and they love one another. It's an amazing church.

Paul, you'd be so proud of them. But there's a couple of challenges as well. In fact, the main challenge that this church in the town of Colossae is facing is that the surrounding culture of Colossae is influencing the church.

And so the church is being more influenced by the culture than the culture being influenced by the church. And so there's two things in particular. The one is that there's a religious group of people in the town of Colossae that are telling the Christians, listen, Jesus is good.

[8 : 09] But if you really want to know God, you've got to add Jesus plus all the Old Testament laws, right? You've got to observe this Sabbath. You've got to worship at this festival. You've got to observe this new moon feast.

You've got to do all these religious things plus Jesus, right? But there's another challenge. The secular Roman culture is influencing the church.

And they say, listen, Jesus is good, but he's like one of all the other gods, Apollo and Dionysus and all these other gods. And if you really want to know who God is, you've got to worship the angels and you've got to engage in asceticism.

You've got to flog yourself and fast and you've got to really seek the gods. And Jesus is good, but he's just one of all these other gods. And so Paul writes a letter back to the Colossians to help them understand.

And he says, this is what I want you to know. I want you to see the supremacy of Jesus, that Christ is Lord of all things. I want you to understand the power of the gospel. And I want you to know what your life in Christ looks like, what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

[9 : 11] And so Paul gets his other friend, this is his fourth friend called Tychicus. Okay, there's Tychicus. Paul gets his friend Tychicus and he sends him a thousand miles away back to the town of Colossae with three things.

He sends him with a letter to Philemon, the master, okay, the wealthy businessman. He sends him with Onesimus, his former slave. And then he sends a letter to the Colossians.

And he sends these two letters and Onesimus with Tychicus to the Colossians and encouraging them to be deep in their understanding of who Christ is, deep in their understanding of the gospel and what their life in Christ looks like.

And that letter is the letter to Colossians that we're going to look at for the next eight weeks. So on that note, Christina, will you come and read God's word to us this morning? Let's listen to Colossians chapter one, verses one to 12, I think it is.

Yeah. Please follow along in your bulletin or on the screen. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God, our Father.

[10 : 21] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid out for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant.

He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of saints in light.

This is the word of God. Great. Okay. Thank you, Christina. Okay. So, let's actually pray. Let me just ask God to really speak to us.

Father, we come before your word this morning. Father, we come because we want to meet with you. We want to encounter you. God, won't you bless the preaching of your word? God, won't your word get inside of us?

[12 : 09] And just as the Colossians, those 2,000 years ago, needed a revelation of your supremacy and your wonder, God, won't you do the same for us? We ask you to be with us now in your name.

Amen. Amen. Okay. So, there's three sections to this passage of Scripture. Okay. Three kind of paragraphs. The first one is a pretty standard greeting. Paul says, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ in Colossae, grace and peace to you from God our Father.

Now, there's a whole lot of good stuff in there, but we're not going to get into it. If we had to get into every good thing, we'd be here for a long, long time. Okay. So, Paul greets this church in Colossians.

The next two paragraphs we're going to look at today. Okay. Now, when we read the Bible, we want to know what is God saying in the Bible. Okay. We don't just read the Bible and say, this is what it says to me, because that might not be what God is saying at all.

Right? The Bible is not just a book of inspirational thoughts and ideas. The authors that wrote it had an idea. They were trying to communicate something, and God is trying to communicate something.

[13 : 17] So, what we want to do is understand, God, what are you saying in the Bible, not just what I think it might be saying. And there's a couple of ways to work that out. If you know Greek and Hebrew, you can study the structure and the sentences and all that kind of stuff.

But if you don't know Greek and Hebrew, like most of us, one of the ways you can do it is say, what are the literary devices that the author is using to help us understand or to help get his main points across?

And one of the ways that authors do this is through repetition of words and phrases. Okay? So, remember two weeks ago, we saw this in Ruth chapter three. Remember, Ruth chapter three starts off like this.

Naomi says to Ruth, should I not seek rest for you, my daughter? Okay? Then it goes through this whole story, and then it ends. The last line is, Naomi saying to Ruth again, don't worry, the Redeemer will not rest until he's sorted out the problem.

So, the first sentence and the last sentence both have this idea of rest. And so, we know that Ruth chapter three is talking about finding rest in the great Redeemer because there's this repetition.

[14 : 23] It's a literary device the authors use. Now, when we look at our passage today, are there any phrases or any words that are repeated in the first paragraph and the second paragraph?

Anything that stands out to you? Look at verse six. Paul writes, And then in verse 10, he says, We've been praying that you'll be filled with the gospel, God's will and His understanding of the grace of God, so that you can walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit.

There's the same phrase. In every good work, as you increase in the knowledge of God. So, here Paul gives us a clue. He's talking about, Paul's writing to these Colossian Christians and he's reminding them that the gospel message is not just a message that you hear and understand with your head.

He's reminding them that the gospel is a life-changing, life-transforming power that when it gets inside of you, it changes you and it impacts you in such a way that there's fruit in your life.

There's evidence that other people can see. He says, And so, this is Paul's big idea.

[15 : 51] That when you become a Christian, it changes you, the gospel changes you. But then he's going to go on to say that as you grow as a Christian, you've got to get the gospel deeper into you that it continues to change you to bear fruit.

And so, these Christians in Colossae, the thing that differentiates them from secular culture or from worshippers of other gods is not the intensity of their worship.

It's not how dedicated they are. It's got nothing to do with them. What separates them is that the gospel, the power of God, came from outside of them, got into them, changed them, and is now bearing fruit for all to see all over the world.

And there's two sections here. And so, Paul is going to talk about in the first section how the fruit or the impact of the gospel has on people when they come to Christ.

And the second section, the fruit or the impact that the gospel has on us as we continue to walk with Christ. Okay? So, that's where we're going this morning. So, let's look at the first section together.

[16 : 54] Verses 3 to 8. Look at what Paul says. Look at verse 3. He says, We thank God whenever we pray for you. Why? Why does he thank God? Well, two reasons. We thank God because of your love that you have for Christ, your faith that you have in Christ, and the love that you have for all the saints.

Okay? So, Paul's heard from Epaphras. He's sitting under house arrest in Rome. He says, Tell me what's happening in Colossae. And Epaphras tells him about these two things. Their great faith in Christ and their love for all the saints.

Now, at its most basic form, these two things is what God always requires of all his people. To love God and love people. Remember, someone comes to Jesus and says, Jesus, there's this whole Old Testament.

What are the greatest commandments? What should we really focus on? And Jesus says, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, and your strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. And that's why it's impossible when people say, I love Jesus.

It's just the church I don't really like. I love Jesus, just his people I can't put up with. It's impossible. Because wherever in the Bible, these two things come together.

[18 : 03] Love Jesus, love his people. Serve Jesus, serve his people. And so that's exactly what Paul has heard has happened to these Christians in Colossae. The gospel's got inside of them.

And it's stirred in them a deep faith in Christ, a love for Christ, and a love for his people. And this comes from the gospel. Now, how does Paul describe the gospel?

What does it mean? What does it look like? Well, he actually gives three phrases for it. He says, It is the hope that is laid up for you in heaven, verse 5. He calls it the word of truth, and he calls it the grace of God.

So this message, this good news message about the grace of God, that we're all sinners that are saved by grace. Sinners like the runaway slave Inesimus, and Epaphras, and Philemon, and me, and you.

The grace of God has come to us. This good news about the truth of God, that all of us are sinners, but Jesus has died on the cross for us. This eternal and unshakable hope that we have in Christ because he rose from the grave.

[19 : 04] He's no longer dead. Paul says, This powerful message is not merely a message that you believe, or that you remind yourselves of every week when you go to church.

This gospel is a power that gets inside of you that changes you on the inside and results in fruit in your life. But Paul says, This shouldn't surprise us.

Because what happened in Colossae is actually what happens all over the world. Wherever this gospel message goes, it produces fruit. What happened to Inesimus the slave, and Epaphras, and Philemon, these aren't freak accidents.

These aren't people that had a religious experience and suddenly decided to become religious. Actually, wherever the gospel goes, it changes people. And friends, I want to say to us that this should give us two things.

The power of the gospel to change people's lives should make us both confident and humble at the same time. It should give us great confidence because in our mission as a church, we want to join Jesus in his mission.

[20 : 11] We want to help people find and follow Jesus. We want to be a church that is making mature disciples of Jesus in the city of Hong Kong that are going to impact other people for the glory of God in Hong Kong.

That's what we want to do, right? And this, the power of the gospel should give us great confidence as we go out doing that. Because for 2,000 years, in every country, in every century, in every corner of the globe, wherever the gospel has gone forward, it's changed people's lives.

It's done so in powerful cities like Rome and London and New York and Hong Kong and Shanghai. God has changed people's lives. But it's also done so in backwater towns in Africa and India and in China.

The gospel has gone inside of people and changed them and borne fruit in their lives with the educated and the sophisticated and the elite. But it's also done so with the simple and the uneducated.

In every corner of the globe, across the ages, in every city of the world, God's power has got a hold of people and changed them. As he says, just as it did amongst you, and it's borne fruit in their lives.

[21 : 19] Because, you know, when we were considering moving to Hong Kong, so a long process, chatting to the elders. And then I think it was around June, July last year, we all agreed, hey, it feels like God is in this.

And so we were coming to Hong Kong. And then we had six months before we came here. And I've got to be honest, in my own heart, there was not just a little amount of angst or concern.

Because as I think about myself, I know that I'm not particularly oppressive. I mean, many people in this church are more educated than me, more sophisticated than me, older than me, wiser than me.

And so as we thought about this, it's like, well, what am I going to bring to Watermark Church? And the pressure to possibly perform, I don't have the goods to win the crowds or perform or to put on a good show that's going to impress people.

But I'll tell you what gave me such confidence. I'll tell you what gave me conviction. It's the absolute certainty that I knew, that I knew, that I knew, that in my heart, this gospel message has a power that changes people's lives and bears fruit.

[22 : 32] And so you don't need to come and perform. You don't need to come put on a show. You don't need to come and win people over. Because as you bring the gospel, the gospel is a power that bears fruit in people's lives. And so Watermark, I want to say to us that as we seek to make a difference for Christ in our city, as we host Elphas, as we reach out to people, as we put on events, we can have great confidence knowing that the power of God is not in us.

It's not in our great shows. It's in the gospel. And Paul writes and he says, Don't you remember that just as the gospel is born fruit in your life, so it does in the whole world, wherever people are hearing the word of truth and understanding the grace of God.

And this powerful message should give us great confidence as a church. But on the other hand, it should also humble us. And Watermark, I want us to hear this. I want us to take careful note of this.

Because as I try and listen to what's going on in the church circles around the world, the trend at the moment and the way many churches are going is to find their confidence in human ability, in putting on a great show, in dynamic speakers, in great oratory skills.

The temptation that we're going to face as a church is to put our confidence in having the right show and speaking the right lingo and putting on a great performance and thinking that if we attract people and people join our church, then we've been successful.

[23 : 58] But in the New Testament, neither Paul nor no one celebrates that success is attracting people and growing into a big church. That's not the mark. What does Paul celebrate? Well, he tells us here in Colossians 1.

He says, We thank God every time we pray for you because we hear that the gospel is bearing fruit in your lives, as indeed it does in the whole world. And so Watermark, I want to encourage us.

We need to be careful about getting too confident in our ability to produce fruit in people's lives. Before any of us were born, God's word was going forward and changing people and producing the fruit.

And so Paul writes and he says, We thank God whenever we pray for you because we've heard of your faith in the gospel. We've heard how this has changed in you, as producing fruit, as indeed it does in the whole world.

The gospel changes lives. Now, look at the second section. Look at verse 9 to 12 with me. Paul has been reminding these Christians in Colossae, whom he's never met.

[24 : 59] So they didn't become Christians because of his great oratory skills or his persuasive argument, or because Paul himself was very impressive. He's never been to the city of Colossae. He's never met them.

They became Christians through this other guy, Epaphras. But he carries them in his heart. And so he's reminding them of the power of the gospel that got inside of them and caused this combustion to take place in their lives and change their lives.

And so he writes this. And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you. Now, here's the question, right? What do you pray for a church that is experiencing this gospel explosion to take place?

So here's a church that's six, seven, maybe eight years old. Good things are happening. God's gospel's got there. People's lives are being changed. It's a great community.

They love one another. There's a couple of challenges, but generally the church is going really well. Sounds a lot like Watermark, right? Eight years old, great community.

[26 : 00] What do you pray for such a church? What do we pray for Watermark? What should we be praying? Well, look at what Paul prays. He says, And so from the day we've heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit, there's our phrase again, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Let's think about this. What does Paul mean when he says, I pray that you'll be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding? Most of life is made up of making decisions, right?

We all make decisions all the time. Big decisions, small decisions, long-term decisions, short-term decisions. We all make many decisions. And how easy would it be every time we had a decision to make, we just looked up to clouds and we could know what God's will was, right?

Or just like a sign fell from heaven on your desk, okay? Employ this person, don't employ this person. You wanna go to university next year? Go to A, don't go to B, right?

Life would be so simple if every time we had to make a decision, we just knew, okay, God, this is your will, I'll do it, right? But the truth is that life is not that simple, right?

[27 : 21] Life is far more complex. It's far more nuanced than just simple answers to life's questions, right? Life is full of complexity and nuance and there's difficulty. God never intended life to be so one-dimensional.

So simplistic, right? God never intended the Christian life to be one in which every time you've got a decision, you just look up the clouds and you know what is his will. God, should I wear this suit today or this suit?

Should I catch the 40M to church or the 22 minibus, right? Lord, what is your will? Please tell me. No, God just says, you've got a brain, you get on with it, okay? Now, here's the problem with most, not most, let's say some education systems.

I don't know what it's like in Hong Kong, but where we come from. The problem with some education systems is we teach our children and our young adults just to memorize the right answer, right?

So memorize the answer and the problem is that when you get out of university and you enter the real world, you realize that life is more complex than just knowing the simple answer to the simple equation.

[28 : 23] Now, in many ways, we're tempted to treat God and faith in the same way. But as we said, life is more complex than that. Think about marriage and dating and singleness and relationships.

I mean, that's complex. It's not as simple as just A or B, which one do I choose? These things are nuanced and difficult. You think that's complex, what about parenting? That's a whole nother level, right?

You can't just flip to the Bible. Let me put it this way. When your four-year-old daughter spits on your six-year-old daughter, just saying hypothetically, yeah, might have happened in our household in the last 24 hours, you can't just go to the Bible and turn to the index page and say, what do you do when your daughter spits on your daughter?

Oh, page 700. Okay, now I know the will of God. These things like parenting and relationships are complex. They're difficult, right? What about handling employees at work?

You want to help your employees succeed and do well, but you also want to do what's well for the company, what's good for the company. What about when you are an employee and your boss is mistreating you? How do you respond to your employer?

[29 : 27] What about race relations and ethnic minorities? What do we do about racism and prejudice? And what do we do when people from a different culture come and they handle things differently? How do we handle these things?

What do you do when someone hurts you? Someone lets you down. Someone rejects you. Someone causes offense. You can't just treat the Bible like a university textbook, flip to the relevant page, and it'll just tell you what to do in this exact situation.

So friends, what do we need to know God's will? How do we live this life that's pleasing to God in the complexity and the difficulty and the nuance of everyday life? Well friends, what we need is we need a framework.

We need a paradigm. We need a worldview to understand who is God, what is God doing in the world, and what are God's ways in the world? We need to understand not just the simple answer, but what are God's ways and his dealings with the world that'll give us a wisdom and understanding to know how to handle the complexities of life.

Does that make sense? So what is this paradigm? How are we gonna understand God's ways and what is God doing in the world? How do we handle the complexities of life?

[30 : 38] Friends, we need a worldview that tells us that though everything in the world has been tainted by sin and feels the effects of sin, Jesus Christ, our great Redeemer, the true and better Redeemer that we've been hearing about, has come and died and rose again to rescue and restore, to bring us into his family, to redeem the world through his atoning death.

Friends, we have a worldview that says though the world is damaged by the effects of sin and the fall, Christ died and rose again, and he's now the head of a brand new creation, a whole new body of people called the church, that he's making all things new.

Friends, we need a worldview. We have a worldview that says though life is tough and it's full of disappointments and people let you down and people hurt you, if you are in Christ, then Christ is in you.

Christ, your hope of glory, the hope of redemption and reconciliation and new things in this life. Friends, we have a worldview that says the way to know God and walk with God is not found in keeping religious traditions and Sabbaths and new moon festivals and worshipping angels.

That's not the way to know God. The way to find the God who made you and knows you better than anybody else in the world is to come to him through the God that reveals himself to you. Friends, we have a worldview that says though there are spiritual forces in the world accusing Christ followers and reminding us of our sin, Christ has nailed our accusations to the cross and he's disarmed the rulers and the authorities and the powers, the very things that try and hold you back, Christ has defeated them in the cross.

[32 : 12] Friends, we have a worldview that says though every one of us here are far more sinful than we could ever imagine, because of Jesus we are actually more loved than you could ever believe.

And therefore we can have grace. We can have grace towards others when they hurt us and they let us down. We can have grace towards other people that we don't understand when cultures clash. We can have grace towards our children.

We can have grace towards our spouses. We can have grace towards ourselves when we make mistakes and we are at fault because of who Jesus is. Friends, in short, what we need is a gospel paradigm, a gospel framework, a gospel worldview that teaches us how to see the world.

Not just what to do and employ person A, employ person B, do this, go to this college, don't go to this college. What we need is a gospel framework and a paradigm that helps us understand the world.

It helps us understand that grace triumphs over hostility, love triumphs over hatred and eventually Christ triumphs over sin. And what happens when we get this gospel paradigm?

[33 : 16] What happens when we see the world the way that God really made it, what God's really doing in the world? What happens when we see the supremacy of Christ over all things and our life in Him? Paul writes and he says, you'll have a spirit of wisdom and understanding.

You'll know how to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him. You'll bear fruit in every good work and increase in the knowledge of God. And the rest of chapter 3 and 4 in the book of Colossians, Paul is going to show how this gospel framework, this understanding of the ways of God and the world of God, of who Christ is and what He came to do and how His death and resurrection changes everything, Paul is going to show that this paradigm helps husbands and wives in their marriages.

He's going to show in chapter 3 how this paradigm helps parents parent their kids. He's going to show that this gospel paradigm helps bosses with their employees and employees respond to their bosses.

He's going to show how this paradigm helps people that are in enmity of each other and don't get along with each other and don't understand each other's cultures and races. Actually, this paradigm helps people find each other and are unified and destroys racism in the church.

Friends, what we need is this gospel paradigm. We need to be filled with the knowledge of God's will and all wisdom and understanding so as to know how to walk fully pleasing to Him, bearing the fruit that God has got planned for us.

[34 : 46] And so what this means is that Watermark, as a church, we, like the Colossians, need to get this gospel deeper into our hearts. You know, every month I have a Skype call with four other pastors in the Asia-Pacific region.

And we chat together and we learn from each other and try to encourage each other and pray for one another. And one of those pastors is in Australia, in Perth. He planted this church about six years ago.

They've got about 150 people. It's a good solid church. A South African-born Australian now. And one of those pastors is a Japanese man in Tokyo.

He's in the process of planting his church. They've got about five people in their church. So it's like very early days. But he's an outstanding man. Okay, Sator. Another one of those pastors, also a Japanese guy called Rauta, also in Tokyo.

Started his church five, six years ago, about 150 people or so. And then the fourth pastor is actually my brother in Singapore. And he planted his church 10 years ago and they've got a big church, right?

[35 : 50] Over a thousand people or so. And so once a month we get together and we chat and we say, what's going on? How can we pray for each other? And so about six weeks ago I said to them, won't you email me each three things I can pray for you?

I want to commit to praying for you four guys and your churches. Email me three things that I can pray for you. And I was astounded because they emailed separately four people.

All of them are older than me. All of them are more gifted than me. All of them are more godly than me. All of them are better leaders than me. And yet all four of them, their first point was the exact same thing.

Just phrased in different ways. This is what they said. They said, Kevin, pray that the gospel will get deeper into my own heart. That I will love Jesus more. That I will understand my sin more than I'll understand the wonder of Jesus more.

Here are four leaders that are way further down the road than me. Way better than me than I ever will be. And yet their prayer was this. Don't pray that we'll have an easy church. Don't pray that all the obstacles will go out the way.

[36 : 50] Don't pray that life will be comfortable and convenient. Pray this, that the gospel will get deeper into my heart. And friends, this message of the gospel is not just something you believe in order to become a Christian.

It's exactly what we need to believe deeper and more profoundly in order to grow as a Christian. The Bible is not just a handbook how to get us through life. The Bible is the revelation of who God is, the supremacy of Jesus and our life in Him and what the gospel is and it helps us to understand God and His ways in the world.

Friends, what you and I need is far more than just simple answers to complex questions. Which suit should I choose? What university should I go to? What job should I take?

What you and I need is the paradigm of who God is and the wonder of Christ's gospel to get deep into our hearts and to bear fruit in our lives. Friends, the fruit of the gospel is not just evident in the lives of those who come to Christ in faith and repentance once upon a time.

It's equally beautiful and equally evident in the lives of those who constantly come back to the rugged cross. Say, Christ, have your way in my life. Jesus, come and change me.

[37 : 59] Let me close with this. John Piper said it like this. Watermarks seek to see and feel the gospel as bigger as the years go by rather than smaller.

Our temptation is to think that the gospel is for beginners and then we go on to greater things. But the real challenge is to see the gospel as the greatest thing and getting greater all the time in our lives.

The gospel gets bigger in your heart when grace gets bigger, when Christ gets greater, when His death becomes more wonderful, His resurrection more astonishing, when the work of the Spirit is mightier and the power of the gospel is more pervasive, when your own sin gets uglier, when the devil gets more evil, the gospel's roots go into eternity deeper and its connections with everything in the Bible and in the world get stronger and the magnitude of its celebration in eternity gets louder.

And so keep this in mind. Never let the gospel get smaller in your hearts. Pray that it won't. Read about it. Sing about it. Tell someone about it. But whatever you do, never let the gospel get smaller in your hearts.

Prince Paul writes to the Colossians and he says this, I thank my God every time I think of you because we've heard of your love in the Lord Jesus Christ, your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and the love that you have for all the saints.

[39 : 22] Ever since you heard the word of truth, the gospel, just as it came to you as indeed in the whole world it is increasing and bearing fruit as it does amongst you since today you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

This week as we go to work, as we go to our homes, as we travel, as we engage with business, as we engage with family and relatives and parents, let us ask God to drive the wonder of who Christ is, the ugliness of our own sin and the wonder of Jesus.

Let us ask Christ to drive that deeper into our hearts and who He is and what He came to do that we will bear fruit in every good work. Let's pray together. I want to pray for us that both as individuals and as a church that the gospel will get deeper into our hearts.

The horror of sin and the wonder of Jesus, what God is doing in the world, the power of Christ who triumphed over sin. I want to pray that this gets deeper into our hearts but I want to ask you to pray with me.

I want to ask you to pray for yourself. Maybe it's been a long time since you were brought to your knees and in awe of who Christ is and what He's done in the world.

[40 : 53] Maybe you've become blasé and familiar with Jesus and the gospel. Even that word gospel might become just so familiar. Friends, when was the last time we were brought to our knees?

When was the last time we had tears rolling down our face at the incredible thing of the cross and what Jesus did and who He is?

Father God, I pray that You'll deliver us from becoming familiar and blasé. God, I pray won't You deliver us from thinking that the gospel is for once upon a time but now we've got to by our own effort grow God.

Won't You drive the wonder of who Christ is and the power of God deep into our hearts God? Father, as a church we want to be a church that is bearing fruit for You that people can see the difference and the impact in our lives.

We ask You God, won't You give us Your Holy Spirit to do that Lord? Won't You fill us with the knowledge of Your will? Won't You give us the spirit of wisdom and understanding? Won't You give us a gospel framework and paradigm God?

[42 : 20] To live out our lives pleasing for You and bearing fruit for Your glory. Father God, won't You dismantle the idols in our life?

The things we hope and trust in rather than You? Won't You destroy them? Won't You God, come and open our eyes to see the wonder of Christ?

Friends, if you're in the place where you just are a bit too familiar or a bit blasé about God, why don't you ask God to do that in your own heart? Ask God to get a hold of you again.

Ask God to break your heart. Ask God to bring you to your knees. Holy Spirit asks you to come and do that.

Come and do that for all of us God.