

Colossians 1:1-8

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[0 : 00] Well, this is great to be able to lead in today's message. I was just thinking the last time that I taught in a situation like this was with a crib in the back was like 25 years ago.

We had a Sunday school class with a lot of young people, and we would just put the packing plays in the back and let all the babies stay with us. And it reminds me of that.

I remember that. If you would turn to Colossians chapter 1, that's where we're going to be at this morning, Colossians chapter 1, 1 through 8. So turn there, and we will talk about this particular passage a lot.

All right, Colossians chapter 1, 1 through 8. Let me read that. 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.

[1 : 22] 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.

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

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we come to you again this morning, and we thank you for a time of worship. We thank you for this time where we can open up your word together.

And Jesus, we pray for your gospel. I pray for a deeper understanding of the power of your gospel, what that means in my life, in our life, in this church's life.

And Father, I pray that you would teach us now, and Holy Spirit, give us power as we look into these sacred words. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

[2 : 32] So, I like octopuses. I would like one. I like to watch them.

I'm fascinated by them. I would like one for a pet, but they're also good to eat. I don't know if we've had octopus, but this is the thing. And I was watching a show on octopuses.

Is that right, octopuses? Octopi? However, whatever the plural is there. So, I was watching this show on the octopus, and there was like, he was chasing a crab for dinner.

You know, like that's what they eat, and among other things, I guess. I don't, I've never actually touched one. I would like to someday. So, this octopus, there was a big piece of coral or rock or something.

And talking about the cracks where the light all gets in and everything. He jumped over this, or it might have been a she, I don't remember. But got over this coral, and then with all of its legs, almost like a, it reached into every part of that piece of coral.

[3 : 41] And there wasn't, the legs, they can get skinny, and they can get into each little crack, you know. And that's what it did. And then with one of them, it pulled out that crab. And then he ate it.

You know. They had like a beak inside that they crunched these crabs up with them. Anyway, I thought about that because this passage today, the power of the gospel is what this message is about, is what this first, what I want to draw out of these first eight verses.

And when I thought about that, in my mind, I sort of equated the gospel as going into every part of the world and into our lives.

Sort of like that octopus that just reaches around and gets into every crack of that coral. So, they worked, those tentacles worked their way into every crevice.

The gospel also reaches in and affects all areas of life. Every bit of us, the gospel affects. The power of the gospel finds its way into our lives.

[4 : 48] So, Colossians is where we're at. Now, I want to just give a quick background since this is the first lesson on Colossians of many. Probably we'll need to come back to this a few times.

But just a couple of high points. It was written by Paul. Very few disagree with that. About 60 or 61 A.D. So, that means this was about 35 years, give or take.

We can all wrestle with this number, but about 35 years after Jesus died on the cross. So, this time had elapsed. And the church was going out.

Paul was in prison in Rome. And the church at Colossae needed encouragement in their growth. And there were some warnings in this book as well. Many warnings about false teachers in particular.

But then a lot of encouragement and instruction on life, family, and going back to important concepts like the preeminence of Christ.

[5 : 52] So, that's a little bit of background. Paul had not been to this church in Colossae. Some people say it's different. Colossae is what I think.

Paul had not been to that church, but he may have known some of the workers that came from this church. May have met them around at different points. And Epaphras is mentioned, a fellow worker, and most likely an apostle with Paul, planted this particular church.

So, Paul himself didn't actually plant Colossae. Epaphras was sent there. So, the gospel is on the moon. That is one of the main points of that.

It was spreading and bearing fruit in the world. And the first eight verses of chapter one, what we just read, begins with a salutation, spiritual description of the Colossians, and some words of the gospel.

And that's what we're going to dive into this morning. So, let's go back to verses one through three and take a look at this, what you would call a salutation or a greeting, how he opened up many of his letters.

[7 : 00] It looks the same in a lot of these. So, 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.

So, it's to the saints and faithful brothers. This, Paul immediately was encouraging them, building them up. He had concerns that he explores later in the book of Colossians in this letter.

But right now, he's building them up, and he's talking about their faith and important parts of who they are. And one of the most important, they were saints.

These were believers. They were ones that were carrying this gospel out from the church that they were a part of. They, this is a great tactful beginning by Paul when you think about it.

He did have tough stuff to talk about, but he opened up with the good stuff of who they were and what they were about. And this is really a great way to interact with people, isn't it?

[8 : 11] Make a habit of offering positive, strengthening feedback to people. Do you do that? Like, there's so many times, I want to talk about it later, but so many times when we have opportunity to give that encouraging feedback, and we should.

Maybe it's on our minds or the tip of our tongue, we have to just offer it. Just give these encouraging words to one another, even if something negative needs to be addressed. Maybe in business or managing, sometimes you start with, well, Jim, you're doing great.

You know, I really like the way you do that. But, you know, then you're hammering me over whatever you've done wrong. But anyway, so Paul's sort of starting out this way in a very encouraging way to a group that he does want to also talk serious as well.

So a great, great tactful beginning. Paul and Timothy are great examples of perseverance, love, care. They were apostolic, compassionate, understanding.

And probably one of the main things that I see here at the beginning is they were invested in the Colossians. In their hearts, in their minds, in the way that they saw this group of people, they were invested in them.

[9 : 30] Beginning with verse 3 is when he starts to share his thankfulness in a prayer and in their prayers. But when I think about this invested, who are you invested in?

This is a small group right now, right? And it's really cool to be a part of this group right at this moment. It's not going to stay this way, is it?

We'll look back in however long, whatever distance of time. We'll look back and we'll think about these days and be like, laugh at each other. Wow, can you believe, you know, this is what it looked

like?

Once it starts to grow, once people start to come in, this question just keeps coming up. Who are we invested in? Right now, who are we invested in?

There's an investment that we put into our family, our MC, our church. But there's also this investment that truly, I guess last Wednesday, we started to really consider and think about and plan for.

[10:37] And that's the investment in Raytown, namely. How are we going to invest in them? Does it look the same way as it did with Paul and Timothy?

Who's the Lord leading you to be invested in, in his power? Not just in what we come up with or what we think might be good, but how do we invest in his power with one another and now on mission, now that we're on mission?

Verse 3, he expresses thankfulness. Let's look at that. Verse 3, 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.

The apostles are consistent. They are all, look at that, we always, in verse 3, we always thank God. They're consistent with this investment in the church at Colossae.

The apostles are offering prayers, remembering the Colossians, when we pray. So we get this picture of these guys, at least Paul and Timothy, probably the rest others as well.

[11:55] But at least these two guys, remembering this church in prayer and speaking of them. He goes over their names later, speaking about them and praying for them specifically in their needs and whatever encouragements there.

Paul and Timothy also are praying together for the Colossians and considering them together. The testimony of the Colossians begins in verse 4.

So, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. Since verse 4, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, of the love that you have for all the saints, and then beginning of 5, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven.

There's faith in Jesus, love for all the saints, and hope laid up for them in heaven. Does that ring a bell? These three things, this triad of maybe 1 Corinthians 13, we know better.

There's faith, hope, and love, right? Same three group there of characteristics. 1 Thessalonians 1, 2 through 3.

[13:17] 1 Thessalonians 1, 2 through 3 also demonstrates this triad. He says, We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith, and labor of love, and steadfastness of hope.

Here he's talking to the Thessalonians at the beginning of that book. So, your work produced by faith, labor motivated by love, and endurance inspired by hope.

These three go together. When one of these three, if you will, rises in us, the other two do as well. These all work with each other. And so, that's why you see it in the various ways. Let's examine Christian hope, the idea of hope.

So, I can find myself, I learned this about myself. I can find myself hoarding my time, and my energy, and my words. Now, this is, you know, even God-given words.

[14:40] I can find myself hoarding that, or holding on to it, when I should be letting it go. Right? That's kind of what hoarding is. We've seen hoarders, you know, the TV show. You know, that's sometimes what my heart can look like.

This is changing, and it has changed a lot over the last couple years. But once I really realized this thing about myself, is that I was holding all of that inside and not giving it away.

I came up with this illustration. I love illustrations, by the way. I've got a couple more, because I really like it. I did tons of illustrations. I need to hold back on them. But anyway, this is the illustration I came up with, and it really helped me.

It's like coins. Like, you have, like, ten coins. And when I would go, I came up with this a couple years ago, maybe the first time. And so I would go to church, and instead of listening to lies like, you don't have a good word for anybody.

You're not contributing to anything. You don't have anything to share. Instead of listening to that, I pictured myself having ten coins. And these coins, I would get to church, and I would try to give away.

[15 : 52] And those coins were in the form of a good word, a word from the Lord, an encouragement, asking somebody about their life somehow or how something went.

Instead of being turned inward and expecting something to be given to me, I wanted to give. And I wanted to sort of encourage myself or force myself to do that.

And be that sort of non-hoarding person, right? Give these things away, what God has given to me. Well, when it comes to this thought of the triad, there's Christian hope.

And I think how this is sort of playing out with these Colossians is when they stand on hope, the hope of heaven, the hope that Jesus gives, that fact doesn't leave.

And what is produced then is love, right? If I trust in him for eternal life, for he's got me, he will never forsake me or leave me, then my love for the saints grows.

[17 : 08] My faith in what he does in this relationship grows. You see, the three are dynamically connected there. Verse 8, I mean 5, I'm sorry, 5.

He begins it with the end of that triad, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. But then he says, and it almost sounds, or the beginning of it there says, because of the hope laid out for you. That's just really illustrating the fact that these are all interconnected. So there's faith and there's love because of the hope that you have in heaven.

So it really plays into the other two. They were heavenly minded. These Colossians, they were heavenly minded. Because that's what hope is, right?

When we think about the future and what the Lord has for us and the idea of heaven, that's heavenly minded. Thinking that eternally. John Piper, he has a good quote on this.

[18 : 17] He says, it is not heavenly mindedness that hinders love on this earth. It is worldly mindedness. And therefore, the great fountain of love in the powerful freeing confidence of Christian hope.

So, worldly mindedness is not where love comes from. It's the heavenly mindedness. It's the hope that we have.

Are you confident in Christian hope? Or does this world and its worldly mindedness drag you down? Or are you confident in this hope?

Can you stand on that looking forward? Well, this hope is part of the gospel. Look at 5b, verse 5b. So, he says, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of this you have heard before in the word of truth, the gospel.

You heard of this hope. You heard of this eternal life, this hope of heaven. Of this you heard in the gospel. The word of truth is the gospel.

[19 : 31] And the gospel is active. It's spreading. If we look on to verse 6, or end of 5. Of this you have heard before in the word of 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.

It's spreading. It's spreading. It's come to you. It's going out into the world. It's bearing fruit in the world and in you. And it is increasing in the world and in you.

The gospel is powerful. It's powerful. It's tentacles, if you will, are reaching out and working into the world.

Romans 1.16. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

1 Corinthians 1.18. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

[20 : 45] The gospel has the power to immediately do these things. Look back at the beginning of 6.

He says, which has come to you. Wait. Just before that. Where does he say the day of?

Verse 6, is it? Which has come to you. Indeed, the whole world is bearing fruit. Oh, yeah. As it does among you. Since the day you heard it. Since the day. So it's immediate.

This is immediate power. It's immediate power to bear fruit. Faith, hope, and love. What Paul is commending them for. The gospel working out through them.

Faith, hope, and love. But it's also immediate in redeeming people from death's grip. Immediate. Their lives are different.

[21 : 52] It changes lives. It heals. It sets free. Immediately. Immediately. Gospel has the power to increase and go throughout the world.

Increasing in lives, churches, and all corners of the globe. The gospel itself is the life-giving agent of change, which is another way of saying that God acts in the gospel.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is moving through Raytown. And this, I think, is the crux of what I want to bring out. What do you believe?

What do you believe on this? Do you believe that this gospel can immediately save and change and heal and set people free?

Do you believe that? We have to answer this question in our own hearts to be a messenger of this gospel.

[23 : 01] Because if we go out and we do not believe this thing that we're saying, then who's going to listen to us?

Who's going to understand this as truth? If it hasn't even infected or changed me, you understand? Like, this has to be what is on our mind.

Is it powerful? Will it save? Will people change as we evangelize, as we go out? And I'm talking to somebody. Am I so worried or concerned about me and what I'm saying or my own thoughts or whatever, my fear, blah, blah, blah, you name it.

Or am I concerned about the gospel changing that person? And do I believe it? If I don't believe it, it's just going to be an exercise in a memory, an act of memorizing verses and words, and then going out and standing in front of somebody and parroting that.

That's all it will amount to be. I used to sit and play cards on a Mark 48 torpedo in the torpedo room.

[24 : 18] There was a whole bunch of them. And on the boat, sometimes when we would go on long deployments, we would actually set beds up because there wasn't enough space for everybody.

We would set up like a little flat board or bed and strap it onto a Mark 48 torpedo. Right? And so we would sit there when they weren't sleeping in it, and we would play cards on that and sort of straddle these torpedoes to play cards.

And, you know, we were sitting on a torpedo that carried a 700-pound high explosive, and we didn't think a thing of it.

It was no big deal to sit on this torpedo and visit or whatever we were doing. We got used to hanging out, sitting on that much power, and it became nothing to us.

It became ordinary to us. It was just a routine thing. It made no difference. It was another chair on the boat. We could sit anywhere. This was just a place we could hide away.

[25 : 31] It was routine and ordinary. May the gospel never be ordinary to us. This is power.

The gospel is power. When we treat it like ordinary, when we treat it like it's just something that we memorized a Roman road, now we're going to go share this with somebody, and then walk away and feel great about ourself, that is not gospel power.

Right? If we are not allowing the gospel to work in our own lives, to change our own lives, how can we possibly explain that to somebody else?

May it never be ordinary. Is it powerful? Will it save? Will people that we talk to be changed? Here's the big question, though, which has to be answered first is, is the gospel accomplishing these things in your life?

Is the gospel accomplishing these things in your life? I just described a challenge that I had to face up to. The idea of I'm holding back what God has given in some way.

[26 : 54] I'm hoarding or I'm holding back. Now, I've spent a little bit of time with you guys, and I know that some of you also can deal with this as well.

All right? I want to encourage you that the way that we employ what God has given in our gifts and talents is when we believe.

When we tap into that power, and he works through us, and he gives us those words or that action or that love or that care or that willingness to sacrifice.

That's his power through us. It's not of ourselves. Not of ourselves. Look at verse 6 again. This is kind of where I hung out a bit, and I thought it was really great.

So, I'm sorry, let's start at the 5B. If 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.

[28 : 15] Do you truly appreciate God's grace?

Verse 6, that's it from the ESV, the way I just read it. In the Christian standard, it says it a little bit different, but it helps to sort of understand this little phrase better.

He says, since the day you heard it and came to truly appreciate God's grace. So, there was a point in time where you recognized that you were elect by God.

He brought you, he gave you life and regenerated you. You recognized and understood, I am elect of God, and I truly appreciated God's grace from that point.

Now, did you know everything about it? No. Is that a learning thing until the day we die? Absolutely, because it is so deep. Let's turn to Psalm 108, 8 through 14.

[29 : 38] Psalms 108. I want to talk about grace for just a second. Psalm 108, and we want to look at 8 through 14.

Ah, where is it 106? I think I've got the wrong. I've got a typo. Sorry.

I'm looking for where he knows our frame. If somebody, I've got 108, but that's not right. That's 103. 103. Oh, maybe it is.

I probably should have put it on my glasses. I don't know. Okay, let's get to 103. Yeah, 103, 8 through 14. Yeah. Okay.

Yes. Okay. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Now, as we listen to this, think about grace. Think about the understanding, truly understanding the grace of God as we read through this, okay?

[31 : 06] And where we stand in respect to him. The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

For he knows our frame, he remembers that we are death. So a couple key things that jump out to me for grace is slow to anger.

Slow to anger does not deal with us according to our sin. We're forgiven. How long does it take to truly understand that?

[32 : 18] To really let that sink in? Right? A lifetime. A lifetime. Sin was taken on the cross. 1 Peter 2, 24 and 25.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree. That we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Not by our wounds. We're not healed by our wounds. That's grace. That is grace. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

He also talks about in 103, steadfast love. He mentions this. It doesn't go anywhere. He's not fickle. He's not going to be upset with us and leave or walk out the room or something like this.

Compassion on his children. In verse 14, this is one that has just really stuck with me.

[33 : 17] He knows me. He knows that I'm... He knows my frame. He knows my errors, my mistakes, where I fall, where I...

Just... My propensities towards sin and problem. He knows these things about me. So do you truly appreciate his grace?

This grace... And that's just a snippet. That's just a little bit. We're just hitting some high points here in those points of 103. How do you know that you truly appreciate his grace?

So this is sort of a personal heart check that can be done, right? Uh... So do you exhibit these qualities? And Paul mentions these with the Colossians. So I just want to go back over them.

Specifically, faith, hope, and love. That's kind of what these are all couched in. But if I exhibit those qualities, then just like the Colossians, because he says, you guys have this, and you are understanding deeply the grace of God.

[34 : 28] So let's take some of these qualities and see if they apply. This is our own personal heart check is what we do. So first thing is, do you recognize this truth in your beliefs?

Or does your faith grow? Do you recognize this truth of grace in how you believe? I believe he has forgiven me. I believe he knows me.

I believe he does not hold my sin against me. Do I believe those things? And then do I see that evidenced, that I do believe in those things?

Another area, you will behave similar. Love, grace, forgiveness. If that has been given to me, if I believe in this grace, I'll act like him.

And I will forgive as I have been forgiven, like Jesus says. I will love because he has loved me. These things will naturally come forward in my life.

[35 : 36] I will find rest in him or faith. Take my yoke and I will give you rest, Jesus says. His grace leads me and shepherds me. That's if I believe this.

And you will be heavenly minded or hope-filled. The Colossians, this describes their state, what Paul was telling us about this group of people, is these were characteristics of them.

His grace prepares a place for us that we don't deserve. It's that hope and that heavenly mindedness. We don't deserve heaven.

We don't deserve to live with him eternally. That's not something that we've done something good to get there or be a part of that. It's his grace.

Colossians came to a place where they heard the gospel and truly appreciated, it says, God's grace. The results were seen and noted by Paul.

[36 : 36] Evidence of the power of the gospel must show in our lives. It's tied to what we believe. When we're challenged, we take that power and we stand on it and we meet the challenge.

Whether that's a personal thing, whether it's a Christchurch thing, we meet this challenge in his power because we believe it. Because we believe it.

Now, there are some areas that we can, by flipping that coin, we can see where powerlessness is evident in our life.

Okay? So, you see what I'm doing here? The gospel has power far beyond ourselves. It's of God. But sometimes we can forget and attempt to circumvent that and work on our own.

We can try to do things by the arm of flesh, not in his strength. So, here's just a couple areas that I want to bring up that we can, there's flags in our life that show us that we're off track, that we're trying to operate in our own power and not in God's power.

[37 : 52] Right? So, first one, and this is, I've got a couple that I think are key. I think they're all pretty good, but this one I think is kind of key because it's easy. This is an easy thing.

The first one, how do we know that we're off track? Our emotions take over. Our emotions take over. Anger, frustration, jealousy, selfishness.

I mean, selfishness, not selflessness. These things, when these things happen, we realize, hey man, I'm off track here. I'm about me now. I hear it.

I hear it in my words in the ways that I'm acting. Galatians 5, 19 through 24. Let's look at that. And it just really outlines pretty much all of them. Galatians 5.

Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry. Idolatry creeps in so many ways when we're not, when we're not believing in the power of the gospel.

[38 : 57] Sorcery. I don't know how many of us get into that, but it's possible, right? Enmity, or, or, you know, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

Man, if we as a group stop trusting in the power of the gospel, there's a couple of these that really stand out to me.

dissensions, divisions, we'll see it as a group. We can see it in our own lives when these things start cropping up, when we're even doing the work quote of the Lord.

We're here, we're serving, but what happens when these things show up as we operate together? What happens when we go out and we're evangelizing and these things show up?

We're working in our own power. We're not in the Lord's power. We're not working in the power of the gospel that saves. Emotions, super key to knowing when I'm off on my own way.

[40 : 09] And it's so easy because we see it right away. Second thing, exhaustion. No refreshing of my body, mind, or spirit. I'm just exhausted.

I don't want to go further. I'm tired. not interested in the work anymore. Maybe even spiritually, exhaustion leads to a letting go of maybe spiritual disciplines, things like that.

These things start to go by the wayside when I get exhausted in this way. Well, that's obviously not how the Lord designed His power.

It, um, we don't find ourselves exhausted like that. That's striving. That's striving on our own in some way, shape, or form.

Third thing is confusion. We know that we're not operating in the power of the gospel when confusion is abound. trying to make my own plans, trying to get other people to get onto my plan, trying to make these things, whatever plan, work out on my own.

[41 : 32] Um, sometimes this, uh, steamrolling others can be a part of this, you know, just, just running over people because I have a plan.

I have an idea, and I don't want anybody else to, to get in my way. Red flag right away, isn't that? Confusion, and that's personal, that's personal confusion, right?

It could cause other confusion as well, but, but I can tell when I'm off track when I'm confused, and I'm going about things my way. Fourth thing is disregarding God's timing or instructions.

One good example, uh, of how we should do it is in Acts 1, when they were to wait on the Holy Spirit to come. One bad example is Saul getting out ahead, King Saul, um, was just in our reading, if you're doing the McShundry, I think it was this last week or something like that a week ago.

I don't know. But anyway, so he, he is, uh, going out to battle because he doesn't want to wait around anymore. So he's going to take the group out and of course he is, gets in trouble for that.

[42 : 46] That's when God says, you're not to be king anymore. Um, because he wanted to take it on himself and go about it his own way. So, uh, disregarding God's timing, you may find yourself trying to hurry or stall God's work.

That's us. That's, that's a red flag. And it takes, I think, where emotions are an easy key, uh, indicator. I think something like this is a little harder because this is what we think should happen rather than, uh, really, truly trusting in the Lord and in his timing.

That's a little harder to discern in ourselves sometimes. Five and six would be distance from God and distance from brothers and sisters. And these are both key things.

These are both in, in our lives, um, when this flag comes, we easily see this. We easily see it.

Uh, we see ourselves separating from the group. We see ourselves doing our own thing between us and God. It's easy to see. We stop reading.

[44 : 03] We stop praying. We find that we've gone a week, two weeks and, and not, not even looked at the word and not even really had any meaningful prayer.

That distance from God, a hundred percent, it's me operating in my own power. I am totally disregarding that power in the gospel that he provides.

Um, and this can turn into an even uglier situation in our hearts, if I can kind of run down this track.

Um, because when we distance ourselves from God, uh, we start to use the things of God for our own purposes.

And so the things of, of maybe it's leadership or the things of the church or the things, um, of relational issues, um, we can start to use one another to get what we want or to scratch an itch or to feel good about something in my own life.

And so I start to, uh, use people or the things of God for my own purposes. Um, and, um, uh, basically denying the power, denying the power of the gospel.

[45 : 22] So I'm, I'm working hard right now at, um, um, keto. I, I am doing keto. Um, and keto, uh, you've, you stop eating sugars and carbs and you eat a lot of fats and protein and things like that.

And so I'm, I'm, I've learned this. I've had a lot of help to, to learn, you know, we got some books and watch videos and stuff learning keto. Um, well, if, if I learned all about it and then just like went around and became sort of a, uh, a spokesperson for keto and then still ate my M&Ms; and my chips when I watched movies, uh, I, I'm not a very good spokesman for keto anymore.

Um, that's not something that I, I can talk the talk. I can do those things because I can learn it and I can behave that way. But, uh, and I, I can sound like, this was a new word I learned yesterday.

We were watching the thing. I can sound like a key toner. That's what they call us keto people. Um, I can sound like a key toner. Um, but I'm really not.

Maybe I just want somebody to think I am. Maybe I want them to think that I'm on track or, or doing things right. Not that, you know, they couldn't tell if I kept eating chips, you know, you know, proofs in the pudding there, you know, but, um, but here's, here's the, the, the analogy here, the illustration is denying the power of the gospel.

[47 : 01] Uh, we, we can distance ourself from God. Okay. Find ourself in a small group and with, even with that distance and we can talk the talk and we can look like all the rest of the people, but am I, you see what I'm saying?

Uh, any one of us can fool another one for a while. I'm not saying there's people in the group fooling people, but what I'm saying is that, uh, is using the things of God for your own purposes.

And I feel like those kind of things, it creeps in all the time from time to time, but we have to arrest those things and bring those thoughts captive.

Um, use these flags in that way to say, okay, listen, if I'm distant from God, I've, I've got to come back, number one, I've got to come back to the power of the gospel that saved me and, and come back to God in this way.

I can't play like I'm something. I can't rely on back understandings, you know, well, you know, five years ago, man, I was studying all the time and it's kind of tapered off since then.

[48 : 22] Here I am now. Why the distance? Why the distance? We have to rely on the power of God and the power of the gospel.

The self-serving part looks like selfish ambition or fear of man. These are all, these are all parts of that. Let's look at verse 7 of Colossians there.

Just as you learned it, the gospel, just as you learned the gospel 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.

So we have this final example and this is what we'll close with. The final example of Epaphras and his comments about the Colossians, he was a faithful minister, Paul says, exemplified the gospel and power in life.

He believed it and shared it, planted that church, knowing that his power would be evident. Verse 8, the Colossians are again encouraged in their testimony of faith through what Epaphras said about them.

[49 : 45] He mentioned their love in the spirit. man, wouldn't it be great to be known this way? This is how we want to be known, as having these characteristics of living in the power.

So, our testimony through belief in this powerful gospel, number one, we will care for a lost, troubled, and shipwrecked world around us.

This is what energizes us, empowers us, gives us our marching orders, to Raytown. This is the gospel. That's the power to save. We'll stand in confident Christian hope, knowing that Jesus is King of Kings, and we have nothing and nobody to fear.

Nothing. There's, you know, they can, we're saying they can kill us. Hopefully it doesn't happen in Raytown. It's possible. But hopefully that's not what we're up against.

Third, we can accurately assess our own lives and let the Holy Spirit convict us of unbelief where it rears its head, which personally, that's how the power of the gospel works in our life.

[50 : 57] The Holy Spirit convicts us and we grow. That's where the power comes from. It's not from ourselves. It's not from something that we figure out on our own. Romans 116, I'll close with this.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.