

A Tree of Truth in a Forest of Falsehood

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Preacher: Matt Huckins

[0 : 01] The title of the sermon this morning is A Tree of Truth in a Forest of Falsehood. And so we're going to look at Paul this morning in our passage.

And if you would turn in your Bibles, we're going to start in Acts chapter 24. We're going to read all of Acts 24 and the beginning part of 25.

Let's pray before we start because I need it, you guys need it, and we're digging into the Word of God. Lord, we ask your help this morning as we read, as we listen, as we apply your Word to our lives.

We pray that you would teach us. We pray that it would be your words and your truth that come out and not my personal thoughts. May the Spirit work, encourage, and direct.

Lord, we pray in your holy name. Amen. Acts 24, starting in verse 1. And after five days, the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus.

[1 : 10] They laid before the governor their case against Paul. And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation in every way and in everywhere, we accept this with all gratitude.

But to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly. For we have found this man a plague, speaking of Paul, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him. I'm going to pause here because some of your Bibles may have part of verse 6 and verse 7 left out. The reason for that is some manuscripts added it in.

So if you don't have it here, you'll probably see it in your footnotes at the bottom. So verse 6, And we tried to profane, he tried even to profane the temple, but we seized him.

And we would have judged him according to our law, but the chief captain, Lysias, came and with great violence took him out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come before you.

[2 : 30] And starting in verse 8, But examining him yourself, you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him. The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied, Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense. You can verify that it is not more than 12 days since I went to worship in Jerusalem, and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city.

Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me. But this I confess to you, that according to the way which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the law and written in the prophets, having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man. And now, after several years, I come to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings.

While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple without any crowd or turmoil. But some Jews from Asia, they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me.

[3 : 57] Or, these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council. Other than this one thing, I cried out while standing among them.

It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I'm on trial before you this day. But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the way, put them off, saying, When Lysias the Tribune

comes down, I will decide your case.

Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody, but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs. After some days, Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity, I will summon you.

At the same time, he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him. When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Portius Festus.

[5 : 09] And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison. Chapter 25. Now three days after Festus had arrived in the Providence, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea, and the chief priest and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, asking as a favor against Paul, that he summon him to Jerusalem because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way.

Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly. So, said he, Let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him.

After he stayed there, stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he took a seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.

When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him, but that they could not prove. Paul argued in his defense, Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.

But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me? But Paul said, I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried.

[6 : 37] To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death.

But if there is anything to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with his counsel, answered, To Caesar you have appealed, to a Caesar you shall go.

So in this passage, we're going to break it up into three sections. We're going to see Paul on trial. We're going to see Paul on hold. And see Paul on his way to Rome.

As things shift there. In general, I think most of us would not enjoy playing a game if the rules weren't set out.

Right? If the rules changed as the game went on. Or maybe for those who like shopping, shopping wouldn't be very fun if the price for items changed unpredictably.

[7 : 44] How about driving laws or laws for pedestrians that didn't always apply? That leaves us uneasy. It's not something that we enjoy.

When I was reading this passage, it reminded me of a Disney movie. Probably my least favorite. Alice in Wonderland. If it's your favorite.

I don't mean to bash you in any way. I won't judge you. But if you know the story of Alice in Wonderland, she starts out and she's bored with her lessons and she wishes all her books had more pictures and were nonsense.

She falls asleep. She has a dream where she's in a world of nonsense. At the end, there's this court scene where she's on trial with the Queen of Hearts who rules the land and she exclaims, I don't even know what I did wrong and the Queen says, forget the trial.

Let's just cut off her head. I won't spoil the ending for you, but it's kind of what we see in Paul's court case where he doesn't know what he's done wrong, but the Jews literally want to kill him.

[8 : 54] And that's what we have here. But in our passage, Paul's not in a dream and the accusations against him are serious. But all the while, Paul wants to remain true even though all around him is falsehood, the lies, the accusations.

Our goal, like Paul's goal as Christians, is we're called to stand true in a world that rejects the truth. We know that Paul knows his purpose and his goal and he wants to remain true to that goal, true to Christ and true to how he should respond in the face of accusations.

Remember, if you remember back a couple chapters, this all started because as Paul returns from his missionary journeys, the Christian church asked him to go to the temple and to take part of this purification process.

It's at the end of this process that these Jewish people from another area come in and start this riot. And so, Paul, because of the lies that they put out, the accusations, he gets caught up in this fight, this being arrested and he didn't do anything.

[10:22] So, as chapter 24 starts out, we see that Ananias, the high priest, whom, if we remember from before, is a pretty crooked high priest. He's also a high priest that when Paul began to speak, he had him punched in the mouth.

And so, Paul's not exactly in a good place starting out in verse 24. He arrives with some Jewish elders and also this spokesman, this Tertullus, who is an attorney.

He's the legal mouthpiece for this group that is coming against Paul. So, they come before Festus, who is the ruling governor of the area.

And Festus has agreed to take this trial because not only is Paul a Roman citizen, but he's from that same area. So, we have the accusers on one side and we have Paul on the other side and the governor motions for them to start.

And the start is pretty humorous. Oh, fabulous, Felix, because of you and your wisdom, we've been able to live in such enjoyable harmony.

[11:28] All over this nation, we have made, you have made changes and improvements that all delightfully we accept and are so thankful for. And we don't want to take up much of your time, but just for a second, if you could, out of your kindness, just hear our plea.

That's how he starts out. This is often the case because each side wants to win the favor of the judge. So often, this flattery happens, but in this case, it really is beyond flattery and it's more lies and exaggerations because if we look back and read what historians say about Felix, he was in no way known for having a peaceful term.

In fact, up to this point, he has the worst term in this area of trying to keep the peace. So not just unpeaceful, but he was hated by the Jews.

He was known for taking bribes. So everything that Tertullus is speaking just in his introduction is just lies to try to flatter the judge and to get on his good side.

So after his introduction, the lies are then directed towards Paul as he lays out the accusations and we see this in verses 5 through 9.

[12:50] He says, Paul's a plague. He's a troublemaker. He stirs up riots. He creates unrest among all the Jews in the Roman world. He's a ringleader of this sect of the Nazarenes.

This is directed, this is meant to be derogatory as if Paul had some heretical spin-off that he was trying to convince people of.

Next, he tried to profane or desecrate the temple. And this, we know from before, was based on just false assumptions that Paul had brought in a Gentile into a part of the temple that was not allowed. And that was a serious accusation because the Romans, they gave the Jews a lot of power when it came to dealing with offenses to their temple.

But this wasn't even true. And then to end it, Felix says that once you examine him, you're going to see all the true things that I just told you were true about Paul.

[13:57] Which is really just a slick way of trying to convince him of his side before even hearing Paul's side of the story. And then you hear all the Jews yelling like, yeah, he did it, that's him, we all agree, as if they can actually add some legal merit to the case by their voices.

And those are the accusations that we see Paul facing. But another thing is going on here, besides the accusations, think about for a minute the situation that Paul finds himself in.

He's in the courtroom, but he's on a battlefield between two forces. Two guerrillas, you could say.

One was the Jewish faith on one side, the religion of Jerusalem that spanned back 2,000 years to Abraham, their history and tradition.

And on the other side you have the Roman Empire, the power, and the rule which covered over 3 million square miles around the Mediterranean Sea.

So he's held in grips by them and accused by the other. Surely Paul wasn't trying to wage war against either of these two. He wasn't.

[15:14] And Paul was not fearful of the situation because from Paul's perspective, he sees a whole different battle that's being played out. It's not a battle between the Jews. It's not a battle

between the Rome, but a spiritual battle.

He's not a traitor to the church. He's not a criminal of Rome. He's on the side of Jesus Christ in the gospel. And Jesus or the gospel do not undermine the law, whether we're speaking of the Jewish law or the Roman law.

So part of Paul's argument that he's trying to make is that the gospel is not at odds between either one and neither is Paul. He's a loyal religious Jew.

He's also a loyal Roman citizen. It was the truth about Jesus that people did not want to hear. The message of the gospel was the truth and since Paul was preaching it, he was the one that they were coming after.

The battle was against him because of the truth that he was preaching. The foundation of these attacks were coming from the same place as those who hated and arrested Jesus.

[16:27] If you remember back, John 15, 18 says, If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you.

The tactics of Paul's enemies were the same as those used against Jesus when he was accused of threatening to destroy the temple, of blaspheming God, of claiming to be king.

And like Jesus, Paul was innocent of the charges that were against him. It reminded me of the verse, John 18, 38, when Jesus is on trial and Pilate says to him, What is truth?

And after he said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, I find no fault in this man. Paul knows the real battle is a spiritual battle.

In addition, he knows that he is there where God wants him to be. Remember, just a few verses back in chapter 23, God, the Lord, appeared to him and said, Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.

[17:43] Paul knows this. Paul knows where he's at and he's where God wants him to be, even though it's not where we would choose we would want to be. If we are standing on the truth, then like Paul, we can be confident that as we move forward where God calls us, that we're where we are supposed to be.

So after the accusations, Governor Felix gives the nod in verse 10 for Paul to begin and he lays out his defense. He starts with an opening that is much different than Tertullus' promises.

There were no lies, there's no exaggerations. He's respectful and he's to the point. He says, You have been a judge over this nation for a number of years and since you are the judge, I cheerfully make my defense.

There's no lie there. All that was true, but also respectful of the governor that he is standing in front of. In verse 11, he says, It has not been more than 12 days since I've gone to worship in the temple. I have no Facebook account. I don't have any followers on TikTok. There's no way that I can gain this amount of support in this short amount of time in order to start this kind of riot.

[18:59] He continues to say that they did not find him arguing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, not even in the temple where they claim that it took place.

See, Paul truthfully and adamantly denies these accusations and he's doing it for good reason. not only were they not true, but they were the connecting pin that the Jews wanted to use to attach their religious complaints about Paul to civil complaints.

See, stirring up unrest and starting riots and disturbing the peace, no, those were things that the Romans would be concerned about. about being a judge over some religious disagreement.

Romans didn't care about that. They had no interest in that. So if the Jews could put the two together, then maybe they can have something done against Paul.

Paul continues in verse 14. He confesses that he is a follower of the way, denying that it is a sect.

[20:05] He says, if I follow a sect, then you follow the same sect. And why is that? Because Paul worships the same God of our fathers that you worship. He worships, he believes the same scriptures that the Jews believe.

Paul's not a starter of some sect. He's not an innovator of something new. He aligns with mainstream Judaism. That's his point. They worship the same God.

They believe the same law and the prophets. They believe the same hope, the resurrection of the just and the unjust. And they had the same goal to keep a clear conscience before God and man.

At least outwardly they would say that, although they may not actually do that in real life. I'm sure some also who were there remembered Paul when he was Saul and how he arrested people who were of the way.

Now he is admitting to being part of the way. But as he had explained earlier in another trial, he explains the reason for this.

[21 : 13] And I have the verse up. This is from Acts chapter 9. I put it up because I think it's important for us to look at. He says, But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

That's pretty ironic. Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him and falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. So the connection to the way is Jesus.

Jesus is the way. He's the core. More than that, if there's no Jesus, there's no gospel. So the one thing, the main thing which Paul preached was Jesus Christ.

The one thing, the main thing that Paul taught about resurrection was Jesus Christ. They believed the same God, the same scriptures, the same resurrection, but they were missing Jesus Christ.

[22 : 34] Jesus makes the continuity happen between the Old Testament and the New Testament. prophecies and promises made in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Testament.

Sins taken away, sins forgiven, a relationship with God, an eternal hope. All this is made possible because of Jesus Christ. John 14, 6, Jesus says, I am the way.

I am the truth. I am the life. This is not a conceited human being. This is Jesus Christ, God of all creation. This is Jesus Christ who went to the cross and died for our sins.

He says, I am the way. You can try to find another way, but if you do it around me, it's not the way. It's not the truth. There is no life. In verse 16, Paul says, And I have always taken pains to have a clear conscience toward God and man.

While they say that I'm a writer or some ringleader, what is true is that I work at to the point of being inconvenienced and burdened if it means that my conscience is clear before God and other men.

[23 : 53] And we know this looking back at what Paul went through as he was on his missionary trips. He went out of his way not to be an offense to another person. He's going to death.

He's been persecuted and gone to jail to keep a conscience before God knowing that God has called him to these things. That's what he's trying to say he's really like.

And building on that, he says that after several years, I've come to the temple to donate to the poor and give an offering. And they found me while I was there. That's right.

I was in the temple but I was surrounded by no crowd. I was not arguing with anyone. That's how the Jews from Asia found me.

And then I don't know if this is just how he is talking or if it all of a sudden hits him. He realizes that those Jews from Asia that were accusing him, they're not in his presence.

[24 : 54] He's like, oh wait, where are those accusers? They're not even here. Shouldn't they be here to bring the accusations? The reason for that is because like now, it's a serious infringement.

It was a serious infringement then of Roman law if an accuser did not show up for the actual trial.

And Paul's like, they're not even here. How much could I have done wrong if they don't even care to show up to talk about it or to bring these against me?

Paul then questions those who are there. He says, you were at my last trial. Was there any wrongdoing found of me then? No. The only thing that I am guilty of is standing up among them and shouting, it is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I'm on trial before you this day.

And this points back to his teaching about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that's what they don't want to hear about. It's what they don't believe in. Because if you believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, suddenly you bring a lot more to the table that you have to deal with.

And that's, they didn't want to go there. In the last chapter, the Pharisees declared him innocent.

[26 : 09] So, from a legal standpoint, all the charges, even with the lies and the slander, would vanish. However, they were still where they are.

He was not charged with any religious insurrection, no criminal offense, nothing worthy of being arrested. So, ideally, this would have been the time where Felix would end the trial and declare Paul not guilty.

And if Felix was an honorable governor, a fair governor, then maybe that would have happened. But, he wasn't and the Jews weren't looking for a fair trial.

They weren't looking for the truth. They were looking for Paul to be killed. We know that. That was their goal up until this point. They had a group of 40 men who had vowed to kill him.

That's a lot of people hating Paul. That's some serious hate. They didn't want to hear about Jesus of the way because, like I said, Jesus and the gospel brings conviction.

[27 : 20] It brings light on sinful hearts and they hated that. Felix had no ground to convict Paul of anything, but he also doesn't want to release him.

Most likely because he fears of missing out on money or falling out of favor with the Jews. So, Paul goes from the lies and the slander of the Jews to the corruption of a governor.

And so, this next section we move into where we see Paul on hold. Verse 22 says, But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the way, put them off, saying, When Lysias, the tribune, comes down, I'll decide your case.

So, just at the end of this case where you would think you were going to get a verdict, you got nothing. You got put off. Sounds hopeful. Maybe. Date's not exact, but the governor's given us something to work with.

But what we see is the governor never actually calls for Lysias to come down. It's just something that he says. There was no court date set.

[28 : 30] Paul's allowed some freedoms, but he's still arrested. He's not free to go and do what he wants. He's on hold until further notice.

Even at times when we feel like we are on hold, like nothing is going on, rest assured that if we are standing on the truth, if we are doing what God has called us to do, even in those times where we feel like we're on hold, God is doing something.

In verse 24, we see that Felix came down with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish. Their relationship came with drama.

I don't want to talk about them too much, but it helps to have a little bit of knowledge about who they are. The marriage between Felix and Drusilla was unbiblical to say the least.

both were married. She was in a marriage with someone else when he saw her and thought she was the prettiest woman in the world and he actually, he actually used the help of a magician to convince her to leave her husband and come marry him.

[29 : 57] I'm not sure how that worked, but he's in his 50s and she's like 22 years old. They both had connections.

They both had wealth. They both came from a line of power and they both knew how to get what they wanted. that's, that's this marriage between Felix the governor and his wife Drusilla.

Oddly enough, they send for Paul and it says that they heard him speak about faith in Jesus Christ. They know what Paul's about.

They, they knew the gospel that he spoke and yet for some reason they asked him to come so they could hear him. There was something that drew them to hear what he had to say.

Some, some curiosity that had to be fed. Drusilla was a Jew so we can expect that Paul talked about Jesus of Nazareth but not just that, how, how he was more than just a good teacher.

[31 : 05] How he was crucified. How he was the son of God. How he had been prophesied to come. How he was the perfect sacrifice. The lamb slain for our sins.

The, the savior, the hope of salvation. Verse 25 says that he reasoned about righteousness, about self-control and about the coming judgment.

So, after Paul tells them about who Jesus is, he tells them about these things. Righteousness, self-control and the coming judgment. See, Paul knew there was what their relationship came with. Felix's life was one of cruelty and injustice. Through repentance and belief in Jesus, there can be righteousness even for someone like Felix.

Their marriage was based on immorality and self-indulgence. So, Paul spoke about self-control. And lastly, Paul talked about the judgment of God and how it could be avoided.

[32 : 17] These were serious matters. Some people may have just brushed him off, but in the process of listening to Paul, Felix became afraid. It says that he was alarmed and told Paul to go away and that he would summon him later.

He was shaken up, but his ears weren't closed up. It says that Felix would send for Paul often and converse with him. He wanted money from Paul, but he also wanted to hear more.

He wanted Paul to pay a bribe, but Paul kept preaching the truth. And this goes on for two years. How long in that process do you think it was before he realized that Paul wasn't going to give him money?

And yet he continued to call Paul to him and talk to him about the word. We don't know if Felix ever trusted in Jesus.

It seems obvious that by the point of the end of this story that he hadn't because while he was governor he left Paul in prison as a favor to the Jews. But he heard the gospel.

[33 : 28] He heard the truth of who Jesus is. And in the beginning at least he was alarmed by it. So there was some part of what he heard that was starting to sink in.

Something that he was starting to believe and was afraid of. But there was no repentance that we ever saw. I bring that out because if you're here this morning and you're not a believer there is something that might be tugging at your ear.

Something that might be tugging at your heart as we read through this passage it's the Holy Spirit wanting to get your attention. And so my plea to you would be not to ignore that.

Satan wants you to push this off. My guess is that Satan was successful in pushing it off with Felix. He wants the world around us to lull us back to sleep.

So the truth of the gospel doesn't make its way into our heart. But I'm telling you that the Holy Spirit wants to wake you up this morning.

[34 : 38] So don't miss an opportunity like Felix did to hear the gospel. After the end of the service we break the chairs down and we kind of leave this room.

I will be in the common room and if you feel like you want to pray you want to talk you have questions I will be in there. There isn't anything that's more important than getting this right if it's something that you're struggling with this morning.

And so I would encourage you to come see me come see Sean and let's take it to the Lord and pray about it together. It's at this point that Felix is replaced by Portius Festus the new governor.

Oddly enough Felix gets replaced because he was unable to deal with a different dispute between the Jews and the Gentiles.

So you see he has a history of not doing things right and he's no longer the governor. That brings us to chapter 25. We have a new governor.

[35 : 48] Looks like we might be going through the same redo in the trial that we did before but we start to see maybe there's a chance of something different because this guy Festus he actually makes a strong stand against the Jews in the beginning.

The Jews make this request for Paul to be brought down to Jerusalem you know like they want to be honest and sweet and give him a different trial. They really want to ambush and kill him. We don't know if Festus knew that whether he did or not.

He still denies him. He says I'm going to Caesarea shortly. You guys have something against this Paul come with me and we will take it to the tribune when I have a seat on that.

And so after a few days Festus goes down he takes his seat he orders Paul brought in and like the trial before we see Paul's accusers throwing these accusations against him and like before they are unable to prove any of them.

In verse 8 of chapter 25 he says Paul this is Paul neither against the law of the Jews neither against the temple nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.

[36 : 57] We see here that Paul is starting to make this transition to where he is to go into Rome. He knows that's where God wants him to go and so he says that even against Caesar I have not committed any offense.

Again the governor has no civil charge to hold Paul and because the Jews because of favoritism towards them he's kind of stuck he doesn't know what to do.

He doesn't want to hold him he doesn't want to release him so he remembers the Jews request he's like Paul do you want to go back to Jerusalem thinking that that would make the Jews happy.

Paul knows his hopes are better with the Romans than with the Jews and so he does not want to take this deal. He says I'm not looking to escape punishment if I have done something wrong but I haven't done anything wrong Festus and you know it and since their accusations were false the governor could not force Paul to go and that's when Paul realizes that he needs to make a plea to Caesar because he's unsure where things are going.

I don't want to go back to the Jews I don't know what this Festus is doing so he says that I appeal to Caesar this obviously catches Festus off guard he doesn't know what to do he talks with his council on the side and then he comes back and says you appeal to Caesar so to Caesar you will go and Paul continues to remain arrested and in prison until whenever this moves on to Rome interesting passage because it's in the middle of he's already been arrested he's already been tried he's tried again and there's no end result he's he's just left there and so it we can find ourselves left there feeling like I don't know what God is doing but like Paul if we if we're standing on the truth and if we're listening to God and doing what what he wants us to be doing then like I said we can rest assured that he is at work so as we close just a couple things for us to think about we are called to die to ourselves so that in everything like

[39 : 32] Paul if it's with our speech if it's with our relationships whether relationships with Christians or relationships to crooked governors we can live like Christ we're to die to ourselves so that we can more live like Christ that should affect everything we do that should affect every relationship that we're in may it be may it be the name of

Christ and the verse to end our passage this morning is Ephesians 4 15 rather speaking the truth in love we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head into Christ let's pray together Lord we pray that this morning and this afternoon next week whatever whatever situation we find us in Lord we pray that you would bring to mind how we are to act bring to mind the truth that we are to say the truth that we are to stand in so that we are not seeking ourselves that we are seeking Christ in his name to be exalted Lord this isn't easy and it literally means at times that we die to what ourselves want what our pride wants what we want to do what's easier to do what feels right Lord help us to die to that so that we aren't we aren't made larger but Christ is made larger through us Lord may he be exalted and not us and God may you get the glory in our lives and in all that we do and we pray these things in your great and holy name amen