

A Transforming Hope

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Date: 13 September 2020

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[0 : 00] Father, we come before you confessing that we forget the gospel very quickly. We forget about you. It's so easy to forget.

Father, even when we're in worship, it's easy just to be thinking about what we have to do at work or a bill or something else. Father, it's so easy for us to have amnesia. And we ask, Father, that the Holy Spirit would come with gentle and deep power upon us to bring afresh to us the wonder and the glory and the power of the gospel, what Jesus has done for us in a sinless life, sin-bearing death, mighty resurrection.

Father, pour out the Holy Spirit upon us that we might know Jesus more and be known by him more and that we might long, Father, to be with you and the Holy Spirit and the Son forever.

And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. When the lockdown happened, several people sent me emails wondering how on earth I was going to have any sermon illustrations given that I couldn't go to coffee shops anymore.

And I have to confess, sometimes it was a little bit of a challenge for me given that I was sort of locked out of a whole range of conversations, especially in the early days of the lockdown.

[1 : 20] So this week I had a conversation in a coffee shop. There's a fellow that I've had quite a few friendly conversations with. He's a wonderful, wonderful fellow.

The type of person, very secular, very successful in his professional career, now retired. And he'd be the sort of guy that if you lived in a condo, you'd hope he lived above you or below you.

He'd always be quiet and he'd never complain. If he was your neighbor, he'd always help you with whatever task. Yeah, just the type of guy you'd love to have as your neighbor. Well read, very, very thoughtful.

We've had some very interesting talks. And I hadn't seen him. He goes to Florida for the winter and I just hadn't seen him in this particular coffee shop until now. And we had about a 10-minute conversation just the other day.

And the conversation turned to his just concern and puzzlement of what was going on in Canada, United States, with the craziness, not just the lockdown, but the riots in the states and lots of just craziness going on.

[2 : 17] And he shocked me by saying something to me that I wasn't expecting. This is a secular fellow, secular Jew. And he shocked me by saying, you know, George, the reason Canada and the United States isn't getting so much trouble is because people have stopped going to church.

What? You, a secular person, saying to me that the reason there's so many problems in our society is because people have stopped going to church? Like, okay, if you think I'm good at witnessing, I'm terrible at witnessing.

Like, this should have been one of those big doors you walk through, share the gospel. I didn't know what to say. Like, it was like the last thing in the world I expected him to say to me. And he talked about it for a couple of minutes, and then the conversation kept moving.

But he said, you know, he said it's in church that, you know, schools are no longer able to really teach morality. This is him saying this to me. This isn't me. Oh, just him. They can't really teach morality. The media definitely can't.

Hollywood definitely can't. People get this basic moral teaching and learning how to live with people who are different than them in church. And they don't go to church anymore. They don't take their kids to church. And that's part of the reason we have so much trouble.

[3 : 26] So, I mean, one of the nice things about developing friendships is, and you can pray about this, and I'll have some other time where I can talk to him about this, because I wasn't really able to follow up very well in that particular conversation. But I'm working on my sermon.

In fact, he'd interrupted me on working on my sermon. And I'm thinking about Colossians and what I have to preach. And it's one of those things, and I'll find out in heaven that one of you were praying for me, because I realized about two years earlier in a coffee shop, I had a very, very different conversation about the Christian faith and its effect on morality.

In that conversation, I finally had this remarkable opportunity to share with this person what it is that Christians believe, that the Christian faith is not about advice.

It's not about moral advice. It's a very different conversation. It's not about moral advice. It's not about how you live. It's not about rules. It's news. And the person said, well, what's the news?

I said, well, the news is that Jesus has come from God, and that by his sinless life, I'm giving you a short version of it, his sinless life and his death upon the cross, he's provided the means whereby you can be reconciled to God.

[4 : 33] What Jesus did for you on the cross, there was a context to this question with the person I was talking to. The wonderful thing about it is that every wrong thing that you have ever done in your life and ever will do in your life is dealt with by Jesus when he dies upon the cross, like everything, from the moment you're able to make your first moral decision and you choose wrongly to what is even for your future, and this was a young person, and if you live 60 more years, every single thing in the past, present, and future that you've ever done is covered by what Jesus did for you and for me and for every person in the cross.

And when you put your faith and trust in him, you receive that. Everything forgiven. And this person's response to me, they looked at me for a second, they said, that's terrible news.

Because if that's true, why on earth would you or any other Christian ever try to do good again for the rest of your life? So you see, two conversations.

Our problems are because people have stopped going to church. I tell a person it's not about moral advice or moral striving or moral living, it's about the gospel. Why on earth would anybody do something good if that's true?

The text that we're going to look at today actually talks about both issues in a very, very powerful and instructive way. So if you turn in your Bibles to Colossians chapter 1, Colossians chapter 1, this is the first week of a sermon series on the book of Colossians.

[6 : 03] We're going to go through it from cover to cover or from beginning to end. And we're looking at verses 1 to 14 today. And now, a bit of a time moment here.

I do this occasionally. Grammar nerd moment. Okay? And we know who are the grammar... I mean, I don't know who all the grammar nerds are, but you know if you're a grammar nerd. So for the rest of you, just pause.

But for those of us who are grammar nerds, at the original language, you have the first two verses, which are two sentences. And then verses 3 to 8 are one sentence in the original language.

And verses 9 to 14 is another single sentence in the original language. And at the beginning of the second sentence, you can see that the two sentences are linked.

Okay? It's one of the things that no editor would ever allow Paul to do this today. He would be told to rewrite and make smaller sentences.

[6 : 58] But he writes this long, long sentence, and then another long sentence. And what it means is, because of the way the sentences build, is that to understand what he's talking about, in a sense, throughout most of 1 to 14, you have to understand what he says at the end of the second sentence.

So that's what we're going to do. We're going to first look at the end of the second sentence. And I think I asked Andrew to put on the screen verses 13 and 14. This is why it's good to have your own Bibles, because it doesn't always perfectly match up.

I'm going to begin with the last little bit of verse 12, and then verses 13 and 14. And then I'll explain what's going on here, and we'll get into it. So here's how it works. So I'll just start reading in verse 12, and then you'll see what's going to be on the screen.

Giving thanks to the Father. Now here's where it really begins. Who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light? Verse 13.

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins.

[8 : 08] Now you'll notice in the language that God qualifies us, that God delivers us, that God transfers us, that God redeems us, that God gives us forgiveness.

And it's even stronger in the original language, because in the original language there's a text, a tense called the divine passive, which makes it very clear to those reading it in the original language that it's something God does.

So here we see these powerful sets of images, that God qualifies us for something, God delivers us, he transfers us, he redeems us, and he forgives us.

That God, what we're seeing is that the triune God, by his grace, accomplishes something marvelous for you that you can never accomplish for yourself.

The triune God, by his grace, accomplishes something marvelous for you that you can never accomplish for yourself. Now, I don't know how many of us have Jewish friends or acquaintances.

[9 : 15] One of the things about Jewish people in Canada, this isn't a put-down or anything, it's just an obvious, I mean, virtually no Christian reads the New Testament in Greek, and virtually no Jews that you meet today reads what they would call the Torah or the Tanakh, and we call the Old Testament.

They don't read it in Hebrew, they don't know it in Hebrew. They would know whatever stories they know, or texts they know, or even the Ten Commandments, they'd know them in English. And a similar type of thing happened, was going on at the time that this letter was written, in the early 60s. There would have been in this congregation and in this region a lot of Jewish people, but most of the Jewish people probably didn't know any Hebrew. And when they read their Bible, their Tanakh, their Torah, they would have read a Greek version of it.

And when the pagans who had become Christians in Colossae, when they read, they went to a church service like this and opened the Bible, they would read like from Isaiah or Exodus or whatever, but it would always be from a Greek version.

They would hear everything in Greek, and they spoke Greek. And now the interesting thing in this text is that let's say when the person was reading this letter to the whole congregation, he said, just before I read this letter from Paul, I want you to know something really cool.

[10 : 34] And he'd get out maybe his version of the book of Exodus, and he'd read this text out of Exodus about how God takes the people of Israel out of the slavery and bondage in Egypt and brings them into the promised land.

And then he says, oh, and there's something else that's really, really cool. And he says, I'll go to the book of Isaiah. And then he reads these different parts because one of the things about Isaiah is Isaiah takes the same language of the book of Exodus, and he talks about it and uses it to talk about this time in the future when God is going to do this remarkable thing, not just for the Jewish people, but for all people, where he's going to deliver them out of some type of bondage into something like a promised land.

But it's a spiritual, it's a new Exodus and a new promised land in the future. And so maybe the person reading, just before he reads Paul's letters, he says, I want to do this really cool thing, okay? I don't know if they use words like cool, but let's say they did.

And they read these two things, and then he reads these verses, and they'd go, oh, it's the same language. He's using the same words that when Paul is talking about qualifying and delivering and the share of your inheritance and even the word light, and when he's using the word forgiveness and redemption, it's all language from the book of Exodus and the book of Isaiah.

And so what it means is that they would all understand that this isn't just something, this isn't just something which we would call spiritual or fanciful, like have a good story to inspire you, to give you some hope, that Paul is communicating that this is what you've understood, that God does something real for you, that in the sinless life of Jesus and his teaching and his miracles, and then in his death upon the cross, which you have to understand is done in your place and in your stead as a sacrifice, and that when Jesus does this and dies for you and you put your faith and trust in him, God does something objective and real for you.

[12 : 39] He takes you from the domain or the dominion or the realm or the country of darkness, and he does, just like he did with Israel when Israel couldn't get out of Egypt themselves, and God does this remarkable series of miracles to literally bring them out of slavery and bondage into the promised land, so God has done something to you.

He's literally bringing you out of dominion and domain of darkness and bringing you into a completely different land. All the things that Isaiah had prophesied were going to happen in the future, that's what just happened in Jesus, and that's what you've entered into when you put your faith and trust in him, and it's real.

It's not just an imaginary thing. It's real. You've actually moved. You live, in a sense, into a new realm, in a new kingdom, in a new place, and that's all seen there in the language.

It's something real, not imaginary. Now, some of you might have a whole range of questions around something like that because it's a pretty remarkable series of statements. I mean, the first one of the statements is, well, one moment, George.

You might say that, but their butts are still in Colossi. And you might say, that's true about us, George, but your butt's in Ottawa. And the other thing is, George, don't you think it's a little bit harsh to describe this world as a domain of darkness, a dominion of darkness?

[14:05] Don't you think that's a little bit harsh? Those are great questions. So here's the first thing. And one of the things about doing a sermon series is, I'm going to talk about this a little bit more next week.

I'm not going to give you any type of proof for this, but I'm going to give you an illustration to help you understand the point of the imagery and to see why they say the imagery so that you at least have an understanding of why it's reasonable to say this from within the point of view of the Bible, which I would say and Paul would say is a way to truly and really understand the world.

It's not just my lens, it's the proper lens. It's actually, that's why early on I kept saying truth, the gospel of truth, entering in truth. And Paul means that this conforms with the real world. That's the claim.

I don't know how many of you know people who've suffered with Alzheimer's or some other type of dementia. There's lots of different types of dementia. I know that at least some of us have. I first really came face to face with it in the early 90s.

That's a long time ago when a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful lady who was unbelievably kind to us as a family and my wife and myself and in fact, we've actually gave her name to one of our daughters as a middle name and we didn't want to believe, didn't know much about dementia or Alzheimer's and as she started to enter into it, we didn't want to believe it.

[15:33] But at a certain point in time when a person enters into Alzheimer's and dementia, you can, it's a reasonable type of way to understand or think about it that they in some ways enter into darkness.

And by that I mean they don't know you anymore. Like they don't know you. They learn in the early stages of Alzheimer's to act like they know you but it's just an act because they actually don't know you.

I hope I don't disappoint some of you who are still hoping to have as long as you possibly can that relationship with the person. But a time will come when they'll think, I mean if it was, let's say, my mom or dad and it means not but they might think I was the brother or the husband or somebody else who's their father or who knows what.

And you can see that in a sense it's a way to understand what happens to them as they enter into darkness where they don't understand the real world, they're not really living in the real world, they couldn't survive in the real world because once you have that type of Alzheimer's or dementia you're completely and utterly dependent upon others caring for you or you would die.

And it's a type of darkness. You see, the message of the Bible is this, that in the real world, the real world, in the real world, and I know I'm going to get pushed back about this but I'm going to say it, in the real world we know that everything can't possibly happen by chance.

[17:02] Like if I was to tell you that the Ottawa Little Theatre was a result of one day there was a whole pile of industrial waste and a whole pile of construction materials that were just parked there and there was an explosion and when the explosion was all over and the dust cleared, lo and behold, the Ottawa Little Theatre is just the way it looks today with this paint and the electricity turned on like nobody would believe you.

If I was to say that this was just where they stored a whole pile of things and there are windstorms and after like 30 years of windstorms, this is what resulted, nobody would believe you. But the fact of the matter is, is that the ecosystem of the earth is vastly more complicated than the Ottawa Little Theatre.

Your body is vastly more complicated than the Ottawa Little Theatre. And if you were to talk to somebody like James or you were to talk to somebody like Jeremiah, they could even tell you that the cell, one little cell in your body is vastly more complicated.

The Ottawa Little Theatre is simple compared to one cell and they would blow you away. And so, in a sense, what the Bible says, and this is the great argument of Romans, is that everybody, if they're

really honest, knows that there can't be that the thing which is most basic is a what and that human beings and love and knowledge and insight and all of this and all of the order is just a result of blind chance that nobody really believes that.

That on one level, when we're really pushed, we have to understand that this had to have been created by a who. And in fact, more than a who because it's beyond this, but only the gospel really communicates, but only the gospel has this one God and three persons, three persons, one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and an eternity of love and in a sense of revealing and community and it's out of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, three persons, one God, that all things have been created and even though evil has entered, not because of God, but evil enters and is disarming and caused breakdown in relationships and brings death and brings our propensity to still do bad things and to be selfish, that the fact of the matter is is that God has created all things, he sustains all things, he's present and he's powerful and active and it's hard not even to look at any type of face or experience any love and not realize that there must be a love that has made all things, that designed all things and to live in complete and utter denial of that is just like a person with Alzheimer's.

[19 : 35] It's to be in the realm of darkness. Imagine for a moment it's me in 40 years, 30 years and I have Alzheimer's and I can't recognize my wife, I can't recognize my children, I can't recognize my grandchildren anymore but by then, by the grace of God, there's a cure for Alzheimer's and it's a very, very quick acting cure.

They put a needle in your body and they inject it and within five minutes it's gone and can you just imagine, can you imagine what it would be like to have a camera on that scene that I'm just the blank, blankness of dementia and this medicine comes in and five minutes later I've been looking at all these faces in the room, my wife, my kids, my grandkids, their spouses, not any recognition and all of a sudden I go, Louise, Tosh, Jesse, there'd be tears, right?

There'd be tears and there'd be laughter. I was in darkness. I was in the domain of darkness.

I was under the rule of darkness and I've entered into light and that's what the Bible says is accomplished by Jesus and just as no Alzheimer's patient or dementia patient can cure themselves when they are in Alzheimer's and dementia but whatever, if there is ever a cure for that, it will come from those who don't have it.

So it is that we cannot fix our darkness ourselves and are dependent upon salvation from outside, from God.

[21 : 42] And God the Father through the Son and the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus' sinless life and sin-bearing death and God brings that message home to your heart.

He pierces your darkness. 2 Corinthians 4 verses 1-6 and He moves you into this new domain and you can see the reasonableness of the imagery.

You have to watch the time. Well, Jesus' sinless life and sin-bearing death is offered by grace and when we receive it, God transfers you.

Now, okay, George, what about this whole thing about, you know, you're still in Ottawa and and why would you do, is it just all future and how does that still give you any type of incentive to do any good acts?

Well, this is where the rest of the text will help us. So if you take your Bibles, so hopefully they're open, now you go back to the beginning of the text and let's read it and we'll see how Paul approaches these particular types of issues.

[22 : 59] Verse 1, so now we know the end and it's the end is in a sense influencing everything that Paul says leading up to it. It's the end in a sense that illuminates the rest of the text and here's how it goes.

Verse 1, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ at Colossus, I grace to you and peace from God our Father.

By the way, one of the indirect ways I'll just share with you now of the proof of what I've just said is who's writing this letter and the remarkable transformative word that he's referring to a whole pile of pagans and calling them his brothers and sisters.

The person who writes this particular text, his name is Paul, used to be called Saul and history shows, and by the way, Bart Ehrman and even most of the staunchest biblical skeptics don't deny, in fact, they would say that it's historically certain that there was an historical man by the name of Paul and that he, in fact, was a violent persecutor of the Christian faith and that his entire life was

transformed and that he would tell you, Bart Ehrman, most biblical scholars, even the most skeptical and agnostic, would say that, in fact, that transformation would come, if you ask Paul, because he said that he saw Jesus after Jesus had died and risen from the dead. And that's what completely and utterly transformed the entire direction of his life. And here he introduces himself as Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ at Colossi, grace to you and peace from God, our Father.

[24 : 47] And the word saint, by the way, just means an ordinary person who's received the gospel and now God has taken them as his own.

That's all it means. A saint is one who belongs to God for his purposes. Not weighing our merits, that's all a saint is. It's not a special person. It doesn't even mean you're very good at living. It means that God now owns you and you're starting to learn to know what it means to live owned by the triune God. And then the first big long sentence, I'll read it all eight and then we'll just pause and camp there a little bit with the time we have left.

We always thank God, verse three, we always thank God. Here's Paul giving a report about how we praise for them. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

See, there's that faith, hope, and love. It's one of, I think, either eight or nine times in the New Testament that those words are used together in some manner. And I'm going to return to it. I'll read it again. When we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope, the reason you have love is because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

[26 : 09] 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 that 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 fellow servant.

He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Holy Spirit. And we'll just sort of pause there for a moment.

And here's the big idea in the text. The gospel shapes us for a hope. The gospel shapes you for a hope-drawn life that transforms. The sermon series is called The Means of Grace.

I almost called the sermon series A Hope-Driven Life. A Hope-Driven Life. You know, maybe people would mistake it with Rick Warren's book and I'd sell 20 million copies and we'll buy a church building.

I don't know. No. Anyway, but that's what we're seeing in here is the importance of a hope-driven life. You see, the fact of the matter is that often when we think of morality, we think of in terms of moral rules.

[27 : 21] You understand moral rules and you try to follow them. And obviously, that's an important part of morality. But in fact, a far more important morality is being drawn by something.

You should read, if you haven't read it, Viktor Frankl's book. Oh, sorry. I should have written it down. What's that? Yeah, Man's Search for Meaning.

And one of the things which is so wonderful about this is he talks about who survived the Holocaust and those who survived the Holocaust were those who had some type of hope, some type of meaning.

And meaning and hope can draw you into a whole way of living. And that's, in a sense, the big idea. The gospel shapes you and the gospel shapes me for a hope-drawn, a hope-driven life that transforms you.

See, go ahead and look again at that verse. It's verses 4 and 5. Since we heard of your faith in Christ, so you put your faith in Christ Jesus.

[28 : 23] And when you put your faith in Christ Jesus, what happens? You understand that God does something that you cannot do for yourself, that he transfers you from the domain, the dominion, the kingdom of darkness, and he transfers you into the kingdom of light, into the kingdom of his beloved Son, and to have an inheritance in that, to be redeemed, to be forgiven, because he has brought you out of slavery, he has brought you out of darkness, he has transferred you to another life.

And so you put your faith and trust in Jesus and that's what happens. And now that you have that hope that's secure, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you, in heaven, is that that hope draws you into a life of love.

You enter the Christian life by faith in Jesus with empty hands. Nothing in my hands I bring. All I can do is ask that you will do what I cannot do myself.

And God the Father says to you, George, I'm so glad you asked. I have longed for you to hear the gospel and to say yes.

Welcome. Your sins are forgiven in Jesus. The Holy Spirit indwells you. Your final destiny is not death and is not darkness.

[29 : 54] Your final destiny is to be in the kingdom of my beloved son and to share the inheritance of the saints in light. And knowing that that is my final destiny, it draws you into a life of love.

Not just for brothers and sisters, but for the world. Some of you might say, well, a hope in heaven? Like a hope in heaven? And all that stuff about all forgiven?

Well, here's the first of the thing is that you have to understand that the Bible when it says heaven doesn't mean Canadian heaven. You see, for most Canadians, when they talk about heaven after death, what do they say?

And you're a guest here. I don't, you know what? I guess I do want to unsettle you. I shouldn't say I don't want to. I do. I want to put a peb, I want to put a little tiny rock in your shoe to irritate you.

Please forgive me, but that's what I want to do. Because the average Canadian says, well, we go to a better place when we die. We go to a spiritual place. They'll say that their mom now looks down on them.

[31 : 02] Their mom lives in their heart. Their mom lives in the waves and the trees and the beauty of the mountains that their mom or their dad, that they dwell in. And that type of wispy, unspiritual, ethereal, sorry, a big word, insubstantial life won't motivate you to do a blessed thing.

And to be honest, as Woody Allen said, I don't want to live in somebody's heart when I die. I don't want to die. I want to keep living in my condo. Like, I'm giving it slightly different words.

Like, that will motivate nothing. But that's not what the text is saying. That's not what heaven is.

What is, what's it talking about? It's saying, you know, it sort of said in a bit of a shadow form in Genesis 3, in Genesis 3, but you get this bit of an image of what it was like in Genesis 3, even as it's revealing that the tragic fall of the human race, that what was like before the fall is that day by day, God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the day.

They had spent the day tending and making paradise even more paradise as they tended the garden.

And at the cool of the day, in the breeze of the Holy Spirit, they walked with God and with each other naked and unashamed. What is heaven? Heaven isn't some wispy and insubstantial place.

[32 : 34] It is the promise that the time will come when in the new heaven and the new earth, you and I, naked and unashamed, will walk with each other after tending paradise and will walk with Jesus under the gaze of the Father as the Holy Spirit blows and moves the hair on our heads, the branches on the trees.

And we will be home. And we will be safe and we will be secure and we will be adventuresome. We will laugh.

We will dance. We will tell stories and we will build. And we will walk on water. And that's the hope that's secure.

Being with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and with each other, naked and unashamed, at home, knowing. And that is your end in Christ.

And there will be people from Africa and people from China and people from Korea and people from Singapore and people from North America and people from Wales and people from the Arctic.

[33 : 52] And we will be every color under the rainbow and we will be one and we will be at home and we will be at peace. And that is the hope.

And you see, this language of hope and the transformation it makes for you to take risks, to do hard things, because the fact of the matter is, as we all know, to love requires doing hard things.

Anybody who thinks that to love never involves doing hard things doesn't know what it means to love. because to love you need to endure. To love you need to have patience.

To love it means that you have to learn how to forgive. To love means you have to learn how to say sorry. To love means you need to realize that you need to repent because you've done something wrong.

To love means that you have to humble yourself and put yourself out and sacrifice yourself. It means doing hard things. It means learning to forgive. It means pursuing reconciliation.

[35 : 02] You can't love without taking risks and doing hard things. And if you think your status in life as a good person depends upon you being right and you being good, it is devastating to realize that you have been a jerk.

And you can use some other foul language. But if you understand that my place before God does not depend upon my performance but that in fact my destiny is secure and that means I can look and say well you know what?

I was wrong. You know what? I need to say I'm sorry. You know what? I haven't forgiven them and I need to learn. You know what? I need to go that extra mile. You know what? I need to die to myself. But you see if you hear this message of the gospel and you say to yourself you see this is what the gospel does and this is why hope in all matters. It's going to reveal whether you think you've tricked God or whether you've actually really received the gospel.

You see because if and this is what my friend didn't get if you hear this news and you go everything forgiven?

[36 : 28] Whoa! Can I ever be a jerk now? Like you watch out folks. I don't have to worry. I can cheat. I can lie.

I can be greedy. I can be obnoxious. Why? Listen. Jesus has forgiven all my sins and I'm going to heaven. This is the best deal in the world. I get to sin which I love and God gets to forgive me because he loves?

Woo! What a great religion. Why can't more people choose it? But you know what? If that's what you think you've done you can never trick God. Only a fool thinks they can trick God.

But if you understand that what Jesus is offering you isn't a license to do as many evil things as you want and selfish things you want for the rest of your life and be scot-free that what you really understand is that God is offering you to be reconciled to himself and has done everything that needs to be done and you can do none of that.

He does it all and is given to you as a gift and nobody ever fully understands that perfectly. We have amnesia we forget it we slip back into old ways that's why we need to gather together that's why we need to have Christian friendships that's why we need to have discipleship that's why we need to have small groups where we can be reminded during the week that God still is on his throne that Jesus loves me that my destiny is the new heaven and the new earth and we need things like small groups we need we need Christian friends we need to spend time in prayer and we need to gather on Sunday morning because we forget because we have amnesia but if you hear the gospel and you start to realize what this means the burden of performance the burden of the fact that there's wrong that I've done that I can never repay that there's failure to do good that I can never repay that it's all been dealt with and that Jesus does this all for me that he has taken my doom upon him and that he has offered me his destiny and rather than thinking

[38 : 35] I've tricked God I've got him you go free at last free at last thank God almighty I'm free at last see that's why to really understand the gospel begins to give you a hope that transforms how you do your life not a license to do wrong but a hope that begins to transform how you do your life just want to say two things very quickly I know I have a problem with time you know one of the things that's really interesting cool about this text one of the things we're going to talk about I think it's the second to last Sunday is we're going to talk about the problem of slavery okay why don't you try to remember this who's Epaphras well nobody knows that here's the answer Epaphras is a nickname what is his real name his Epaphras is his nickname his full name is Epaphroditus what does that mean in honor of Aphrodite the fellow the fellow who planted the church was a man who before he met Jesus he was named in honor of the goddess

Aphrodite you want to know something else which is really really really cool that in most cases in the ancient world if you came across a man named Epaphraditus you know what he was a slave the gospel transforms a slave into a free man who plants churches and shares the gospel and changes him from being a man dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite to the brother and sister of you and me the share and the bearer of the gospel keep that in mind when we come to the topic of slavery in the text look at the last sentence verse 9 and so from the day we heard we have not

ceased to pray for you asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and spiritual wisdom here means not like woo spiritual stuff it means wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit that's what it means in the original language and understanding so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord see here's the thing the Bible constantly teaches us that we live in the already not yet that when we're redeemed by Jesus our destiny is secure our hope is secure our end is secure but Jesus doesn't just sort of take us as soon as we give our lives to Jesus and then he it's like the rapture and he instantly takes us to heaven we still have to live this life and that means on one hand the already is true the final word about me is true but it's not yet it's not yet I still need to learn how to love better I need to learn how to forgive better I have to learn to take risks better I have to learn how to dwell in the truth better I have to learn how to dwell in compassion better and justice better and kindness and mercy better I still have to learn those things drawn by my end being secure and that's why this word walk is there walk means as I go through my day as I go from here to chatting with you after the service to stopping off at a coffee shop to buy a coffee on my way home to spending time with my family to exercising to reading to having supper that's walk it's how you do your life verse 10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord fully pleasing to him and over the next few weeks we'll talk about how to walk in a manner drawn by the hope of the gospel what does that mean it means it will bear fruit in every good work and it means will increase in the knowledge of God and that not only means knowledge about God but actually knowing God and being known by him it's personal knowledge and then verse 11 that you'll be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy because that's what we need if we want to live lives of love isn't it we have to be we have to be able to endure and we don't want to do white knuckling with a sour grumpy face always saying got to got to got to we want to move to the point where we say get to

I get to love I get to take risks I get to share the gospel not got to get to then verse 12 giving thanks to the father like that's part of what it means to be strengthened to walk by this hope is to become more living a life out of thankfulness to the father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints and light he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins praise God I'd like you all to stand please Andrew could you put the general thanksgiving up that would be really helpful thank you and if you haven't given your life to Jesus there's no better time than now to just say father thank you for Jesus I understand that it's hard for me to completely understand darkness but I get it I get that you need to do something that I can't do for myself and you know whatever goodness you've done in your life he doesn't take it away and say that hasn't been good it gets ennobled it gets empowered it gets strengthened it gets more it just you brought you get into the light fully and there's no time now that's better than now to give your life to Jesus and probably every week this ancient prayer this call to worship

I'm writing my blogs about it this in many ways perfectly expresses lots of what I've tried to say today in a very compact message and every week in my sermon we're going to end with this general thanksgiving because it perfectly expresses so much of what the Christian life is like in light of the Colossians so would you pray call out to God with me in the words of this prayer Almighty God Father of all mercies we then unworthy servants do give you most humble and hearty thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all people we bless thee for your creation preservation and all the blessings of this life but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ for the means of grace and for the hope of glory and we beseech you give us that due sense of all your mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful and that we show forth your praise not only with our lips but in our lives by giving up ourselves to your service and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days through Jesus Christ our Lord to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory world without end

[45 : 55] Amen sorry that's not what my blogs run sounds that was in one of my blogs not the one I've run let's just pray one more time Father pour out the Holy Spirit upon us you know how quickly we forget the hope of glory we ask that you deliver us from amnesia and that we would remember this and we ask Father that you would guide us into small groups and spiritual friendships and other such things so that throughout the week we have other ways to be reminded of who Jesus is and what he accomplished for us on the cross and how to then live in a hope filled transformative way that is worthy of you and is good for others and this we ask in the name of Jesus your son and our savior and all God's people said Amen I I