

Praise Be to God

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[0 : 00] Very thankful for those that have traveled to be here. I keep feeling in my mind you've had 37 years to forget me. And God by his grace has kept me in your mind and I'm thankful for it.

He certainly has kept you in my mind and my heart. And Cindy and I are very glad to see the continued blessing of God upon this work. Thank you for the welcome that we have received and for the blessing it's been so far.

I'd like us to turn to 1 Peter. 1 Peter chapter 1. And our beginning is with verse 3.

And really we're starting with just the first part of verse 3. And then going to return to the rest of verse 3 and then turn to two other passages. The passage we're focusing on as we start is the wonderful doxology in 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 3.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And our real focus at the beginning will be that doxology.

[1 : 24] Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that phrase will be the one we'll return to because the same words, praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, appear three times in the exact same words in the scripture.

twice by the apostle Paul, once by Peter, doxology of praise for God in all his goodness and grace to us. And then there are particular things about which he praises the grace of God.

And those are three things that have reminded me of Grace Fellowship Church, especially the early years. And so our attention this morning is first to look at the doxology and then to look at that doxology here, that doxology in Ephesians, and that doxology in 2 Corinthians.

So let's ask the Lord to help us as we look first at this doxology itself and how it brings to mind the early years of Grace Fellowship Church.

Let's pray. Our great God, we thank you for the privilege of gathering together in this place, for the opportunity of remembering the amazing grace of God to this assembly, to look back to the wonder of the things you did in the early years, to look around and see that you have not abandoned this work, but rather continued it and united people to rejoice and bless the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 07] We'd ask you to be with us now and cause our meditation together today to be that which encourages our hearts in Christ. And Lord, if there be any in our midst, and there probably are, who have not personally committed their lives to Jesus Christ, who somehow have held back, somehow have postponed that to another time perhaps, if there's any here that have never really understood clearly the things of God in such a way as to capture their hearts, Lord, you know who they are.

Would you speak to them today? You've made promises concerning your word. You said it would not return into your void, but would accomplish the things where to you sent it. And so we're especially concerned that you'd send forth your word, Lord.

Your promise is connected with your sending it forth. And so will you send it forth? Will you send it forth to the one that needs it most today? Will you do a work of grace in the hearts of some even today?

And will you bless all of us and encourage all our hearts? We look to you with praise and thanks, and we exalt your name together. Lord Jesus Christ, we worship you.

Help us now, we pray. In your dear name, amen. Amen. The passage, the doxology passage, seems simple on the surface, and yet there's so much in it that it reminds me of Grace Fellowship Church.

[4 : 38] Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There's so much theology in that verse. There's so much to think about.

There's so much meaning in it. It's not simply a praise you Jesus type saying. And that's the thing that characterized Grace Fellowship Church from the beginning.

Those that were gathered together didn't want to despise those people who simply think, well, Christ is my only creed, and I love Jesus, and that's all that counts. Well, that's wonderful when there are Christians that love Jesus.

But there's some that would like to think more about Christ, to understand more of the height and depth and breadth. We know so little, and we long to know more. And we realize there's a wonderful richness in God's word.

And think of the richness in this passage. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Every word full of significance. Every word full of praise to the great God who loved us in such a way as to send his Son to live the life that we couldn't live, to die on the cross, to pay for our sins, and to rise again from the dead.

[5 : 50] And God the Father sent him. For God so loved the world that he didn't want you and me to perish, but he sent his own Son in order that those that believe on him should be spared.

That's a wonderful message that it's God in his love that sent Jesus. People see how different that is from concepts of God somehow bad in the Old Testament and Jesus kind of does something to change the badness of God.

People came to see that just isn't right. God is a God of love. God saw the world that he has made fallen short and turning astray from God. And God did not want people to perish.

At least not all the people to perish. He had those that he set his love upon from the beginning of eternity and he did not want them to perish. Well, it's wonderful to praise God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is a biblical concept of God. This is a biblical picture full of the wonder of the Lord. God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 58] He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Wasn't that a thing that was so important to the early people that wanted to learn God's word is that he is our Lord Jesus Christ. He's the one who is to come over and take over our lives and to guide and direct us as our Lord in our lives.

And people saw that and when they heard the challenge from God's word, their heart ran out to that. The Lord Jesus Christ. He's Jesus, the Savior. He came to pay the penalty for our sins and he is the one that saves his people from our sins.

And what a wonderful thing that was to think about and to realize that. And then the name Christ opened out the reality of he's the Christ, the anointed one.

The Christ, the anointed one. The one that God purposed from the beginning to come and to be the prophet, anointed of God. The priest, anointed by God. The king, anointed by God.

This was the one that we gather to worship. The greatness and the wonder of who he was. The things that move people to find others that believe the same kind of way and enter into a covenant they can learn together of the wonder of this great God.

[8 : 09] And that sense of the greatness and the wonder and the complexity, the wonder of God. These things were the things that move people together. They wanted to hear and when they heard some they wanted to hear more.

There was a yearning of the heart to see the height and depth and breadth and to know the love of God that passes knowledge. And there were things that I personally received from Grace Fellowship Church.

That whole concept of desiring to understand the whole picture. There's things that I learned that have stamped my ministry since then. The one thing that I hope is still somehow returned to here, it certainly was wonderful when I was here, was the panorama.

The concept of the whole Bible, the history of the Bible. The Bible being the only book that starts at the beginning and ends at the end and it's an unfolding of one story.

I came to see that even as we were here at Grace Fellowship Church, the unfolding story of the gospel. Now Adam and Eve created by God, perfect and yet they fell.

[9 : 13] And God, not indifferent to that falling, brought judgment. And we saw a little picture of an ark. God brought judgment. Was that the end of the picture? No, man came and still rebelled against God. The building of the Tower of Babel and then the judgment of God and the dispersing of the nations and the affecting of the languages.

So that's the reason all the people in the world speak these different languages and that picture. And then out of those nations, God raising up one man, Abraham, and making the wonderful promises to Abraham that he made in Genesis 12.

The promise to make a great nation of him and through him should all the nations of the earth be blessed and the whole story of the Bible unfolding from there. And what God is doing unfolding from there.

From one man in order to make a nation needing to bring a child into the world. The child comes into the world and has children and Jacob goes to Egypt with the people of God and multiplies to two and a half million people.

You've got people for a nation. God promised it to Abraham and you've got people for a nation and they're in Egypt long enough to build up to two and a half million people but that's not enough to make a nation.

[10 : 21] You've got to have leadership. Some of you remember you've gone over that this is the precious truth that is pictured here and the idea of the scope of the picture. There's the people. There are people.

That's sufficient for a nation but you need leadership and the God of heaven and earth raises up Moses to be the leader. But a people also need a law and a culture and God gives the Ten Commandments and all the aspects of the culture that make it a nation and then God gives them the last thing they need.

They need a place and God gives them the geography of the Holy Land and in that context raises up the kingdom till it comes to its height in David and Solomon and there we have a great nation in answer to the prayer of Abraham 1500 years before.

God has brought about a great nation in Solomon and David and it's pictured the coming king and then you remember the kingdom then is broken apart and the important person from that point on is the prophet who is calling men back to the God that created them and pointing them forward to the God the Jesus that will come and you have the prophet as the key person and then you have the break in the whole well you can you've gone over the panorama you have the break in the whole continuity during the Babylonian captivity when idolatry is rooted out of the land and then you have the people there and then the message cut off for 500 years and nothing from God for 500 years until the heavens declare unto you this day in the city of David a savior who is Christ the Lord and so you see Christ coming in as the working out the story of the scriptures I saw that here I was taught that here it wasn't what I brought to teach it was what I learned and it's been a part of my thinking because of Grace Fellowship Church and of course after Jesus dies and rises again from the dead before he ascends to heaven he says go to all the world and preach the gospel isn't that the question of Abraham through you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed and Jesus before he ascends says go to all the world and preach the gospel to every creature and then we follow history through we don't have the Bible at that point but we come to the next 500 years which comes to the fall of Rome and then we have the next 500 years and that comes well I always remember there is

William the Conqueror because England was established at that point this is history this isn't from the scriptures England established and English being such a mess such a language for declaring the truth of God and then 500 years later of course Luther comes and there's the Reformation and 500 years later 2000 the coming of the Lord well of course the dates are not exactly where they need to be and what God might do at the end of 2000 years where the 2000 years we're at 2018 2018 what's God going to do is there another thousand years we don't know of course but there's the picture the scripture gives and I remember that being displayed and becoming so much a part of my thinking that Grace Fellowship Church and what it ministered to me has been a part of my ministry for 37 years and as I've taught at Northumberland Christian School I can say that at least for the last 35 years there has not been a single person graduate from Northumberland

[13 : 51] Christian School that couldn't draw the diagram of the panorama as it as it culminates in the Lord Jesus Christ as it culminates in the 2000 AD new heavens and new earth whenever that will be and the wonderful thing of that story is that you can put if I had the whole diagram you can put the point there and challenge kids this is where you are there's the unfolding of history from 2000 BC to 1500 to 1000 BC to 500 BC and then to the time of Christ and then to 500 AD and so on and here's the whole panorama of history and you can point this is the point where you are there once are you going to be a part of all that God is doing in this world are you going to say no to all of that and pursue your own selfish and individual interests and bring destruction upon yourself you can challenge kids that this is the panorama of history over which God reigns supreme and it's a beautiful picture and it's an unfolding of the whole scripture and you can place any book in the Bible in that panorama you can put any point in history in that whole panorama well that's a treasure and for my own experience at Grace Fellow at First Baptist Church in Northumberland at Northumberland Christian School there's not been a graduating class for 35 years that hasn't been able to draw that panorama have I been enriched by Grace Fellowship Church has it been something that's spoken to my heart indeed it has it's people that love the truth wanted the whole Bible wanted to understand everything the Bible teaches so far as we could trying to learn and people teaching each other and the life of God existing in the church and it's it's rooted in doctrine in the truth of God an exciting reality of the truth of God and in a context of worship isn't that what it is praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ so it's in the context of praise to God wasn't that characteristic of things from the beginning praising and magnifying God even as as we have to the glory of God done today it's been a praising of God and it's been a very personal reception of those truths because that's in this passage too it says praise be to the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ so in all of this praising and magnifying God and seeing the expanse of it and recognizing the unfolding of history and our place in history and how it all looks we can say praise be to the to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ now that's been the background and the testimony of Grace Fellowship Church have you caught anything of a glimpse of that have you seen anything of the idea of all of history spread out displaying by God from God displaying the wonderful work of grace that he has carried on the wonderful fulfillment of purposes that he has determined from the beginning the gathering of people to himself and the forming of people and the bringing Jesus Christ into the world and then sending forth from the gospel to all the corners of the earth the message of the gospel that in some remarkable and amazing we reached you you heard the gospel you heard the message of salvation you heard that Jesus died for sin and that believing on him you could be saved you heard it in a culture so utterly different from the scripture and so far away they didn't even know we existed the world didn't even know this part of the world existed and it did exist and God knew that it existed and God was pleased to send forth someone who was it how did you come to hear the gospel who spoke to you

Connie Kroc Gene Cannon who spoke to you about the gospel of Christ did Alan Walp speak to you well you have to be fairly old to be able to say when they did but somebody did God sent somebody in answer to the the call of Jesus and the gospel reached to you it's amazing that it got to you it's amazing that God working all those things in all the nations of the earth bringing to pass these things that the message reached you but it reached you because God didn't want you to perish has it reached some of you and you haven't come to Christ I know the gospel has reached you I just told it if you didn't hear it before you heard it from me has it reached you and you've not seen come to Christ believe on him turn from your selfish pride and sin come to Christ why did God bring the message to you that you'd be sunk deeper into hell

God brought the message that you might be saved and he calls you to himself well that's the message I got from Grace Fellowship Church and tried to give some of it and has it affected my life sure has has it affected the lives of everybody my life has touched to the glory of God it has and often it's been because of your prayers because some of you haven't forgotten me in the 37 years I've been gone you've remembered me and you prayed for me and I thank you and I'm thankful to be a part of a work that had such a beginning may God by his grace continue to sustain well now that's Mark Church has a clock right out there and I'm supposed to be able to see how long I'm going and I don't want to tire you oh I've got some time because I want to go to the other places where this text I want to enlarge on what this text is saying we've looked at it as a wonderful doxology praise be to the

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ but look how he goes on in 1 Peter in his great mercy he's given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead in his great mercy he's given us new birth now that makes me think of Grace Fellowship Church to the beginning because people were being born again and it's so wonderful to see people step from darkness to light people that didn't understand somehow couldn't understand the light dawns they see what God's talking about they recognize the reality that this isn't just words it's a reality you can remember when God showed you and that sort of thing was taking place at the early years in Grace Fellowship Church people were hearing the gospel they were sharing the gospel people were seeing people's lives they were being born again by the spirit of God and that's a wonderful part of my remembrance of the beginning of

[20 : 54] Grace Fellowship Church it's people being saved people's eyes being opened people who before were either in terrible ignorance or stubborn resistance or something that kept them from Christ and finally they see they recognize it and they move in such a way as people do when they're born again by the spirit they long to testify of the wonder of who God is they long to follow the Lord in the ordinance of baptism they long to join with the people of God and their hearts rejoice in the singing and the praise and all of that was happening and so when Peter says praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in his great mercy he's given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead that's what did it recognizing Jesus Christ rose from the dead and giving me a hope in eternity and a hope for life and some who had faced nothing but a hopeless life came to have hope because of

Jesus and that's what God did in our midst and Peter is saying praise God for this and I say praise God for this and some of you are part of that where God was pleased to open your eyes to see praise God praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living home through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead well that's what I remember about Grace Fellowship Church and from what I understand it's still going on and what a wonderful thing it is people are hearing the message of the gospel and believing and it's the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men and women and boys and girls that enables them to see the truth no man comes to the father except the it comes to Jesus except the father draws him some of you have been drawn some of you have seen and it's a wonderful thing to think about well I associate with Grace

Fellowship Church I don't associate it here with this church alone I'm thankful to see that same activity going on in the place where I've served for these 37 years and I see many from the school who come to Christ and join churches and are part of a serving of the Lord Jesus Christ and I can't hear of it without thinking praise be to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who's given us new birth well that's one place where the praise be comes but turn with me to Ephesians chapter 1 all of these are in chapter 1 verse 3 and Peter uses the word the phrase exactly and Paul uses it twice exactly the same words look at it as it appears in Ephesians chapter 3 it says praise be to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ creating an enthusiasm for heaven a creating in the hearts of people a delight at the thought that there's a home that

God has prepared for us makes us able to turn from this world and the things of this world because he's put upon ourselves a hope for something far greater now God's given us a wonderful life here there have been struggles and difficulties that most of us have faced but it's wonderful to live here there are many blessings many things to make us delight and be glad to be here I'm very conscious that I want to go to heaven and see Jesus but I won't have any grandchildren in heaven and I really want to enjoy my grandchildren too and so I'm torn between the two to depart and be with Christ which is far better or to remain which I hope will be better for them I know it'll be better for me to see more of them who I won't see in that sense in heaven there are blessings in the world that won't be in heaven and we long to enjoy them the best we can and then in the glory to the glory of God be transferred to his presence where all is more wonderful to be sure but we won't have any grandchildren in heaven so there is something that keeps drawing us here and here we are in a betwixt between betwixt two and what do we say we glorify God that he's given us a wonderful treasure in heaven and we delight in all the blessings that he's been pleased to give us in the heavenly realms the gifts of

God but you know what that does to me as I think about Grace Fellowship Church it brings me back to the church and the gifts he gave to the church we've sung things by Keith Gates wonderful gift to the church we've enjoyed the ministry of people who reached out to us and blessed us wonderful ways in which these gifts have been manifest in the lives of people now one thing that happened early on in Grace Church is everybody when we came to a point where we discussed whether the gifts have ceased and about the spiritual gifts and all those things it seems to me those conversations are still going on maybe not here but still find people discussing the whether or not this is continuing or whether this finished with the apostles and that's a very interesting study but you know in the midst of it all God has wonderfully gifted his church and we saw at Grace Fellowship Church people with gifts serving others people having perspectives that enlarge our perspective I remember some song by Dave Kotzko a phrase sticks in my mind and will forever from here where he somehow in the midst of the song was thinking of the cherubim in the presence of God and here's how he described them creatures that would dazzle your eyes being dazzled by him

[26 : 45] I think that's so beautiful people that would dazzle your eyes being or creatures that would dazzle your eyes being dazzled by him what do you feel at the thought of a cherubim they are feeling that at the thought of God what a glorious creature creatures that would dazzle your eyes being dazzled by him there's that vision of the wonder of what heaven will be we don't know very much about what heaven will be it's very hard to think of what would it be like and how will we communicate and in I mean if our bodies in the ground and we're spirits in heaven how do you recognize anyone how do you talk questions that come all through your mind there's so much that we don't understand but there's in our heart a desire to behold Jesus a recognition that whatever it is and however inadequate my ideas are there's a reality that goes beyond all my ideas and I will be part of that wonderful reality and I'm willing to rejoice in it though I realize that even my words are very inadequate and my thoughts equally inadequate I cannot understand and yet I love and appreciate the thought of Christ and the thought of seeing him well that kind of thing was catching people up in priest fellowship church excitement with God and it manifested itself in gifts manifested to encourage one another well I think of that when I look at this passage the gifts in the heavenly when God says set your mind upon the things of God where you want it to be set your hearts upon the kingdom of

God where Christ is and isn't that where you want your heart to be and you want your thoughts to be and that kind of thing is generated now maybe that's all just part of what it is to be saved wasn't it part of what it was for you to be saved when God brought you to Christ didn't heaven become dearer didn't the thought of having an eternal home and being being a pilgrim here don't you feel like a pilgrim don't you feel like this world is not your home isn't there something yearning heaven word in you that somehow lifts you up and and you really long and there's a sense in which there's a culmination of your life and it's found at the feet of Jesus and whatever that means isn't there a longing in your heart well that's the kind of thing we saw as people were saved turning from idols to serve the living God excited by the things of God wanting others to see that kind of thing is there and I think of that when it says praise be to the God of the father of our

Lord Jesus Christ who blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ brings back grace fellowship to me has it come to you as it have you come to see those things it's a wonderful reality in heaven it's a wonderful reality that we glimpse from afar but we long for it and that's part of what the spirit of God does when he opens our eyes well that I remember and that has been an encouragement to me and said what did God do with the people early days of the church one of the things he did was that give them a sense from heaven a desire for heaven and and a gift to minister to others wonderful reality well there's another I will look at the last passage that deals with or that uses that phrase exactly look at 2nd Corinthians this is in 2nd Corinthians and it's chapter 1 verse 3 again all of them are chapter 1 verse 3 Ephesians Ephesians Peter Ephesians and Corinthians 2nd Corinthians all verse 3 we saw something of this too that comes back to my mind and hit me in a special way there of course I was just young well fairly young as a Christian and I was just about to be married so I didn't have any family at the time and so a lot of these things are very formative in my life and building me as a person and and enabling me to see perhaps for the first time first time first church I ever ministered to so I'm learning a great deal I go back to that and listen to what it says in 2nd Corinthians 1 in verse 3 praise be to the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God we saw that in the early days God drawing near to comfort in hard things Alan and Virginia are here our hearts were heavy and concerned for Jeff Walt for a long time we saw a wonderful young man who loved the Lord and desire to serve him and at the heart of service and enthusiasm for the things of God and God gave him a cancer that couldn't ever be really stopped with operations and concerns and vigils and prayers and yearning and we'd like Jeff to be here today but he's in heaven today that's where God wanted him to be but you know God comforted us God helped us God didn't hear we somehow got through we prayed times and it was when there were times of anxiety and concern and we prayed together somehow God helped us to press on and be encouraging to Jeff and really use Jeff in a wonderful way it wasn't only here when he went from here he was used of

God in wonderful ways to encourage me and then in God's time he brought him home but you know I think of the comfort and the help that the Spirit of God gave in our afflictions there it's enriched my life and I'm able to comfort others partly because of the comfort that I received them and not just them there were other broken people people hurting people needing encouragement and blessing and comfort tears being cried people pouring their heart out to God and looking to him to bring the help to get through what they're facing those things took place it wasn't just Jeff and he wasn't the only because there are other things broken people who needed to be encouraged needed the blessing that God alone could give we saw that happening and people were able to put together their lives again maybe there's somebody here who needs to put his life together again has God in his wonderful sovereignty brought you here and you've got a whole broken situation and you're still outside of Christ is that the case it's wonderful to preach to people that you don't know them all now I know a few of you and I'm certainly not speaking to any of you when I'm suggesting you don't know

[33 : 34] Jesus I'll just leave that I see many reasons I think you do but are there some here who don't know Jesus haven't been born again these things aren't real I'm getting all excited about these things you're not excited or you might think look that guy's getting all excited by something well I am excited I'm excited by something that's still exciting me after 37 years being gone well 50 years of knowing Christ are you one that hasn't seen that yet what are we all about then what are all these testimonies what are the things that people can say about the goodness and grace of God is that all a game are we all playing some sort of a silly game why would we play it what's the reason what good does it get to us where does it advance us in this world to play this silly game it's not a silly game we've come in contact with reality and we long for you to know it too you young people if you come to know the reality of Jesus and really believed on him I mean you've heard about praise God you've got family that that told you about

Jesus you know I mentioned the kids when I've taught them at school I've mentioned to them that my mother and father never prayed for me once I could talk to kids who have their parents praying for them every single day and have been praying for them maybe many times a day since the time they were conceived before they were conceived that they would be conceived and they've been bathed in prayer all that time and I could talk to kids at a Christian school and they have parents that have prayed for them you know my mom and dad never prayed for me once never and maybe my mother might have been saved before she died and I'm sure there'll be some prayers for me but as growing up didn't have that at all some of you have have you believed in Jesus aren't you old enough now wait a minute you know the verse Jesus said let the little children come to me and don't forbid them for such as the kingdom of heaven are there kids in our midst today that haven't come and said Lord Jesus I if you're there I want to know would you open my eyes maybe you've heard maybe you're young and you know that God must open your eyes well that's true have you asked God to open your eyes maybe you're a little older and you know that well it's not just my asking him he's if I'm going to ask he's got to even prompt me to ask well that's true have you asked him to prompt you to ask well I wouldn't even be interested if it weren't that God does it so hey that's true have you asked him to do it whatever it is where you are could you come to Jesus and ask him to do that whatever that is could you ask him to show you could you could you do that well of course you could do that it's like you can't bat the ball it's not like a tennis game you keep batting the ball out of your court no the girls in your court because whatever you don't have in Christ ask God to give you that and whatever disinclination that you have to the things of God ask God to change them and whatever ignorance you ask ask God to show you at every point you can call upon God and ask him to show you and I urge you to do that kids that haven't yet taken the stand for

Jesus take a stand for Jesus ask God to show you pray say Lord if that's true if what he's talking about and he seems to be excited about if what he's talking about is true show me can't you do that that's what God wants you to do and God may use that to bring you to Christ and you'd be born again by his spirit I'm talking about being born again by the spirit I'm talking about seeing the wonder of heaven and seeing it as a reality and longing for it I'm talking about being really comforted in the place that you really need comfort and you do need that even you that are holding out and haven't come to Christ you know you need help you know inside you need comfort you know there's a sadness and unhappiness within you that needs to be needs to be addressed our concern is that it not begin to be addressed in the wrong way and that you not get old enough to go after ways of trying to address it in the wrong way people can look for happiness in the wrong place and never find it and so we challenge you but that's thing that I remember that kind of thing did happen early on and kids came to Christ young people came to Christ wanted their kids to know whole changes in life well that was the wonderful remembrance that I have and these that praising of God praise be to the God and father of our

Lord Jesus Christ the praising of God the complexity of who he is and the interest in all that's revealed and then the heart that says it's my Lord Jesus those things are part of great fellowship and have been part all these years and then the fact of being born again that's been a part of great fellowship church people getting born again and then the the sense of the wonder of heaven and that manifesting itself in a reaching out to others that's a part of great fellowship church it has been and God wants it to be and then the the comfort because we'll always need that there'll always be those things to break our heart there'll always be the things that tear our life apart we'll always go through things that we do not understand and that bring us simply to have to cast ourselves upon God and say God help me there'll always be those things praise God that he's always there to help us in those times of need one thing that came to mind as a thing to say with regard to this celebration of 50 years of grace excuse me there's a sermon by our by Charles Spurgeon called it's on the text revive your work in the midst of the years it's from Habakkuk and the text is revive your work in the midst of the years now the problem is that probably is not the correct translation of that passage and so if you read if you do study of it they'll say well that isn't technically the words that are actually there so you look for some other place that says that exactly and there isn't another exact place so here I've got this beautiful sermon by Spurgeon on a text that while it's very biblical it isn't perhaps what the book of Habakkuk says well I'm still going to say it's a wonderful sermon and it's full of God and one of the wonderful things about it it considers an anniversary where you're in the midst of the years and you kind of are you're in the midst of the first hundred years aren't you right there in the middle midst of the first hundred years isn't it something so we not to pray Lord revive your work in the midst of the years and if you don't look that up and of course you can find on the internet you don't have to have a whole set of Spurgeon anymore you can find everything probably if you just googled revive your work in the midst of the years boom you'd have it and seventeen bad comments on it or something always wonderful you can get anything on the you know we look up look for a text you can find it on

Google and seventeen bad sermons on it so you you never know what you got to be awfully careful with that but if you just looked up revive your work in the midst of the years it would talk about what are the special challenges of being in the midst having known the blessing having matured some in the midst of it and cooled some in the midst of it and what are the special challenges that are there with regard to that mid passage and it's wonderful encouraging it doesn't matter to me that that isn't the exact translation of that text it's certainly a wonderful idea and everything he gives to support it is from the Bible and it's my prayer that God will revive this work in the midst of the years is it as live and vibrant as it was at the beginning well dear ones probably not we don't can well are you as excited right now are you as excited with Jesus as you were when you first came isn't there some hymn that says where is the joy that once I knew when first I found the Lord isn't there some kind of a phrase like that and doesn't that echo with your heart where is the joy that once I knew when first I found the Lord there's always there's always a waning there's always a lessening in some ways can that be revived I have to say that the closest I ever knew to person to revival I've read about revivals closest I ever knew to revival was exactly what was happening in those days at Grace Fellowship Church if this wasn't revival it had the sparkle of revival and we always prayed oh Lord rend the heavens and come down there was our desire oh that God would come in power and we knew the verse that says the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea and we said Lord make that the case for us wide and deep don't you long that the earth should be known but should be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea wide and deep oh that God would do that well we came as close as I've ever had had in my ministry to that kind of magic happen in the midst of God's people and it was wonderful and I would say with

[43 : 22] Grace Fellowship Lord revive your work in the midst of the years may God send us revival may God pour out his Holy Spirit and refresh our hearts not with new things refresh our hearts with the things we already know we have learned them they have been taught we've seen the panorama we recognize God's work we realize the promises we see the faithfulness of God in fulfilling them we see what God did in history to bring them about we see all that we don't need new things but that God would revive our hearts and refresh our hearts with the wonderful Jesus is touch some hearts because there's some that haven't yet seen this and can somebody being excited about the things of God generate that in you well no and yet God sent forth his apostles as witnesses you witness what you've seen and heard and in fact God does use that in people's lives and maybe you will be saved and maybe God will speak to your heart maybe something that I've said or something that you thought while I was talking that I didn't say that's the wonder of preaching you sometimes think of something the preacher didn't say and that's a blessing because there's something more wonderful well there are many things more wonderful has any spoken to you have you come to see anything anything in your heart been warm to the wonder of who

Jesus is longing for him well I I've just challenged you that Jesus is wonderful and knowing him is wonderful and the hope of heaven is wonderful and the sustaining comfort that he gives is wonderful and the help he promises is wonderful and he calls you to enjoy that so I long for us to think about these things and be encouraged by these things and embrace these things and I really do mean it to those that haven't come to Christ the kids that not come to Jesus you need to come to Jesus this is not just a bunch of words this is a reality you need Christ older ones that it's past you all this time and you've been part of it but not really part of it what you need to be born again by the Spirit of God you need your eyes to be open to the glory of God in the face of Christ but that's exactly what God does to people opens their eyes to behold the glory of

God in the face of Christ and that's what you need so ask God for it pray that God will do that get honest with God and say Lord if that's true show me may God do that oh that God would be pleased to draw men and women boys and girls to himself and then the rest of us wonderfully refresh us in our remembrance of the goodness of God well it's a blessing to be able to think about a blessing to my own heart to say it and a blessing to tell you of the importance in my life of things like the panorama showing the outworking the unrolling of God's purposes starting at Genesis and going to the Revelation the wonderful unrolling of God's purposes well in terms of the unrolling dear ones you're right here come to Christ come to Christ today let's pray dear God we thank you for the history of this church and the way that you have worked many of us can declare we know that reality that we have beheld the glory of God in the face of Christ our hearts have been changed we've wanted you Lord you've done that Lord we know that you've continued with us you that began a good work in us kept us and continued it even until now and we have the promise you'll continue it to the day of the Lord Jesus are there any here today Lord who are far from where they were who are here in kind of a historical way to look back but not where they should be now Lord help them we pray and bring them to a knowledge of Jesus in a fresh and wonderful way Lord are there kids that have heard these things and basically could recite them but have never known the reality would you work in them Lord are there some that are trapped in sin right now and have given themselves over to ungodliness and wickedness and they've come here and they're smiling and being friendly but their lives are not where they ought to be are there says here today

Lord you know if there are Lord would you be pleased to work Lord work in us we pray and continue with us and make the next 50 years of grace fellowship church to be even more glorious grant grace we pray and thank you Lord for your love in Jesus name amen you