

Brother Dennis Kiszonas, from Grace Bible Church in New York, is known by many through his teaching ministry in audio and print. He brings an inspirational message today.

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 December 2008

Preacher: Dennis Kiszonas

[0 : 00] Good morning. I would like you to please turn in the Bible to Paul's letter to the Colossians.

And this morning, we'll be taking a look at the first chapter of Colossians, verses 1 through 12.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae, grace to you, and peace from God our Father.

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world, also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also, since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth, just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bondservant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf.

[2 : 13] And he also informed us of your love in the Spirit. For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

To please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience, joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

I guess it's time for me.

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for inviting me to be here. This is, I don't know, I must have been here three or four times, I think, over the years, going way back.

And it's a real pleasure to be here and be able to share with you. We're going to get to Colossians this morning, but I first would like to remind you, and maybe for some to introduce how it happens that I'm here today.

[4 : 14] It all goes back almost 20 years ago to around 1990. I think that at the Bible conference over in Indiana that year, that I met Dave and Marie Weinbrenner and a few other saints here from Grace Bible Church.

And at that time, we were starting a church in New Jersey. We also had a radio broadcast in New York City called Grace for Today. And through the radio, we were meeting people in New York, and we would invite them to come to a Bible study on Sunday afternoons.

And we held that in a YMCA building on 34th Street, right in almost in the shadow of the Empire State Building. And one Sunday, Dave and Marie showed up in a Bible study.

And their son was living in Hoboken, just across the river from there. And they had come to visit him. And he used to come to the Bible study in New York.

And so they came that day. And I think they enjoyed themselves. We had quite a variety of people. There were not a lot of people in the Bible study, maybe 10 or a dozen people.

[5 : 38] But I remember one guy came in with all his earthly possessions in a milk crate. And he put his milk crate down in the corner. And then he took a seat and participated in the Bible study.

So we had a very interesting group of people. And Dave and Marie were there that day. And they came home and shared with the church here. And ever since then, Grace for Today has been on your list of missions that you have supported.

The interesting thing is that around that time, Grace for Today, the radio broadcast, we are in the largest media market in the United States.

And as a result, buying time on the radio is very expensive. And at that time, back in 1990, we had been on the air for about five years or so.

And we had run out of money. We were just totally broke. And I had been trying for five, you know, when we moved to New Jersey, I came from Chicago.

[6 : 41] I was a pastor in a church in Chicago for five years. And then we had an invitation. And we felt the Lord's leading to move to New Jersey. And we went there to candidate.

And we decided to come. The church decided to call us to be the pastor. And our family was going to move. But while we were there on that first trip, being city people, we went into New York City, just across the river from the suburban area in New Jersey.

And we thoroughly enjoyed our visit. But when I came back, I said to the people in the Grace Church over in Jersey, I said, now, where are the Grace Churches in New York? You've got eight million people.

It's a great city. And they said, well, there are no Grace Churches in New York. And I think about that time, the Lord planted the seed in my heart that that just isn't right.

Acts chapter 19, the Apostle Paul said, after I see Jerusalem, I must see Rome. And I felt like the Lord planted in my heart, after I've been to New Jersey, I must.

[7 : 48] I must plant the church in New York City. And that became a project, and it took many years. And after five years of the radio broadcast going into New York, we were broke.

We didn't have a church started. We were nowhere near starting a church. And I remember just giving up, saying, Lord, I feel like you brought me here. I used to stand.

Sometimes I would be traveling in and out of the city for various reasons. I'd stand on the Palisades, the cliffs along the Hudson River, and you look back at midtown Manhattan. I used to pray.

I said, Lord, there should be a Grace Church in this city. The Apostle to the nations, the gospel, the grace of God, this message that you gave for the nations, it ought to be preached in its purity there in New York City, where people from every nation in the world have come to New York, every language.

It is the most diverse city in the world. There are zip codes there. There are the most diverse zip codes in America for all the people who have come from around the world, and the U.N. building and all these diplomats, business people, immigrants, illegal immigrants, everyone that's come.

[8 : 59] Lord, there ought to be a Grace Church. And I just felt like I had been creamed when I went there. It was just, we got nowhere. And we had to cancel the radio broadcast.

And that week, unsuspecting, unexpectedly, a letter came from Grace Bible Church and said, we are going to put you on our mission list, and we're going to be sending support every month.

And if it hadn't been for that letter, I truly would have just done something else. We had come to, it just, but that letter came, and somehow, you know, this church, everything that happened after that was because this church, by the grace of God, by the leading of God, decided to support a ministry over there in New York City.

A few years later, we started the radio broadcast again, and we ran out of money again. I'm used to this. I'm getting used to it. We went bankrupt again. And I remember writing a letter to the owner or to the manager of the radio station saying, you know, I really believe in radio.

We've been talking with a lot of people. We get a lot of phone calls. We get a lot of mail. But we just don't have enough money to continue, and I'm sorry, but we're going to have to cancel as of a certain date coming up.

[10 : 29] And he called me, and he said, we're going to give you eight months free on the radio, and we're going to put you on Sunday morning on prime time.

And it turned out that the manager of the radio station had heard the grace message years ago. And although he hadn't really followed and gone to churches, but he knew this message.

And so when he heard it on his radio station, he knew what we were preaching, and he wanted people to hear it. And so the manager of this probably premier radio Christian station in America gave us eight months of free time and put us on Sunday morning, and we have not looked back.

That was 1995, and now, where is it, 14 years later, we have a church now going in New York City. And we have a very creative name.

It's called Grace Bible Church of Brooklyn, New York. And we have incorporated that church. And last Sunday, we had a real celebration because we had a man.

[11 : 34] His name is Joe Torres, a young guy. He was installed as our associate pastor of the church. He's from the Bronx. He's a Puerto Rican man.

And so now he's preaching back there while I'm gone. But I thank God. And as I said before, we gave up in 1990, and then a letter came from Springfield, Ohio, that said, maybe you should just hang on just a little bit longer.

And I'm happy to come here today. Last time we were here, last time I was here was around 9-11, just after 9-11. And I had been in a church in New Jersey.

I'd left that church then and gone to New York full time to get this church going. And I'm happy to be able to come back now years later and to share with you that there is a Sister Grace Church.

One. There is one Grace Church in that city of 8 million people. And I appreciate all that you have done. It's amazing how God used you in my life.

[12 : 39] And thank you for your gifts and your prayers. And pray that you would continue to uphold that ministry. Now, amazing things happen in a place like New York.

Because we had a young man years ago listen to the radio broadcast who had come to New York from Ghana, which is a country in western Africa. You know how Africa has the big bulge that goes out into the Atlantic Ocean.

And Ghana is down here kind of on the bottom of the bulge near the corner. And so this man came from Ghana. And he worked in a hotel. He carried suitcases to people's rooms when they checked into one of the real fancy hotels in New York.

But he listened to the radio broadcast. He's already a Christian, but he had a lot of questions about the Bible. And as he heard the word rightly divided, he said, that's the answer. And so this young man named Enoch began to come to church.

And then Enoch talked to his friends. And another one came. And another one came. And pretty soon they had about five Ghanaian young men who were coming to the church. And they were gung-ho Christians and gung-ho grace believers.

[13 : 51] And after a while, Enoch said, you know, guys, his friends, the Ghana guys I call them, he says, Ghana, you know, how come this message isn't being preached in our homeland back in Ghana?

We need to do something about that. And so Enoch went back to Ghana, goes back every once in a while, flies in there. And Enoch landed in Accra and then took another smaller plane up to Kumasi, which is sort of the capital of the Ashanti kingdom there in the middle of Ghana.

And he got off the plane in Kumasi, and he got in a cab, and he talked to the cab driver. And he said, I want you to take me to a grace church here in Kumasi. The cab driver said, I don't know what that is.

And so Enoch says, well, let me tell you what a grace church believes. He said, he's probably looking for a good way to witness, you know. He says, a grace church is a place where they believe that Jesus died for our sins, and you're saved by grace through faith, not because you do something or get baptized, but you're saved because Jesus paid for our sins.

And then when you're saved, God the Holy Spirit seals you into the body of the Lord Jesus, and you cannot lose your salvation. And when you're studying the Bible, you study the whole Bible, but you study it, focusing on the letters given by the Lord Jesus to the Apostle Paul, because that's where you see the message of grace.

[15 : 14] And so the cab, he listened, he said, I don't know of a grace church, but I know a pastor who preaches like that. And he used to have a church, but when he started preaching this, everybody left his church.

And so he started this broken down pastor. So Enoch says, well, take me to go meet him. And they go over there, and he meets a man named Pastor Peter. And it turns out Pastor Peter learned the grace message somewhere.

Someone had sent him a book, and he was the only guy in Ghana, only guy in a country of 20 or 30 million people who knew the word rightly divided. He preached it, and his church took off.

Well, Enoch and he got together, and they were on the same page in the Bible. They hugged each other. They developed a friendship. Enoch came back, told his buddies, his buddies who drive cabs, carry suitcases, have not these good-paying jobs.

They put their money together, and they start supporting Pastor Peter so that he can go on the radio and do what Pastor Dennis is doing in New York, and he can do it in Ghana. Well, Pastor Peter got on the radio with the help of these guys in New York, and I had the wonderful privilege of visiting that pastor in Ghana a year ago last February.

[16:36] There are now about 12 grace churches in Ghana, one in Kumasi in the center, and then in villages all around where people have heard the radio broadcast.

They have embraced the message of grace, and a few places, whole churches have come into the message of grace. But you have to understand, in Ghana, you've got these, basically, everything is Pentecostal.

It's either Catholic or Pentecostal or African religion. People still go to the witch doctors and have their fortunes told and all that. So the message of grace is salvation by grace through faith is hardly heard.

But now there are 12 grace churches in Kumasi. And he took us around. We preached in the main church there in Kumasi, and then we got in his car, and we drove down the highways and then turned off onto dirt roads and went 10 miles down a dirt road into the rainforest.

And you'd get to a village, and they would let the school out for the day so that the kids could come here, these preachers from New York, America, who had come to their village.

[17:46] And so all the little children wearing their uniforms and their short pants, and they would line up there in the churches, and we would come and share with them to encourage them in what they believe, what we believe.

And sometimes we would drive into a village, and you'd have the window rolled down, and the children would run alongside the car, and they'd be pointing and saying something.

And I said to Pastor Peter, what are they saying? Why are they pointing and saying? And he says, they're saying, white man, white man, because they've never seen a white person before. We went to villages where they said this is the first white person they've ever seen in their village.

It was an amazing thing. It goes back to a letter we got from Springfield, Ohio, back in 1990, and how the Lord connects things to things.

And I met a man from Ghana who went back to Ghana and got a ministry going, helped the pastor to get a ministry going in Ghana. And we had the, hey, you know, if you have \$1,500, you can go down to Delta Airlines and buy a ticket.

[18:53] They would be so happy to see you all. And they would run alongside your car going, white lady, white lady. The world is so small, and it is so amazing.

And that brings us really to Colossians. Before we get into Colossians, let's go back to Acts chapter 19 where the story gets started. Acts chapter 19, Paul is in Ephesus, which is not too far from Colossae.

They're both in the same province. Ephesus is the big city, probably second or third largest city in the empire, full of people who have come from around the world to do business.

And in Acts chapter 19, we read in verse 8, he went into the synagogue and he spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

But when some of them were hardened and did not believe but spoke evil of the way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

[20:01] And this continued for two years so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. I believe towards the end of Paul's life, I mean, we're in chapter 19 here, and in a couple of chapters he's going to be arrested, and we will stop reading about his ministry and he'll be in prison.

But by this time, I believe Paul had developed a strategy, that God had taught him a strategy for reaching the whole world.

He starts out here in the school of Tyrannus. He starts in the synagogue, but then they move into this school. They rent this building. And in the Mediterranean, in all those countries, when lunchtime comes, they lock the doors and they go home for about three hours to have lunch.

And so Paul here, now in the middle of the day, takes over the school of Tyrannus and runs a Bible study. And apparently, just about every day, he was teaching the word of God's grace in the school, and people were coming and learning it, and then they were taking it out to wherever they've come from.

I believe God gave him a strategy for reaching the world, but it's going to start from this school in Tyrannus, this big city in the center of places. And turn with me now, let's go to Colossians and see how the Colossians got involved in this.

[21 : 29] Paul writes in Colossians chapter 1, verse 28, Him we preach, Christ we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man.

Paul has a worldwide vision that every person is savable. He wants to warn every man, he wants to teach every man, and he wants to present every man perfect, mature in Christ.

He says, To this end I also labor, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily, for I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.

And right there, I think there's a great clue. Paul has a strategy, and in the verse here, he says, I want to teach every man, warn every man, teach every man, present every man. When we were reading over there in Acts, that all those in Asia, he ministered for years in the school, but all those in Asia heard the word of the Lord.

There was a church in Troas, there was a church in Colossae, hereafter, it was Laodicea, Miletus, and Ephesus. We know of half a dozen churches, and no doubt there were many other churches in Asia, but Paul, God's given him a strategy to reach the world.

[22 : 49] But the interesting thing is, it would not be Paul. Paul figured out, I'm not going to get to every place. So Paul sets up there in Ephesus, and he teaches the word, and people get it, and they go home with it.

We read about a man, Epaphras, who learned the message, and he went home to Colossae, and he taught it to the Colossians. Paul says in verse 1 here, chapter 2, verse 1, For as many as have not seen my, the Colossians have never seen Paul.

The Laodiceans have never seen Paul. And yet, Paul has now got a strategy. I go to the center here. I teach people. They go. They take it. Of course, Paul's goal, in verse 28, warning every man, and teaching every man, that we may present every man.

He has a goal. God is just as interested, in the people in Ghana, as he is in the people in New York, or in Ohio, or wherever. We are involved in something. This is the most exciting thing, going on in the world today.

Absolutely, the most exciting thing. God has a message, for every single, Paul says, I want to reach every person. And the way I'm going to do it, I'm going to set up here, I can't. You and I will not.

[24 : 01] Well, I mean, you know, we can reach a few people. But Paul's strategy is, train people, who are going to go out, the things which you've heard from me, teach them to faithful people, who will be able to teach others also.

And by chain reaction, we hand it on. We hand it on. This man, Epaphras, heard it, and he went back to Colossae. I like what Paul says, that in verse 20, I used to read verse 28, and say, oh, he can't really mean that.

He must be exaggerating. He wants to warn every man, teach every man, present every man. But Paul knew that he, you know, when Paul went to Galatia, the early trip, when he went to Galatia, he went to each town.

Up and down, you know, they stoned him. He was raised from the dead. He went to these places. Now, towards the end of his life, he realizes, I'm never going to get to every town in the world.

But if I can train people, they can go to those places, and they will train others, who will be faithful to train others, who will carry on. And so, but Paul still says in verse 29, this is my goal, and to this I am laboring, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily.

[25 : 11] I almost hear Paul with a certain note of amazement, striving according to his working. One thing that comes out to me all through this passage, all through this Colossians chapter 1-2, is that Paul tells us that what he's doing is not by his own effort, not by his own power.

This whole operation, getting this message out to the world, is not something he did of his own strength, of his own ability. I can remember, oh, it must be 40 years ago, visiting a little church.

I was saved from being a Catholic. And, did I say that wrong? I had been raised as a Roman Catholic, and went to church every Sunday, and all of that.

And, and, I got to be 18 years old, and I was totally lost.

And I knew it. I would just pray, God, keep me alive till tomorrow, because I'm not ready to die tonight. I didn't know what to believe. I no longer believed in my Catholicism.

[26 : 40] I'd gone to Catholic school, grammar school, high school. My dad was a, a firm, Catholic, and, kind of required me to go to church, but I didn't believe it.

And, some years before that, my mother was killed in a car crash. And, as a result, oftentimes, God uses the tragedies in our life, speak to us so much louder than the happy times.

And, the tragedy in my life made me aware of death, and I remember my dad going, I went with my dad to the Catholic priest, and he had \$600 that people had given at my mother's funeral to buy masses, and he bought, it sounds strange to buy a mass, but that's what you do.

You go to a Catholic rectory, and you buy, you pay the priest to say masses for the person who has died, and you give this offering in a certain amount for a high mass, a certain amount for a low mass, and all that.

I remember sitting there thinking, how many masses does it take to get a person into heaven? If a mass is Jesus dying on the cross, it is the reenactment of Calvary.

[27 : 50] How many times does Jesus have to die to get my mother into heaven? And I started to think, I don't think I believe this anymore. And other things happened, and I slowly lost my faith, but I had no faith.

I tried to be a Buddhist for a while. That didn't work very well. I tried everything. Finally, somebody knocked on my door in college and invited me to a Bible study, and I thought, oh, Bible. You know, I'm Catholic.

I know the whole Bible. I know everything in the Bible. I've never read it, but I'm sure it's all there.

And so I went to the Bible study, and I started reading, and I'm looking for the candles. I'm looking for the holy water.

I'm looking for the rosaries. And I'm quietly sitting there being shocked that the Bible doesn't talk about the religion that I've been practicing. And instead, the Bible said that Jesus died for me.

And I always knew he died. His crucifix was up in front of the church. I carried one in my pocket. I knew that he died, but I didn't know why he died. And then I read in the Bible that Christ died for the ungodly.

[28 : 52] He took the blame for my sins, and he paid so that I could get into heaven. And I've been trying to get myself into heaven. And so, first of all, it kind of cleansed out the candles in the holy water.

And then I had to ask myself, do I believe 2,000 years of tradition, of men's opinions, or will I believe the word of God? And I thought, I think I should believe the word of God.

And then I thought, but you know what? If Jesus comes into my life, I'm that close. But I thought, if Jesus comes into my life, he's going to move in and start moving all the furniture around.

He's going to be rearranging my life, and I'm not sure that I want that to happen. And so, again, I kind of backed away, and one day I finally said, just what is so great about your life right now that you don't want Jesus to come in and rearrange it.

And so that night, I had heard a man preach in our college meeting, and I went to bed. I said, Lord, I want to become a Christian tonight.

[29 : 59] I want to trust in the Lord as my Savior, and believe that he died for my sins. And that was when I was 19 years old, and he did come into my life, and he did, he did change my life.

A few years later, I'm sitting in a Baptist church up in Wisconsin, visiting a girl who would become my wife, and I'm sitting in church, just going to church, and at the end of the sermon, the pastor came down the steps, walked down the aisle, walked right up to me, and he shook my hand, and he said, are you thinking about becoming a preacher?

I said, no, not at all. But I, you know, all of a sudden, people started doing that. It happened in a church in Chicago, a church up in Wisconsin.

All of a sudden, people were coming to me who knew nothing about it, didn't even know me, who started talking to me about becoming, I'd like to say today, as that minister, when I said no, I'm not thinking, he said, we need preachers.

And I want to say today, it's still true, 40 years later, we need preachers. There are people, there are cities, there are countries, people need, how will they hear without a preacher?

[31 : 12] If you're thinking about being a preacher, God needs, the word Jesus said, pray that God will send out laborers into the field. Well, the Lord sent me, and I remember sitting there thinking, well, I can't do this.

I would never be, I'm a Catholic kid that got saved, and I know very little about the Bible. I know I'm saved, but, and then you get to this verse, to this end I labor, striving according to his working. You may be sitting there saying, I can't do this. I could never get up and speak. The first time I had an opportunity to speak, I was in a Pentecostal church, and the minister, I was just, I didn't even know what Pentecostal meant.

I just was there. We were on the radio that night, crowd of several hundred people, and I remember we were standing, and I saw the minister up in the front pointing at me, and his assistant came all the way around in the back, and he said, Pastor, so-and-so would like you to come up here.

I said, well, I don't know. I've never been up in front of something like this. I said, well, okay, and I went up, and the pastor that night, he kind of interviewed me a little bit.

[32 : 30] He asked me what my name was, and I opened my mouth, and nothing came out because I was scared to death. All these people hitting their tambourines and things, and all the excitement of that night.

When he asked me what my name was, I go, and I was speechless. And then later on, he said, I'm going to give you a prophecy. You're going to be a spokesman for the Lord.

I remember standing up there saying, yeah, sure. I'm going to be a spokesman. I can't even say my own name, but I'm not Pentecostal, and I don't believe in prophesying, but I do believe that God can use a lot of funny ways.

If he could use Caiaphas to say, better that he would die than that the whole nation. God can use anybody, and that was one of the things, but I always thought, man, God has picked the wrong guy to be a preacher.

And I cling to this verse where Paul says, I'm striving according to his working. And then the end of the verse, I almost hear Paul saying, and he works in me mightily.

[33 : 33] Sort of the amazement. Maybe you're not amazed at Paul, and maybe you're not amazed at me, but I'm amazed at what the Lord is doing in my life, because I know where I came from, and I know the whole process.

And I look back and I go, this is quite amazing. I remember, I was at a dinner one time, a church dinner, and we were sitting at a table, and desserts were being given out, you know, people getting their desserts.

The man across there had a cheesecake, cheesecake with raspberry sauce on top. I thought, that looks pretty good. So one of the women came over to me and said, Pastor, what would you like for dessert?

And I go, well, I think I like what that guy's got over there. That cheesecake with the raspberries looks pretty good. Well, you know, when you're reading your Bible, sometimes you come across one of those verses that's the cheesecake with the raspberries on top, and you say to yourself, well, I say to myself, when I get to verse 29, I say, I want to get some of that.

If Paul is saying, I'm striving according to his working, which works in me mightily, I say, man, give me some of that. In my life, I want to taste what the Apostle Paul was experiencing there.

[34 : 48] I want to get some of that. Well, striving according, it's amazing as, you know, as we give our lives to the Lord, how surprising and amazing it is where he takes us and how he uses us.

And then we look back and say, that just wasn't me. It's not me here today. It's not me there in Brooklyn. I am so thankful that it doesn't have to be me. That we can strive according to his working, his working that works in us.

And when we do that, we say, you know, sometimes you just get amazed. It's amazing. Striving according to what he's doing in me. You back up a little bit in the passage.

Paul has this theme. He says in verse 5, Colossians chapter 1, verse 5, he says, because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you, since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth, as you learned from Epaphras.

Now at the end there, we learn that God used the man who learned it from Paul, and this man carried it home to Colossae. But earlier, has it ever struck you, it's kind of strange, verse 6, that the gospel, the word of the truth of the gospel has come to you.

[36 : 23] It's like Paul says, the gospel is a living thing. God sends this gospel and it comes to people. It moves around. It goes to Ohio.

It goes to New York City. God puts it in somebody's heart. I mean, God is the one who is working within that person's life, and then God is the one who is taking this message and He's putting it into the heart of somebody and saying, there ought to be a grace church in that city, or there ought to be a grace church in that country.

We went to Ghana and we spent most of the time, almost two weeks, just visiting different churches. And at the end of our visit, we drove down to the coast, about a four-hour drive down to the Atlantic coast.

And there's an old castle, old fort there, block-long fort with the cannons aimed out at the ocean.

The British built the fort maybe two or three hundred years ago.

But the main purpose of the fort was to collect slaves. All the slave trails led from the interior to this building, and they took us down in the pits underneath the building where the slaves were kept.

[37 : 40] And in darkness, a thousand men in one, a thousand women in another, in these pits, you know, the basement of the castle.

And then there's a walkway. And it's just, it's unspeakable. Just, the excrement of the people was never cleaned.

There were no restrooms or latrines. It was just on the floor. It was, they dug out these things and the marks were like two feet up on the wall of how deep the filth in the, I mean, people were treated like, they're just horrific.

You go in there, I mean, I'm not, you know, my ancestors didn't come from there, but people who go there whose ancestors are from Africa who came over as slaves, they go in and they weep.

They weep to see the places where people scratched their fingers on the walls of this keep. And then they would take them down these nicely designed, these chutes sort of sidewalks underground and then out and through the door of no return and they take you on the slave ship to America, South America, wherever.

[38 : 58] We were visiting, we went to see this and after we came out we had arranged to meet someone and ten people, ten young people from Liberia met us on the beach in Cape Coast in Ghana.

These ten people have been living for the last 15 years in a refugee camp in Ghana. There was a civil war which has just recently been settled in Liberia and these ten people that we met had seen their parents be killed in the civil war.

They had seen their parents killed in front of their eyes and they had run for their lives and now they were living in these camps in Ghana as refugees and somehow or other I didn't hear the story how this happened but somehow or other the message of grace had gotten into one of those camps and there was now a church an assembly of about 200 of these very young people in their 20s who are now meeting together to study the word of God rightly divided to learn the message of grace and they wanted to meet us.

They called and made appointment and we met down there on the beach and again Paul says this gospel has come to you as it has come to all the world. I am constantly amazed at how God takes God it's like the gospel has got legs the gospel has got feet and Paul says it just goes God's behind it God's pushing it along God opens the door for a man in New York to go to Ghana God opens the door of a man in Ghana to preach the message of grace God opens the door in this refugee camp for these people and now they've gone home to Liberia to continue that ministry wow that's exciting the gospel has come to you and then at the end you get to verse 7 and he says just as you learn from Epaphras God's looking for some Epaphrases God's the one that's doing the work but God is looking for some people that he can use you don't have to be I love this I love this book A Brilliant Mind you don't have to be brilliant though

I am going to read this I do need this I need more than this but I need this I don't feel I need to increase my brain power I feel like I'm losing it I just want to stop I just want to stop but we don't have you know God takes ordinary people because we're all ordinary people Paul prays for them in verse 9 since the day we heard of it we do not cease to pray for you and ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you may have a walk

worthy of the Lord fully pleasing him fruitful in every good work wow we are praying Paul's praying I'm praying that this message you know that you might be completely filled with it that it may the idea of being filled in the scripture is to be controlled by this message that you will take what you know and lift up your eyes and get going like the guy who carries the suitcases in the hotel in New York he could be looking at suitcases all of his life and just carrying his suitcases and say [42 : 27] I'm just I'm just Enoch and I'm just this immigrant who carries these suitcases but Enoch has got his eyes up his eyes are looking around Enoch says how come this message and Enoch is being filled with the message being filled with this message of God's grace like Paul who said he's working in me mightily Enoch says I want some of that I want to taste that and so Enoch goes back to his home and starts a ministry which now multiplies into twelve churches fantastic Paul says that you may be filled that you may walk I'm sorry that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom sometimes we're so slow this is God's working this is God's doing all you gotta do is kinda say Lord I'm here I'm available send me somewhere send me to someone Lord I can't do it but you're gonna work in me mightily and I wanna taste some of it

I wanna know I don't wanna just read it I wanna be filled with it I wanna hear what he's saying I wanna live what he's saying we have a saying in New York you know I think it's true here but a lot of times we call ourselves grace believers to draw a distinction we're Christians but we are grace believing Christians we're grace believers but we got to this verse a few years ago and we realized you know we should change that name we should not just be grace believers but according to this verse here verse 10 you may walk worthy of the Lord fully pleasing and fruitful in every good work verse 11 strengthened with all might so we changed our name we call ourselves grace good works believers because grace is not meant to put us to sleep I mean I know sometimes sometimes people accuse us of that well you grace people you know you just grace grace grace Paul Paul Paul and all of that but Paul says you know grace is God's message of grace is not something that is to put us to sleep and just say okay I'm going to heaven what's on TV tonight or whatever rather it says here that we would be fully fully pleasing him and fruitful in every good work isn't that amazing working according to his working which works in me mightily I'm praying that you may be fruitful in every good work so we started calling ourselves the grace good works believers and then we got to chapter 3 we added one more another favorite verse Colossians chapter 3 Colossians chapter 3 verse well let's start at verse 11 12 therefore as the elect of God holy and beloved put on tender mercies put on a heart of compassion put on kindness put on humility put on meekness put on long suffering bearing with one another forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint even as Christ forgave you so you also do but above all these things put on love which is the bond of perfection and so now we want to be known as grace good works well dressed believers and we are well dressed with such things as compassion and kindness and humility and meekness and long suffering and bearing with one another and on top of everything in verse 14 putting the ribbon putting on the ribbon on top of it all putting on love which is the bond that holds it all together with perfection

I have I have very much looked forward to being with you today and I thought that I wanted to share with you some of the things that are the most important to me we didn't do it verse by verse but I wanted to hit some things that it's God's work that we're involved in the most exciting thing going on in the whole universe is going on right here and in places like this all around the world and the man who was involved in getting this thing going said he's working in me mightily and then he writes and he prays and he says I pray that this message will so fill your life that you will not just be carrying your suitcases around and doing your job that you might open up and look up and realize you're involved in the most important thing in the world and that it might bear fruit in our lives the fruit of every good work and fully pleasing to him and a heart that would say

Lord I want to taste I read in the Bible about these things but I don't want to just read about it I want to taste that I want to be able to say he works in me mightily I don't want to just read about what he's doing in somebody else's life I want to be able to give that testimony myself I am so thankful that through the years God has shown me more and more that it's not me and that I don't have to be afraid that I can't do something that I don't have to hold back and say well somebody else should go I'm so thankful that the Lord has showed like here that the gospel comes God God God raises up people he sends them out and the gospel comes God God God God's doing something and we have the privilege of being part of it I am thankful for your prayers and your partnership in this ministry in New

[48 : 36] York that has at times even gone to Africa reached out with people we have people in our assembly from many different countries around the world and I'm hoping I find I don't know why I really don't know why but I find that I seem to be I seem to have a thing about clearing my calendar I don't know why it's like we have now have an associate pastor in our church in New York and we have a couple other guys a guy named Angel and a guy named Gregory who are in the process of becoming pastors and I find myself almost obsessed with getting these guys trained and getting them into the ministry and I keep saying but Lord what will I do after that this guy can go to the Bronx and this guy can stay in Brooklyn and this guy can go to Queens but Lord where is what for me I don't know I'm not sure why this is my father died last year and it was very hard to have my father die

I kept for about six months I drove back and forth a couple times a month and I would stay with him at his home and take care of him and I don't think I've ever seen someone die before like that and somehow when he died I felt very empty I felt very much like my own life and almost and somebody said to me well pastor you've got your I have to be reminded that I guess it's a normal thing in grief that you wonder how you're going to live on after someone who's important to you dies and I don't know if that's having an effect on me but I find myself like with this obsession to finish this work to finish this work in New York and that's why I said I don't need this I don't need to become more brilliant I would like to know what the Lord wants me to do and I would really appreciate if you pray for me

I am so thankful for what has happened over the last few years in New York and thankful for what we've done together there and I wonder what to do next and it's the strangest thing when you have your calendar getting cleared off and you wonder what is it going to be so I'd appreciate your prayers pray for a guy named Joe who became a pastor last week and a guy named Angel and a guy named Gregory who are going to be pastors pray for a group of people that they will be faithful and what they learn they will hand on to others to hand on to others there was a grace church in New York many years ago I found records of it way way back in the 30s it's not there anymore just gone and I know that that can happen to any grace church and I want to see I want to see these grace people there 50 years from now maybe the Lord will send me I've been thinking that you know we have a lot of people in our church from Barbados and I've been watching these ads on TV and that looks like a pretty cool place to go no grace church is in

Barbados Trinidad St. Lucia we have people that came from these places so maybe maybe next time I come back I'll be telling you about Barbados that would be great but I'd also love to hear from you say I wanted to taste some of that myself and I'm getting to know what Paul's writing about here our father we are thankful for you we're thankful that we have come to know the living God and that you are at work many times in such hidden ways that yet you are working out your plan father I thank you that wherever we go wherever we go there are always some people there's some people we can find who who will trust in the Lord and people who will come to know the word rightly divided the message of grace father I thank you that there's so many open doors around us I pray that we might have that hunger to taste a little bit of what we've read in the scripture that we might be able to say striving according to his working which works in me me too works in me too mightily father that we might be good grace good works well dressed believers fruitful in every good work we're thankful for your goodness to us we thank you for sending your son to die for our sins we thank you for making us part of the most exciting project going on in the whole universe

I pray that we might be faithful that you will you will strengthen us and give us give us that wisdom that Paul right that wisdom and insight into the word to go home to go back and to live it we are thankful for knowing you as the living God and that you take flawed and broken people like us and you can use us thank you we pray for anyone that's come today who has never trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ father that was the greatest day of our lives when somebody told us that we could be saved that Jesus died for our sins that he's alive today and that we can come to him and we can trust in him as our savior in that moment start a new life father we pray if someone has come that today might be that day right now that they would trust in him and be saved and father in our own lives we pray that we might dedicate our as a living sacrifice that we might present ourselves put our faces down on the ground and just give ourselves lock stock and barrel everything in our lives to you father that you would use us wherever you want to send us whatever you want to do with us father we thank you for the open doors and the opportunities around us and pray that you will help us to buy up the opportunities and to redeem the time and father we pray with compassion for those

who still need to hear that there is life in the midst of this dying dead world that you offer eternal life a home in heaven fellowship with you the holy spirit to live in us and to change our lives and father we thank you for hope in a hopeless place for life in a dead place for light in a dark place thank you for saving us and coming into our lives and father we pray we pray that you would use us to reach to others to be used by you thank you we pray all of these things in the name of our savior the lord jesus christ amen don't thank you