

Turned From Idols to Serve the Living and True God

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

Date: 03 August 2025

Preacher: Rev. Jonathan St. Clair

[0 : 00] We hope that you enjoy this teaching from Christchurch. This material is copyrighted and no unauthorized duplication, redistribution, or any other use of any part is permitted without prior consent from Christchurch.

Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning. I am Sarita. I am part of the CC Kids.

Today's scripture reading is from Acts of the Apostles, chapter 17, verse 1 to 9, and from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 1, verse 1 to 10.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles. And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men off the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

[1 : 42] And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them.

And they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus, and the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.

And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. A reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. Paul, Silas, and Timothy to the Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace to you. We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompt by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers and sisters, loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power. With the Holy Spirit and deep conviction, you know how we lived among you for your sake.

[3 : 11] You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaya.

The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaya. Your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it.

For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell you how you turned to God from the idols to serve the living and the true God.

And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead. Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Thank you for that phenomenal reading. That was incredible. And this is sort of like, how many guys does it take to shut a door?

[4 : 13] Joke right here. So, I'm waiting for the punchline. I don't know. Now we need four. And can Pastor Andrew get it to shut? No pressure, guys.

Yes. There we go. We got the door to open, which is phenomenal. And now we're ready to dive in. One of the highlights of the summer for our family was taking our kids to Washington, D.C. for the first time. And the first morning we arrived in D.C.

We rode our bikes all around the mall and all the monuments. We saw the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Monument. We saw the monument to FDR, World War II, Martin Luther King Jr.

But the crown jewel, in my opinion, and in many people's opinion, is the Lincoln Memorial. Anyone been to the Lincoln Memorial? It was full of a diverse crowd of classes, races, and nations.

[5 : 17] All of them there in reverent silence. And they were queuing up to get photos with one of our greatest, if not the greatest president. And to read those texts that are emblazoned on the walls in stone, in all caps.

The Gettysburg Address, government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And the second inaugural address with, what does he say? He says, with malice toward none and with charity toward all.

There was no docent anywhere in sight telling people to be quiet or to line up. It's just that the statue of the man and the man's words sort of demanded a sense of awe and honor and reverence. And that monument, I would say, was effective for me because I cannot get it out of my mind. I've read one book on the second inaugural. I'm on a second book on the Gettysburg Address reflecting on the life and literature of this great president.

And it has set off two recurring questions in my head. First of all, how do we make presidents great again? Okay? Both for the blue team and the red team, not a political comment, just an obvious question.

[6 : 27] Secondly, what have Christians revered the apostles like that? We don't build monuments to Peter, John, James, and Paul.

But what if churches in the Western world, what if churches in North America, instead of ignoring and neglecting Paul, instead of deconstructing and dismissing the apostles, what if instead we studied them and we memorized their texts?

As if they were etched in stone in all caps. What if we formed friendships so that we could help one another live out these doctrines and these ethics?

And that's what this sermon series is about. It's like the Lincoln Memorial. It's meant to introduce the church to this man, Paul, the Apostle Paul.

And to encourage you to get more familiar with his life and more familiar with his literature because he is the greatest Christian theologian. So we're looking simultaneously at both his story and at his letters.

[7 : 32] And just to remind you, we started in Acts chapter, the Acts of the Apostles chapter 9, and Paul's transformation on the road to Damascus. And then we looked at Acts chapter 16, how Paul went into that Greco-Roman pagan city of Philippi.

And he planted a church in that city. And then we looked at the letter that Paul later wrote to those young Christians in that young church plant called Philippians. And today we're looking at Acts 17 where God takes this team of Christians, mainly Paul and Silas.

And remember, they've been beaten, they've been imprisoned, and they've been exiled from the city of Philippi. And the Lord sends them now on with all their wounds, all their exhaustion, all their rejection.

And he sends them on to a new city to make this arduous 100-mile journey to Thessalonica. We have a map in case this part of the world is not familiar to you.

So you can kind of see where Philippi is and where Thessalonica. And Paul's going to make his way down to Athens and Corinth where we'll be next week. And it's a harbor city.

[8 : 44] It's a flourishing commercial center. It's very much like the Bay Area. Paul went and he planted a church in that city. And then he wrote, again, a letter to those young Christians in the young church called 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians.

So as we open that up this morning, I have three questions I want to engage you with. And the three questions are these. How does the gospel message ring out?

Secondly, what is the basic problem of our world? And third, what is the deep power of our gospel? Okay, so how does the gospel message ring out?

What is the basic problem of our world? And what is the deep power of our gospel? First of all, how does the gospel message ring out? Paul and Silas, as they're journeying to the city, they're praying for the city.

They're praying to God and asking him to lead them to people of peace who God has made ready. God has made open. God is making curious to hear the message.

[9 : 45] And they seek out and they encounter two very different types of people. You can see in this text that they find religious Jews and they also find pagan Gentiles who are spiritually curious

and interested.

Now, why in the world would these Gentiles be at synagogue on the Sabbath when they could be sleeping in or enjoying brunch? Okay, that's a big question. Why are they there?

Well, presumably because they're dissatisfied with their pagan polytheism. They become disenchanted with the various lifestyles that the Greco-Roman and Roman Empire has offered to them.

And they know that something's missing in their lives. They know that there's more to life than this. And they became attracted somehow to the God of the Bible. They began to worship Israel's God of love and his high moral ideals.

And maybe that's some of us here today. Maybe that's you. You're thinking, gosh, there's got to be a better way. There's got to be a deeper truth. There's got to be a higher life on offer for me.

[10:53] And the Apostle Paul addresses that group and he says, well, let me share the gospel message with you. And in Acts 17 verse 2, it says that he reasoned with them from the scriptures.

He had a dialogue with them about who made the world and why. And what is really wrong with the world. And why does humanity need a Messiah? Why does it need a Christ?

And who is? What does the Bible say about this long prophesied Messiah of God? This promised king. What is he going to be? What is he coming to do?

And when Paul gave that gospel message, it says that he had a mixed reception. Right? Some people were glad to hear it. Some people, they were persuaded. They put their faith in Christ and they joined the church.

But other people, it says that they actually formed a mob and they started a riot in the city. That's how explosive the message actually is if you really understand it. So, chapter 17 verse 6 says that they dragged Jason, one of these new Christians who's hosting everybody.

[11:59] They dragged Jason and some of the other new Christians before the city officials shouting, these men are causing trouble. They're turning the world upside down, they say.

And they're defying all of Caesar's decrees and saying that there is another king, one called Jesus. And I think Paul, had he heard that charge, he would have said, you know, actually, it's not that Jesus is turning the world upside down, he's turning it right side up.

Right? But you are right in that all of Jesus' loyal subjects, they do refuse to give their allegiance to any ruler or any ideology that would claim the homage and the obedience that is due to Jesus and King Jesus alone.

That's true. So, what's happening in the city? Much like the cities of the Bay Area, what's happening? What's happening is that the gospel message is beginning to ring out like a bell. It's beginning to ring out. And as usual, Paul is forced out of that city. This happens everywhere he goes. He has to basically leave. And after a few months, he goes and he writes a letter to kind of pastor this new church plant.

[13:19] And he reminds them of how the gospel came into their pagan culture. He reminds them how God formed that community among them of faith and love and hope. And here's what he says.

Now we're turning to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. You can follow along in verse 6. He says, You became imitators of us, the apostles, and of the Lord Jesus himself.

For you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. And the Lord's message, the Lord's gospel rang out from you.

Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God became known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it. What Paul's saying there is that your life and your witness as a healthy and a vibrant church is making my job a whole lot easier.

Because what I'm finding, Paul says, what I'm finding everywhere I go is people stop me and say, Ah, you're the guy. You're the guy who shared the message of Jesus in Thessalonica.

[14:31] And we've heard all about you. We've heard of what's happening up in that city and in that church. Everybody's talking about the new Jesus people there.

And everybody's talking about how those brand new Christians are already actively sharing the message of Jesus with other people. What Paul's saying is that I came into your city and I rang the gospel bell.

But what's happening now is that you, the people of God, keep ringing that bell. And it's ringing out through you. He says, look, you are a group of men and women, probably much smaller than the

group that we have here today.

You're a group of men and women who not only believe the gospel, but you've decided to live by the gospel. You've decided to embody the gospel. That individually and collectively, you are interpreting the gospel in your relationship so that other people can see what it's all about.

The gospel is being verified. It's being substantiated by your lives. That's part of why the gospel is ringing out from the church.

[15 : 45] And he says, you know, the gospel is not only ringing out through your lives, but it's also ringing out through your lips as you share the gospel message with people you most deeply love.

And listen to it again. He says in verse 8, he says, Now, how many of you know the Campanile at the center of Cal's campus over here?

The Campanile is, it has 61 bells. It's a carillon, and it plays three times a day. And I'm told that you can hear it up to a mile away, and maybe on a clear and quiet day even further away.

Well, just to give you a quick geography lesson about the provinces of the Roman Empire, if you haven't studied up on that recently, I want you to appreciate how far the gospel is ringing out from this little church in Thessalonica.

We have another map, and that map can show you that in the ancient world, to get from Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, down to Corinth, the capital of Achaia, you had to go on an arduous trip over three high mountain ranges.

[17 : 04] You had to cross a portion of the sea. You had to cover a considerable distance over a very difficult terrain. And yet the apostle is saying that the news of what's happening in that tiny little church in Thessalonica, the Lord's message itself is ringing out into a region that is actually twice the size of the Bay Area.

And remember, there's no radio. There's no television. There's no newspapers. No telephone. No internet. No social media. Achaia, the beautiful music of the gospel is spreading from person to person so that when Paul went to the very southernmost tip of Achaia, they were ready for him and ready to receive his message.

Why? Because ordinary men and women, just like you, in that little church, were proclaiming the message with their extraordinary lives.

They were attracting people of peace to come and see. They were opening the door for people to listen to the gospel because of the marvelous and dramatic changes that were happening inside of them as they were believing and living by this message.

And this has been the key element in every major revival, every major reformation in the history of the church from its first days until now. What is this astonishing and dramatic change that's happening in the lives of these Christians?

[18 : 32] Well, Paul actually writes about it in verses 2 and 3. He says, We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

See, people saw their alternative, countercultural way of life. They heard it ringing out like a bell, like the Campanile bell tower.

They heard it for miles and miles around. And it caused people outside of the church to ask the question, Tell me, what is the reason for the faith that you have?

What's the reason for the love that you show? What in the world is the reason for the hope that you live by? We don't know where this is coming from.

We want to know where did you get this faith and this love and this hope. Now, pause here to apply this. Like Paul, when I look at our church, I thank God for what he's doing in our midst.

[19 : 47] I thank God when I see the faith that is producing good works for other people in our church. I thank God for the love that's prompting labor for the kingdom of God in our church.

I thank God for the hope that is inspiring many of you to endure very difficult things because of Jesus Christ. I look at that and I go, wow. Thank you, Lord.

And I look back on this past year of our church with incredible thanksgiving because I feel like we made a giant leap forward in the way that we began to pray for people to begin to explore the faith. And then we hosted Alpha. We created a space and a time where people could come and explore all their questions about life and meaning and God and faith in an amazing way.

And I would say probably the gospel message rang out from Christchurch this past year in a more audible, in a more steady, in a more beautiful way than maybe it has even over the past five years. [20 : 57] And I think we need to just thank God for that. Amen? But I also want to encourage us today to ask God for more. What if we were to ask God for more?

Because in this little Thessalonian church, the gospel was ringing out to a region twice the size of the Bay Area. And it makes me wonder, you know, what if the gospel rang out from us and from all of the churches here like that?

Paul says, your faith in God has become known everywhere. What if we asked God to do that? What if we prayed over this next month, Lord, cause your gospel message to ring out from us to many, many more people than we've ever been able to reach this year?

What if we came to our retreat at the end of the month, which is all about how the gospel can ring out from the church, and we just prayed, Lord, would you give each person in our church three people of peace, three people they can pray for, three people through whom the gospel can begin to ring out into their lives in our church?

Or what if we very simply just prayed this way, even over the next 24 hours, the next week, and we just said, Lord, thank you for the faith that you've given me. Increase my faith.

[22 : 20] Thank you for the love that you've given me. Increase my love. Thank you for the hope that you've given me. Increase my hope.

Let your faith and love and hope ring out from me and from the church. So, how does the gospel message ring out?

It rings out from the lips and the lives of his people. Faith, love, and hope. What's the basic problem of our world? What's the basic problem of our world that Paul is getting at in his gospel?

He says in verse 5 that our gospel came, and when he says that, he's talking about the basic Christian message that's the most thrilling good news that's ever come into the world, the most wonderful, most glorious news that anyone could ever hear.

He says, our gospel came to you, and it came to you with words, which means that there's a basic content that must be verbally transmitted if one is to actually hear and understand the gospel.

[23 : 23] And part of that gospel, part of the essential, non-negotiable, basic content of this good news is actually bad news.

And what is that bad news? We need to get clear on it as a church. What is the basic problem of our world? What's the plight and the predicament of human beings? Does the problem lie in parenting and in the family?

Does the problem lie in education and technology? Does the problem lie in capitalism and the market? Does the problem lie in government and the state? Where is the problem? Well, the apostle says our problem lies much deeper than any of these things.

And he tells us about it in verse 9. He says, This is a great summary of the gospel, and I want to invite you to just use your imagination for a moment and imagine the apostle Paul just working through this outline as he preaches it in every pagan city that he goes to.

And every time, he starts with God. Right? He starts talking to them about the one true God. And he says, He says, You turned from idols to serve the living and the true God.

[24 : 45] He says, When you look around your city, I want you to see that it's actually full of idols. And that you're giving your lives to created and creaturely things rather than to the creator himself.

And the way this worked out in the Roman Empire is, Paul would say, Look, mammon is this money God that everyone says is divine, and he rules our pockets so that our work and so that all the profits we make from our work, they trump everything else in our lives.

Or look at Aphrodite, this great goddess of erotic love and sex who everybody says is divine, and she rules our desires. And any hint that we should resist her is an infringement on our personal rights.

Who would ever say no to the pleasure that she offers? And Paul would say, Look at Mars. Mars, the God of power, the God of war, who everybody says is divine, and he rules our relationships. And so we sort of structure our lives in merciless competition and conflict. And Paul would say, Look, over all of these idols of mammon and Aphrodite and Mars is Caesar himself who calls himself Lord.

[26 : 01] And in his empire, money and sex and power, they just reign unchecked and unchallenged constantly. And if Paul were here today, he'd say, Friends, a lot has changed in 2,000

years, but really nothing has changed.

Because these are the same idols in the San Francisco Bay Area. Money, sex, power, politics. Paul would say, Everyone you meet, including the person you meet in the mirror, has an idol problem. Their heart is actually an idol factory. I mean, ask yourself the question, Do you ever live for finite things rather than your infinite creator?

Do you ever live for finite things as if they themselves are ultimate? Do you serve created things rather than your creator? What do you dream about? What do you scheme about?

What thrills you and what moves you? What do you sacrifice for? Is your real God your partner? Is it your career? Is it your kids?

[27 : 06] Is it your wealth or your leisure? Or your hobbies? And having asked this question, Paul begins to speak to these people and he begins to tell them about the one true living God who is from eternity to eternity.

The God who he says is light and in him is no darkness at all. The God who created the world out of nothing. The God who said, Let there be light and bang, there was light. The God who rules over every square inch of space, every nanosecond of time, every molecule of matter.

The God who is the author of history. The God who revealed himself to Abraham in Israel. He begins to tell them about the God who has truth in himself. The God who's righteous.

The God who's just. The God who's holy. And in telling them that, he brings them to the bad news.

You ready for the bad news? He says, If you serve things that are not God, as if they are God, then you are going to die in misery eternally.

And that's why in verse 10 he says, You need to be rescued from the coming wrath. Now that is a word that is extremely uncomfortable to say out loud. It's a word that offends the sensibilities of western secular people in the late modern world.

[28 : 26] It's a word that many people in the church have tried to soften and to erase over the past 100 years so that they can be a little more comfortable. But in 1937, Richard Niebuhr, he kind of summarized this approach in the church.

And he talked about, A God without wrath who brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministry of a Christ without a cross. And what Niebuhr was saying there is that when you try to erase this word wrath, it actually creates way more problems than it seeks to solve.

Because the cross of Jesus means nothing apart from the realities of sin and judgment and wrath. So, what if this morning we were to seek to, rather than soften or erase it, just try to understand it. Anybody want to understand it? Okay. How many of you got the tsunami warning on Tuesday? So, it was kind of a nothing burger.

Nothing happened. But, had there been a deadly tsunami on the way to our shores, wouldn't all of us wanted to know about it?

[29 : 38] And wouldn't we be grateful that somebody thought to put a warning system in place to tell us about it ahead of time? You see, Jesus is the most loving person that's ever walked planet Earth.

And He is the person who warns people about judgment and hell more than anybody else in the whole Bible. So, why is Jesus and why are Paul warning us about these things?

Because they're telling us that the God who made human beings in His image, He gave us certain powers, certain privileges, certain responsibilities, and that we're going to have to give an account of ourselves and how we use these gifts according to God's moral standards.

And there are certain just consequences when we misuse and when we abuse the gifts of God that He's given us. Let me just clarify for you briefly what the coming wrath of God is and is not.

The wrath of God is His holy love. The wrath of God is His holy love in active opposition to all that distorts and defaces and destroys His creatures and His creation.

[30 : 54] And the 20th century was the most inhumane and most brutal century that we have on record. And we have no good reason to believe that the 21st century is going to be any better.

We have no reason to think that we won't still be shocked on a regular basis by the inhumanity and brutality of human beings. And the question is, is anyone willing to look at all that humanity, inhumanity, and all that brutality that's floating across our screens in bits and pieces every day in which all of us are somehow organically complicit?

and are we willing to argue that a good and loving God should just kind of shrug His shoulders, maybe wink and smile at it, or maybe just turn the other way as if this appalling wickedness isn't happening?

Paul would say, no, God's justice and His righteousness require a reckoning. They require a putting right of all moral wrongs. And so let me also clarify what the coming wrath of God is not.

It's not like human wrath. It's not uncontrolled, vindictive passion. Even the purest forms of righteous indignation are not without their imperfections in human beings.

[32 : 19] But Paul would say, God's wrath is perfect. God's wrath is perfect justice. It's perfect righteousness of a holy and a good and a loving God on display for us.

And so Paul's question to this pagan city, Paul's question to every person in each one of us is simply twofold. Number one, are you serving finite and temporary things rather than the living and true God?

And number two, are you ready to stand up to the spiritual and moral standards of a holy and righteous God when He justly judges your life? And this brings me to our third question.

How does the gospel message ring out? What is the basic problem of the world? And what is the deep power of our gospel? And I'll be brief. Paul says in verse 10, Jesus rescues us from the coming wrath.

That's the simplest way to say it. Jesus rescues us from the coming wrath. Having shown us our terrible problem, He now shows us our wonderful deliverer.

[33 : 26] That Jesus has not just come to give us an example. He's not come to merely be our teacher. He's not come to show us how to help ourselves. No, He came to do the one thing essential to bring about our rescue.

The Son of God, He says, came down from heaven to earth to live the life that we should have lived according to God's moral law, this perfect life of love toward God and toward our neighbor.

The Son of God stepped out of eternity and into time to die the death that we should have died. And on that cross of Jesus, all of my sin and all of your sin and all the sin of human history entered into this one person who lived here and never sinned.

And on to this one who lived a righteous life serving every day, serving the living and the true God, all the judgment of God was laid on Him as if He had been serving idols like we had.

And you see, the coming wrath of God for you and for me was absorbed by Him so that we who have been living for created things could be treated rather as if we had been living for all the things Jesus had been living for.

[34 : 43] every church is meant to be ringing out this good news like a 61-bell tower.

And everybody that hears it is meant to say, thank you, Lord. Friends, do you hear this good news ringing out today?

In verse 10, Paul says, God raised Jesus from the dead. And the reason he says that is because the resurrection of Jesus is a historically verifiable event that proves that the cross of Jesus was sufficient, that His rescue is complete, that God is satisfied with everything Jesus did on your behalf and in your place.

the resurrection proves that Jesus rescue, His rescue of you from that coming wrath, that He triumphed over that sin and death for you and it was absolutely sufficient and effective.

So how do we experience the deep power of that gospel? Well, Paul says in verse 5, he says, our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power and with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

[36 : 05] And what he's saying there is that something in addition to the message of the gospel is needed. He says that the gospel must come with that strange power that's not inside of you but that comes to you from outside of you.

He says that the power of the Holy Spirit has to come upon you and grip you so that suddenly you understand with your heart and with your mind so that you are moved in the depths of your being with a conviction in which you say you know everything that I'm hearing right now is right and it's true of me and I'm not okay and I'm not enough and I need to be rescued.

The power and the conviction of the Holy Spirit is what makes our terrible problem and our wonderful deliverer living and real to us so that we believe it and so that we submit to it.

So how do we know that the power of the Holy Spirit is actually operative in us? How do we know the power of the Holy Spirit is actually working in our lives? Well, Paul says you turn from idols to

serve the living and the true God.

The structure of your life, the entire orientation of your life, the direction of your life completely changes. That's how you know the Holy Spirit's at work, the power's at work because your eyes are opened to things that you could not see before.

[37 : 35] That all these things you had been looking to for your identity and belonging and meaning and purpose were actually counterfeit gods. All along you realize I've been serving idols and you say to yourself I want to intentionally, decisively, irrevocably turn away from those idols.

I want them out of my life. I want to leave them behind completely. I want to turn my back on them so I never turn to them again and I want to turn toward God as the Lord of my life so that I'm worshiping Him and I'm living as His servant and I'm living for His glory and not for my own self and my own comfort and my own satisfaction and my own praise.

Paul says that's how you know the power of the Holy Spirit is working on you and it's working in you. It's because you're now serving the true and living God in faith and love and hope.

But then in verse 10 he says also we wait for His Son from heaven. We wait for His Son from heaven. This is how you know that the gospel is taking hold when you're waiting with a sustained and an eager expectation and a patient trust for the risen Son of God to return from heaven.

And what is the church waiting on Jesus to come and do? Very simply we're waiting on Him to judge the world and in judging the world to destroy all that belongs to the realm of sin and death and evil.

[39 : 06] The church is waiting eagerly on Jesus to come and put all that's wrong right to take all that's broken in our hearts and to heal it to take these bodies of death and to raise them up to life.

The church is waiting expectantly for Jesus finally and fully to establish His kingdom of righteousness and life and peace. So friends the proof that the deep power of the gospel and the deep power of the Holy Spirit is working in our lives is this.

to the degree that we're focusing on Jesus the rescuer to the degree that we keep turning away from the idols of our hearts and the idols of our culture to the degree that we keep serving the living and true God to the degree that we keep prayerfully maturing in faith and love and hope to the degree that we keep waiting for God's resurrected Son to return from heaven and to the degree that we keep relying on the power and conviction of the Holy Spirit and to the degree that we keep sharing the gospel with both our lives and our lips it is to that degree that the gospel message will ring out from the church and when it does and when we commit ourselves to live this way perhaps one day our city will say of us what they said of those Christians in Thessalonica that they're turning the world upside down they're acting against all the decrees of Caesar they're saying that there is actually another king and his name is Jesus may it be so in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit Amen