

Young Send-off Service

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Date: 24 July 2022

[0 : 00] I'd like to share with you briefly from 1 Thessalonians chapter number 1, verse number 5. I pray about what verse that I would share with the missionaries before they would leave, something specific about the couple and the work that they're going to do.

And then after I share it, you'll have an opportunity to give testimonies. It's one of my favorite things that we do as a church, because I love you all being very nervous about your 30-second testimony, knowing that I have to do this every week, three times a week, in front of all of you as well.

So it's your opportunity to come up here, and I'll sit down for a little bit and hear what you all have to say. And with Graham and Olivia, as I look to this verse, and the song was so beautifully sung there, as Christians, we have this unique privilege to weep and smile at the same time.

I mean, it's a time where two things are just coming together, and I have done my weeping, Olivia, and I'm done, all right? And now I'm ready to smile. I'm ready to talk about some wonderful things that are happening as you are being sent to Nigeria.

1 Thessalonians 1.5, it says, For our gospel came not unto you in word only. I'm so grateful we get to say that to the people of Nigeria.

[1 : 15] But also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance, as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. When Paul preached to the Thessalonians, it was many false prophets that gave conflicting message.

Unlike the false prophets, Paul did not misuse the people. He did not try to persuade them with flattering words. He did not try to take from them, but he gave himself. When we look at the condition of the world and missions, and we know of many places where the gospel is not preached, that is a sad state.

But there's many places in the world, much like where Graham and Olivia are going, where the gospel has been falsely taught, where the gospel has been taught in a way that is confusing, where people that were supposed to represent the gospel have been using people to their advantage.

And that puts them at a very difficult situation. Since the beginning of the church here, there have been people that brought confusion to the gospel. Romans 16, 17, 18 say it like this, Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them.

For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly. And by good words and fair speeches, and these last words here, look at it, it says, deceive the hearts of the simple.

[2 : 41] When Graham came back from visiting there and telling us that some of the most amazing church buildings that he ever saw in his life were in Nigeria, and that everywhere you turn there was a different type of church, but that people just didn't know the gospel, because people went there not to share the gospel, because the people not sharing the gospel were used, they would use their fair speeches and their good words, and they would deceive the hearts of the simple.

That was common in the beginning days of the church with Paul here. It's common here in America, and it's especially common where the youngs are going.

Vince Habner says, Satan is not fighting churches. He is joining them. He does more harm by sowing tares than by pulling up wheat. He accomplished more by imitation than by outright opposition.

Do you remember, church, the story that Graham shared with us when he first started deputation, how a pastor before a large group of people took something, took some oil, and said that this would bring healing to you, to your family, and when he poured it out, dozens of people died as they were in a stampede.

They get to the front. Why do people give and give? Because in a place where people are living in poverty, that religion is telling them that if they would give, then that is going to be their path to prosperity.

[4 : 07] The gospel is being misrepresented in Nigeria. The gospel is being used in a way that is not appropriate, and it is not honoring to God. But Graham and Olivia know the gospel, and it has transformed them.

Wear the gospel, Graham and Olivia, as it should be worn. Wear the gospel as it should be worn. Get some funny shirts like Nate as well, all right? Graham's going to Nigeria so he doesn't have to wear a tie.

I can understand that, all right? So in all you're getting of African attire that you're going to wear, and when we visit you, wear the gospel as it needs to be worn. The gospel comes to people not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and much assurance as you know what manner of men were among you for your sake.

As you walk those streets, as you meet your neighbors, I know and I rejoice in advance that there are going to see people that have been changed by the gospel, the people that love them.

Many people all around the world use the ministry as a pretext for greed. Verse Thessalonians 2, 5, For neither at any time use we flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness.

[5 : 21] God is our witness. They use their ministry as a pretext for greed to take from them. The churches in Nigeria, for the most part, are using the ministry as a pretext for greed to take from people.

But what are you to do? Rather than being greedy, verse 2, 1 Thessalonians 2, 8, So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us.

Delight to share the gospel with them. Look upon those people with love. You have more than enough that's been supplied to you. So first of all, I want to encourage you, wear the gospel as it should be worn.

And then second, I would tell you, give more than your location, but give your life. It says, but also our own souls. You might have considered what it's like, the challenge of Graham and Olivia of living in another country.

We've heard praises. Graham gave a report, one on a survey trip. God has made provision for Olivia when it comes to diabetes. There's much research that needs to be done. Maybe you've imagined what it's like to live in Nigeria and the challenges that are there.

[6 : 38] But the great challenge that Graham and Olivia have, that all of us have, it's not just to give their location, but it's to give their lives for a group of people. They're not going to a place on a map.

They're going to a people that God has placed in their heart. And they're going there not to live, but they're going there to give their life for these people. They desire to do so much more than still live in the country, but they want to live out and impart the gospel to them.

And then lastly here, preach and live in a sincere manner. Make the gospel clear in your preaching and your life. 2 Corinthians 2.17 says, For we are not as many, not as many, Graham, that would be in Nigeria and other parts of the world, which don't be as many which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

And the way that you do that is, unlike those that are not wearing the gospel correctly, those that are using it as a pretext for greed, we no longer live for our own rights.

1 Corinthians 9.11 and 12. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?

[7 : 58] Nevertheless, Paul is saying, I have rights. These people have rights, and I have rights. But the heart of the gospel is not about our rights. It's nevertheless, we have not used this power, but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ.

Live in such a sincere manner before those people that it brings no hindrance to the gospel. And that's why I rejoice tonight. These people have not seen the gospel.

These people have not heard the gospel. They have been given a cheap imitation of what it really is. They have been given a cheap imitation, and many of them, of what a church is.

But by God's grace, Graham and Olivia are going to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ, the one that causes you to give your life for other people and to not take from them. They will build churches that are a community of believers like we are, that live sacrificially for one another, that don't come here just to see what we can receive.

They're going to see an incredible beauty as the gospel is lived out. Graham and Olivia, I have no doubt when we visit there that the people that have come to Christ will know that there's a different manner of man and woman that lives among them.

[9 : 22] Because when you say the gospel and you speak of it, you speak of it as something different than they've ever heard. I don't get to write letters to Nigeria, even though they're always writing me letters, right?

The dear Prince of Nigeria, all right? If I could send that man a letter tonight, if I could send the country of Nigeria a letter tonight, this is what I wish I could tell them.

I'm going to read this to you, and then I'm going to pray. And then those of you that would like to share testimony, you know how that goes. Please do. Please share your heart. Don't share everything that you know, but share what you need to share, okay?

Tonight, as we will share those testimonies, Ms. Shannon would like to go first, and Bitsy would like to go last, all right? She's clean up tonight, she said, all right? But let me read Graham and Olivia.

If I could write to your country that you were going to, this is what I would say. Dear Nigerian, we're sending the gospel. It's not coming in word only, but it's coming in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and much assurance.

[10 : 21] You do not know right now, but we will someday know what manner that Graham and Olivia are bringing it to you. Their ministry is not a cloak of covetousness for their own greed, which we know you've experienced, but they come to you with love and desire to not only give you the gospel, but to impart their lives for you, for your good, and for his glory.

And we love them very much. Soon, and I would sign it, soon to be your brothers and sisters in Christ, Vision Baptist Church. I have no doubt we will see that family grow, Graham, that you spoke about, because the gospel transforms lives.

You know that, and you're living it, and going to Nigeria, they're going to see that on display, and it is going to change generations of families. Heavenly Father, Lord, I thank you that night that we are sending not just the Bible, which is such a wonderful gift to a country, Lord, not just anything, but we are sending the gospel that is in the hearts of a brother and sister in Christ.

Tonight, we are sending a couple that knows you, that loves you, that knows the gospel, that can explain the gospel, and Lord, most importantly, will live out the gospel.

Lord, our heart hurts as we imagine what it is like for so many people that have heard the gospel and has not been properly defined, to think that they know who Jesus is, but have never truly met him.

[11 : 53] Lord, may it be said in the years to come that those people in Nigeria will say what manner of man and woman that has come among us, not because we're a special group of sending them, or that they're special, but because the gospel transforms lives.

Father, we love you, and we thank you for this wonderful privilege. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.