

**Archie Mason 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service**  
**Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro, AR**  
**Grateful for the Gospel: The Preacher and the People**  
**1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**  
**Dr. Wes George**  
**February 23, 2025**

**Highlights can be used for projection screen.**

**Introduction:** Good morning Central Baptist Church family.

We celebrate the Gospel. We celebrate the Gospel Preacher and the Gospel People. I have often said that churches and their pastors typically deserve each other. It is usually in a negative context that we discuss this. Is it the preacher or is it the church? Often times, I believe it's both. They deserve each other. So, today as we celebrate Dr. Archie Mason, Angie, Ty and Taylor and their wives and children, we also celebrate the church. It speaks volumes of the church that has a pastor for 20 years.

So today, I want to brag a lot about Jesus, and I want to express gratitude to God for the Preacher and the People of Central Baptist Church, if that's ok with y'all. And even if it's not that's what I'm going to do. And I will drive back to Rogers this afternoon and leave it with you all.

What a blessing to preach on such a glad occasion! Make no mistake today we celebrate what God has done, what His Gospel has done.

Before I start preaching, I do want to do some remembering.

I was a student at Arkansas State University for two years before transferring to UA Fayetteville where Lisa and I both graduated. While I was a student at ASU, I was a member of Central Baptist Church. Wilbur Herring was the pastor. Laverne Pickett was the minister of music. Mark Tolbert was the collegiate minister. So, I personally have some history, some might consider ancient history with the church. I have fond memories of Dr. Herring who invited me to preach at Wynne Baptist while he was serving as an interim pastor years ago after his retirement from Central.

I have more recent history with Archie.

One of my first memories of Archie was when I was in view of a call at Wynne Baptist Church and I remember praying in the pulpit area on my knees with Archie, a young ag consultant / deacon serving faithfully in the church.

I had not been there long until Archie shared with me his call to ministry which he had been considering prior to my arrival and then he felt like his baptism needed to get on the right side

of his salvation. Archie had a great sincerity and passion that was magnetic to me even then. My recollection of his baptism is that he quickly came down the steps (he did everything quickly in those days) and his feet slipped out from under him and he kind of bounced down the steps on his rear end.

After Archie started seminary, we put him on staff as an intern. He loves telling everyone that I told him that we would pay him \$8/ hour but would not pay him for working on Sunday since he was coming to church anyway. That is true. I'm sure today that it gives him a good story to tell all the young interns and staff coming on board.

But it wasn't long before it became apparent to me and everyone else that God's hand was on Archie, and he had great work ethic. His part-time \$8/hour internship soon became a full-time staff position while he was completing his M.Div. at MABTS.

We had a great time. I was the oldest at 36 or so except for a part-time pastoral care pastor. We were young and dumb but passionate. We worked hard. We were passionate about Jesus. We had fun. God blessed the church with significant growth.

Bro. Tallant Dropping bums to break the ice

Baptizing with Mike Huckabee there with the water too hot.

Getting the squirrels out of my house on Sunday morning

Duck hunting falling down, pulling Randal Caldwell into the boat

Calling him one day to see how he was doing, What do you know?

One of the most overwhelming grateful introductions that Paul wrote was in 1 Thessalonians. Paul was grateful for this congregation.

Grateful for the Gospel: The Gospel Preacher and the Gospel People

READ TEXT

1 Thessalonians 1:2-10

2We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers;  
3constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,  
4knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;  
5for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

6You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

7so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.  
8For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.  
9For they themselves report about us what kind of a <sup>a</sup>reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve <sup>d</sup>a living and true God,  
1and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

We read about the establishment of the church in Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-15 on Paul's second missionary journey. It was on this occasions that Scripture describes "these men who have turned the world upside down." Paul, Timothy, and Silas also turned Thessalonica upside down. The unbelievers at Thessalonica attacked Jason, Paul fled. The crowd followed him to Berea where Paul was also hid until he fled eventually to Corinth where Paul wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians.

Despite the aggressive opposition to Paul and the gospel, Paul obviously had tremendous gratitude and hope for these believers. He was positive, grateful, and hopeful towards these believers. It is in that same spirit that we make our journey into this text.

We celebrate today what the Gospel has done in this Preacher of the Gospel and in this People of the Gospel.

We can only celebrate today what God has done for us and in us and then through us. In particular what God has done for, in, and through Archie and what God has done for, in, and through Central Baptist Church.

### **God has created Gospel communities called churches.**

Make no mistake that this is a church. A church is defined by the Gospel. It is defined by the Word of God. The church is a fellowship, family, community. It is defined by biblical leadership, sharing the ordinances together, church discipline and membership. It is created by God through the Gospel. Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture, he was buried, and He rose again on the third day according to the Scripture. This is our hope and our message. This gospel is the message that transformed us and it is our marching orders until Jesus comes.

Jesus said, *This gospel of the kingdom will be preached to the whole world as a testimony to the nations then the end will come.* Matthew 24:14

God blesses the Gospel Preacher and the Gospel People. It is His mission strategy.

**The Gospel produces a grateful fellowship.**  
**2 We give thanks to God always for all of you**

Paul joins with Silvanus and Timothy to express their gratitude. Their gratitude is directed towards God understanding that God is the One Who gives every good and perfect gift.

While it is appropriate to give thanks to Archie for serving faithfully for 20 years and to give thanks to the church for supporting, following, and putting up with Arche for 20 years; our first line of gratitude is to God. We thank God. This is what God has done.

His gratitude is expressed for “all of you.” His thanks is to God, but his thanks is for them. We are grateful to Him for them.

Just like in a long tenured marriage, it takes both the husband and wife working together, loving, forgiving, and being steadfast to your vows and commitment. The same is true in a long tenured pastorate.

I have developed a leadership lesson on tenure. There are so many blessings of tenure. Some of those are gratitude and appreciation and abundant fruit.

We are grateful for the amazing grace of God. We are grateful for the gospel, the gospel preacher, and the gospel people. Our theme today is overwhelming gratitude for God and for all of you.

**The Gospel produces a prayerful fellowship.**  
**2. . . , making mention of you in our prayers;**

I think all of us would confess that we wish that we would have prayed more. I know I do. But I am amazed how God has blessed and answered so many of my less than the best prayers. We talk a lot about prayer and need to pray a lot more. But I have noticed that the more I talk about it, the more I do it. Not to the degree that I want or should, but the gospel compels us to prayer.

Prayer is our fruitfulness and prayer produces fruitfulness.

I love John 15 where we learn the secrets of the vine, abiding, praying, bearing fruit, glorifying God, experiencing joy. Jesus puts an exclamation point on this section with verse 16 that bridges this point and the next point I want to make today.

**John 15:16**  
**16“You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.**

Do you see the connection between prayerfulness and fruitfulness. Prayer produces fruit and prayer is the fruit.

### **The Gospel produces a fruitful fellowship.**

*3 constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father,*

Years ago, I read a book by Gene Getz entitled *The Walk*. In this book, Getz analyzed the introduction to Paul's epistles and suggested some marks of maturity that he found consistently in these epistles. 1 Thessalonians was the clearest and best example of what measures of maturity Paul was looking for and commending. They are centered around that trinity of faith, hope, and love. And we see them here.

He was "constantly bearing in mind" PAPtcNMP remembering, recalling, thinking of. It was like he could not get it out of his mind. These three things were distinct but they ran in tandem. They complement each other.

Work of faith (salvation, sanctification)

Labor of love (service)

Steadfastness of hope (expectancy, optimism, hope is close to faith, it closes the circle)

This is a continuation of the Thanksgiving. Paul describes what he is thankful for in more detail while at the same time pointing ahead to what he will be saying. He is describing how the Gospel has transformed their lives. Verse 5 is a subordinate causal clause to verse 4 explaining why he "knowing. . . His choice of you." Mainly, he knows His choice of them because of their reception, transformation by, and commitment to the Gospel.

The fruitful footprint of the ministry of Central Baptist has expanded exponentially over the past twenty years. This is an unusual church that grows and is fruitful through one of the greatest moral declines in our nation's history. It is not something to take for granted or to take credit for; but it is something to be grateful for and give God glory for.

You have been experiencing an unprecedented revival and expansion. Sometimes when you are in the midst of such a sovereign work of God, you can take it for granted. Celebrate it, be grateful for it, beg God to not take His hand off abundant blessing of God.

### **The Gospel produces a grace-filled fellowship.**

*4 knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you*

Reminds us of what Jesus said 16 "*You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain*

Grace provides hope to sinners.

Grace produces humility in me.

Grace points glory to God.

He did not choose you because you were good, better, smarter, more talented.

He did not choose you because He needed you.

He chose you because of grace.

God did not need Central. God did not need Archie. He chose both out of His grace and He appointed you all for such a time as this.

This is a unique time in the history of this church. If Jesus tarries, generations will look back on this season as an unusual season of God's providential blessing. I must confess that there are many things that I do not understand about the sovereign, providential hand of God. I know faithful men and women who labor in obscurity with little visible fruit for decades. And yet, there are churches like Central that is experiencing phenomenal, exponential fruit. I again admit that I do not understand completely why. But a few observations are:

God uses imperfect men to lead imperfect people to do extraordinary things. He always has. That's all He has to work with. We are saved by grace. We are chosen and called by grace. We are blessed by grace.

God blesses humble men in leading humble people to do what only God can do. God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.

God blesses faith.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Our faith is never perfect faith. We often struggle with faith. We often waffle with faith. But while our faith is not perfect, our imperfect faith is in a perfect God and Savior. God blesses people who do not know what God cannot do.

**The Gospel ignites a powerful fellowship.**

*5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction;*

Not in word only. It did come in word. It was not a silent assassin. It was proclaimed and preached. And it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

The gospel comes in power and conviction. It is supernatural and spiritual. It creates a dependency and expectancy on the supernatural hand of God. It is a missing element in the lives of many believers and many churches today. We have the best that education, technology, music, talent, etc. can offer; but we do not have the best that God has to offer. That is much of the reason that people and churches are impotent and fruitless.

*The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, the Jew first and also the Greek. And in it the righteousness of God is revealed. Romans 1:16-17a*

The Gospel Preacher and the Gospel People live in Holy Spirit empowered community.

**Where we are a transformed community.**

The Gospel builds a transformed community.

6 *You also became imitators. . .*

7 *so that you became examples. . .*

9 . . . *and how you turned to God from idols to serve <sup>d</sup>a living and true God,*

3 times the word *ginomai* is used here. The word literally means “become” which implies change or becoming something we were not.

We are transformed by the word.

We are transformed in tribulation.

We are transformed with joy in the Holy Spirit.

We are transformed to be an imitator & example.

The Gospel Preacher and the Gospel People live in Holy Spirit empowered community.

**Where we are a faithful witnessing bride.**

The Gospel propels a faithful witnessing bride.

8 *For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything.*

Sound the word

Show your faith

Seize your moment locally, nationally, and globally

The Gospel Preacher and the Gospel People live in Holy Spirit empowered community.

**Where we are rescuing from a coming wrath community.**

The Gospel rescues from a coming wrath.

9 *For they themselves report about us what kind of a <sup>a</sup>reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve <sup>d</sup>a living and true God,*

10 *and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.*

*“turn to God from idols to serve a living and true God”*

It is first personal to the preacher and the people. Then it becomes global to the preacher and the people.

“Turn to God from idols” highlights the distinctiveness of the gospel as being monotheistic and unique from all other religions or beliefs. This highlights the exclusivity or “narrow” way of the gospel. This is further emphasized with the statement of “to serve a living and true God” as opposed to a dead idol that is false.

Waiting speaks of hope and faith and expectancy. He came out of heaven once before, then went back into heaven, and will come from heaven once again. John 14:1-3. We work and wait until Jesus returns.

Wrath is God's settled judgment against all evil, sin, and wickedness. It is not like a sinful man's anger that escalates, and wanes based on emotions and circumstances. God is holy and perfect in every way including in His wrath.

*"wrath to come"* is literally wrath that is coming. "Come" is a present participle like "rescues". Literally, this is saying "who is rescuing us from the wrath that is coming (already)"

Your story

Turn to God from idols  
To serve the living and true God  
To wait for His Son from heaven

His story

He will come out of heaven .  
He has been raised out of the dead.  
He rescues us out of the wrath coming.

**Conclusion: We celebrate what God has done and what God is doing. God has chosen to use a man, a leader, a preacher. We can trace it back to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and then God became a Man, then Peter, Paul, Timothy. . . God uses a man. He chose and called Archie for this season at this location. He has chosen Archie out of the muddy fields, duck blinds of Biscoe and the row crops of Cross County to lead this church during this season. Fortunately, we have the benefit of looking back to see what God has done. Oftentimes, it is difficult to see in real time what God is doing. He has also chosen you. He has chosen this church for this moment in redemption history. He has chosen you to follow, encourage, keep Archie out of the ditch while trusting God to work in him. I heard Roland Maddox say about Adrian Rogers years ago. He said, when you have Moses, you better listen when he speaks because God talks to him.**

**As a friend, as an observer, as a co-laborer, with the benefit today at looking back over 20 years and I am better at looking back at what happened than looking ahead predicting what will happen; I say well done, keep us the good work.**

**But on this day, at this exact moment, in an overflow of gratitude and celebration of all that God has done, we are reminded at the heart of what God is still doing is rescuing people from the wrath that is to come. Jesus has come to rescue you from the wrath that is to come. If you are willing turn away from idols and turn to Jesus today, the power of the Gospel will save you today.**



