

Living Truth

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Date: 19 April 2026

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[0 : 00] Here we go, here we go. And actually what we're doing today, we're actually launching into a new sermon series through the book of Colossians, which is exciting. We'll be in there for the next couple of months.

And if you got a Bible, go ahead and open to Colossians 1. It's in the New Testament part of your Bible towards the back. And if you don't have a Bible, don't worry about it. It'll be on the screens as well.

So we're gonna read Colossians 1, verses 1 to 8. And it says this, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae, grace to you and peace from God, our Father.

We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world, it is bearing fruit and increasing, as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.

[1 : 04] Just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow servant, he is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

This is God's word. So a bit of context before we get into it to help us understand the Colossian context a little bit better. Why was the letter written in the first place?

Why was the letter written to the Colossian church? Well, we see throughout, and if you read the letter in a whole, you see Paul doing various things. One, he's giving them encouragement. And we need encouragement. Those who walk as disciples of Jesus in the faith, we know that it's not easy. Not only do we live in a world that is fallen and difficult and there's suffering that sorrows that are common to every single person, there's also unique things that we suffer as followers of Jesus as well.

And so we need encouragement in the faith, right? And also Paul gives them clear direction because things need to be corrected a little bit. There was some false teachings coming in. There was maybe false ways of thinking like, oh, God is okay with me living this way or this kind of lifestyle, even though I'm claiming to be a little Jesus and following in his ways.

[2 : 13] And so he gives some course correction, some direction there, and he offers them hope. Hope that like, hey, life is gonna be difficult, like we were talking about, and encouragement and hope. Hope for what is to come. And then his encouragement is seeing them and their love for one another.

And he's saying, man, you guys are doing a good job. And also from a sense from Paul's own thing that he loves these believers as well and wants them to know that they are loved. And this Colossian letter is actually one of two letters that Paul wrote that were meant to be circulated in a couple of churches in that area.

So Paul writes to Colossae, this church in Colossae. Colossae was one of three cities in the Lycus Valley. The other two are Laodicea and Hierapolis. And they were within about 10 to 12 miles of each other.

And so Paul writes these two letters to be circulated amongst the churches. And so we know that Paul's the author. He says so at the beginning of verse one. And so he writes this letter.

And we can assume from that that like, oh, he's writing it to the churches that he planted there. But fun fact, Paul never went to Colossae when he wrote this letter. He had never been there before. He had never set eyes on any of the saints there.

[3 : 18] So how did the gospel get there? Well, it got there through a guy named Epaphras, right? He talks about that in verse seven. Just as you, Colossian church, as you learned it, the gospel, the word of the truth from Epaphras, our fellow servant.

So this guy, Epaphras, let's talk about him, right? So he is, who knows what his life was like before the gospel came to him. It probably, we can bet that church planting was not in Epaphras' life plan. But that's what the gospel does. It finds us, it surprises us, it disrupts life, and it calls us into a life that is anything but boring. The gospel is this living truth that accomplishes amazing things through average people.

Now again, don't know much about Epaphras beyond a few honorable mentions by Paul in various places in scripture. We know one that like Paul knew him. He was on Paul's team. We knew Paul calls him a hard worker.

He labors for the saints in prayer, so we know some things about him. But that's pretty much it. He could have been 16 years old. He could have been 65 years old. He could have been by trade a baker, or he could have been a rich banker.

[4 : 27] He could have been tall. He could have been short. He could have been smart intellectually, or just kind of average intellectually. The Bible is silent in that. And I think it's a bit of God's sneaky, divine conspiracy to be silent to keep us from believing that God can only use a certain kind of person.

Because God's calling on people disregards age, or gender, or talent, or wealth, or physical strength, or mental capacity. I mean, look at what they said about Jesus' disciples in the early church, in the early days after his resurrection.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. People are looking at them, and they're going, who are these guys? They had recognized that they had been with Jesus.

Average people accomplishing amazing things. So whether you are on the front end of your life, in the middle stage of your life, or in the final stage of your life, you need to hear this.

God can use his living truth in you to make an eternal impact in ways that you can't even possibly imagine. And although Paul writes this letter that we're reading, we have to honor the fact that this letter doesn't get written without an Epaphras, right?

[5 : 41] And to help us understand kind of what we're dealing with here, because our minds think of like, man, Paul's this amazing guy. Epaphras, like, who is this guy? Big deal. Well, it's kind of like, if you were to think of Nolan Ryan, and if you're a baseball person, you kind of know who he is.

Nolan Ryan's big name in baseball. Like, Hall of Fame pitcher has like a lot of records. And then this other guy, Jack Morris. How many of you know about Nolan Ryan?

You heard of him? You know about him, right? How many of you know Jack Morris? Dang, man. I'm always surprised. But there was like, you know, four to five times as many people that raised their hand knowing Nolan Ryan than Jack Morris.

Both are in the Hall of Fame, right? Nolan Ryan is this very big name. Jack Morris, a few people know him, but not too many people. Nolan Ryan's rookie card, pristine condition, goes for 100,000 plus.

Jack Morris, pristine condition, 100 bucks. But here's what's interesting. Jack won the World Series four times and got an MVP at one of them.

[6 : 57] Nolan Ryan, won World Series ring. Jack, he's obscure, a lot less known by a lot less people, but he was an impact player.

His career was set apart even though not a lot of people know about him. And you and me, we look at that and we think of like, man, you know, Nolan Ryan, he gets all the fame, he gets all the attention.

We want the Nolan Ryan life. We want the Nolan Ryan recognition and winning and dominance and success. And there's a religious version of that too. But that impulse is exactly the opposite of the way God's kingdom works.

Who did Jesus say was the greatest in this kingdom? It's like the little children. Like the no-namers that we walk past, right? They're little hobbits. We just don't even know that they're there, you know? We overlook them.

Verse two identifies all the rest of the impact players in Colossae. To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae.

[8 : 00] Saints, who are they? Well, they're people like you and me who've been called and set apart by God to his purpose. Faithful brothers in Christ, called, adopted, set apart, brought into God's family.

The living truth, what it does, it tells us that God sets us apart to his holy purpose. The Greek word here for saint, hagios, we think of it as like, oh, you describe something, that's a noun.

You tell someone that they're a hagios. It's an identity. But actually, it's not an identity. It's an adjective to identify something that is different in kind. So if you're back in the day and you're three Greek guys, you know, sipping on whatever they sip on back in the day, you're looking at like three buildings, you're saying, oh, look at those buildings.

And two of them, you're saying building, building, and then you get to the temple, right? And you say, oh, that's a hagios building. That is not a normal kind of building of the same kind. It's different in kind.

It's distinct. It's uncommon. It's set apart from those other buildings, both in glory and in purpose.

And in the same way, salvation in Jesus means that you are hagios now, that you are special.

[9 : 07] Your mom was right. You're set apart. You're distinct. You're different. But you're not that way for your own glory. You don't walk around with like a big head and egotism and saying like, oh, man, I'm so important.

People should fall down and worship me. People should be impressed with who I am and what I've done. No, we live our life as hagios. We live our life special because it glorifies and honors God. You're set apart for that purpose. You're on God's team. You're in his family and you have a role to play. And how do we do that? The Bible word for our purpose and our role to play to glorify God is summed up in the word ministry.

I wanna ask us when you hear that word, what's the word association? I say ministry. What's the word association that pops in your head? Man, you guys are so smart. That's right.

It's serving. You must have really good teachers at this church. We do. But who do you think does the ministry? And I ask because our 21st century church context and our experience and the things I think that we get so used to here is distorted like, you know, what really it meant to those first century Christians back in the day.

[10 : 22] To minister is to serve, like you said. To serve is to minister. Every disciple then is called, qualified, and equipped for ministry. And it's not done through seminary. Seminaries and seminaries can be helpful and you can learn a lot of good things and be equipped and stuff through that.

But here's the thing. The Bible tells us that through Jesus and salvation and faith in him, he is the one who qualifies us and he gives us his Holy Spirit. He sends that to every single one of us. And that Holy Spirit, he comes to us and he brings gifts with him. And those gifts are meant to equip us and empower us and work through us to serve God, to minister on his behalf for his glory. And those gifts come in very different forms and different capacities and measures. We know and learn that from various parts of Scripture. And so out there in the seats and the saints, there is a bunch of gifts given to you and to us.

And the more that we are operating in them and moving in them and serving and doing the work of the ministry, the more that God is glorified. The problem is, is what we often do is we drift toward elevating certain ministries above others.

[11 : 27] Our tendency today, I think in the American church context, is that pulpit ministry has been elevated to a degree that has diminished the value and potency of the saints in the seats. The church's missional impact is weakened when it sets apart one person above all the others or one type of ministry above all the others.

But Paul refused to play that game. Paul refused to do this. What does he say? What does he call Epaphras? He says, Epaphras is a beloved fellow servant. Paul is putting himself on equal footing and equal standing with Epaphras.

The Greek word there, fellow servant, is sundulos. And to understand that, you kind of have to understand Greco-Roman culture, right? So businesses back then were run through households, right?

And these business households were called an oikos. And it didn't mean they produced overpriced yogurt to sell. It was just a word to understand. This was the business model, the common business model of the day.

And in that household that was conducting business, you had the master of the house, the patron of the house, and you had household managers, and then you had servants that were doing the labor. And so Paul says, I'm not the master of the house.

[12 : 36] I'm just a sundulos. I'm this, with this guy Epaphras, we're on the same page, right? We are fellow co-laborers in the same household, under the same master, working for the glory of that household, and the glory of the master.

We're on the same team. And although Paul notes his apostleship in verse one, he doesn't lord it over everybody, and he doesn't keep reminding them like, I'm a, you know, Epaphras, my fellow servant.

But guess what, guys? Don't forget, I'm an apostle. He says, no, my fellow servant, my co-laborer here. He doesn't lord it over people. He doesn't live above everyone else. He works alongside. He shares in ministry. We know that because he did that with Epaphras. Probably Epaphras came and heard the gospel for the first time through Paul while he was in Ephesus for three years preaching at the hall of Tyrannus, right?

And he didn't just, that's what the common history tells us. And he just didn't hear the gospel. Paul took him under his wing, and he disciplined him for it, and then disciplined him, raised him up, shared ministry, and said, okay, you're ready to go.

[13 : 36] And then at some point, we know Epaphras went back home. He went back to Colossae, but he went back equipped and ready to preach the word of God and share the word of God as a fellow minister, fellow sundulos, fellow co-laborer with Paul, right?

That's what Paul does. So if you're in Christ, this is what I want you to hear. If you're in Christ, then there is nothing special about me over you. But also, there's nothing special about you over me. We're all impact players. We're all Jack Morris. Don't fight to be Nolan Ryan. Be Jack Morris. We're all in Jesus's hall of fame.

If you think about it, the message about the good news of Jesus, and what it was, it was captured for us, and for our benefit, and for our posterity, in a collection of gospels, and letters written by eight-ish authors.

We know most of them. We don't know a couple of them. And we call that the New Testament. We read the New Testament. We get to see all this. We get to know these things. And we know most of these authors' names, and we can appreciate how they made a lasting impact that we still get to enjoy today.

[14 : 38] That's awesome. But also, the gospel message spread like wildfire in a couple of generations. Because in a couple of generations, it went beyond the boundaries of known civilization, right?

Beyond the places that Rome had conquered. It got out into parts unknown. And how did it do that? Well, in part because of the apostles, but you know what, in large part? It was regular saints. It was regular saints. Unknown impact players. Sharing it with family, and friends, and coworkers, and neighbors. And Paul testifies to this fact. He actually commends the Colossian believers that, hey, they're already doing this.

He says in verse five, of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you as indeed in the whole world, it is bearing fruit and increasing, as it also does among you since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God and truth.

What does it say in verse six about the word of the truth, the gospel? It says it's bearing fruit. It's increasing. That only happens if it's alive, if the gospel is a living truth.

[15 : 41] Newtonian physics, it's true. But you know what? It can't bear fruit and increase. Living things grow and reproduce after themselves.

God set it up that way from the beginning. The creation account we have, it says, God said, let there be, and it was so. And then we get to the things where he's putting plants and animals in the earth, and he says this, let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit, in which is their seed, each according to its kind on the earth.

And then down in verse 21, when he starts creating some of the animals, God created the sea creatures, and every living creature that moves, and with which the water swarms according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good, and God blessed them, and saying, be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters and the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. And we know he says the same thing

about us.

He created man and woman in his image, and he blessed them. He said, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, have dominion over it. If something is alive and healthy, it will reproduce after its own kind.

[16 : 48] God established that law from the very beginning of Genesis. The gospel is the living truth about Jesus. And yet, its aliveness makes it more than just mere facts about Jesus.

The gospel is the living truth God uses to make us like Jesus. This doesn't mean you and I suddenly get olive skin and a cool beard and dark hair, and we wear a toga or something like that, like in the Middle Eastern man.

No, we become like Jesus, not in appearance, but in desire, attitude, perspective, and purpose. It happens within our hearts. It's a renewal of our hearts, a restoration of our hearts and our minds. These things are changing within us. And that happens as we take in the living truth. And we not only hear it, we do what Jesus said, don't just hear my commands, but obey them. And when we do that, what happens is we begin to change in degrees to the likeness of Jesus.

And I want you to hear this. I want you to take this image with you. The next time that you open scripture, got your Bible open, maybe it's during the morning at the devotion time or in the evening at devotion time, maybe it's at community group, maybe it's just some friends doing a Bible study, you open that word and it's there.

[17 : 58] And you're believing and you're expecting and you're asking the Holy Spirit to make it real and alive and do something. I think what happens, I imagine something, a bit of the creation account takes place again.

I think God begins to create in new and different ways. Or that creation account, it says God spoke into the lifeless void of earth. There was nothing there. It was dark and there was a void and the Spirit was hovering there.

And then God began to speak into that place of emptiness and the Spirit was hovering and the Word met the Spirit and things began to happen. God said and it was so. But those two things had to happen. You have the Word and the Spirit and He's making life happen.

Creation begins to happen. And just like that happened at that original creation account, I do believe that when you open up the Word and the Spirit is hovering over that sacred moment with you and me, God's Word comes into us and through some mysterious, wonderful thing, the Word that comes in, God says, yes, I'm gonna make it happen according to my purposes.

And God draws on this theme elsewhere in the Bible when He speaks to the prophet Isaiah. And it's not about creation, what He's gonna do to create life on earth. He's talking about His salvation purposes for His people.

[19 : 04] He has just finished talking about the promise of a new covenant and deliverance and restoration. And then He says this in Isaiah 55, 11, so shall my Word be that goes out from my mouth.

It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. The living Word of truth united with the Holy Spirit, God Himself, has a purpose.

And that purpose is to make you more like Jesus. And accomplishes this amazing feat of making us more like Jesus by increasing our faith, hope, and love.

Paul says this in verse 4, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. We see faith, love, and hope by Paul.

These are the chief Christian virtues. And he doesn't go into like, hey, we know that this took effect because you're following this rule and you're following that rule and you're living like this and you're not doing this.

[20 : 05] He actually just gets into the principles undergirding the life of Christ that transforms us and that works out of our lives that becomes more like Jesus. Faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus means that you and I, what we do is we believe in Him as He says He is.

He is truly the only begotten Son of God, the uncreated one, the first born among many brothers who got sent into this world to die for our sins, to fulfill God's purpose and plan of redemption so you and me can believe on Him and He is the way to the Father.

Father, that's what means to believe in Jesus and to believe in Him means that we just don't know those things and say yes and amen but we trust those things to be true and we obey Him. We obey in all the ways and commands that He has given us to follow Him and one of the ways that we work that out in our lives is love.

Love is the primary way we manifest our faith through our lives. If we love God, we will obey His commands. We can't say that we love Him and disobey Him, right? The Apostle John says, no, you got that backwards.

That doesn't work, right? That is an oxymoron and also, if you love God, you're gonna love others. John 4:20 says, if anyone says, I love God and hates his brother, he's a liar for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

[21:20] Right? Faith and love, these are essential pieces to what we do but so is faith. If we endure in faith and love, we have to do it through the hope that we have in Jesus because, man, being faithful in faith is not an easy thing.

Loving like Jesus is hard. It is really, really hard. It costs you dearly. Your ego, your preferences, you being the most important person, it is a call to lay down your life over and over and over and over again.

Loving like Jesus is not easy. And so we need this hope. We need to know that, like, man, I'm sticking in this because as good as I have it with Jesus now and I know that he loves me and I know that he's for me and I have these experiences with him that, like, that reminds me of, like, yes, he's there and he sees, still we need that, like, hope of the reward that is yet to come that one day we're gonna be there and all the sorrow and all the suffering and all the difficulties of just both living this life in this fallen world but also the difficulties of living this life and following Jesus, all that's gonna be taken away because sin and death is gonna be defeated and we're gonna live in the fullness of life with Jesus.

We're gonna see him as he is. Faith is gonna give way to sight, as the song says. We're gonna get to enjoy that and we're gonna be like, oh my goodness, that's the reward. That's the reward I'm living for. Paul talks about it in the Philippians.

My goal is the prize, the heavenward prize. I'm living my life and to live is Christ, to die is gain but I can do that because I'm looking ahead. I'm seeing that. Jesus, what does he say? For the hope set before him endured the cross.

[22:52] He saw the other side of suffering and he saw the inheritance of nations, the people that he loved being drawn to himself and redeemed and he says, yes, I will do this. For the hope set before him he endured the cross. What is the hope set before you?

Faith, hope, and love. They're so important. They're so necessary for us to walk in, for Christ to be formed in us. This is how Jesus reproduces himself in us, faith, hope, and love.

And as those things grow and increase in us, they bear fruit and we begin to look and act and think more like Jesus. And when that happens, others begin to look at us and you know what they see?

They see the living truth with flesh on it. You know God's brilliant plan wasn't to leave Jesus down here and say like, you gotta go proselytize the whole earth. He said like, hey, you're gonna die, you're gonna resurrect, you're gonna come up into heaven and you know how we're gonna get the gospel or you know how we're gonna get millions upon millions upon millions and multitudes of people believing in you?

We're gonna do it through multiplying little Jesuses so that the living truth embodied in flesh is gonna spread throughout the whole world. Our calling is to be a living testimony that the truth of the gospel is alive.

[24:07] You and I, we cannot force people to believe. I would like that. There are people in my family that I would love to like somehow use like the force and just be like, and you believe now. That would be so nice.

Oh, if it only worked that way. But it doesn't. So what do we do? Our calling is to be living, walking, proclaiming, demonstrating proofs that the gospel is true and active and powerful.

the gospel that Paul shared and that Epaphras shared, it spread like a virus through their generation. And you know how it spread?

Regular Jack Morris kind of Christians caught it. They were bakers and shoe cobblers and handmaids and businesswomen and magistrates and soldiers and young men and old men and all these people, we don't know their names.

Their names have been lost to history, but you know what? God knows every single one of their names. They are etched in his book of life, his hall of fame. These multitude of saints not only proclaimed it, they lived it.

[25 : 21] And when your life is filled with evidence of God's redemptive power, what it does, it gives credence and weight to evangelism. Like we're meant to demonstrate the gospel and we're meant to proclaim the gospel.

And what people see with their eyes, what it does, it opens up their hearts to hear and to trust it just a little bit more. I'm not saying like, man, it's on you to change their hearts.

I'm just saying like, man, if you're living in a certain way, it could add obstacles to the gospel or it could remove obstacles to the gospel. You can't change a person's heart, but you can do that. You can remove some stones out of the way.

You know, if you're a judgmental person and you're just like, eh, I'm just, I'm not gonna work on that. I'm just gonna continue being judgmental. I'm gonna continue to be unkind. You know, you can still go to heaven because you have faith in Jesus, but you're gonna miss out on the joy of God using you to reach people with the gospel effectively.

You can choose to live your life pursuing significance through wealth and career and being the most liked person on social media, and you can still go to heaven because you have faith. But if you live towards that, I guarantee you, you're gonna miss the excitement that is at the front lines of the gospel work in the low places.

[26 : 33] Conversely, the more compassionate, gentle, and kind we are to others without compromise to the gospel, the more potent our efforts to reach people for Jesus will be.

As you and I, as we hold fast to the living truth, it works powerfully through us. Now, I want you to hear this. Don't take this as a, you better get right or you won't get into heaven.

Holding fast simply just means being faithful. We're commended to hold fast to the truth. And this isn't, this isn't something we do that lands us in some kind of like high-minded, elite moralism.

It's the humble life that is lived to glorify God and walk in the Spirit. To see the living truth's power at work in and through you doesn't require your perfection and holding it perfectly.

Just holding fast and faithfully. The living truth, it calls us to obey God, to live toward His righteousness. And when we fall short, which we will do, it calls us to confess and to repent to God and the others we've sinned against.

[27 : 39] And when you do that and you do that with confidence knowing that, you know what, I am, I can do this because Jesus has imparted to me, has given to me, imputed to me His perfect righteousness and that's already considered and counted towards me, then you are purely holding to the living truth.

then the beauty of God's grace and mercy and forgiveness is put on display. I mean, Paul says, he calls himself like, he refers to this thing called trophies of grace.

Right? What is a trophy? If God has trophies on His shelf, He's looking at you. He's saying like, man, you guys are the thing that I'm boasting in. And as His trophies of grace, what are we boasting in?

And here's the thing, friends, if we live our life thinking that, you know what, all the stuff that God saved me from, I gotta keep that on the down low, I gotta keep that hidden because people don't need to know about that.

Well, what's the big deal about God's grace then? What did He save you from? What are you telling people He saved you from? Because all that you're projecting is I'm a really good person.

[28 : 48] How are you a trophy of grace if you're hiding those things? Here's the thing, when you start to walk in the freedom, I've done this and I've done that. I used to be this kind of person, I used to be that kind of person.

I still am this kind of person, but God's working it out in me. Man, the person I was is not the person that I am. And yet, I know it's not the person God's bringing me into. That's God's grace at work in us.

And it's a beautiful, powerful thing. We have to get comfortable as God's people sharing our weakness and boasting in our weakness. We have to be able to boast in them.

You know, the apostles never talked about their greatness. Like Paul and John, they're not like, hey, Peter saved a thousand people this year, I saved two thousand.

You don't read that anywhere. They didn't boast in those kind of things. You know what they did boast in? Their weaknesses. Because their weaknesses pointed to God's power to save and deliver.

[29 : 49] Remember. Friends, boast in his power. Boast in the power that pulls you out of the pit and empowers you to walk in freedom. That's what holding fast to the truth means.

It means that you live trusting that Jesus did it for you and is working it out in you. It means that, it means believing that our heavenly father is able to fix anything that we break.

It means today's doubt can become tomorrow's assurance. Holding fast to the truth doesn't mean we hide our sins and failures and weaknesses. It lives to share them as the proof of the power of God's grace at work in our lives where we say, come and see what Jesus has done for me.

Because if we don't do that, what we're gonna say is we're gonna give a very different testimony.

Our lives will say, come and see what I've done for Jesus. The first is the only right way to hold fast to the living truth.

Anything else is compromising it. It is distorting it. And here's the thing. You can try to manipulate it. You can try to live life on different terms than what the gospel says you should be doing.

[30 : 57] But it's gonna fail because there's only one living truth. Paul talks about the word of the truth, not the word of a truth.

It's the living truth, not a living truth. It's just not one great option out of many. The gospel of Jesus is the only living truth. Every disciple, every church is going to be challenged to compromise the gospel.

We will. How do I know this? Because we have Colossians. It was already starting there. And if you read enough church history, you will say like, ooh, every generation faces its challenges. Paul wrote this letter because Jesus alone as the sufficiency for salvation was being assaulted by other teachings entering in.

Other ideas, other wisdom of man things, false gospels. And we got all the same ones today. See if you can spot it. To the Colossians, they were fighting against the gospel of the ascetics, which was, which was your body bad, your desires bad.

You got to discipline your body severely all the time. Food bad, fast all the time. Sex bad. Even if you're married, you're not allowed to have it. Fun bad. That was the ascetic religious tradition.

[32 : 11] Put your flesh to death by being brutal and mean to it. Then there was the Gnostics. Oh, we got the secret hidden knowledge. Oh, yeah, you know about this Jesus guy?

Yeah, that's good and that's correct, but you know what? I got some extra stuff. I got some stuff that you need. If you really want to please God, if you really want to get to heaven, you also need to know this.

Oh, and by the way, you can know it and you just got to pay me a little bit of money. And then there was the emperor worship. Colossae was part of the Greco-Roman world.

Rome was the great power at the time and they loomed in the shadow of that empire's might and Caesar's glory and so there was the cult of Romans greatness that they had to contend with and Caesar is Lord.

He was considered almost God-like, a divine being to be worshipped and he would say, pledge your allegiance to you. Look what we have. Look at how amazing life is because of his wonderful allegiance.

[33 : 14] The Pax Romana, the peace of Rome has come to us. Oh, how great it is to be a part of this wonderful blessed empire and the great king at the top who bestows upon us all his goodness and benevolence.

you spot any of those things? Pushing into the church at any given time? Pushing into your faith at any given time? Calling you to compromise?

To distort the gospel? The living truth, friends, claims exclusivity and superiority. It is not a truth, it is the truth.

It is not Jesus plus, it is Jesus alone. The question for you and me today is this, is that living truth alive in you today?

As the band comes up and we look to respond. The living truth is Jesus Christ. The living truth is the truth about him, but it is a truth to live in, abide in, a relationship to enjoy, a person to dwell in.

[34 : 14] And he invites you to come to him right now. And if you are not yet a follower of Jesus, we're going to take communion in a moment, but before you take communion, you come to Jesus.

You come to him because there is no other name by which you can be saved. He alone is the living truth. You have to come to him and say, you know what, Lord? I am setting aside, Jesus, I am setting aside all the false truths, all the other truths that I thought would get me into heaven, get me right with you.

You're laying those aside and you're coming to him and saying, you know what, I need you. It's you and it's you alone. He's here. He's inviting you to himself. And I want to encourage you to do that. There's going to be a prayer on the screen for you to pray if that's you.

And I want to encourage you today also if that's you and you're saying, Jesse, I want to know more about this. Come talk to me. I'll be right up here. And if you're already a follower of Jesus, we're going to take communion, but I want to ask each of us as followers of Jesus to prepare ourselves for this time of communion.

Because what Jesus is inviting us to at this table, which are around the rooms that you can get to in a moment here, is to come and draw near to him and the sign and the symbols of his very presence.

[35 : 24] And he's here with us even now. And he says, come and partake and fellowship with me. I am the living truth, your savior. My body was broken for you.

My blood was shed for you. This is a chance for us to stop before we come and partake to examine ourselves. Where are we at with this living truth? Where do we need to repent?

Where do we need, where is God working and aligning us? Convicting us about some things. Come to him. There's forgiveness and there's goodness in him.

Are you and I, are we holding fast to the living truth or not? Pray with me. Jesus, we come to you right now. Some of us, maybe for the first time, praying that prayer of salvation, recognizing you as Lord and Savior.

Some of us, we're coming yet again to the communion table. Coming to the Savior that we know and love and saying, Lord, man, work this out in me.

[36 : 27] Help me to keep and value and hold fast to this living truth. To hold fast to you, to abide in you. that we pray that you would do abundantly more that we can ask or imagine.

In your name I pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. that you would do abundantly