

## Colossians #2 - Praying Under Pressure

- Pastor Mark Driscoll at the Trinity Church in Scottsdale Arizona, really excited to provide for you the series of sermons based on the book of Colossians. It's an amazing book of the New Testament, where the Apostle Paul is writing from prison to a newly planted church. And we took a few months here at the Trinity Church to go verse by verse through this book of the Bible. I've had the honor of preaching and teaching perhaps a few dozen books of the Bible in my career. And this is the first time I've ever been through Colossians. And I'm really excited that you can join me. All right, if you've got your Bible go to the book of Colossians, it's in the New Testament. We're gonna spend a couple of months doing a deep dive through this book of the Bible. And how many of you, at least maybe you were like me. When I first read the Bible I thought, love, joy, peace, hope, all this nice encouraging, have a good attitude, love people, forgive people. My first inclination as a new Christian was that person must have a very easy life. Amen. They must not live a life like mine filled with hardship and difficulty and trial and temptation and trouble. I bet you they don't understand what it's like to live my life. And then I started studying the Bible and I realized a lot of these books were written from where? Prison, jail. It's an ancient Roman jail, it's not Camp Cupcake. I'll tell you that. It's a real situation. And so what we find in Colossians, you're gonna find a message today, a prayer actually about faith and hope and love written by a guy who is suffering in prison. His name is Paul. And by way of preface, two things happen when you are in a very difficult trial season. Number one, it pushes you and you decide which direction you go, closer to the Lord or further from the Lord. Paul is in prison suffering for his love for Jesus, his preaching of the gospel, his serving of the Lord and he has used that to push him into closer intimacy with the Lord. Number two, the best way to really get to know somebody is to hear them pray. As you pray with people you really start to get a revelation of who they are. Do they know who God is? Do they know who they are? What do they love? What do they fear? What do they hope for? What are they struggling with? Who are they struggling with? This is why when you pray with people, you really get to know them. And when you pray aloud you really get to know yourself. Who am I? What do I think? What am I feeling? And those intimate moments of conversation with God there is a real revelation of who we are. We're older to say today what we're going to do is hear eavesdrop in on a prayer that Paul writes from prison, writes it down, has it delivered to a church in a city called Colossae? So I'm gonna read it all to you because faith comes by hearing the word of God. And it's good to just hear it in its totality, and then we'll dig into it more intimately. So here's what we're gonna have to do. We're all gonna stand up just to honor God's word today. We're gonna do something a little different and I'll just read. We always thank God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Colossians chapter one, beginning in verse three. When we pray for you, since we have heard of your faith Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of 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 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 the knowledge of his will and 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. May you be 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 the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son and in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. You may take your seat. There is Paul's prayer. And here's what's going on in Colossae, there is a designer, consumer, spirituality. What they're dealing with is not unlike what we are dealing with. Today the question is often, what works for you not what works for God, what is most expedient for you, what is not according to God's will and word in way. And so what they would do, they would look at spirituality as we do. Kind of like a salad bar, you get a plate, you get your tongs, you say, "I like this. "I don't like that. "I like this. "I don't like that. "I'll take a little bit of this religion, "a little bit of that philosophy, "a little bit of that pop psychology, "a little bit of that morality. "And I will just create a designer spirituality "that works for me regardless of whether or not "it works for God." That was what they were dealing with. That's what we deal with. That is exactly the same situation we find ourselves in. And so he was worried for this new church. We're a new church. And for these dear people and your dear people that they would be deceived by a counterfeit spirituality. So he begins with three evidences of real Christianity. What is real Christianity? He says that it is faith internally, hope eternally and love externally. We'll unpack these in succession. Firstly, he says in chapter one verse four, he speaks of your faith in Christ Jesus. That one of the evidences of real Christianity is a personal internal faith. You may have been born into a Christian family, but you are born again through personal faith in Jesus Christ. And some people that come from Christian backgrounds they think, well, I was born into a Christian family. Somebody got me wet when I was a kid and called it baptism. I opened one eye at a youth retreat when they said if you don't wanna burn forever like kindling open one eye. So I did 'cause I don't like fire, or my grandma prayed for me and she said I'm a good person. So I feel like I have a relationship with the Lord. Here's the key, do you have internal personal faith in Jesus Christ? That's the issue. And this key absolutely unlocks everything else. This is why we love Jesus. We believe in Jesus. We follow Jesus. We serve Jesus. We listened to Jesus. We want to be like Jesus. We want to be with Jesus. That ultimately he becomes the center and everyone and everything else goes out to the periphery. And internally there is this deep, abiding, unshakeable commitment to the person in the work of Jesus Christ. If you've experienced that you are a real Christian, if not you really need Christ. And this is why it's so important. We live in a day when people tend to focus on the sincerity of faith, not the object of faith. So you will hear, they are very devout, they're very well meaning, they're very committed, they're very generous to their religion, they believe in their spirituality, they live out of their ideology. They may have faith, but the only faith that saves is faith that is an object that is capable of saving. What I'm saying is this. You may have sincere faith but if it's in any one or anything other than Jesus, you are sincerely wrong in the object of your sincere faith. I'll give you an example. I come from a family of five kids, three boys, two girls. Us three boys we're not great boys. And possibly the worst boy of all was my brother. And this would hold up in court. There's plenty of evidence to convict. But my brother was, he was a kind of a wild kid. And so he

would do things. He was the kid who would run his motorcycle into the house, playing ball in the backyard, broke out literally pretty much every window in the back of the house, he was kind of a wild child. And so my brother had this deep, abiding, unshakable faith that if he closed his eyes, he was invisible. So you would hear the cookie jars crashed to the floor. You would hear a window break. You'd go find what was happening. And there you would see my little brother Very still, very quiet with his eyes closed. Absolutely, utterly, unshakably convinced that if he couldn't see you, you couldn't see him. He was invisible. And he held that deep, profound conviction until my dad whooped him. And then he realized that his faith was in vain. His faith was devout and sincere and he was committed to it. But his faith was in vain. So many people in various religions, ideologies, philosophies, spiritualities, they have sincere faith, but it is sincerely wrong because it is not faith in the person, in the work of Jesus Christ. So let me tell you who Jesus is. He's God. Let me tell you what Jesus does. Jesus does what only God can do. And it begins with the bad news that we are sinners, that we have rebelled against God, that we have disregarded, disobeyed, dishonored God. And the God in his great love had a rescue mission for us that he sent his son. He became a man. He lived the life we have not lived, the life without sin. He has died the death that we should die, the death for sin. That he is given the gift that we cannot earn, the gift of salvation and access to eternal life, access to the presence of God, access to the person of God, access to the peace of God, is solely, exclusively, eternally and inextricably in the person who is alive today, rose from death, sitting on a throne, ruling and reigning over all kingdoms and kings and his name is Jesus Christ. And faith to him is connecting with him. And it is unleashing his life in your life. That's what faith is. That's what faith does. Do you know Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Do you belong to Jesus? Are you trusting in Jesus? Is your faith in Jesus? If not, your sincere faith is sincerely misplaced. Number one true evidence of Christianity is faith internally. Secondly, it's hope eternally. That we begin with the end in mind, that we define our life forward and we live it backward. We know where we're going. So we know how to persevere along the journey's way. He says it this way in chapter one verse five, the hope laid up for you in where? Heaven. What this means here at the Trinity Church, we say this a lot. We do not live culture up, we live kingdom down. We do not live culture up, we live kingdom down. We ask, what will it be like when Jesus comes back? What will it be like when the elections end, the wars end, the conflict ends? And ultimately Jesus rules as the prince of peace overall, what will that world be like? All nations, all races, all cultures are welcomed. All people who turn to Jesus and trust in him will be forgiven. There will be love. There will be joy. There will be forgiveness. There will be peace. There will be healing. There will be reconciliation. And so like Jesus, we pray thy kingdom come. What this world needs is the kingdom of God unveiled through the church of Jesus Christ. And this is the most messed up period in our nation's history. And it's the most magnificent opportunity, because now there is a vision to the right, there is a vision to the left, there is conflict between the two. And the only hope is that everyone would look up. Who is the king? What is the kingdom? What does the king say? What is the kingdom like? That ultimately, as the kingdom is lived among the cultures then everyone is welcomed to repent of their ideology, their philosophy, their spirituality, their godless vision for their eternity. And to gather around the one alone who brings reconciliation, unity, love, and healing. And that is the kingdom of God. That is heaven. That is the person in the presence of Jesus. And so for us, we do not look out to the culture to determine how we will

do church. We look up to the kingdom, and we want to be a church that is a counter cultural kingdom lifestyle, providing for a fallen crooked corrupted culture. Another way of living with another king that lasts forever and goes all to repentance and to redemption through this one who alone is worthy. And so for us, we begin with that in mind. We ask ourselves who is our king and what is our kingdom? And this really hit me recently. I was recently in Orlando, Florida, I went to a conference, I had some meetings. I get off the plane, what's the first thing I see with all the advertising? What do you think it is? Disney World. It's a kingdom. It's a magical kingdom. It's the happiest place on earth. I thought, oh, there's a kingdom. That's the happiest place on earth where all the nations come to have a peaceable joyful experience. And the king is Mickey Mouse. We can do better than that. We could do so much better than that. But it got me thinking, oh, maybe everyone who goes to Disneyland or Disney World deep in their hearts really longs for the coming of Jesus. Maybe they really wanna just enter into a kingdom, where there is peace and provision, where memories are made, where nations are welcomed, where people are glad, and the joy never ends. See, we begin with that in mind. I know who my king is. I know what my kingdom is. I know what things will be like when he returns and all is done. And that gives me hope eternally. My hope is not in this world, my hope is for this world. And my hope is in this king, in this coming kingdom. So it brings faith internally, hope eternally and love externally. If you say, if the presence and power of the person, of the spirit is living in the child of God, then I know my eternal destiny and the love that God has for me, then I want that kingdom love to flow in me and to flow through me so that others are like, this is the mark of a genuine and true Christian love. The fruit of the spirit is love. Jesus says to summarize the entire Old Testament you could do so with this world, this word rather, love. That ultimately love is the mark of the Christian because love is supernatural and love comes from God that ultimately the love that the father, son, and spirit, the Trinitarian God of the Bible, that they share eternally. It is placed in us by the presence and power of the spirit. And through the work of the Holy Spirit, we have access to an unending flow of divine love. This is why God could tell us, love your enemies. You're like, I don't have it. God's like I do. I'll give it to you. Love strangers. I don't even know them. I have love for them. Give it to them. Love one another. This is what we do. We love one another. And here's what you need to know, Christian, we're gonna annoy one another. Amen. We all have many spiritual gifts including the gift of annoying. We all have that gift. We're going to annoy one another, and when we annoy one another, it's an opportunity to love one another. And love is the way that we demonstrate that we truly are real Christians, that we love. So here's what this means at the Trinity Church, we believe that love is preeminent, we believe that love is over issues. And in love we can work through our issues, without love we can never work through our issues. That's why he talks about, chapter one, verse four. The love that you have for all the saints, not just the people you like, the people you don't like, not just the people you know, the people you don't know. And he talks about your love in the spirit. He's talking about a divine inexhaustible source of eternally flowing love. Practically this means we pray for one another. We don't criticize one another. We build one another up. We don't beat one another up. We speak well of other churches. We speak well of other Christians. And it is just heart wrenching and horrifying that so many have been held captive by this demonic plan, where Christians will fight with Christians in front of non-Christians. Hey, we're shooting at each other. You wanna join our team? Not really, not really. Love is compelling, love is supernatural,

love is kingdom in its orientation, love reveals the heart of God, and love is not just what you say. Love is what you do. Love is what you do. That our God doesn't just love us with word, he loves us indeed. And he comes as the Lord Jesus Christ to love us through his sinless life, his substitutionary death, his bodily resurrection and his granting of eternal salvation. So these are three evidences of real Christianity. Do you know Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Do you belong to Jesus? Do you have faith internally? Do you have hope eternally? Do you have love externally? If the answer is no, or I am not sure, let me just beg you, let me plead with you, let me welcome you, let me encourage you to turn from sin, to trust in Jesus and to be a real Christian. For those who have experienced that, or will experience that today, he then gives us four ways to encourage real Christianity. There's a lot of points today. There's three points, there's four points, there's seven points, I'll probably make up some other points. I get paid by the points. So with three in, here's four more. All right, here we go. Four ways to encourage real Christianity. So how do we nourish? How do we encourage? How do we bless Christianity, real, genuine love for Jesus, relationship with Jesus in other people? Firstly, glory to God and gratitude to people. And he says in chapter one, verse three of Colossians, we always thank God, the father of our Lord, Jesus Christ when we pray for you. It's glory to God and gratitude to people. Some people only do one of these two. Some people it's like, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you. Never thank you, Lord. Other people it's thank you Lord, thank you Lord, thank you Lord, but never thanking anybody else. The way it works is all glorious to go to God. That's all honor and praise. Glory means preeminence, it means weightiness, it means heaviness. It's a theme that the Bible uses a lot. The glory goes to God, but gratitude goes to people 'cause God works through people. They are oftentimes the channel of his grace to us. I'll give you an example. I was dealing with a religious guy some years ago. This religious guy, I just preached on love. So I love this guy. But it was hard. And so this guy, he was just one of those highly religious guys, really regimented, not very loving, not very gracious, not very kind, rules for everything. But a lot of religious pious, dearly, beloved, as I'm talking about. He could only talk in King James. Well, brother, I besiege you. I gotta Google that. I didn't even know what he was talking about. My dearly beloved. So nonetheless, this guy I'm talking with him, he's got a lot of kids, like him and his wife they're fruitful, multiply kids, like they call that as their life first. They got a ton of kids. And this poor woman, he doesn't make a lot of money. I mean, she's making their clothes, she's homeschooling them, she's serving as the doctor, she's working very, very hard. And the kids, well, some of the kids were good. The girls were like their mom. They're pretty great. The boys were like their dad. They were like future felons of America, their situation. But anyways, the girls were pretty nice. I'm just telling you what happened. So anyways, I was talking to this guy and his wife was there. And I said, well, it's amazing how well cared for these children are. I mean, they're all dressed. They can all read. They're all fed. And there's a lot of them. He says, "Yes, glory be," he literally, "glory be to God, God feeds my kids. "God teaches my kids. "God raises my kids. "God heals my kids, all glory be to God." I said, well, and also thanks to your wife 'cause like, I'm pretty sure she cooked and birthed them. I've seen that in this situation. That's a lot of work right there having a kid. And when they're sick, she's up all night and she taught them how to read and write. And she teaches them the scriptures. And she's a good mom. He says, "No, no, no, no. "All glory be to God." I said, "No, you can give glory to God "and gratitude to your wife." "And I think God is

most glorified "when you give gratitude to your wife and glory to him." I looked at her and I said, "Thank you for loving your husband for loving your kids, "for loving your Lord. "Thanks for staying up all night with those kids "when they're like sprinklers "and there's fluids coming out of all the holes." You parents have been there, right. Thank you for teaching them to pray. Thank you for buying them a Bible. Thank you for homeschooling them. Thank you for feeding them. There's a lot of work. This woman just starts crying. She says, "Thank you. "It's really hard. "I'm exhausted." I said, "Well, God is very pleased with you. "And I just wanna thank you for serving the Lord "and your family. "And I wanna thank God that he's given you the strength "to persevere and endure and to love and serve these kids." And her husband was angry with me because he felt I wasn't glorifying God. It's good to glorify God and have gratitude for people. So I told this guy, I said, "You could say, I thank God for this woman. "I thank God for the resilience of this woman. "I thank God for the perseverance of this woman. "I thank God for the devotion of this woman, to her family. "I thank God that this woman is willing to forgo sleep "so that she could love and serve. "I thank God that he made a woman who is so committed "and devoted to her own children, "that she has poured her life out "for the wellbeing of others." Is that okay? That's glory to God and gratitude to people. Some of you only thank people and you never acknowledged God's provision is ultimately behind it. Others of you only thank God and you don't think the people whom God has ultimately brought to be the conduit through which his grace flows. One way that we encourage real Christianity is glory to God and gratitude to people. Who can you thank? Who can you be grateful for? Who even today, can you call, text, email, talk to and just say, "Hey, thank you. "I appreciate you. "I praise God for you. "You were the means by which he brought much grace to me." Another way to encourage real Christianity is to pray. Chapter one, verse three says, we pray for you. How awesome is that to hear? How many of you, when you hear that someone says, "Hey, I'm praying for you. "You're like, "Hey, thank you." The shortest distance between two people is prayer. The way that God connects people is through prayer. Paul's in prison, there in church, he can't be with them, but in prayer, he can connect with them because God closes the gap and the distance between the two. Now let me say this about prayer. Some of you have heard me say this. God doesn't need prayer. He doesn't. God's haven't gone, tell me some stuff. There's some stuff I don't know. Please tell me. You're not like, "Well, God, "we're having marriage problems." He's like, "I know, "your wife already talked to me about that. I already know that. God already knows everything. Amen. So when we pray, it's not that we're telling God something he doesn't know. And also when we're praying, we're not making God do something he doesn't want to do. It's not like God, and haven't gone. All right, I'm not gonna do it. Unless you say amen twice and besieged three times. And if you throw in a hallelujah, ah, now I got to do it. It's not like that. Amen. Here's why we pray, because we needed. And what happens when we pray is We don't change God, God changes us. And in that conversation with God, he begins to change and to mold and to shape our heart. And so what Paul is doing here, he is praying for them. It is a way of having God's heart for them. It is a way of loving and serving them and connecting with them. And let me say this as well. When you pray for people, it helps guard your heart against jealousy. Here's what happens. We get jealous of people. Amen. Let's just be honest. Right? You got a job, how come I didn't get a good job. You got married, how come I'm not married? You got divorced, how come I can't get divorced. We get jealous of people. We get very jealous of people. I'm just, okay

that's kind of funny, but totally true. Okay, I mean, right, right. We get jealous of people. What happens when we pray? We have God's heart for them. That means we can weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice like the Bible instructs. So where's Paul here. He's in prison. Could he be jealous? Yes. A lot of the people in the church, they have a spouse. He's single. They have kids. He's childless. They have a home. He's homeless. They're free. He's in prison. They're getting to enjoy their life. He's being persecuted and punished. Paul could have been very jealous and bitter. Like very grumbling. I'm an apostle, I write books of the Bible, I pray in churches, I save people. And all I get is riots and prison. He could have been very upset about this. Instead, what he says is I pray for you. And I'm glad that things are going well for you. That's what prayer does. It may not change our circumstances but it changes our heart in the midst of our circumstances. Number three, it is good to encourage. He says it this way, the word of the truth, the gospel. And I love how he explains this. What he's talking about here is the big message of God's word for all people, for all history. And I say this often, but the Bible is not about you. It's for you. But ultimately it's about Jesus. And the story of the Bible is one that he calls the truth. What that means is everything that deviates from God's word is false. So there's true and false. And he says, it is the gospel. What that means is good news. So it's not just true news like, the dentist telling you you've got a cavity or the IRS telling you that your taxes are due. Those things are true, but they're not good news. Amen. The Bible is true. God's word is true. And it's good news. That's what gospel means. It's good news. And so it's the good news that we have a problem, that we're sinners by nature and choice and that results in death. And apart from God's intervention, we are forever doomed. The truth is the good news that God sent his son and he loves us and he seeks us and he serves us, and this is the good news of Jesus. And so he wants to encourage them that the good news of the truth of Jesus who is alive and well and ruling and reigning, it is bearing much fruit. He says, which has come to you as indeed, and the whole world is bearing fruit and increasing as it also does among you since the day you have heard it. Now, let me say something about the good news of the gospel. You have to hear it. Sometimes well-intentioned Christians or sometimes cowardly Christians will not talk about Jesus. And they'll say things like, well, I just show people the gospel. That's impossible. Because the gospel is about Jesus Christ dying on the cross in our place, for our sins, as our substitute and our savior. And three days later rising to conquer our enemies of Satan, sin, death, hell and the wrath of God. You can't teach somebody that by making them a sandwich. And they're like butter and jelly. Oh, Jesus died on the cross. No, they cannot connect those dots through good deeds. There are good deeds that Christians should do. There is good advice that Christians should give. But there is good news that Christians must proclaim. Good news must be proclaimed. He says it was heard. God has chosen to bring salvation through the preaching of the gospel, through the preaching of his word. It has to be proclaimed. It has to be taught. It has to be explained. There is good deeds that we should do, to love and serve people, feed them, house them, care for them, love them. There is good advice we should give people, do this and don't do that. But ultimately it is good news that saves people. It is hearing about the person and the work of Jesus. And that good news has its own inexplicable, unmatched, innate power. It comes and it transforms people and it changes lives, and it alters destinies. We never get bored with the gospel. We never give up on the gospel. We never lose hope in the gospel. We don't alter the gospel. We don't edit the gospel. We don't mute the gospel. We don't

limit the gospel. We proclaim the gospel and we let the gospel go with the power of God to do exactly what God intends for it to do. That's why we're not ashamed of the gospel. That's why we're not scared of the gospel. That's why it doesn't matter what culture it goes into, what ideology it comes up against. It always marches forth triumphantly in victory because it is the truth and it is good news. And it is the power of God unleashed to transform people in communities, their lives and legacies. And he's encouraging them. He's saying, you've heard this, you've received this, you've believed this, you've embraced this, you've experienced this and you need to abide in this and continue with this. Man, I'm excited. I hate to interrupt your nap. I used to. I once went to a drive in and after the drive in all the cars were dead, and they brought out one of those batteries and charged them all. That's what I'm trying to do. I love you. But there needs to be a little passion, a little enthusiasm, a little excitement. Amen.

- Amen.

- All right, okay, all right, all right. Encouragement. And so what encouragement does, encouragement builds more hope for the future and momentum. So I'll tell you this about me. I'm the guy with a critical eye. I see everything that's wrong with everyone and everything. So pray for my wife. She has to live with this guy. So early on in our marriage, I was not a great encourager. I was more critical. So rather than saying, thank you, this was great, thank you, that was awesome, thank you, I appreciate you. I would say, this was off, this could have been done better, this was a little wrong. One day, my dear sweet wife who lived up to her name Grace, she looked at me and she said, "Do I do anything right?" Oh man, I'm horrible. I said, "Yeah, baby, you do." She says, "Why don't you tell me that?" Because I'm horrible. Back to my initial point. She said, "It would help "if you told me something I did good "and then something I did bad, "so at least I'd have a little hope "that I do something good." I'm horrible. What I learned was in every relationship, encouragement are deposits, and critiques and corrections are withdrawals. And I was one who was making a lot of withdrawals and not a lot of deposits. And so I was running my account with my wife in the red. Don't just hear what Paul says, but see what Paul does. He begins with a lot of deposits. I'm encouraged things are going well. It's bearing fruit. Church is growing, church got planted. I hear good reports. I love you guys. Be encouraged, be encouraged, be encouraged. And then later on, I'll be like, okay, couple corrections, maybe a few withdrawals, but we've already got so much in the account through the deposits of encouragement that we can make a few withdrawals through correction. How many of you are critical people? And you wonder why people won't listen to you. I hear laughing. For those spouses you're welcome. Thank you for bringing your, I see a lot of this, write that down Jack. Write that down. That's a good point, Jack. You build momentum through encouragement, through encouraging what people are already doing and how they are already fruitful. And then that will encourage them for more. So let me encourage you. Paul is encouraging this church. Let me encourage our church. You guys are really wonderful people. I've had pastors ask me, "How's it going?" I said, "We have wonderful people." And if you don't know this about me, I'm not really a flatterer. I kind of just say it. If you were nice, I would tell you loudly. And you guys are wonderful people. People ask me all the time this, I was gonna say, "We've got the most wonderful people." They said really? I said, "Yeah, they're genuinely nice. "Like I get hugged a

lot. "I feel like I won something, like I get hugged so much." And I said, "You know they've been loving to my family." They're loving to each other. A whole bunch of strangers show up to work and to serve and to pray and to give. They don't owe anybody anything, they're just here because they love the Lord. And ultimately this church is growing, it's taking root, it's flourishing, ministries are blossoming, things are happening, people are being saved. I said, "It's really remarkable." I said, "I really look forward to coming and seeing the people, "I look forward to meeting and getting to know the people, "and I get excited about the people getting to know "and love and serve one another." I'm so overjoyed at what God is doing here. It's remarkable. You're a special people. You're easy to love. You're easy to lead. Thank you. In addition, I would say I'm so glad that we have a variety of ages. Some of you are older. Please stay. We love older people because younger people are like a sail, lots of power, but they don't know where they're going. So older people are like a rudder. Amen. You've been to a church, it's all rudders, you're like, "We're going nowhere, straight as an arrow." You go to another church, all young people are like, we're going hundred miles an hour toward the reef. Younger people, you're like a sail, older people you're like a rudder, and those together are beautiful and good. Amen. So I love seeing that. I also love some of the diversity. There's different races, and cultures, and backgrounds. And it reminds me of the kingdom of God, this multicultural, multi-generational glorious, loving family of God's people. It's an honor to be your pastor. I love you. I'm having the time of my life. My family are very glad to be here. And I'm very excited for what God has already done and the future that he has for us. So I wanna encourage you. And I genuinely mean that from the bottom of my heart, we love you, I love you. And you make it very easy to love you. In addition, number four, he speaks of honor. One way that we encourage real Christianity is through honor. What he speaks of is this leader in the church. So Paul's in prison. He's never been to the city. He's never visited the church. He doesn't personally know the people. He's their apostle, he's not their pastor. Epaphras is their pastor. Epaphras are? I love it. You see this honoring poses, I love Epaphras. Well, that's very nice. Fellow servant. He serves, he works really hard. He is what? He's a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf. Here's what he's saying is, I know your pastor, Epaphra, he's a really wonderful guy. I love him. He works very hard. He cares about you. And he is trying to do everything that Jesus wants him to do. He's honoring. True or false, we live in a day that is not very honoring of leadership. Does any of you have a television or the internet? When you pull up the stories, is it, oh, they honored, and they honored. It's just so much honoring. People honoring their political leaders, and political leaders honoring one another, and children honoring their parents, and wives honoring their husbands, and husbands honoring their wives, and congregants honoring their pastors. It's just so much honoring. It's not. Amen. True or false? There's not a lot of honoring. There's not a lot of honoring. It's a culture of dishonor and rebellion. And it's not working and it's not going well. And the kingdom of God, ultimately there is a culture of honor. We honor the Lord Jesus. We honor those who love and serve. We're supposed to honor our father and mother. We're supposed to honor those who are in leadership and pray for them and encourage them. What I love here is Paul is establishing in the church a culture of honor. And here's why it's so important because when you honor someone you influence them and they will listen to you. So even if there is a disagreement that ultimately does come into being it's through love and honor, that you will be heard and respected and not seen as a critic, but seen as one who cares. I love that

Paul does this. He honors Epaphras. So what this means at the Trinity Church, we honor. We honor other pastors. I've met with over 100 pastors in the Valley. There's some wonderful people. I don't have any criticism. If I did, I would speak with them privately, not publicly. And we would work it out as family, not enemy. We don't criticize other pastors. We don't attack other churches. Wherever the Bible has taught and Jesus's love. We want to honor and we want to love and we want to serve and we want to bless. And then if there is an opportunity that we need to say something, it will be received by love and relationship because there has been honor that has preceded any potential disagreement. This is crucial because sometimes we forget that the whole world is watching, and if we are not loving, then our witness is destroyed. There are some wonderful churches, some wonderful pastors here in the Valley. And I praise God for their welcoming of me and their support of us. And so we want to honor them as well. And I would encourage you, children, honor your parents. You wives honor your husband. You husbands honor your wives. You employers honor your employees. You employees honor your employers. And all of us to just ask, how can I be honoring? And some of you will struggle 'cause you'll say, but they're not a great person. How many of you were in the military? Sometimes you salute the person. Sometimes you salute the uniform. And you respect the office that they hold because it's an honorable office. Those are four ways to encourage real Christianity. And then he moves on to seven exciting gifts God has for you. These are things that God has for you. He plans for you. These are gifts that he wants to give you. These are ways that he wants to help you. Before he tells you what to do, he tells you what he'll do for you, before he asks life to come out of you, he puts life in you. And the first thing you need to know is that God will teach you. God wants you to know. God wants you to learn. God wants you to grow. God is not withholding things because he wants you to live in the fog of darkness and uncertainty. He says it in chapter one, verses nine and 10. You may be what? Filled. This is plenty. This is abundance. This is generosity. With the knowledge of his will in all spiritual, wisdom and understanding increasing in the knowledge of God. What this means is that through the course of your life, there's always something to learn. There's always a way to grow. There's always more revelation to receive. Some of you have been Christians for a long time. Don't just go back to your favorite books of the Bible. Pick new ones. Don't just lean on the verses you memorized 10, 15, 20 years ago, memorize new ones. Don't just go back to the favorite book that you read every year. Pick up some new things and see what new revelation and insight, God would have for you. There's always something to know. There's always room to grow. Amen. And God wants to teach you. God wants you to learn. God wants you to continue to grow. How do you do this? Number one in the scriptures, read the Bible, study the Bible, memorize the Bible, meditate on the Bible. If you want to know God's will, you gotta read God's word. And I know that you know this but many of you don't do this. Get a copy of the Bible. Get the YouVersion app, figure out whatever works for you. Just getting God's word and get God's word in you. The second way that you find God's will is in prayer. Talk to the Lord, listen to the Lord, meet with the Lord. And the third way is wise counsel. Find people who know what you don't know and do what you can't do and learn from them. You're good with money, tell me. You're in real estate, I'm trying to buy a house. My wife's crying, yours is laughing, help me fix this. My kids are horrible, your kids are not, help. Ask questions, seek counsel. Now here's how it works though. Usually when we're talking about God's will, we're talking about knowing what

God wants for us. Some of us want to know all the way to the end. God oftentimes does not give the exact journey and path. In fact, in the Bible it says, your word is a what to my feet? A lamp. It doesn't say high beam headlight. Amen. High beam headlight is, oh, look, I see 75 years into the future and what I'll be doing. A lamp is just I see today and I see what's next. I see as far as I need to see, but ultimately I need to continue to learn and to grow and to trust and to walk with God because sometimes he only illuminates the path a little bit at a time. Number two, God will walk with you. Chapter one, verse 10. Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him. The Bible often uses this language, this imagery, this analogy, that Christianity is a walk with God. How many of you are dads? Dads, how many of you when your kids were little, you'd walk with them? Well, I hope you did. Otherwise you're not a dad anymore. You lost your kid. You really need to walk with your kid 'cause your kid will get lost. When my kids were little and we'd be in a public place, I'd hold their hand. And one of my favorite things, when the kids were really little I'd have them step on my feet and I would hold their hands and their feet would be on my feet, and I'd walk with my kids. It was one of my favorite things to do. Every time I see a parent holding a child's hand, I think, you know what? We're the children of God. And sometimes when we get big we think, oh, I need to walk on my own. But in God's eyes, we're still sons and daughters and we still need our dad. And what walking with God is it literally is saying, God is my dad. And I need to walk with him. I don't know the future, but my dad does. I don't know how it's all gonna work out, but my dad does. I don't know exactly what steps I'm supposed to take but my dad does. This is why when we pray, we raise our hand. It's literally reaching up, saying, "Dad, walk with me." When we sing, we raise our hands, it's literally, dad walk with me. Dad walk with me. And your dad, here's the good news, God is your father, he is your dad, he does love you, and he does want to walk with you. And what this means is that you never have to fear being isolated or alone. I'll tell you a story from my life. Yesterday my youngest son, he had to go to a baseball game. He had a double header. And he just refused to go. He's like, "I'm not going." I said, "You gotta go buddy, your team needs you. "And they're not gonna have enough players without you. "They're gonna have to forfeit." He's like, "Well, it's tough for them, huh?" I was like, "No, buddy, for real, like you gotta go, "you gotta go, you gotta go." He's like, "I'm not going." I said, "You are gonna get in the truck. "We're gonna talk and pray about this. "We gotta head to the ball field, we'll work this out." So we had a long drive, and we're talking. I said, "What's up?" He said, "I'm scared." I said, "what are you scared of?" He said, "I'm scared to go out on the field all by myself. "I'm scared." How many of us are scared? You know what? Here's what I told my little buddy. I said the number one command in the Bible that appears more than other command in the Bible, about 150 times is fear not or do not be afraid. Because people are scared. We're all like kids. We're just scared. And I said, "You know what little buddy? I've looked at all those occasions almost every time that God says fear not. In the same orbit he says, for I am with you. I said, the reason that you shouldn't fear is that your dad goes on the field with you. I said, "I'll be at the game buddy. "I'll take you to the game. "But I can't walk out on the field with you. "God can walk out on the field with you." I said, "So here's what I'm gonna do. "I'm gonna walk to the ball field with you, "literally with my hand on your shoulder. "And then when we get to the field, "I'm gonna pat you on the back and pray for you. "And then I'm gonna send you on the field." I said, "But your other dad "is gonna go on the field with you." I said, "Your Heavenly Father "is gonna go on the field with you." It says, he'll never

leave you, he'll never forsake you, he'll always be with you forever and always to the end of the age. And he's like, "You think God goes on the field with me." I said, "I'm sure he does." I said, "So you're not alone little buddy, God is with you." He went and played, he had a great game through five shutout innings. Got tired in the sixth, gave up two runs, his team won. He just blew it up. I took my wife out last night and got home late. And I walk in the door as he kinda go little buddy excited, he couldn't see the end of his game, he said, I killed it. Put his knuckles out. He said, "I wasn't scared at all." I said, "You don't have to be scared." If you walk with your father, you don't have to walk in fear. Amen. That your dad loves you. And he goes with you. Now, let me say this about your walk with God. Some of you, you're all about the destination, your father is oftentimes about the journey. And what you need to figure out, 'cause here's what a walk is. It's one step at a time. And so when you consider your walk with God you just gotta ask, okay, dad, what's my next step? Should I take that job or not take that job? Is it time to go buy a new Bible and start reading it? Is it time to pick a church? Is it time to start praying every day? Is it time to start praying with my spouse every day? Is it time to start praying with my kids every day? Is it time to forgive that person 'cause I'm bitter in my heart? Is it time to pursue that person for relationship because they have wisdom? What's the next step? So my question to you today would be, are you walking with the father? And if so, do you know your next step? All you gotta worry about is your next step. Point number three, our God will grow you. I love this, chapter one, verse 10. Bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. How many of you, when you were a kid, did you ever have that experience where they give you a cup? Like kindergarten, preschool, like put dirt in the cup, put a seed in the cup, water the cup, put the cup over by the window. And then you're supposed to watch the cup. Any of you remember that experience? And you're like nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing. You're coming, you're like, look at that. Something popped above the dirt. Remember that moment? How happy you felt. It was just me. It was exciting for me. And then I was like, that's amazing. It's got life. There's life in the seed. Life bears fruit. It comes forth. So I remember as a little kid I'd come into kindergarten every day, go run up to the window sill, it's bigger, it's bigger. Oh, it's got leaves, it's blossoming, it's blooming, it's growing, it's alive, it's fruitful. That's you. That's you. That's you. Once the seed of the gospel comes in you, once the truth of the person in the work of Jesus Christ comes in you, it has this life giving power, like a seed has life that just brings forth fruitfulness. So the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the life of a believer, it takes root and bears fruit. And so some of you are discouraged because you're looking at where you are and where you should be. I want to encourage you. Look back for a moment. What has God already done? How have you already changed? Who would you be today without Jesus? I know who that guy would be, not good. Okay, not good. What kind of husband would I be without Jesus? What kind of father would I be without Jesus? What kind of man would I be without Jesus? I already see a lot of fruit. Now I see a lot of work that remains to be done. But for you, God has already done great things in you. And he's in the process of bearing great fruit through you. And it's through the power of the gospel. And if you have not changed, if you are not experiencing change, if you look back and don't see any change, here's what I would say to you, I love you, but the gospel is not in you. You do not yet know the Lord Jesus because when you meet the Lord Jesus, just like a seed burst forth. So life in Christ burst forth. So a seed causes fruit to flourish. So there is life transformation in the child of God. But there is for you

growth, and God wants to grow you, and God seeks to grow you, and God delights in growing you. And number four, it's by his power because God will empower you. Chapter one, verse 11, strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy. How many of you have looked at your life and just thought, I can't do this. I can't endure any longer. I can't. What you'll need is a supernatural divine source of power. That in and of yourself, quite frankly, you don't have it. To love, to serve, to forgive, to work, to persevere, to endure. You will need God's power, but here's the good news. God will give you his power so that you can endure. You can continue to march forward, loving, forgiving, persevering. And it says that you can do so with patients. This is your emotional state. Lord when it's your time, not my time, Lord I can continue as long as you want me to go, not because I have power, but because I rely on your power and you can do it with, what's this word? You didn't say it very enthusiastically. Joy. Joy. We live in a country, my friends, founded in life, liberty, and the pursuit of? How's it going? Chuckle, chuckle, chuckle, not very good. You know why? Because you need a supernatural source for endurance, a supernatural source for patients, and a supernatural source for joy. That way you can have those things through your circumstances, not from your circumstances. Oftentimes in spite of your circumstances. Now I'll be honest with you. I really struggled with this because sometimes when I read Christian books, it sounds like naive people who are reading greeting cards and saying nonsense. I'll be honest with you. So I remember in the worst darkest season of our whole life in ministry, my wife and I are meeting with a counselor and he said, "Do you understand the stages of grief?" And he was like, "Shock and disbelief and anger." And then he says, "Well, for the Christian "there's always one at the end, thanksgiving." And I literally said, . That's what I said. No. I said, "Man, I'm not that guy "who's gonna get hit by a car and be laying on the sidewalk. ♪ Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say ♪ With the side up, that's what I think. But here's what I found. He was right. God gave us endurance. I don't know how. He gave us patience with each other, which was supernatural. And in the end we were very thankful for God's provision. And it was supernatural, not natural. It was from God, not from us. And it was in spite of our circumstances, not from our circumstances. This is counter-cultural kingdom living that only the Holy Spirit gives to the children of God. Number five, God will encourage you. He says, we give thanks to the father. This is very, very difficult, but you've got to find a reason to praise in the middle of the problem. You've got to seek some reason to be grateful even in the middle of trial. It doesn't mean that you deny, diminish, disregard circumstances in any way. But what I love about Paul, he's giving thanks to the father. And again, where is he? Prison. If a guy in prison could say, guys let me tell you what I'm thankful for. There always has to be something for which we can be thankful for. This is one of the exciting gifts that God gives to us. Whatever we are in, there is a praise in the middle of the problem. There is a hope in the middle of the hurt. There is a joy in the middle of the grief. There is. You just got to find it. Number six, God will reward you. Now this is really good to me. Encouraging, hopeful, joyful news. He says in verse 12, he has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. How many of you like the word inheritance? We all agree on that. I like the word inheritance. How many of you, there's somebody you know, they're gonna leave you an inheritance. You're pretty excited about that. How many of you, you look forward to the day when, whether it's your retirement account or whatever you have invested that you get to just see that return on investment. Amen. Here's what he's saying. That in the kingdom of

God, there is an inheritance that awaits the saints. What this means is that God has for you eternal provision of all sorts, emotional, physical, spiritual, all provision stored up for you. What that means is, that you can't take anything with you, but you can send it ahead. This is why Jesus says that we store up our treasures in heaven. So when you suffer, you're sending your inheritance ahead. When you persevere, when you love, when you forgive, when you give, you're sending your inheritance ahead. And then when you get into the kingdom of God, you receive this eternal inheritance, it's this great provision of God's grace and blessing and rewarding for all of your life. None of your life is in vain. It'll all get rewarded. God is keeping account of all you say and all you do, and all you give and all that you are. And there is an eternal inheritance of reward for the children of God that awaits us. Now knowing this, this changes quite frankly how we live, because we know the end and so we know how to persevere until the end. I'll give you an example. It's a little bit weird. But how many of you guys watch ESPN Classics? And if you watch those, it's like old boxing matches or old games. How many of you, when you watch the ESPN Classics, you're not sitting there freaking out? Where like, "Oh my gosh, it's the 1974 super bowl. "How will this go? "What will happen? "What will the outcome be?" You're texting, you're Facebooking, you're doing, oh my gosh, they found out. This is crazy. I'm unsure what will happened. Oh, my gosh. You're like, it's the 74 Rose Bowl. I just sit there and eat my popcorn. I'm not freaking out 'cause I already know who won. Amen. We know who wins. We know the end. We know the score. We know that Jesus returns. We know that he conquers Satan, sin, death, how? In the wrath of God, we know that Satan, demons and rebels are sent to prison. We know that God's people are delivered. We know that God causes the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the dead to rise, the broken to be healed, the discouraged to be encouraged, the hungry fed. It's just a kingdom of life and joy and peace forever, where God provides for all of our needs in abundance for all eternity. And you say, well, that is coming with the Lord Jesus. And what that means is that knowing that God will reward us, that helps us to endure and persevere and have a little bit of patience and emotional stability just like someone watching the 1974 Rose Bowl. It's interesting, but I know how this ends and I will get there by God's grace. Now how does all of this happen? This is my, perhaps last point. Because God has delivered you. How does all this happen? How do we have evidences of real Christianity? How do we encourage real Christianity? How do we receive all of these great gifts that God has for us? Because he has already delivered us. Chapter one 13 and 14, he has delivered us. This is a present spiritual reality, which we are walking into experience. From the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. This is amazing. I don't know why this isn't on the news every night, because this is the best news and it should always be the lead story. And it is through Jesus, you go from darkness to light. You go from hell to heaven. You go from death to life. You go from condemnation to salvation. You go from Satan to Jesus. You go from enemy to family. And this great transference of identity, this great transference of citizenship occurs through Jesus. And this is the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption. The forgiveness of sins. You know what? We have a lot of problems, but that's our biggest problem. Our biggest problem is that we're sinners by nature and choice, and God is holy and righteous, and we need forgiveness and Jesus comes to forgive. So you don't need to punish yourself. You don't need to pay God back. You don't need to deny. You don't need to diminish. You don't need to disregard your sin, rebellion and folly. You

can give it all to Jesus. He dies for you. He rises to live for you. There's just forgiveness of sin. Get all that condemnation off of you. Get all that shame off of you. Get all of that discouragement off of you. Take that pressure hand it to Jesus. Take that burden, give it to Jesus. Take that guilt, give it to Jesus. Take a nice deep breath and start your new life as a citizen of the beloved son. Oh, I'm not done. There's another really good point here. There's another really good point. We're gonna talk about this word, redemption. Redemption is a massive word. It's an incredible word. It's a life changing, eternity, altering, soul satisfying word. Okay, I'm a nerd. I'll be your blue-collar nerd friend just for a moment. The word redemption appears about 150 times in your Bible, about 20 times in the New Testament, including right here. It has been, I believe wrongly taught since the days of origin and early church father, and the second and third century that redemption referred to the pagan slave market in Rome, where you are a slave, someone comes and they purchase you and then you belong to someone else. And then the whole question comes well, who does Jesus pay? Does he pay Satan? How much does he pay Satan? Why does he pay Satan? I don't think any of that applies. I've looked up all occurrences of this great word in the Bible, and it almost always goes back to one event, the Exodus. Here's the story of the Exodus. It's the great redemption story of the Old Testament. There's God's people. They're away from home. They have a cruel overbearing domineering on loving master. His name is Pharaoh. He torments them. He harms them. He abuses them. He enslaves them. They are his possession, though ultimately they are God's possession. They cannot deliver themselves. They're in a circumstance that they cannot deliver themselves from. So God sends a mediator. He sends a representative. He sends a spokesman, a type of Christ, a man named Moses. And Moses says, "You're not the real king, "I come on behalf of the real king. "These are not really your people, these are his people. "And the real king tells you Pharaoh, let my people go, "they need to be free to worship him and to return home." And God in his great mercy and patience even gives the horrific Pharaoh an opportunity to relent and to repent for redemption. And a succession of plagues comes. If you don't let them go today, this is what will happen. And it does. And the plagues escalate until there is the killing of the firstborn. This is now the highest consequence. And the real God through his representative comes to the false God and says, "If you do not let the people go "so that they are free to worship, "then death will come to every home "and it'll take the firstborn son from all households "that do not repent and experience redemption." This is where then we receive the inauguration of something called the Passover. God then tells his people, death is coming to every home with one exception, those who in faith acknowledge their sin, take a lamb without spot or blemish, showing sinless perfection, confess their sin, their need for redemption, slaughter the animal and death as a substitute in their place for their sins. All of this is foreshadowing the forthcoming of Jesus. When he comes his cousin, John sees him and says, behold the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Paul tells the Corinthians that Christ our Passover lamb has been slain. All of this is pointing to the coming of Jesus. The family would get together. They would confess their sins. They would slaughter the animal. The blood would flow for the remission of sin. They would take the blood. They would paint the exterior doorposts of their home. It was a way of declaring openly and publicly and unashamedly, I am a sinner, I need redemption, I need forgiveness, I need a substitute, I need death to come that I might have life. And then death came to every home in Egypt with the

exception of those homes who in faith recognized and repented of their sin openly and publicly and death literally passed over them. Hence Passover. Death came and God's people were liberated. They were delivered by the power of God. They were able to walk away from Egypt and walk toward God's presence. They were liberated. They were delivered. They were freed. They were redeemed. They were redeemed to be God's people, to be in God's presence and to sing God's praises. They were redeemed for worship. And let me say this, our world, it is just absolutely parched for redemption. This is why when a firefighter runs into a home and grabs a child and risk their own life and carries them out, everyone cheers, and they make the news, and we clap, and we celebrate, because that was the redemption. When the bad guys encircle a home and they're threatening to kill someone and the police show up and they deal with the bad guys and they deliver those who are held hostage, we celebrate, we throw a party, we give them a prize, we put it on TV, we sing their praises, we have a parade 'cause that's a redemption. Amen. That's a redemption. When people are being oppressed and soldiers come in and they get rid of all those who are evil and oppressing and the people are liberated to just live their lives and be free. We've bring metals on them. We have parades for them. We give honor to them. We recognize them. We thank them, because that's a redemption. On the church, every Sunday is just celebration, good time, happy party, redemption party because I got good news for ya. Redemption comes through Jesus Christ that you belonged to Satan and death, that you were in the grip of bondage, that you were tormented and harassed and abused, and Jesus comes and he conquers your enemy. He sets you free through his death in your place for your sins. God's wrath passes over you. It is placed upon him. He suffers and dies. He rises. He loves, he forgives. He ascends. He is high and exalted. Right now the Lord Jesus is seated on a throne. He hears your prayers. He sees your tears. He loves you. He cares for you. He walks with you. He prepares a place for you. He will never leave you. He will never forsake you. And when all is said and done, we will be his people. We will be in his presence and we will sing his praises together forever. That's all I got. We got to have a party now. Amen. All right, so we're gonna take communion, remembering the broken body, shed blood of Jesus. We're gonna sing and celebrate and raise our hands so that we can walk with our father who takes our hand. And we're gonna partake of communion, remembering the broken body and shed blood of Jesus in our place for our sins. Lord Jesus, thank you so very much for the scriptures. That we're not left with speculation, we receive revelation. Lord God, for some people, they have never heard this. Please open their hearts, open their eyes, open their minds, open their understanding to love, serve, believe in, trust in, follow Jesus. Lord, for those of us that have heard this many times, I pray we'd receive it with fresh anointing and love. God, you love us. You seek us. You save us. You serve us. You never leave us nor forsake us. God, I thank you for those that you have redeemed. I thank you for those that you are redeeming. I thank you for those that you will redeem. And God, I pray for us here in Scottsdale, the most livable city in America, I pray for a divine sense of urgency to worship and to evangelize. It's great to go golfing. It's awesome to grow. Spring training is fun, but eternal matters are at stake. We are not here on vacation, we are here on mission. And Lord Jesus, we ask that your kingdom come and your will be done in Scottsdale as it is in heaven. And we ask for this grace in your good name. Amen.