LSB Colossians 3:25 - 4:6 Acting like who we are.

NASB77 Col. 4:7 As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. 8 For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number. They will inform you about the whole situation here.

10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him); 11 and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision; and they have proved to be an encouragement to me. 12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved physician, sends you his greetings, and also Demas. 15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. 16 And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea. 17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

If you took the time to re-read 13 years worth of my sermons given in this pulpit I think what you would find is that in each passage of scripture that we have exposited, the Lord would always give me a theme. A single idea encapsulated within the passage that is an important doctrine that christians

need to know in order for them to rest immovably attached to a solid foundation.

I lock onto a thematic doctrine and I beat it to death. That's because when the cyclone comes, when the hurricane sweeps over the land you're attached to I want you to be so securely attached to a foundation that after the storm blows through, you'll still be standing strong.

That has been my method. You might go back and look at all 13 years and say, OK, I sort of see what you're talking about, you're not very good at it, but I do see it. It's cumulative. It's a combined effect of many many many mornings like this of God's truth being taught in simple plain terms.

Our word this morning, our theme that I'm going to beat on for the next 30 minutes or so is; VERACITY. Veracity.

If that's a new word to you or one of those obscure words that you sort of think you know what it means, but it's not in common use in your vocabulary, then stick with me while I give you a definition. Because it is an incredibly important concept. Foundational to everything.

Merriam Webster's dictionary says this about veracity; *Veracity refers to the quality of being truthful, honest, and accurate. It originates from the Latin vērācitās and is often used to describe the habitual observance of truth in speech or statement*.

I have several 100 year old camera lenses made by a company called Wollensak, and this particular series is named. Verito. It was a play on the latin word Veritas which means true. Truthful. In other words that lens was going to give you a true rendering of what was in front of it.

You can tell I like word etymologies. The greek root word for truth is verum. Same root. Verum, veritas, veracity.

In 1968, Francis Schaeffer wrote a book titled "**The God Who is There**",

and in it for the first time, he doubled down on this word and spoke about true truth. It was a purposeful redundancy to get at this idea that there is in fact absolute truth. Truth that is unassailable. Truth that is unchanging.

And that's our idea of veracity. This book that we hold in our hands is absolute truth. Every word is true. It is God breathed. It is authoritative over our lives. And it has varacity. Anywhere I turn and read, I don't have to ask myself, now is this true? It is in total and in all of it's parts, the veracity of truth.

I want you to look at the last verse in Colossians. We'll start at the end.

Chapter 4:18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

Paul had an eye disease of some kind. So he dictated this letter to an amanuensis. The physical writing on the parchments was done by a secretary. Probably one of the men listed above. My guess might be John Mark.

So how does the recipient know that Paul was actually involved in the manuscript? Anybody could write anything and say it was from Paul and interject chaos.

Paul understood the importance of the veracity of what he was writing. He knew that the words were inspired by God. He understood that the new testament scriptures were being written, as Christ unfolded and founded His church.

And so, for the sake of the veracity of the scriptures, Paul signed his letters, and his signature was big and clunky because of his eye disease. He apparently didn't see well. We don't know all the details, we just have little clues, like in Galatians where he says that if they could have removed their eyes and given them to Paul, they would have.

Pauls signature authenticated his letters as being truely from him. *18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand.* This is authentic Paul. We need to know that.

How else is scripture given veracity? Well, just like the declaration of independence was written and it has a lot of signatures, these final verses at the end of this letter are a group portrait of the signatories, in a way.

Paul, in these few words, gives us a portrait of the witnesses who were with him when he put his big clunky signature on the final verse.

God did that. It was God who in the old testament through Moses tells us that on the basis of two or three witnesses, we can arrive at truth.

No one in this room has ever seen Jesus. Why do we believe what we believe about Him? We are convinced of the veracity of the truths about Jesus because of the veracity of the witnesses who wrote down what they saw.

John, the apostle wrote; Jn. 1:14 *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and **we beheld His glory**, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*.

And Peter, the apostle wrote; 2 Peter 1:16-17
*For we did not follow cleverly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **we were eyewitnesses of His majesty**. / For He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

We beheld His glory. We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. Just two witnesses amongst thousands that give us a mental picture of Jesus.

The veracity of the truths of this book are based in eyewitness accounts of what men saw and touched and experienced first hand about Jesus.

Veracity is based in visual truth. Things seen. Real things witnessed by someones eyes. The Library of Congress has thousands and thousands of documented physical records of visual truth. Photographs.

When I worked out on the range for Sandia National Labs, some of the antiquated structures were slated for removal, but before that could happen, we had to make archival photographs as a record of what was there. HABS/HAER level photographs. Historic American Building Survey / Historic American Engineering Record.

Those records had to meet written requirements that insured that they would be archival records. Silver oxide film substrate. The camera made exquisitely sharp images on 4X5 inch film. Each negative is catalogued. Processed archivally so that the physical record if stored properly can endure for hundreds of years.

Then we printed the images on archival silver oxide paper. Those black and white silver oxide based prints when stored properly can last for thousands of years. 2,000 years from now, someone can open a vault and look at an image of something that was there.

I have a camera that was invented in 1905 that makes those yard long black and white images like you see on the walls in museums. I'm thinking that at some part of our celebration of 120 years for our building, I may get you all together in one place at one time and get out the camera that could have photographed this building when it was new, and make a group photograph of us. Our congregation.

I have film. I can make an archival record of us, as we were in 2026 on a particular day, in fact we may want to print the date and include it in the photograph. We will end up with a photographic record on a piece of film that is 9.5inches tall and 44 inches wide. 420 square inches of the most permanent archival image record ever achieved. A moment in time, captured for, well, not eternity, but a record that could last for a thousand

years. Let's do that.

Karmin and Kristina can write up an accompanying document with a paragraph that describes each person in the visual document. We could even mail it off to the Library of Congress.

Why am I laboring this idea of archival proof of visual documentation of reality? Because, that's what Paul has done for us in these words that he wrote and sealed with his own big klunky signature. These are the fellow signatories of the document that is the letter to the Colossians.

They didn't sign their names like the declaration of independence guys did, but they are collectively fellow witnesses of the veracity of this letter.

I'm going to bear on this idea of veracity a little longer, and then we'll breeze through Paul's descriptive paragraphs about all the guys in the group portrait.

On facebook, primarily, and other places around the internet, something brand new is happening. This is a sidebar, but it's important to what we're talking about here this morning.

On facebook there are currently thousands of new computer generated records that claim to be old photographs and they are purposely innacurate. There will be a computer generated image that looks somewhat like a 1961 Chevrolet and the title will say, 1955 Chevrolet BelAir. Included will be a computer generated paragraph that is just accurate enough that the innacuracies are like cumulative tiny amounts of arsenic that would take a full year to finally kill you.

What is happening is diabolical. Satan understands very well that truth is based in what is seen and then accurately witnessed by reliable witnesses. Veracity comes from men like John, and Peter, who saw Jesus transfigured up on a high mountain, and then came down and later wrote down;

Jn. 1:14 *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*.

For we did not follow cleverly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 2 Peter 1:16-17

In the epistles of John, in 1 John, the apostle writes about the Lord Jesus;

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have gazed upon and touched with our own hands—this is the Word of life. / And this is the life that was revealed; we have seen it and testified to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us. 1 John 1:1-2

The very veracity of the reality of God dwelling with us, Jesus, is based in what men saw and witnessed over time, and touched.

Satan is undermining visual truth. The campaign of dismantling visual truth is relentless. First it was pictures and paragraphs with intentional errors that dismantle and destroy the historic record, and now its movies. Our eyes are constantly watching computer generated nonsense. Non-reality that looks more real than the things we can see and touch.

How long before what Pontius Pilate said; ***What Is Truth***, is actually the good old days when people believed there actually was such a thing. They believed their eyes in the good old days. Now nothing your eyes see is based in reality. Everything is computer generated. There IS NO truth. Truth is a false concept. There is no absolute truth. Nor was there ever.

Welcome to the brave new world of Artificial Intelligence. AI and the atomic bomb have one evil in common. They're here and they can't be un invented.

And Satan is very subtle. There are images galore now with only a single digit in error. A picture of a 1956 Thunderbird with the title that states it is a 1955. I'm looking at a 1931 Model A and the title states; 1928 Multiply that by a million times and the historic record is forever altered. Who cares?

Dismantle veracity and what is left. Jesus was no more real than all the other computer generated vomit that purports itself to be something real.

I'm lazy. On Monday nights I don't grab my Bible and take it to class. I've got a downloaded version of Legacy Standard Bible on my phone. I trust the people who own the servors and publish that document on line. It comes from some storage cloud somewhere.

How long before the next time I click on Galatians 1, some word that comes to my phone app from the cloud is changed. How long before someone knocks on my door and says, I'm here from the government and I have a mandated authority to search your home for two things. I'll need any firearms, and I need any printed Bibles please.

At this point some of you are starting to ask yourselves; Is this guy a nut job? Lunatic wack job.

The veracity of absolute true reality is under serious and relentless attack. The record of Historic Truth is being systematically dismantled. As we speak. So, let's look this morning at Paul's method of authenticating the veracity of what he wrote under the inspiration of God. Paul's group portrait of a bunch of very real guys who were faithful soldiers in God's army.

7 As to all my affairs, Tychicus, our beloved brother and faithful servant and fellow bond-servant in the Lord, will bring you information. 8 For I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts; 9 and with him Onesimus, our faithful and beloved brother, who is one of your number.

They will inform you about the whole situation here.

Paul was part of a group of elders, a plurality of presbyters if you're a presbyterian, or sometimes rendered as overseers from the church at Antioch. And we have names of those elders. Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and even Saul

God works with pluralities of leaders. One person alone cannot testify to a historic event. Even when God sent Paul on the first missionary journey, God didn't send Paul alone. *Separate for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them*." Acts13:2

Saul was never alone, and the one time he may have been, at Athens, he was at his weakest point. Paul relies on Godly fellow workers. What a grace that is from God that we don't have to labor alone.

Let's meet the crew. From left to right.

Tychicus It seems like every time his name comes up, Paul is sending him somewhere to put some fire out. He was one of those capable capable guys that Paul could count on to go where Paul needed him and faithfully accomplish his intended ministry.

He was with Paul at the Jerusalem trip where Paul was arrested, and he's still with Paul now, in prison. He chose slavery and imprisonment in order to stay with Paul.

How capable was he. We get a clue. In Paul's final winter, Paul wants Titus to come and be with him for the winter. So 2 guys are mentioned that Paul was planning to send to Titus' church to take care of the church in order for Titus to be freed up to come to Paul. Tychicus was one of them. He must have been very capable if he could replace Titus and take care of that ministry in Titus place.

In this period of our letter here, Paul entrusts Tychicus to make the journey

and deliver this letter to the Colossians. He has the job of taking all of Paul's news and prayer concerns to the saints at Colossae. He delivers Paul's letter and also, some of Paul's heart for these folks.

You know, we believe that God had a sovereign hand in what we call transmission. Getting the inspired word of God, on it's pathway from the original authors, clear down to our day. God protects His revelation.

To be the guy that God sovereignly chose to transport inspired scripture, Tychicus must have been amazingly faithful. It was a huge task, and God was in it.

Later on, near the very end, Paul sends Tychicus to free up Timothy to come to him one last time. Listen if you can replace both Titus and Timothy, and carry their responsibilities and take care of their churches to free them up to come to Paul, you must have been quite the servent.

Next is Onesimus. He's the slave that ran away from Philemon's household. And some think that the Colossian church met at Philemon's house.

Tychicus also had the letter for the laodicean church. And it was like a circular letter that was to be read in all the church's there in Asia minor. Most scholars think that letter is what we call Ephesians. And he had the letter written privately to Philemon about Onesimus.

Onesimus ran away from Philemon, and in that world, that was a capitol offense. Onesimus made it all the way to Rome. He ran away useless. But in Rome, God sovereignly ordained that Onesimus would run into Paul, and become a christian.

Small world, right. And even though the formerly useless Onesimus is useful to Paul, Paul does the right thing and sends him back to Philemon. Paul hopes that Philemon will forgive Onesimus and release him to be a useful companion and minister with Paul, in Rome. But not without

Philemon's release and blessing.

The early church fathers wrote letters too. One letter from Ignatius who was pastor at Smyrna mentions Onesimus and does it in such a way as to make us believe that eventually Onesimus may have become the pastor at Colossae.

What a story. Runaway slave, worthy of death, useless to his master, becomes a christian and becomes useful to everyone, and perhaps even becomes the pastor to his former owner. God does amazing things.

10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings

Aristarchus is another one, like Tychicus who wants to be with Paul, and Paul calls him, fellow prisoner. So Aristarchus must have been a free will prisoner in order to stay with Paul. He is with Paul on the Jerusalem trip where Paul is arrested, and presumably, throughout the imprisonment.

10 Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas' cousin Mark (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him); 11 and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision; and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.

It's interesting that Paul mentions that these 3 alone, in the group, like Paul, were jews who had become christians. Paul never gave up his sympathies for his own brethren, the jews, even though it is Paul who wrote the strongest words about the lack of any distinction between jews and greeks who are together in Christ. He loves his own countrymen

Barnabas cousin Mark is of course, John Mark who accompanied Paul on the first missionary endeavor, and who was not faithful. When the going got tough, Mark went home.

This verse is where we learn that John Mark was a relation of Barnabas.

His sisters son. And when Paul was getting ready to leave on the 2nd journey, Barnabas wants to take Mark along and Paul says; no way. he flaked out on the last journey, he doesn't get to come along this time.

And the disagreement was so sharp that Paul and Barnabas parted with each other and both went different directions. Paul took Silas.

Then Peter takes John Mark under wing. Peter knows all about flaking out and getting 2nd chances. And ultimately, John Mark writes the gospel of Mark, which is Peter's version of events written down by Mark. What a recovery. From ministy failure to gospel writer.

Then in one of the last sentences Paul will write, Paul says; . Take Mark and bring him with you, for he's profitable to me for the ministry." 2 Tim 4:11

Peter's gone. Paul's slipping away. Tychicus please relieve Timothy so he can come to me. Timothy please pick up John Mark and bring him also.

I don't know about you, but the Peter's and John Mark's of the world give me hope. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off and keep going. John Mark got a 2nd chance. I'm hoping for a 10 thousandth chance.

11 and also Jesus who is called Justus This fellow we know nothing about save what it says right here. He was an encouragement to Paul. We assume the brothers changed his name to Justus in order to save some confusion. I'm pretty sure he's a great uncle to our own Josh and encouragement is a family trait.

12 Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondslave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I bear him witness that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Epaphros gives us a lesson in praying for one another. He doesn't pray for

physical things. He prays for spiritual victory in a spiritual war. There's more going on than hangnails and physical health.

Dr. Luke. What a comfort to Paul that God graciously provided Paul with a companion who was a healer. Luke was a physician. He also blessed all of us with more written scripture than any other biblical author. Think about the portion of scripture written in the New Testament by the men present in this group portrait. Paul, Mark, Luke. Maybe 4/5ths of your new testament words, standing together in this single portrait.

And finally Demas. The only one on the list who suffered a defeating failure. In 2 Tim. 4:10, Paul reports that Demas having loved this present age has left me and gone to Thessalonica. If you love this present age and abandon Jesus and His future kingdom, you are an apostate.

15 Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. 16 And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.

There is crossover. These letters were to be like circular letters that would travel around the circuit of the churches in Asia minor and be read. We think the letter mentioned for Laodicea is our book of Ephesians. And presumably, but we don't have proof, we can't help but wonder if scribes didn't copy verbatim the letters while they had them and make their own copy to save. The new testament being assembled.

17 And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."

Archippus is mentioned here and in the opening salutation to Philemon. But we don't know what his ministry was. Was he pastor at Colossae which church met in Philemon's house? We don't know enough to make a guess.

But, Paul has just given us a group portrait of amazingly able and faithful men. Archippus, fulfil your ministry. Be like these men in the picture.

We can remove Archippus name and put our own names in verse 17. I commend to you to do that. There's no reason this is only for Archippus, it is for every christian everywhere.

"Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it." Print it large and put it over your desk or your workbench as a reminder that we are collectively in an army, in a spiritual war, and our fellow soldiers will be shot and die if we are not taking heed to the ministry that God has assigned to us.

IF you are a christian, THEN you have received a ministry from the Lord. Simple as that.

18 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my imprisonment. Grace be with you.

The VERACITY of the word of God is forever testified to and written down for our benefit, by Godly men who God chose and who fulfilled their ministries