

Living in Step with the Gospel

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading today comes from Colossians chapter 2 and 3. Please follow along in your bulletin or on the screen. Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world rather than Christ.

For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells in bodily in Christ, and you have been fulfilled by him, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

You were also circumcised in him with a circumcision not done with hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ, when you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him, through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.

And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses.

He erased the certificate of debt with its obligations that was against us and opposed to us and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly.

[1 : 19] He triumphed over them in him. Therefore, don't let anyone judge you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day.

These are a shadow of what was to come. The substance is Christ. Let no one condemn you by delighting in ascetic practices and a worship of angels, claiming access to a visionary realm.

Such people are inflated by empty notions of their unspiritual mind. He doesn't hold on to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and tendons, grows with growth from God.

If you died with Christ to the elements of this world, why do you live as if you still belong to the world? Why do you submit to regulations?

Don't handle, don't taste, don't touch. All these regulations refer to what is destined to perish by being used up. They are human commands and doctrines.

[2 : 29] Although these have a reputation for wisdom by promoting self-made religion, false humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are not of any value in a curbing self-indulgence.

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry.

Because of these, God's wrath is coming upon the disobedient, and you once walked in these things when you were living in them. But now, put away all the following, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth.

[3 : 44] Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your creator.

In Christ, there is no Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all and in all.

This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Christina and Jefferson. Will you join me as we pray? Let's spend a few minutes praying for ourselves and for our city and for our world together.

Will you join me? Gracious Father, Lord Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, we do come before you this morning to have our own hearts ministered to, to set our hearts aright with you, but also, God, to bring you worship and glory, to praise your name, to worship you for who you are.

Father, this morning we are reminded that you are the sovereign, glorious God. As Angie reminded us earlier, there is no one like you in all creation, God. You are glorious and majestic, and yet you are also deeply personal.

[4 : 56] You are close and caring. You are compassionate, God, to the hurts in our hearts and, God, the hurts of our city. Father, thank you that you know our deepest concerns.

You know everything about us. You know the fears and the anxieties, and, God, you are concerned about that with us. God, your heart is compassionate towards us. We do praise you for that, Lord. God, thank you that you alone hold these two tensions, your majesty and your mercy, your glory and your grace, God. Where could we find someone like you, God?

In all creation, we could go to the ends of the earth, God. We could search for all eternity and not find anybody that comes close to your majesty and your mercy, God. And so we do come before you with such humble hearts and considered incredible privilege to be called your children.

Father, this morning we've read, this morning in Colossians, as we ask, God, that it will be true of us. Lord, we pray that as a church and as followers of Jesus, we will not be deceived by human tradition, by human philosophy.

[6 : 02] We pray, God, that as Colossians has reminded us, we will hold fast to Christ. God, we pray that we won't be sidetracked by the shadows, but we'll come to know deeply, God, the substance of the gospel, which is you, Jesus Christ.

We pray, God, that we won't be those that are interested in religion, but miss the person of Jesus. Oh, Christ, we pray, get the gospel deeper into us.

God, help us to see and to savor you, Jesus, as our Lord. Help us, God, to apply the gospel to our own hearts and lives, God. Help us, God, to see our sin and yet to revel in the good news of Jesus. God, we really do pray that as a church, Watermark, whatever else happens, God, may one thing be true of us. May the gospel get deeper into us as a church, we pray. Father, come and pray for a move of your spirit amongst us.

We pray, revive our hearts, oh God. Lord, where our faith has become dry, oh God, let the water of your spirit come and revive our hearts, the wind of your spirit revive us, God.

[7 : 10] God, come be at work in our church, we pray, and start with each one of us. Father, this morning, we want to also pray for our city and our world and our neighbors in mainland China as we think of the coronavirus.

God, we pray for those that are affected and infected and suffering. We pray for those that are in hospital, those that are at home and are sick. God, we pray for your grace and your mercy to minister to them.

Lord, we want to pray for families of those that are suffering, especially over Chinese New Year when families would normally come together. We pray, God, where families are apart or are unable to travel.

We pray that you, God, will minister to those families. We pray, God, for the medical staff and for doctors, and especially those in Wuhan that are working so hard many, many hours.

God, we pray for their protection. We pray they won't be infected. But we also pray, God, that you just strengthen them, encourage them in this time. We pray for our government officials, God, that you will give them profound wisdom how to handle this.

[8 : 12] God, put policies in place that will stop the spread, and yet, God, not be harsh and hard. God, may we be a sympathetic people. May we be gracious. And Father, we pray for Christians that as a church, we will move towards the pain.

God, we won't just think about ourselves and distance ourselves, but we will move towards those that are hurting, have compassion in our hearts and sympathy and empathy. God, we pray for us. And finally, Father, we pray for this Chinese New Year period. We pray for the Watermark family. We pray as families are traveling around the world, won't you be with each one of us.

I pray for good family times around the dining room table, around meals. As we are visiting family, we pray for warm hearts and soft hearts, God.

God, we pray that you help us to be salt and light in this time. And Christ, we pray for you to give us opportunities to share the hope of the gospel, the reason for the hope that is within us with our family and our loved ones in this time.

[9 : 13] Christ, may this be a great time for the gospel to go forward in our homes, in our families, and the various cities of the world as we travel. And so we do, God, bring this weekend before you

and ask your spirit to fill us and to lead us and to guide us.

We pray these things in your wonderful name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Okay, well, good morning, everybody. Sonny Phylock.

I probably said that all horribly wrong, but happy new year. It's great to see a bunch of people and it's great to see some new people, some guests, some visitors.

Welcome. Wonderful to have you with us. If you are from out of town and you're visiting Hong Kong at this time, a warm welcome to you and welcome to Watermark. As a church, for the last couple of weeks, we've been exploring what the Bible has to say about the gospel.

What is the gospel and what are its implications for our lives? Why is it that as followers of Jesus, we need to make sure that the gospel is front and central in our lives, not just one of 17 priorities in our life, but really front and central.

[10:22] And we've been exploring that for a couple of weeks. And so, so far we've seen that the gospel is God's announcement of good news. It's not just God's good advice about how we should live our lives, even though it does have implications for how we should live our lives.

It is God's announcement of his good news that God has done for us, in the person of Jesus, what we could never do for ourselves. Jesus lived the life we should have lived.

Jesus died the death that we should have died. God, Jesus went to the cross and died so that when we put our faith in him, our sin is credited to him and we don't bear the consequences for our sin.

That's the good news of the gospel. But we've also seen, I've tried to show us the last few weeks, that as followers of Jesus, we constantly need to get the gospel deeper into our own hearts and our own lives.

If we're gonna become anything like the people that God is calling us to be, we have to be those that are constantly meditating on the beauty and the wonder of the gospel. And one of the reasons for that is the way that we change as human beings is, or let me put it this way, we will never really change unless we confront the stuff that's in our hearts.

[11:38] Unless we really look at what's in our hearts, what's going on in our lives, what's the motivation behind the fears and the anxieties and the things that we do, unless we really explore the deep recesses of our hearts, we never really change.

But the gospel alone gives us a security to be able to do that. The gospel gives us an identity that allows us to really explore what's going on in our hearts without crushing us, without making us feel like failures.

And so the gospel gives us the power to change. And then last week we saw Oscar shared with us how the gospel gives us a new identity. 2 Corinthians says we are new creations in Christ.

The old is gone. The new has come. The gospel gives us a new heart, a new motivation. Jesus doesn't just come and help us to fix our lives up or to make us slightly nicer people.

He completely revolutionizes the interior of our lives. And so what this means is that as a church, one of the things that I've been trying to impress upon us is we must get the gospel deeper inside of us.

[12:43] And so I want you to know that that is the prayer that I have prayed for myself and it's the prayer that I've prayed for us as a church more than anything else over the last two years. More than praying God grow us as a church, even though that's not a bad thing.

More than God give us more finances, though I have prayed that as well. The one prayer that I've prayed more than anything else is God for Watermark, for me. Help us get the gospel deeper into our hearts.

And so prayer, I'm gonna keep on praying for us. Now today I want us to look at how the gospel relates to the moral and ethical commands of the scripture.

Okay? So how the gospel, the good news of Jesus, relates to where Jesus calls us to obedience, to follow him and to love him, and to the moral and ethical commands of scripture.

Now there's a bunch of ways that we can get it wrong. Okay? There's two ways that we can get the commands of scripture wrong, but there's a gospel way that is completely different. And I want us to look at that today.

[13:46] Now, and we're gonna do that by looking at the book of Colossians, but we'll get there in a bit. I wanna set up a framework first, and then we're gonna come to Colossians. In the book of Galatians, chapter two, the apostle Paul does an amazing thing.

He confronts and he challenges another apostle the apostle Peter over his hypocritical behavior. So Peter, this apostle that walks with Jesus, at one point he's acting one way in front of one group of people.

Then there's another crowd, and he starts to change his behavior and act a different way. And the apostle Paul calls him out on his behavior. But the interesting thing is, Paul doesn't go to Peter and say, hey Peter, you've broken the Exodus 17 law by acting hypocritical.

Paul doesn't go and say, hey Peter, you've just broken the Matthew 23 rule in the Bible by your hypocritical behavior. What does Paul do when he challenges Peter's hypocrisy? He says, Peter, your behavior is not in step or not in line with the gospel.

You see that? He could have gone to the Bible and said, look Peter, there's this verse that says, treat your neighbors as yourself, love others. He could have done that, but he doesn't. He says, Peter, your behavior, your conduct is offline, is veering off from the conduct of the gospel.

[15:09] In other words, Paul is saying to Peter, your hypocrisy is not merely a behavior, it's a gospel issue. Okay, does that make sense? Paul challenges Peter, not because Peter's broken the rules, but because there's a disconnect between Peter's actions and the life that the gospel produces.

And friends, you've got to believe that if that can happen to the apostle Peter, the guy who walked with Jesus for three years, who saw him being crucified, who saw him being raised from the dead, Peter who preached the gospel on Pentecost and 3,000 people got saved, if Peter can forget the gospel and so his behavior veers off from the conduct of the gospel, friends, you've got to believe that it can happen to you and to I.

And so how does our behavior disconnect from the gospel? How do we get it wrong? Well, I'm so glad you've asked that question. That joke is so old.

I've really got to stop saying that. Okay, I'm so sorry. I will try my best to stop saying that. There's two ways that we can get it wrong. I don't know if you've ever been horse riding.

Okay, in this rural setting of ours called Hong Kong, we don't have too many horses. The only time I've ever been horse riding, I was in Mongolia. I was 19 years old.

[16:26] I was visiting a friend there and he had some horses and so we're out in the countryside and he says, come, let's saddle up and I'll show you how to ride a horse. And so I get on this horse and at first, you know, we are walking slowly and then the horse starts trotting gently and after five minutes, I can feel myself leaning to the one side and I can still remember, I can still picture remembering, this is not a good thing, right?

And so more and more and more and after five minutes, I was being dragged on the Mongolian countryside by this runaway horse, okay? And eventually I let go and my friend holds onto his horse, grabs the other horse's reins and then they split.

They go separate ways. And so it pulls him off his horse and he's being dragged holding onto these two horses across the Mongolian countryside and eventually he reined them in. What were we talking about?

This is the point. This is the point. Like riding a horse or a bicycle without hands, right? You can fall off on two ways, okay?

You think you're getting it right and before you know, you're on the ground. You can fall to the left or you can fall to the right. There's two ways that we can get the gospel wrong. Two opposite but equal errors that we make.

[17:51] The first one is what we could call moralism or performance Christianity. Performance Christianity. It's where we think that our acceptance of God, or God's acceptance for us, or God's love for us on theological language, our justification is based upon our moral or our spiritual performance.

Essentially how good a Christian you are, okay? So remember this quote from Richard Lovelace a few weeks ago? He said this, most Christians intellectually know in our heads that God accepts us because of what Jesus did on the cross.

But in our actual day-to-day existence, most of us rely on our spiritual or moral performance to assure us of God's love and acceptance. Either our spiritual sincerity or our past experience of conversion or our recent religious performance or the relative infrequency of conscious sin.

Okay, so I've got some props here. Sorry, I'm not very good at props, but let's see if we can get this going, okay? So this is what Richard Lovelace is saying. For most Christians, this is what we believe, okay?

We believe that, we believe the gospel, Jesus died on the cross for our sins, plus my good works, my moral performance, my obedience to Jesus.

[19 : 09] And if I can get these two things right, then God will love me and accept me. Okay? Does that make sense? So most of us think.

Faith in Jesus plus good works or obedience or moral performance leads to my salvation or my acceptance. Friends, think about that for a second.

How many of us think or feel that God's love for us or his acceptance of us is based on our recent moral, spiritual performance, our recent lack of sin, or some other thing that we've done for God? Now the problem with this is many. One of the problems is it makes us insecure about God's love for us, right? Because if our feeling of how much God loves us depends on our performance, or you have a good week, you feel like, yes, God loves me.

You have a bad week, oh, God doesn't love me anymore. We feel insecure about God's love for us. Remember Richard Lovelace said, Christians who are not sure that God loves and accepts us in Jesus, apart from our spiritual performance, are subconsciously radically insecure persons.

[20 : 19] But ironically, it also makes us judgmental and arrogant because we cannot help looking down at people that aren't performing as well as us. So I think I'm a pretty good Christian, but I look at my friend Leo there, and shame, he's not doing as well as me, and you know, I just, I can't help but feel better about myself.

But you know what, also when I'm having a bad week and I'm not doing that well, and Leo is suddenly amazing, he's on stage, and he's leading worship, what do I do? I find somebody else that I think I'm doing better at.

I cannot help to find somebody lower than me in order to feel better about myself. And so Christians that operate like this are naturally judgmental and arrogant and bigoted.

Here's the third thing it does. It makes us deny and cover up our sin because we just cannot look at what's really going on in our hearts. To look at the real stuff that's going on in our hearts is just too painful.

It makes me feel like a failure. And so I cannot help but cover up and deny or what I tend to do is get defensive or I will admit to some minor sin, some lesser indiscretion in order to avoid the real things that's going on in my heart.

[21 : 30] Kristen this week reminded me of a pastor a few years ago who was caught embezzling money, right? So taking money from the church coffers and redirecting it to a family business.

He was convicted of this and put in jail. But when he had to face his congregation, this is what he said. He said, I'm so sorry if I've caused any hurt or offense. You see?

It's so much easier to admit to some lesser sinner, I'm sorry if I've hurt you or caused offense, rather than saying, I'm wrong. I shouldn't have done that. I'm a sinner.

Right? But the problem is that when we do that, we never really change. In order to really change, we have to be able to look at what's going on in our hearts, to have an honest assessment and bring stuff to the light.

But here's the fourth problem with this, is that it blinds us to seeing the reality and the beauty and the majesty of Jesus. That's the problem with the Pharisees, right?

[22 : 28] Remember the Pharisees? They're always judgmental, they're always arrogant, they're always doing things wrong, but the problem is they never see the beauty of Jesus. Remember in John chapter 9, Jesus heals somebody and they say, he must be casting out demons by satanic power.

Rather than just saying, man, Jesus, who are you? Or they say, this man must be a sinner. There's something about Jesus. They cannot see the beauty of Jesus.

Friends, when we believe that God's love and acceptance of us is partly based on how well we perform, it'll blind us to the beauty of the gospel, to the wonder of Jesus, to the majesty of his grace, to the problem of sin in our lives and how glorious he is.

That's the problem of performance Christianity. But then there's another side that we can fall off the horse, okay? You don't fall off this side, you can fall off the other side. And that's what we could call licensed Christianity or relativism.

And that says, because we are saved by grace alone, because Jesus died on the cross to cover our sins, obedience to Jesus, the ethical commands of the scripture are all relative.

[23 : 39] They're not really important. Jesus died to cover our sin. It's okay. And so what this is, is faith in Jesus simply means God loves and accepts us and who cares about good works or obedience anyway?

Because Jesus died to cover our sins, right? In other words, when we think that the gospel is simply pray a prayer or put your hand up and you've got life insurance and fire insurance from hell and everything's going to be rosy, well you're suddenly given a license to do whatever you want. You can sin however you want, you can say whatever you want, live however you want, because Jesus is some big grandfather in the sky that just loves to forgive. Remember Voltaire on his deathbed, he supposedly said this, of course God's going to forgive me.

That's his job, right? Or some people think I enjoy sinning, God enjoys forgiving sins. This is a good arrangement. But friends, if that's how we think of the gospel, there's many problems.

One is the problem is it'll again blind us to the beauty and the reality of Jesus, but the other problem is it'll never deal with the real stuff that's going in our hearts and we never therefore change.

[24 : 52] We never change. Look at what Paul says to Peter here. When Peter is acting hypocritically, what does he do? He calls him out and he says, Peter, you're not walking in step with the gospel.

He says, because the gospel is true, because Jesus died on the cross, the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God, this has implications for our lives. How we treat people, how we forgive those that have hurt us, whether we fear people, what we do with grudges and unforgiveness in our hearts, how we handle money and sexuality.

There is a gospel conduct which is not the essence of the gospel. The essence of the gospel is Jesus died on the cross for sinners like me and sinners like you. That's the essence, but there is a consequence of the gospel which is our conduct.

In other words, the life of the Christian looks something like this. Let's see if I can get this maths right. I was never really good at maths, but let's see if I can get this right. The life of the Christian looks something like this.

Faith in Jesus Christ leads to our salvation. But our salvation, because it changes us, it gives us a new identity, a new motivation, a new heart, does lead to a new kind of lifestyle, a good works, an obedience, a morality that is different from our life apart from Jesus.

[26 : 14] Obeying the ethical teachings of the Bible doesn't contribute to your salvation at all. Not one little bit, but it is a consequence of loving and trusting Jesus. Obeying the teachings of Jesus, loving and trusting Him doesn't contribute to God's acceptance of you at all, but it is a consequence that does flow out of God's acceptance for you.

Friends, if on the one hand we approach God either out of performance mindset, like I've got to earn God's love by my good moral works, or if on the other hand we approach God out of license mindset, anything goes.

I can just sin like I want because who cares? Jesus is coming for it. Both of those problems will rob us of the power of the gospel to change us.

Both of those will rob the gospel of its power to save us, but both of those will also rob us of the beauty of Jesus, of the horror of sin in our lives, of the wonder of what Jesus did on the cross for us. Both of those will leave us with the gospel being irrelevant and powerless in our lives. And that brings us to Colossians chapter 2.

[27 : 29] In Colossians chapter 2, the apostle Paul is going to unpack the gospel and then he's going to show us how both of these errors are wrong and to call us to Jesus.

Okay? In the beginning of chapter 2, he says this. He says, Brothers and sisters, I want you to know how much I have been wrestling and struggling with you that you may know deeply and be deeply assured of the hope of the gospel which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

So Paul says, I've been wrestling, I've been struggling in prayer. I've sent Epaphras from Rome all the way to Colossae. I'm doing everything I can. I want you to know, brothers and sisters, deeply in your hearts the riches of Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Okay? That's what he says in verses 1 to 4. And then in verses 8 to 15, he unpacks what is this gospel. I don't know if you've ever had friends or family members visiting you from afar and they open their suitcase and there's a whole lot of goodies and treats inside.

Do you know what I mean? No? Okay. Last, about a year ago, my parents-in-law, Claire's parents, came to visit us for Christmas. And it was Claire's dad's first time in Hong Kong.

[28 : 42] And so they opened their suitcase and there were all these treats from South Africa. First thing, rooibos tea. Great South African tea. Okay? Second thing, zoo biscuits.

Zoo biscuits are like these wonderful cookies that our kids love. Okay? Third thing, a home-baked Christmas cake. A massive Christmas cake baked by my mother-in-law.

The fourth thing, a frozen leg of lamb. Okay? We wanted roast lamb for Christmas. They figured it was cheap in South Africa. They put it in their suitcase.

Cathay Pacific didn't know they were bringing roast lamb into Hong Kong. Okay? That's kind of what Paul is going to do now in the next couple of verses. He's opening his gospel suitcase and he's going to bring out one truth after another of showing these Colossians what is the gospel and then he's going to show the implications of it.

So let's look at what he says. Look at verse 8. Okay? He says this in verse 8. Sorry, can you see the slides? Should I move these things? Okay, let's... You get the point.

[29 : 46] Okay? Let's move that out the way. In verse 8, he says this. Be careful that no one takes you captive through human philosophy, empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of this world rather than Christ.

So he's saying, brothers and sisters, Watermark Church, make sure that you don't get veered off the gospel, don't fall off the horse by human tradition and human philosophy. Make sure that Jesus, who Christ is, is front and central in your eyes.

Then in verse 9, he pulls out the first gospel truth out of his bag. Look at what he says. For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ and you have been filled in Him.

So Paul is saying here, a Christian is not just someone who's had their sins forgiven, though that is true. A Christian is not just somebody who one day will get to be with God in glory, though that is true.

A Christian is someone who is now spiritually united with God in Christ. There is a fusion that has taken place. It's like a marriage. The two have become one.

[30 : 53] Christ is in us and we are in Christ. Every good promise of the gospel is a result of us being united or fused into Christ. So the reason why as a Christian your sins are forgiven is not just because God offers this blanket amnesty to anyone.

It's not just because God is this kind grandfather in the sky that just loves to dish out forgiveness. It's because we have been fused and united with Jesus and what happened to Jesus happens to us.

And so Jesus dies on the cross, pays the penalty for sin, it is finished and that dealing with sin is now credited to us because we are in Christ.

The life that Jesus lived is now our life. The death that Jesus died is now credited to us. Jesus' acceptance before the Father is now given to us because we are in Christ.

Christ is in us and we are in Christ. Does that make sense? Okay. The first gospel truth. Second thing, look where he pulls out his bag here. Look at verse 11. He says, you were also circumcised with him when you were buried with him in baptism.

[32 : 04] In the New Testament, circumcision is always a picture of cutting off the old way of life and dealing with it and moving on to a new way of life.

Okay? So you cut off the past way of thinking, old behavior, old way of life, and you're welcomed into a new way of life. It's kind of like the picture of baptism. When you get baptized, you go under the water.

Hopefully, we bring you out of the water again. You go under the water. It's a picture of your old life being buried. It's dead. And you come out of the water. It's a picture of your new life in Christ. The old is cut off.

It's done away with. It's dead. It's buried. The new life is given to you in Christ. Baptism is a picture of that. Paul is saying this is what happens when you're born again in the gospel.

Your old way of life, your old self, with its selfish motivations, ambitions, and passes away, your old way of living for yourself, by yourself, with your only hope being in yourself, that has died.

[33 : 03] It's been cut off. It is buried. And now you're given a new identity in Christ. This is what Oscar was telling us last week. If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has gone.

The new has come. It's kind of like, and this is not a great analogy, so work with me for a second. Just imagine, your father has got an old car.

Okay? An old blue Toyota van. Burn it. Okay? You've got an old car. And it's always costing money. It's always breaking down.

The seats are torn. The steering wheel is a little bit dodgy. And your father's got this old car, and he's always late for meetings because he's breaking down on the side of the road. And you get given this massive bonus at work one day, and so you decide, I'm going to buy my dad a new car. Okay? Finally. So you go to your dad. Dad, he has a brand new Tesla. Out of the box. Brand spanking new. And your dad is so grateful. He's so pleased.

[34 : 04] Thank you so much. A month later, you're driving down the road, and you see this old blue van with its hood up on the side of the road, and your dad is peering into the hood looking at what's wrong with his broken car.

And so you pull over and you say, Dad, what's up with this car? Where's your Tesla that I gave you? And he says, No, no. Thank you so much for the gift. I took out the seats and I've put them in here.

I took out the steering wheel from the Tesla and I've put it in my car. It is so much more comfortable. Thank you for making my blue Toyota so much more comfortable. If only I can fix the engine, it drives so much nicer now.

Does that make sense? That would be crazy, right? Friends, Jesus doesn't come to just help us improve our lives. Jesus didn't come just to give us new car seats or to make our lives slightly better.

Jesus says, The old is gone. You've been circumcised in Christ. You've been buried in baptism. The old life is thrown away. He has given you a new life in Christ.

[35 : 08] Friends, because the gospel gives us a new heart, a new motivation, that means that we will act and behave differently. We will fear people less.

We will love our enemies more. We will give away more money. We will love our wives and our children. But these things are done as a consequence of God's love and acceptance melting and shaping our hearts, not in order to try and earn God's love and acceptance.

Look at the third thing Paul pulls out of his bag. He says this, verse 13, Previously, because of our sin, we were dead in trespasses, but now he has made us alive with Christ for giving us our sins. When the Bible says that apart from God, we are dead in our sins, that doesn't mean, he's not talking about physical inability. It's not like half of your cells in your body are dead and then you become a Christian and your cells wake up and come alive.

He's not talking about mental incapacity. Your brain is half dead but you become a Christian and suddenly you can think new thoughts. He's not talking about personality, even though some people maybe do need a fresh personality awakening.

[36 : 19] What he's talking about is that the most important part of our lives, our relationship with God, our heart, and knowing God and walking with Him is dead, spiritually dead.

We are dead to God and God is dead to us spiritually. We are blind to the glory of Jesus, deaf to the voice of His Spirit. We have no love for God, no awareness of His presence, no conviction of sin, no longing to please Him and know Him.

That's our state outside of Christ. But in the Gospels we see God reaches into the deepest and the most fundamental part of our lives and our hearts and He breathes fresh life into us.

He pours His love into our hearts that causes the deepest part of us to come alive, to know God and to love Him, to trust Him and to walk with Him and to obey Him. And that, friends, changes everything.

It changes the way we relate to people. It changes the way we handle success but it also changes the way we handle disappointments. It frees us up to love and serve people without strings being attached.

[37 : 22] It allows us to give of our time and our lives but not in order to receive God's love but because we have received it. Look at the final thing that He says in verse 14 and 15.

This is the roast leg of lamb. This is the big one. He says, all of this is because Jesus died on the cross to take our sin, our record of death, He took it to the cross, He nailed it to the cross and He left it there.

Friends, the record of death in my life, my sin, has been nailed to the cross and is left there no longer to be held against me. Remember that old hymn?

He took my sins and my sorrows, He made them His very own, He bore the burden to Calvary and suffered and died alone. How marvelous, how wonderful our song shall ever be.

How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me. Friends, that's the wonder of what Jesus did on the cross. He died for sinners like you and I to welcome us into His family.

[38 : 28] Now, we're going to wrap up soon. Paul then goes in the rest of chapter 2 and 3 and actually the rest of Colossians, he unpacks the implications for this.

What are the implications? There's many, but I want us just to focus on two of them. The first implication is this, because of the gospel, forsake performance Christianity.

Don't fall off the horse. Because of the gospel, get rid of performance Christianity, get rid of dead religious rituals. Look at how he says this in verse 16.

He says, because of the truth of the gospel, because you've died with Christ, because you've been raised with Christ, because you've been given a new identity in Christ, because your record of sin has been nailed to the cross, because of what Jesus did for us, therefore, verse 16, do not let anyone judge you with regard to food and drink on the matter of a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

These things are just a shadow of what is to come, but the substance, the reality, is Christ. So what's happening here is some people are coming to the church and they're saying, oh, you're a Christian.

[39 : 37] That's good. Well, because you're a Christian, that means that, you know, you better not do this, you better eat this food, not eat that food, you've got to drink this, don't drink that.

You have to go to that festival and observe that Sabbath. There are all these religious rituals that are now putting on top of them to saying, if you really want God to love you and accept you, you're going to have to do all these rituals as well.

And Paul says, you're in Christ. Those things are just a shadow. The reality is Jesus. Fix your eyes on Jesus. Look again at verse 20. It says, why do you submit to these regulations?

Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch. These things have a reputation for promoting wisdom or self-made religion. These things make you falsely humble, but they are of no value in curbing self-indulgence.

Isn't that what we said earlier? You veer away from the gospel, you can act like a Christian, you can behave like a Christian, you can do all the Christian things, but that has no power to actually change the inner motivations of my heart.

[40 : 44] It has no power to change what's really going on in my heart. And so I can act the talk, I can put on a good false image, falsely humble, that doesn't make me more like Jesus.

Friends, can I confess something? Pastors are the worst at this. Because we have to pretend like we've got it all together, right? No one wants to go to church with a pastor that looks like his life is falling apart.

And so as pastors, we are the best at acting it. We are the best at faking it and looking like our Christian life is all in order. Paul says, if your Christian faith is I've got to do the right thing and play the right part in order to be accepted and loved, your Christian faith is a fake.

It has no power to save you and it has no power to change you. And so what's the implication? Forsake empty religious rituals.

Friends, looking to your spiritual sincerity, your religious effort, the relative infrequency of sin to assure you of God's love is powerless and deceiving.

[41 : 51] It cannot save you and it cannot change you. Friends, look to Jesus. Look to Jesus. Look to the one who died on the cross for you. Friends, if you've come to Christ in faith and repentance, you are united in Him.

Your life is in Him. His death is your death. His life is your life. His obedience is your obedience. His acceptance before the Father is your acceptance before the Father. Look to Him.

Look to Jesus. Friends, this day, this week, look to Jesus. Don't look to yourself. Don't look to your moral performance. Look to Jesus.

Here's the second implication. Forsake licentious Christianity. Forsake the lie that says because Jesus died I can live however I want. It doesn't matter. In chapter 3, Paul says this.

He says the same thing that he's just said in chapter 2. He says, your life is with Christ. You're united with Christ. You've died with Christ. You've been raised with Christ. Your identity is in Christ. Your hope is in Christ.

[42 : 50] Your meaning is in Christ. Your purpose is in Christ. Your future is in Christ. And then he says, verse 5, therefore, because of that, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature.

Sexual immorality, impurity, lust. Christ. Remember, we looked at this verse two years ago and we said, friends, John Owen said it like this, be killing sin or sin be killing you.

Friends, if we struggle with sexual immorality, put a shotgun to your computer. Take a hammer and smash your iPhone. Buy a dummy phone that can't access the internet.

Do whatever it takes. Put to death the sinful nature. It's serious. It really is. What about hypocrisy? Peter put hypocrisy to death. That's not how Christ calls us to live.

He says, evil desires, selfish greed, these are idolatry. Put them away. Anger and wrath, malice, that means unforgiveness in our hearts. Slander, filthy language.

[43 : 49] Do not lie to one another. Why? So that God will love us? No, no, no. Because you have put off your old self with its practices. You have been given a new self in Christ.

You are renewed according to the image of your creator. Friends, the gospel doesn't come and tell us to pull up our socks in order to be loved and accepted by God.

No, it says, because we have come to Jesus in faith and repentance, we are accepted. We are loved. We are given a new identity, a new life, a new power, a new purpose, a new motivation. And that leads to a powerful change in our lives.

Last thing, I want to say this. in Ephesians chapter 4 and 5, the apostle Paul wants the Christians to live forgiving and loving lives. And so this is what he says.

He says, therefore be imitators of God as dearly loved children and walk in love. He says, brothers and sisters, walk in love. Now is that a good thing to do? Yeah, that's a good thing we should do. Is that a gospel conduct?

[44 : 51] Yeah, that's a good thing to do. But what's the motivation? Why should we be loving? Is it so that God will love us? Is it so that we'll be more acceptable before God the Father? Is it so that Jesus will be more favorable, more blessed, will be more blessed in our life?

No, he says, friends, walk in love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us. Gave himself up as a sacrificial offering to God.

Friends, because you've received the immeasurable love of Christ, because your heart has been melted by God's love for you in Christ, because you're secure in his love, because you've been humbled by his love, therefore, dear brothers and sisters, walk in love.

Friends, throughout the New Testament, the paradigm of obedience and holy living is this, because you're a new creation in Christ, because of the gospel, therefore obey Jesus, because you're in Christ, therefore pursue holiness, because your life is in Christ, forsake immorality, because you're rich in Christ, therefore be generous with your riches, because you're secure in Christ's love, therefore give yourself away in serving and loving others.

Friends, this stunning announcement, though we were dead in our sins, cut off from God, under God's wrath and his judgment and his fury, Jesus died for us on the cross to take our sin, to reconcile us to the Father, to bring us home again.

[46 : 13] Jesus did what we could not do for ourselves, so that we can be united with him. Friends, that is why we must, we must, we must, as followers of Jesus, get the gospel deeper into us.

Friends, that's why if you're not a follower of Jesus today, you must believe the gospel. You must become a Christian. It's your only hope. Friends, that's why as a church, we must be getting the gospel deeper inside of us.

Jesus, our Christ, our Lord and our King. Let's pray together. Father, O Lord Jesus, God, we need you.

God, we so, so need you. Father, we need you more today than we needed you ever before. We need you more this week, God, than ever before. God, we need a work of your Holy Spirit to be getting inside of us.

We need you, God, to open the eyes of our hearts to see our sin, to see our brokenness, but to see you, Jesus, and what you've done for us. God, won't you give us a fresh revelation of the gospel.

[47 : 15] God, I pray for Watermark like we've prayed so many times. God, may you get the gospel deeper inside of us. I pray, Lord Jesus, that if there's one thing that marks us as a church, though we are very far from being perfect, God, if there's one thing that marks us, may it be this, that God, we know and trust in and love deeply and respond to and walk in obedience to you, Christ, our King and our Lord.

God, show us the gospel once again. Show us how it relates to our lives, Lord. Father, where we have put our hope or our trust in empty religion, God, forgive us.

Where we've put our hope or our trust in ourselves, God, in our spiritual performance, in our moral performance or in some recent spirituality, Father, forgive us of the idolatry of that.

Forgive us, God, of trusting ourselves. Father, where we've taken your grace, taken advantage of your grace, where we have not realized that it's your kindness that leads us to repentance, God, God.

Oh, Father, forgive us as well, we pray. God, we pray, come and change us. We pray, Jesus, that we really will be salt and light in the city. We pray that as followers of Jesus, we will stand out, we will be different.

[48 : 43] We pray there will be a different conduct, a different ethic, a different morality, not because we're trying to be good Christians, but because we're overwhelmed by your love that you have for us.

We are secure in your gospel. We've been given a new identity, God. Oh, Christ, I pray, do that. Father, finally, I want to pray for those of us that don't know you this morning.

Maybe we've been very religious, we've tried to do all the right things, but we've never been born again. Oh, God, I pray this morning, give us your Holy Spirit, give us faith to trust you, cause us to be born again.

God, I pray for my brothers and sisters, I pray for those of us here that don't know you, God. Come and do what only you can do, Lord.