

The Gospel to the Colossians

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Preacher: Ernest Romanchik

[0 : 00] Good morning. It really is good to be with you guys. Thank you for having me again. I was here in 2019, December 29th, and then COVID hit right after. And boy, does that ever feel like forever ago.

But it is truly good to be back. I really do appreciate this church. Pastor BK is a good friend of mine, and unfortunately, my visiting coincides with him being away.

And I wish I could have seen him, but I love BK. I don't know if you call him Pastor BK or BK1, just first name basis kind of thing, because that's how close we are. But Pastor BK, normally I'm not one to, when I get invited to a church, it's always good to thank the people and say something nice about the pastor.

But I'm not much for bootlicking. But boy, you guys should know, I think you are tremendously blessed with who you have as a lead pastor. I can't go into all the details, but I have dealt with some real theological struggles over the last few years.

We have dealt with just a tumultuous series of events, not only in ministry, but also personally, as my mother, for example, has just gone through her third round of cancer treatments.

[1 : 06] She's dealing with a very severe and rare form of cancer. My father, in the end of 29, 20, beginning of 2020, I don't know, the timeline is so blurred, and with COVID, everything's even blurrier.

But the father had a brain aneurysm, and we were told after multiple surgeries there would be a recovery, and instead there was a rapid declining. And now he finds himself in a long-term care home, unable to speak, unable to move.

And we, in a sense, are living with our father, who we're losing while he's still alive. We welcomed our beautiful daughter, Adeline, last year. But that came with a high-risk pregnancy and then a week of what was just the most emotionally draining and difficult week of our lives in the NICU, which I didn't even know what that was before, as I told my gracious host yesterday.

I thought NICU was a boy band, and when they said, we're taking your kid to NICU, I had no idea what that meant, not realizing what we were about to go through. God has been very gracious in that, and part of his grace to me has been BK.

It has been his mentorship, it has been his advice, and though I live a life with many pastors who surround me, Pastor BK has been my pastor through a lot of this. And so I am so grateful to be trusted and invited to come and speak in his pulpit, to be here to share with all of you.

[2 : 20] I love your pastor dearly, and I hope you know you have a man who cares deeply about the Word of God, not only being handled rightly here, but also in other places, and he has invested in the kingdom of God, even when you don't see it.

And so I'm very grateful to him, and I hope he does very well wherever he is today. But today we are in Colossians 1, so please take your Bibles and turn there with me. This should be a familiar text for you, as Pastor BK actually two weeks ago was preaching out of the first half of Colossians 1.

It was humorous to me that I asked him, I always try and piggyback or connect something with where the pastor is preaching, so there's continuity in the pulpit. And I asked him what he was preaching on, and he said Colossians 1 and on prayer.

Or he actually, he told me he was just preaching on prayer. And I was thinking, that's great. I actually just studied and prepped up a sermon in the first half of Colossians 1. I know this text, and I went to listen to BK's sermon.

Wouldn't you know it, he preached on the exact same text I did. But that opened up the door for me to preach on the earlier passages, because in my preparation for this, there was a couple verses

that really struck me in Colossians 1, that I didn't have time to really work out or flesh out in my previous sermon.

[3 : 31] And so, BK has already laid some of the groundwork, which is really helpful, so we can get right into it. So, chapter 1, we'll be focusing today on verses 1 through 8. And we're just going to take it verse by verse.

I'm not going to read the whole passage out right now. We'll take it verse by verse and break it down. 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. This is a customary greeting. It's a customary opening to a letter. This is how letters were written back in the day. And it's a format that Paul regularly uses. You'll see this throughout the text of the New Testament.

He states, first and foremost, who the author is, Paul. He also mentions shortly after that Timothy is with him. And by listing Timothy with him, he's also saying, in a sense, that Paul is the author, but Timothy is in agreement with what he is saying.

And just as a side note, if we are people who believe Scripture, then we believe 2 Timothy 3.16. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

[4 : 39] And that needs to be in the back of our minds. Paul is the author. But everything he's about to say, he has Timothy in agreement with him. And not only that, but we trust that the Spirit of God has inspired the very words of Paul.

So what is about to be said is also the Word of God. And because of that, we should be very careful to pay attention to what is said. Because what we're going to read in verses 3, specifically through 5, has major implications for us today.

And for those of you who are parents, especially of high school kids or those going into high school, some of what I'm going to say is going to specifically come through the lens of a youth worker. And this has massive ramifications for you.

So Paul is the author. Timothy is there with him. And then the second thing he does is state his, essentially his titles or his credentials, the authority by which he comes and he writes, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God.

And that is very important. We live in a time where many today will appoint themselves as apostles. There are all sorts of organizations with modern day apostles that have self-ordained or set themselves up.

[5 : 51] They have a denomination that sometimes gives them some sort of stamp of approval. But Paul is not such an apostle. Paul is an apostle. He is a sent out one by the very will of God himself.

He is not an apostle for a denomination. He is an apostle of Jesus Christ. He is a servant, a slave, a missionary, an ambassador by the very will of God.

This was not Paul's will. This was the will of God. And then in verse 2, he addresses, to whom is he writing? He says, the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossus.

John MacArthur in his full Bible commentary mentions that the word saints that is used here, it is only used of true believers in the New Testament. It is the holy called out separate ones of God. This is a term that is only used for believers. And so when Paul says to the saints, we know that he's writing to legitimate believers. And that will mean even more when we get further into the text.

[6 : 50] And they are brothers with him. He has this familial relationship with them. But that is remarkable because Paul has actually never met the Colossians. We find out later on that he's actually heard about them from Epaphras.

But he's never gone there and met with these people. He doesn't actually know who they are face to face. There is none of that interaction that has taken place. And yet he considers them brothers in Christ.

It is that relationship, that faith that they share in Christ that unifies them together. And it's not only a brotherly connection, but he says in his blessing at the end of verse 2, grace to you and peace from God our Father.

And together, because of their faith in Christ, they share a brotherly relationship, but they also share in the Heavenly Father. And if you are a saint today, if you are one who has called and trusted on the name of Christ, you too share in the same Heavenly Father as Paul.

You too are a brother or a sister in Christ with the Colossians. And so the words that are instructed to them are even more so important for us to understand. We are family.

[7 : 58] This is a letter that has much bearing on our lives. And the implications for it are striking. Look with me at verse 3. He says, We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

Now, I'm not going to belabor or beat a dead horse. Pastor BK has already discussed two weeks ago what it means to always be praying. They are continuously praying for the Colossians. He says in verse 4, From the very day, the moment that Paul hears about what is going on in the city of Colossians, who these Colossians are, that they have had a genuine conversion experience in Christ, he begins to pray for them.

And what a beautiful connection there is in the church that we can have brothers and sisters whom we've never met, who share in a Father, and there is a burden for us to pray for them. We should. And Paul is regularly praying for these people, though he has not met them in person. And he's done this because they have faith in Christ. And a faith that we know is genuine because it is worked out in a love for all the saints.

[9 : 11] You see, genuine conversion will always be accompanied by a genuine love for others. The two go hand in hand. You cannot have faith in Christ and yet not have love for your fellow man, especially a deepening, richer, greater love for the brethren.

True faith is always worked out in obedience and manifested love to those around you. And this is what we see in the city of Colossus. They have a faith in Christ Jesus as the anointed one, as the Messiah.

And because of that faith in Christ, they have a love that is worked out, a genuine faith that is put into practice now as they love others. He continues in verse 5.

This faith and this love is there because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. The Colossians have heard that after this life, there is something to come. There is a hope.

There is something that you can confidently be assured and trust in that is coming for you who trust in Christ. And so they have a faith in Christ.

[10 : 14] They have this faith worked out in love. And these are evidences of true conversion. Faith in Christ, love for the brethren, hope for the future because of what Christ has promised.

And before we move on, just look back for a moment. Who does Paul thank for all of this? Does Paul look at the Colossians and go, man, I'm just, I'm so thankful that you guys have chosen to believe in Christ.

I'm so grateful that you've now decided to love others. No, Paul rightly thanks God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because Paul is constantly affirming that God is sovereign and in control of even salvation.

That God is the author, the perfecter, the accomplisher of salvation. This is something that Paul is reinforcing again and again and again. And I'll call your attention to a few pages on your left.

Turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2, a text I'm sure many of you are familiar with, maybe even have memorized. It's one of those things that if Paul is going to affirm it, we should give it our attention.

[11 : 18] Ephesians chapter 2 verse 8. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. Not a result of work so that no one may boast.

For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Paul thanks God for the salvation of the Colossians because he realized they have been saved by grace.

And this grace is given through the means of faith, which is a gift by God. If you are a believer, just like the Colossians, you are not the gift giver.

You are the receiver of the gift. You are not the source of faith. You are simply the one who benefits from it. You are not the giver of grace, but the receiver of it. And if this was to be from yourself, if it was to be by your own doing, it would not be the gift of God.

Rather, it would be the accomplishment of yourself. He continues in verse 9 here. Not a result of work so that no one may boast because God knows our hearts truly. If we were to accomplish or decide on faith ourselves, we would boast about it.

[12 : 30] No, God is the one who gives it. It is not a result of our works because we would boast, but rather it is a result of his work on the cross. The very will of God worked out.

For we are his workmanship. You are not the worker of salvation. You are the result of the work of another. One who has done a greater work on that cross. And so now you are the result. You are the workmanship. You are created in Christ Jesus for good works. Again, not the creator of salvation, but simply the byproduct. And you were created to do good works. And one thing you will notice again and again that our society and the world confuses, the world religions confuse, but Christianity again and again makes this point clear. Good works follow salvation.

They do not precede it. Your good works are like filthy rags, Isaiah says. They are essentially good for nothing but to be thrown into the fire as a soiled rag. But there are good works for you after you have been created in Christ Jesus.

[13:33] Once you have been converted, now begins the good works to the pleasure of the Father, not for the sake of earning his salvation or his favor beforehand.

And of these good works that we do, he says, which God prepared beforehand. Even the very good works you do, God has already ordained and lined them up that you would simply walk in obedience to them.

And so Paul rightly understands and reinforces that for all of the salvation that is found in the city of Colossus, God is to be glorified. God is the one to be thanked for all of it.

And so while he prays for the Colossians in praying for them and their needs, he is continuously thanking God, recognizing, God, you saved these people. And he rightly gives him the worship and praise for it.

And now there is a hope laid up in heaven for these people. He continues in the second half of verse 5. Of this you have heard before in the word of truth, or excuse me, the word of the truth, the gospel.

[14:37] And we just have to camp out here for a minute. Notice how the word of the truth and the gospel comes to them. Notice how it is different from how people today often talk about the gospel.

The gospel comes to them by hearing. It is something that they receive from somebody who's declaring or proclaiming, like a herald. A gospel herald is one who essentially is taking the king's message.

You go and you announce or you read, you declare, you proclaim the message that the king has given you. That is what a gospel preacher does. They are an ambassador of a king.

They are not one to tweak the message. They are not one to make it more politically correct or to soften it. They come and declare it. And this is what has happened in Colossus. The people have heard the word of truth.

We often hear today, you know, unfortunately it is misquoted or misattributed towards Francis of Assisi. You know, proclaim or share the gospel.

[15:36] Use words when necessary. When in reality, how does one do that? I think if you want to show somebody the news in the newspaper, you don't act it out and you don't live the news.

You share the news by reading it, by declaring it, by proclaiming it. This is what the gospel needs to have happen. It needs to be proclaimed. And this is the means by which God has chosen to save people through the audible declaration of the gospel.

And this is what has happened in Colossus. Somebody has come and has preached to them. That way they have heard the word of the truth. And notice even the little intricate details here that Paul uses.

The word of the truth. The gospel. He uses the definite article, the. It is an exclusive term. It is the word of the truth.

It is not a word of truth as if it is one of many. It is not a version of truth, but rather it is the word of the truth. And he uses it right alongside the gospel.

[16:40] It is synonymous. It is the same thing, which means the good news, the gospel that has been preached in Colossus is not a truth, a kind of truth, a variety of truth, but rather it is the word of the truth.

And this is a point that we must contend for today, unfortunately. Because there seems to be many different gospels today. The prosperity gospel.

The health and God will always heal every single calamity. And if you are a Christian, you should never get sick gospel. The gospel of business success or making you feel better. The gospel of Jesus patting you on the back and solving all of your problems.

There seem to be a lot of different truths proclaimed in churches. But Paul's contention is that there is the word of the truth. It is God's truth. To him, he is the standard and he sets what the truth is. And what is that truth to God? It is the gospel. Turn with me to one of my favorite passages, again on your left, Galatians chapter 1. Galatians chapter 1 is an interesting book.

[17 : 44] It's the only one where Paul opens it up and he doesn't give like flowery kind words to the people. Instead, he just takes them to town and he scolds them. Chapter 1 verse 6.

Paul says in some of the most striking and strong language you will find anywhere in scripture. I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him, that is God, who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.

Now stop there for a minute. You might be thinking, but wait, you just said that there is only one gospel. If they are turning to a different gospel, then surely there must be at least two. Likely more. Paul anticipates. Verse 7. Not that there is another one. But there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. Paul's contention is that there is one gospel.

It is the truth. And anything that deviates from that gospel is not another gospel. It is simply a distortion of the gospel. It is a counterfeit.

[18 : 48] It is not good for anything. It does not matter how good your fake \$100 bill is. It's worth nothing. It does not matter how close it seems to be, how pleasing it is.

I am sure if I gave you a counterfeit \$100 bill, you would probably be excited about it until you found out that it was counterfeit. And then you would realize it is rotten. It is good for nothing. I have been deceived. In fact, you feel even more disappointed than you were elated when you received it.

The Galatians have had a true gospel presented to them, but now it is being distorted and there is all sorts of confusion for them. I love this. So invite me back. I would love to do a whole sermon on this, but I will give you the Spark Notes version of it.

Verse 8. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. Let him be damned.

Let him be cut off from God. Do you understand what Paul is saying? The truth here is what matters, the gospel. And it does not matter the credentials of who is coming to speak to you.

[19 : 49] If they change the gospel, let them be cut off from God. Regardless of whether it's angelic or an apostle or some sort of super apostle as the Corinthian church was dealing with.

No matter what, if there is any deviation from the gospel, they are distorting it. Their credentials do not matter. If you think Paul's not being strong enough, look with me at verse 9. As we have said before, so now I say again, the emphasis stresses the urgency here.

If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Brothers and sisters, there is only one gospel. And this gospel has come to the Colossians.

And we know this because they have faith in Christ, which is worked out in a love for the saints. And they have a hope laid up for them in the future as they trust in the rewards for believing in Christ. And this has come to them through the preaching of the word of the truth, the gospel, the one and only.

Unfortunately today, a lot of times the gospel that is preached to young people is not this gospel. I don't know where exactly we went off. But the gospel that comes to the Colossians is not the gospel I hear a lot of times to young people today.

[21 : 08] A few years ago, my youth group and I were invited to a gathering in Abbotsford for all of the different youth groups. They wanted everybody to come together. We would play a couple of silly games, which was fun. And then they would actually break us off.

Rather than each and every youth group on their own, the kids would gather in groups that, you know, if you go to this school, then all the kids from all the youth groups that go to that school gather together and pray. It's a wonderful initiative, a great idea.

And they had a speaker lined up. Unfortunately, that guy got sick. And so they needed a replacement speaker. And they brought in somebody who was apparently very well known in the area. He travels to multiple youth groups. He's well recognized.

He's well respected. Here is a trustworthy teacher. And he gets up there and he begins to preach. And I remember thinking, you know, there's some really good points here. There's some good application. There's some good practical stuff.

Nothing worrisome. Look, he's no BK or MacArthur up there. But the guy was doing a commendable job. And then he rightly comes to this conclusion right near the end. He says, I would

not want to presume that everybody here is a Christian.

[22 : 08] In a group of about 400 kids, I would imagine he's right. And he says, so I need to share the gospel with you. And now I don't remember it word for word.

But his three-minute gospel presentation was something along the lines of this. Are you lonely? Are you sad? Jesus can help you.

Say yes to Jesus. Do you want to say yes to Jesus? Essentially, he said, I'm going to prayer, prayer. And I'd like you in this prayer to say yes to Jesus. And there was a couple of kids, I believe, who raised their hands.

And I'm looking around and it seems like we're all okay with this. Nobody's batting an eye. And I remember sitting there thinking, we just had a gospel presentation that made zero mention of sin. There is no need of forgiveness in this gospel. There is no such thing as repentance in such a gospel. It is a gospel of boyfriend, cuddly bear Jesus who wants to come hug you, rub your back, and make you feel better after a breakup.

[23 : 12] And then after a couple months of following Jesus, you then turn back to your vices or whatever it is that you desire. But don't worry, boyfriend Jesus will be there to come for you. And while this sounds silly, this is the gospel that is often presented to young people.

Because we've removed the offense of the gospel. We'll talk more about, and I know this is being facetious, but oopsie daisies. Where is it that when we decided we were going to talk to young people, we decided to lose our spine and remove all of the offense of the gospel?

As if in our wisdom, our modern wisdom, we could come up with a gospel better than what God has given us. Do you understand? There is a biblical gospel, the gospel.

There is not a gospel in their times for the Jew and then one for the Gentiles. There is not a gospel for the educated and the uneducated.

Look, I'm just using this side. I'm sure you're all equally educated with this side. When I practiced this, I did this side was the negative one. So if that's any comfort to you. There is not a gospel that comes to the Scythians and one for the barbarians.

[24 : 24] There is not one for the rich and one for the poor. There is not a gospel that is for an audience that could handle it back in Jesus' time. But you know, the modern man, a little bit more sensitive.

You know, we're a little bit more finesse. We're a little bit more educated. You know, we're just smarter. We're not as primitive. So we need a gentler. That's just rubbish. There is the gospel. It is not in need of updating. The truth is enduring. It continues. And if God has given us this truth, who are we to think that we can remedy it or make it better?

And yet this is what we do to young people. I remember after the thing, one of my kids decided he was going to catch a ride home with a friend but doesn't bother to mention it. So I'm searching through the crowds trying to find this kid.

And I bump into the organizer of this event. Lovely, lovely youth pastor. And he asked me what I think of the event. And look, I don't love conflict any more than anybody else in this room.

[25 : 22] And so I said, look, I'm so glad you invite us. The games are fun. And there's some media troubles with, you know, the music. And that kind of took away from it. But overall, you know, we're grateful to come. Thank you for us. And I try and turn and leave.

And he goes, the one and only probably time I'll ever ask me, what did you think of the message? It's one of those times where I'm like, I'm not going to lie about it. He asked me.

And so, you know, the guy made a couple of good points. But man, we just had a false gospel presentation. There's no sin.

There's no repentance. There's no forgiveness. And he says, say yes to Jesus. What does that even mean? Like, where do I go in the Bible to find how to say yes to Jesus? Is that Ephesians, Galatians, the book of first opinions?

Like, I don't know where to turn for that. And he being a very gracious man, he says, you know, he was last minute.

[26 : 18] And he was rushed at the end. And so, you know, he only had like two or three minutes. He has two or three minutes to get it wrong. He doesn't have two or three minutes to get it right.

And if you can't get the gospel right, why would you give kids a false gospel? Now, perhaps you're sitting here thinking, you know, this is overly critical. You don't, like, you know, kids just, they're different today.

Understand, as a youth pastor, I see the fruit of false gospels. I see what happens when you have a majority of young people who are filled with this cotton candy fluff.

And then they leave the church. Do you know statistics ranging from the last like 20 years? Is whether in some denominations it's a little bit better, 60%, worst denominations, 90%.

Whatever denominational statistics you look at, 60 to 90% of your most regularly best attending youth will leave the church within three years of high school graduation.

[27 : 19] 60 to 90% of those kids who are here regularly. There's a lot of reasons why. But the primary one is that we peddle a false gospel.

And so these kids realize very quickly afterwards, I don't really believe this stuff. I made that decision, but I don't feel that way now. And when we give these kids a false gospel, it is no wonder that so many of them leave the church and then have the perspective, I tried that.

It didn't work. I've experienced it. And because of that experience, they're now reticent to come back. They think they've already seen and heard and felt the message. When in reality, what they've been given is a distortion of the truth.

And I've seen this again and again and again and again. God knew what he was doing when he gave us the word of the truth, the gospel.

And if we would be bold and preach that, we will see real conversions among young people. Where do we see in scripture a gospel for the adults and a gospel for the children? We just don't. And we do ourselves a disservice.

[28 : 28] We shoot ourselves in the foot when we think that young people, teenagers, can't handle sin, forgiveness, repentance, the holiness of God, what it means to be a sacrifice and the need for a savior, as if for some reason they can't understand those terms.

Look with me at verse 6. In regards to the gospel, the word of the truth, Paul says, And we're going to camp out at this verse for a little bit.

The gospel has come to them. And then Paul elaborates, As indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing. And the whole world here is an expression. It simply means everywhere that the gospel is going.

The known world, the gospel since Pentecost has been spreading and going out. And what is remarkable is that wherever it goes and whoever bears it, the result is the same. Do you notice that?

Wherever the gospel goes, what does it do? It bears fruit and increases. And this is remarkable. Look at the rest of the verse. Paul did not come and preach the gospel to the Colossians.

[29 : 44] And yet, because somebody did, it is bearing fruit and increasing in their midst, just as it is everywhere else. Because when the gospel is rightly proclaimed, it will bear fruit and it will increase in the lives of those who receive it.

Since the very day they hear it. And this, again, is noticeably different from what is a lot of what we find in Christianity today. Why is it that there seems to be a class of Christians who believe but produce no fruit, and then some who do and are more serious about their faith?

That might seem silly and you won't see it in scripture, but you do see it in churches today all the time. Especially with young children. This idea that somebody believes at four or five years old and bless their soul they're a Christian even though there's really no fruit in their lives.

And I'm not one to say, look, if you got saved at five years old, praise God. I wish I had been saved a lot earlier. Would have saved me a lot of pain, a lot of misery, a lot of regret and repentance. I would have, you know, been so fortunate.

Yet the Lord saw fit to do it differently. But there is no such thing as a Christian who does not bear fruit. We see from the very day the Colossians have received it.

[30 : 55] A congregation that is mostly Gentile with likely some Jews as there's a little Jewish populace in the city of Colossae. They have other gods. They have other religious systems. And yet from the very day that God has saved them, he begins to produce fruit.

Now if you know anything about fruit, you know it takes a while to produce. It takes a while to mature. There's growth. What's the growth? Pastor BK talked about a couple weeks ago. How long does it take a person who is converted to get to the point of a person who has been converted 10 years ago?

Like 10 years. Because it's not simply about learning the truth, but it is working it out. And that experiential growth and learning that comes from trial and error and praying and repentance and

sanctification. That continuously happens over time as God refines us into the image of Christ. A few years ago, a good friend of mine, he was just a young man at the time, was getting baptized. And so he joined the baptismal class in a church.

And I was invited to come along to essentially see how this church was doing baptismal courses. And the lead pastor was leading it. And he asked each and every person to share their testimony. And testimonies were all pretty much identical.

[31 : 58] I was saved around four or five years old. You know, went to church my whole life. And this was my friend's story. He says, you know, around 15 years old, my faith became real to me.

And as he's saying that, he begins to realize there's a little bit of a confusing element there. He asked, what point was I saved? Actually, I don't know.

Was I saved at four or five when I confessed Jesus and I invited him into my heart? Or when I was 14 or 15 when my faith became real? And the pastor in that moment said, you know, I don't want to distrust it.

You believed in your young kid. You made that profession. And then God saved you. And you just took a step in your faith when you were 14 or 15. Now, I have a bit of a problem with that. How is it that you can believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?

As we read today in 2 Corinthians, you are a new creation. Behold, the old man has gone away. And yet, nothing really changed. But then your faith became real when you were older.

[32 : 58] Show me in Scripture where somebody has a faith that isn't real but is in Christ. You just, you won't see that. And afterwards, him and I were talking and I said, look, that question that you were confused about that I know you're still confused about, I can answer that.

Would you say that you repented and believed at 15? Yeah, that's when my faith really became real. Like, God changed me. That's when God converted you. Again, I'm not saying that God doesn't save young children.

By no means. But let us not be deceived to think that there is some sort of slumberous state of Christians who don't produce any fruit. If you are converted, you will produce fruit.

Now, granted, much of that will be small. You will make many errors. It takes time to ripen. It takes time to grow. I don't know a lot about fruit, so I'm going to stop with the analogy there.

But it takes time. But regardless of who has brought the gospel, whether, and spoiler, verse 7, Epaphras is the one who brings the gospel to the Colossians.

[33 : 57] Or Paul who brings it to Ephesus and other cities. Regardless of the location or the audience or the speaker, wherever the gospel goes and is rightly proclaimed, when God saves souls, he produces fruit, and that fruit within them increases.

And it goes outward as now their life bears witness that they are changed. They've trusted in Christ, and there will be conversations with others about that. We cannot buy into the experiential lies of today that we have all sorts of people who profess Christ, but really just don't bear any fruit.

But you know what? That one time they made that profession, so we can't say anything about it. It is not without reason that 2 Corinthians 13, verse 5 talks about examine yourselves to see whether or not you are in the faith.

And then he talks about a confident assurance we can have if we pass the test. But that's just something we don't see today. I remember years ago teaching the gospel.

Not that that was years ago. We regularly are teaching the gospel at our youth group. But I remember telling our kids, just because you made a profession of faith doesn't mean that you're a Christian. And some kid goes home and shares that, and his father comes visibly disturbed.

[35 : 11] Why would you be planting the idea in my kid's head that they might not be saved? I said, look, I don't know the heart of man. But a simple profession doesn't mean a whole lot if there's not genuine fruit that follows it.

And we began to discuss what it means to be saved and why we don't just have the assumption that if you were a kid in the church that you're saved. And this conversation led to a really fruitful relationship between me and this man who then openly admits that he's lost his eldest son.

His son was in the church and was a Christian, and he just assumed things were fine. He essentially abdicated his role of teaching his children, handed them over to the church to do it. And then at 19 years old, he loses his son who no longer wants to really have any spiritual talks with him and doesn't want to engage in that.

Why? Because we assume that just because there was a profession, they were saved. And so we don't need the gospel anymore. This is the fruit that comes from this.

But the fruit that comes from the real gospel is faith in Christ. It is love for the saints. It is a hope for the future. It is an increasing maturity within the believer, even in the young ones.

[36 : 21] And this happens since the day they heard it. Since the day they understood the grace of God in truth.

And there is a lot of talk today about grace. That Christians should be gracious. They should be loving. God is gracious. And the way that that is often portrayed or framed is that you should be gracious like God is by just simply overlooking sin as if it does not bother God.

We should be gracious, but we've robbed grace of what it actually is. We've robbed it of truth.

We've robbed that God's grace is glorious because he poured out his wrath on his son so that he could pour out his grace on us.

But we today have often, and by we today I'm talking about general Christianity, often that is portrayed and taught in the West. We have removed the truth in the grace of God.

But Paul recognizes that as the gospel has come to them, they have understood the grace of God in truth. Recognizing you are not worthy of it, but God has given it to you because one who was worthy of all of God's grace was denied it.

[37 : 29] And instead the wrath of God was poured out on him as a substitute in your place as a sinner. And when we understand the grace of God in truth, when we hear the gospel, we are converted.

And Paul says in verse 7, just as you learned it, speaking of the gospel and the grace of God in truth, 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.

In chapter 4, he talks about how Epaphras is one of them, which seems to be that Epaphras was probably in Ephesus, heard the gospel, was remarkably changed by it, and then went back home and there he proclaimed the gospel.

And look at the result. We now have the letter to the Colossians because one man was converted and then went and proclaimed it. And God in his faithfulness saves more there.

We must contend for the truth that there is the gospel. And the biblical gospel will produce real fruit in people when they are converted. That fruit is evidenced.

[38 : 33] I get that it is harder to see at times, but there will be a faith, a real belief, a trust. Not an acknowledgement, but an actual trust in Jesus as the Christ.

There will be a love for one another. 1 John is a really good book to see whether or not a person is saved. Do you have a fellow love for the saints? If you don't, you're not. Do you trust in Christ? Do you obey God? Because to love God is to obey him. If you don't, you're not. Do you notice how the Bible gives us multiple tests in the New Testament to know whether our faith is genuine? Those aren't there for no reason.

And I'm not here saying all of you should now question whether or not you're saved and your assurance has gone out the window. By no means. But let us contend for a biblical gospel that produces real spiritual fruit inside of those who have actually been converted.

And when we aim to preach such a biblical gospel, we will see people get saved. But if we offer a counterfeit, we will see just counterfeit Christians. And when persecution comes, we will see people just leave the church in droves.

[39 : 40] And they will find a church that will continue to give them more counterfeit assurance. But we don't want that. No, we want the biblical gospel.

We want to see the fruit. And when we proclaim that gospel and we see that conversion, we too must thank God because he is sovereign over salvation. He is the one who will accomplish it.

This is not part of the sermon. Let's call it a bonus as I wrap it up. Today often I see in churches this desire to manipulate the gospel because we really don't want to trust that God is in control of it.

We want to try and make the gospel more palatable, more delicious, easier to swallow for a person. And so this is why we remove the offense of it. Our job is not to change the message, but simply be heralds of it.

And how much more important is it for us to then understand what is the actual gospel? The gospel that speaks of sinners who are irreconcilable to God by their own efforts. That by no means of your own effort will you be able to bridge that chasm.

[40 : 47] No, you are utterly hopeless. Listen, even if you could earn God's grace, there is no one who seeks God. There is no one who desires him.

Romans is very clear about that. That's the state of us as people. We need someone to help us. But who can atone for our sins? Who can deal with them if they too are sinners and cannot even remedy their own situation?

No, we need blood because blood is what is required to atone for sins. This is how God has mandated it in his infinite wisdom.

And so he offers up his son, the only truly good person to ever live, born of a virgin, both truly God and truly man. And he comes and he fulfills the law as nobody could and then shockingly is betrayed.

And yet this is the very will of God and the will of Jesus who offers himself as a sacrifice in our place. Taking our sins, our shame and all of the curses that are due to the transgressors of God's law upon himself.

[41 : 54] And there on the cross, he does not simply face the piercing spear or the sharp nails or the elements as they whip against his flesh. After receiving a horrific beating and torture at the whips and the snares of the Roman centurions and guards.

No, no, he bears the very wrath of God. As God pours out all of the wrath due to us on him in our place. And then he dies. And three days later he is resurrected.

Behold, the sacrifice is sufficient. God has approved of it. And he is raised to life and so all that he says is true. If you would trust in him, if you would confess that Jesus is Lord.

Believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. You too will be saved. Do you recognize that you are a sinner in need of salvation? Do you recognize that you need grace that is undeserved because you don't earn it?

But there is grace and mercy that is extended to you. Would you recognize Christ is your only hope? If you look anywhere else, you will be lost. If you trust in Christ and anything else, you will be lost.

[43 : 03] No, he is the all-sufficient, exclusive Savior. Cast all your hope and your cares on him and you will be saved. And understand that should that happen to you. Should you cry and recognize to God, I am a sinner in need of your salvation.

I believe in your son Jesus Christ as the means of my forgiveness. To reconcile me to you.

Recognize that you are now a child of God. You are a brother and a sister with the rest of the saints.

You now are sealed with the spirit. You have an eternal hope awaiting for you. A glorious resurrection where we will see face to face with those that we've lost. What a beautiful truth. What a wonderful hope.

My father now cannot speak, but we will speak again. He cannot move, but we will rejoice in the presence of God our Savior. Savior, we will see those who have gone before us, those who have perished, those who have suffered, those who have been faithful because Christ gives us this hope. And he deserves all of the praise and the glory for it. Let us preach a biblical gospel. Let us produce fruits in our lives that God will naturally be working out in us.

[44 : 10] Let us not just assume that people are saved because they profess to follow Jesus. Even the demons know about Jesus. Let us stand for a biblical gospel in a time where there is so much counterfeit that is yet accepted within the church.

Please join me. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, you deserve the glory for all those who are saved. Father, we praise your great name.

You who from before creation have chosen us to be your people, adopted us as your children, grafted us into your nation. Father, you call us friends.

We are undeserving. You call us your children. Father, what a blessing for the rebellious. Father, you are good and kind and gracious. And we sing these things and even then we barely scratch the surface of just how truly magnificent you are.

And Father, how is it that you give unconditional love to us? Those who are conditional all the time. Those who walk in error and make mistakes and we stumble and we sin and yet your grace is sufficient.

[45 : 23] Your mercies are new every morning. You are so, so good to us. Thank you for your son, Jesus, who atones and covers over our sins. Who brings us into your family.

Who makes us an heir. That we would have things, a hope and good things to look forward to. An imperishable reward in heaven. Father, you deserve all of the credit for the salvation of the Colossians.

And the Ephesians and the Laodiceans. And those in Jerusalem. And those a hundred years ago. And a thousand. And even today here in Squamish. Wherever it is that the gospel is preached, Father. You deserve the credit and the glory.

Help us, Father, to be your people who proclaim a biblical gospel. May we produce fruit that is pleasing to you. And walk in the good works that you have prepared beforehand for us to walk in. Thank you, Father, that you not only save us.

But you even have a plan established for us to walk in. Father, you take care of us each and every step of the way. Whether or not we see your hand at work. We know that you are there and you are active.

[46 : 24] We love you. We thank you. We ask that you bless us this day as we go from here. As your holy, anointed, saved people. In your name, Jesus, we pray. Amen.