

# 1 Timothy 1:1-11 - Dangerous Gospel

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning, everyone. If you've got a young one, by all means, they can go to their! Meetings now, their children's church. And as they do that, I want to just get straight stuck into 1st! Timothy. So if you have a Bible, why don't you go ahead and turn there. And as you do that, let me just tell you that as someone who has spent more of his life living in Portsmouth than living in Southampton, today is the most dangerous day to be alive, apparently. And so with that, I wonder if you thought this morning that it would be dangerous coming to church.

Now, Zach is nodding because he made the illustrious trip. And I did see the convoy, the pictures of the convoy this morning. And Laurie and I discussed it and we thought it was a little bit over the top. But Laurie's not been to one of those games. And I'm assuming Zach has. And they're not to be trifled with. And so today is a dangerous day to be alive. But I wonder whether you've ever considered the church to be dangerous. And the question is, I guess, dangerous for what?

We've seen in the news or scrolled social media, you've seen the damage that churches can do. Abuse, scandals, hypocrisy, churches that fight more about politics than they do about people's souls.

That's dangerous. But that's dangerous in all the wrong ways. What we learn in 1 Timothy is that the church should indeed be dangerous. We should be dangerous people.

But in all the right ways. Dangerous to the powers of darkness. Do you know Jesus said that he would build his church at the very gates of hell and there wouldn't be anything that the gates of hell could do about it.

[ 2 : 22 ] Is that the kind of church that we want to be part of? Dangerous to injustice. Dangerous to the lies that people can save themselves.

This is what Paul is writing to Timothy about. He is going to show us that the gospel doesn't make the church dangerous in toxic ways.

The gospel makes the church dangerous dangerously beautiful and dangerously bold and dangerously good. So therefore, Paul is going to argue that the gospel needs guarding and upholding.

And there's three things he's going to say in this section. Here's the first. We need to guard the gospel personally. And so Paul writes in verse one of first Timothy chapter one.

And he says this, Paul, an apostle of Christ. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by command of God, our savior and of Christ Jesus, our hope to Timothy, my true child in the faith, grace, mercy and peace from God, the father and Christ Jesus, our Lord.

[ 3 : 40 ] Now, quickly, the background is that Peter, excuse me, Paul and Timothy are good friends. They met in Lystra. They've been partners in ministry work for many years to the point where sometimes Paul would send Timothy in advance to a town or a city that he was about to go to to kind of get them ready for his arrival, to clear the way, if you like.

Sometimes he wasn't planning on even visiting that city or that town, and he would send them, Timothy, back and just say, Timothy, go and sort them out. That was their kind of relationship.

And we see that kind of relationship by how Paul affectionately refers to him, to Timothy. He says, my true child in the faith. I want us to grasp this idea that the gospel, this thing that we call the gospel, isn't just about doctrine on paper.

It's not just about doctrine on paper. It's about discipleship in people.

It's good for us to have a definition of the gospel. It's good for us to unpick what the gospel message is about. And it's good for us to understand it with our minds. But as Paul introduces this letter about guarding the gospel, it doesn't begin with laying out definitions and doctrines.

[ 5 : 06 ] he shifts the focus to discipleship in people. It's super personal, super relational, which means that parents, small group leaders, ministry volunteers, whoever you are, business leaders, whatever you are doing, you are passing on something that is alive, is living.

it's not just and only written on paper. Look what he says in verse 3.

He says, as I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain in Ephesus. And so one of the interesting things is that Ephesus, in one way or another, receives four letters, at least four letters that we know of, right?

So, and that's more than any other church. So they receive one from Paul directly, that's the letter that we know called Ephesus, right, or Ephesians.

They receive two through their pastor, Timothy, one Timothy and two Timothy that we'll read in today. they receive one from Jesus himself through the apostle John in the book of Revelation.

[ 6 : 21 ] And so this, this church is an important church and I wonder if it gets all of this attention in the New Testament because of how dangerous the church was.

It was situated in Ephesus. If you know the story, it was one of our, it was home to one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple of Artemis. Emmaus. But the church had a reputation of closing down religious shrines.

Do you remember that story? People were coming to know Jesus and they went, I don't, I don't need to go buy religious shrines and idols anymore and all the idol makers went out of business.

They had the powerful ministry of Aquila and Priscilla and Apollos and Paul who lived there for three years. even the apostle John lived in Ephesus.

This was a church that was a dangerous place to live as a Christian but listen, it was a dangerous place to live if you weren't because of this dangerous church.

[ 7 : 29 ] they had what you might call a dangerous gospel. A gospel that says no matter who you are, whatever your past has been, whatever shame you carry, whatever secrets you've buried, however broken, however far gone, however unworthy you feel, Christ has come for you.

not when you had it together, not when you were at your best, but while you were still a sinner, Jesus died for you. That's dangerous and it's dangerous because it tears down pride.

The very thing that we all struggle with, ego, flesh, pride. There's not a person in this room who doesn't struggle with ego, flesh, and pride. the gospel rips up self-righteousness.

It shatters the lie that you can't be forgiven. It dares to say that grace really is greater, mercy really does win, and Jesus really is enough.

And this gospel wasn't a document that everybody agreed or disagreed with or signed and didn't sign to. It was lived out. So Paul says, I've left you in Ephesus.

[ 9 : 00 ] And he has this relationship with Timothy to guard something. Look what he says. What is the reason I've left you in Ephesus? He says that the gospel needs to be guarded doctrinally, verses 3-7.

He says, so that you may charge certain people, certain persons. And it seems actually that Paul knows who these people are. That's got to be a frightening thing for those people, hasn't it?

He says, I want you to charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

Now look at that phrase devote themselves. It suggests that these people have become obsessed with irrelevant things. And this is probably the root of the issue.

The root of the issue probably isn't the myths and genealogies. the root is they've become obsessed with irrelevant things. Like if you remove the myths and genealogies, they're still obsessed about irrelevant things.

[ 10 : 18 ] They're just different irrelevant things. It's an idea that Paul repeats in chapter 4 verse 1 where he says, now the spirit expressly says in the latter times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves.

You see, now it's not myths and genealogies, now it's deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, right? He'd also write about it in his letter to Titus where he says, not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and commands of people who turn away from the truth, devoting themselves, just obsessed with irrelevance.

Now it might be a good question I probably to ask, what's the problem with these myths and genealogies? And again, the problem isn't ink on paper, it's the people that live them out, it's the way that they were lived out.

Again, obsession with irrelevance. You see, Paul says in our text that these people devoted themselves, and they devoted themselves to myths and endless genealogies.

So these myths actually are a reference to the far-fetched stories from the Greek and Roman gods. people. And I know what we immediately think.

[ 11 : 34 ] Well, I'm glad about that because obviously we don't really believe that anymore so that I'm okay. But let's be clear. These doctrines aren't dangerous because they were stories.

They weren't dangerous because they were written on paper, but because they were practiced by people. That is the contrast that Paul is making. like Plato, the philosopher, used the term myths when people used stories about the gods to justify their own behavior or practices.

They would do this certain thing A, B, and C, and they would go, oh, the reason I'm doing that is because the gods did it. Does that make sense? They're not just saying, oh, I'm not just telling you a story about the gods.

I'm justifying my behavior based on those gods. And Paul says, you know what? In the opposite way, that's how the gospel should work. The gospel isn't confined to paper.

The gospel should be lived out every single day in your lives. The second word that Paul uses is genealogies, and this is actually more about the content of those false doctrines.

[ 12 : 47 ] The term itself is simply a description of lists of family trees. This is not a exhortation to close your ancestry account.

This is a hint. With Judaism, genealogies played a really, really key role in establishing a person's bloodline.

And establishing a person's bloodline, if you could link to a certain family and a certain tribe, that kind of gave you a little bit more credence and credibility and superiority over others.

Like, this isn't someone just making links to who your great-great-great-great-great grandfather was. This is saying, ah, my family go all the way back to Levi, therefore, I'm better than you.

My family goes all the way back to the Aaronic priesthood, therefore, I am. And so it seems that these different doctrines is about who God favoured more than others.

[ 14 : 10 ] And Paul thought that this teaching was dangerous to the church. And then at the end of verse 4, we're given the reason why these doctrines are dangerous.

He says, because they promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. Where we are tempted to prefer speculation over stewardship, where we are tempted to go down conspiracy rabbit holes, theological trivia instead of discipleship, where we confuse the law with the gospel.

Because Paul is contrasting different doctrines, which involves uncertainty and speculation, rather than or comparing that with the faith-filled direction and God's plan of mission through the church.

church. And we know he's talking about the church. We know Paul is talking about the church because that word stewardship in the Greek is *oikonomia*, which means management.

It means to manage something, manage a household. And he's saying that God has organized the church to carry out activities, not just get people sign up to a creed and credence.

[ 15 : 44 ] He's organized the church to carry out activities, to do things that bring the world to genuine faith. faith. If you want to unpack what that whole little section, they promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith.

That's what it means. That God has organized and ordered the church to go out to the world to bring the world to genuine faith.

And he's saying that God has done that and he's done that so that people would actually follow that. That those activities are different from myths and genealogies which just promote speculation.

It's just chit-chat. It doesn't get you anywhere. It doesn't do anything. It certainly doesn't bring people to genuine faith. And with this comparison between what these certain people are doing and what the church is supposed to be doing.

We have in verse 5 a task for Timothy that will bring the church into line with God's plan and mission of verse 4.

[ 16 : 58 ] He says the aim of our charge is love. And for Paul this is the outworking of faith.

It is for James as well. Read the book of James and James is very super clear that actually if you're not demonstrating faith each and every day in your life that faith is not genuine faith.

Multiple times in the New Testament Paul will link love and faith. faith. The invisible belief in God with the visible outworking of it in life.

And he says that the end goal of the instruction is love. love. I don't know if you've ever thought about that.

What is the end goal of Christ's working invisibly in us? The end goal of Christ working invisibly in us is love.

[ 18 : 14 ] Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was in Matthew chapter 22. And he said you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. And on these two commandments depends all the law and the prophets.

Jesus said in John chapter 13 verse 35 that by this all will know that you are my disciples if you have love for none other.

There is a visible outworking of the invisible working of Christ in our lives which is love. And once we realize what God has done for us and the mess that we were in you can't help see that the goal of that is love.

Romans chapter 5 verse 5 God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit whom who has been given to us.

[ 19 : 34 ] Love. God's love.

God's love love to the world. At the end of the day the goal of the church isn't sharper arguments.

The goal of the church isn't cleaner doctrinal statements. I love all that right? We go for coffee we're talking about that. But listen the goal of the church is love.

real love. The kind of love that erupts when you know that the God of the universe has set his affection on you. And look this love then is qualified by three things in our text.

It, this love, issues from, so that term issues from is like, is born out of, it comes from, the word issues is just strange, we don't use that anymore, it just means comes from, flows from, it issues from, a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

[ 21 : 07 ] So three things, love comes from a pure heart. Now here's the problem, here's the problem entirely. Jeremiah chapter 17 verse 9 says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick.

And so if I'm to experience this love that is on offer, that is displayed ultimately in Jesus and should be displayed in and through me, the big problem is that Jeremiah 17 says actually if it's coming from a pure heart, I don't have one.

And yet we also know that John says in 1 John 1 9 that if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us.

cleanse us. The word cleanse means to remove sickness, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and that's the kind of heart where love comes from, the kind of heart that doesn't have sickness.

And I wonder when the last time it was when you laid your heart before God and asked him to forgive you for your sins. because a sick heart can't love.

[ 22 : 42 ] That's what he's saying. An impure heart can't love. It's not possible to do that. And so I wonder if the problem that we have with love isn't a problem with love, it's a problem with impure hearts.

I wonder when the last time you laid your heart before God and asked him to cleanse you and to remove that sickness. So that's a challenge for all of us, isn't it?

But in the second thing he says, where this kind of love comes from, is he says that it's born out of, or it flows from, a good conscience. conscience.

Like all of us have that compass and that's what conscience is kind of referring to. We have a compass. The compass points to the right place. By it we know where we should go.

and how often we don't. Paul is going to refer to the conscience actually a number of times in this letter.

[ 23 : 54 ] And again, it's that idea that there is something in us that tells us where we should go and this is the wrong way to go. That's what a compass does.

And what Paul is saying is that love is born out of going in the right direction. Walking with God. And thirdly, love is born out of a sincere or genuine faith.

This is referring to the active believing in God. And he is saying that when you have these three things going on in your life, no matter how weak or small, love will be born and start flowing from you.

And that's the goal. That's the aim. And then he contrasts that kind of life in verse 6 with those who don't have it.

So he says, verse 6, certain persons, and we assume it's the same certain persons as he was referring to in verse 3, certain persons. Certain persons by swerving from these, i.e.

[ 25 : 04 ] swerving from a pure heart, good conscience, sincere faith, certain persons. When we fail to come before God and say to God, Lord, I know this stuff in my life.

Search me, oh God, know my heart, cleanse my heart. I've been going the wrong way. I need to go this way.

I trust you. When we fail to do that, these are the certain persons he's talking to. Certain persons by swerving from these, like swerving.

He's not talking about turning around and going the opposite direction. He's like dodging them. That's what he's saying. Oh, I'm just going to dodge that. We do that when we go, oh, that doesn't matter, or I haven't got time for that, or we're too rushed to do anything else.

Swerving. Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion. And we assume that vain discussion he's talking about are myths and genealogies, but as I said before, if we didn't have those myths and genealogies, we'd probably be still talking, having vain discussion.

[ 26 : 19 ] Vain discussion. And here's what these people then do. They desire, verse 7, to be teachers of the law without understanding either what they are saying or the things about what they make certain or make confident assertions about.

Jesus in Matthew chapter 15 calls them blind guides. They are teachers of the law, but they don't really know what they're saying. They don't really have any understanding. He says in Matthew 23 that their motivation, same people, blind guides, their motivation is to be seen by other people and get praise from them.

They weren't concerned about learning God's ways. Learning God's ways in terms of forgiveness of sins, walking with a pure conscience, having a genuine faith.

God's God's ways. They weren't concerned about learning God's ways or teaching God's ways. They're concerned with getting the kind of accolades that rabbis in Judaism got. Only they wanted it in the church.

They wanted a platform, they wanted a microphone, but they don't actually know what they're talking about. And listen, that is not a first century problem. It's not only a first century problem.

[ 27 : 45 ] people who chase pulpits before they've carried crosses. People who plant churches because they want to preach and stand on stages and cling to titles but haven't been shaped inwardly by the word of God.

And when that happens, listen, when it happens, Paul isn't saying that those people and those churches become irrelevant. He's not saying that.

He's saying that those churches and those people become dangerous. The results are painful. Churches are divided.

People are confused and the gospel is distorted. This is why Paul is so urgent. He's saying, look, not everyone who wants to teach should teach.

Not every voice is a gospel voice. No matter how confident it sounds. Paul's saying that their ignorance isn't bliss. It is a blight on the church. Then in verse 8, he's going to tell us two things about the law.

[ 28 : 58 ] And it's almost like, wait a second, Paul, well, that's a little bit of a tangent, isn't it? Like, why are you now going to talk about the law in verse 8? Well, he's going to talk about much more after verse 11, which we'll look at next week.

So this is kind of an introduction to that. But he's going to say, look, the goal is or the need for the gospel to be guarded missionally.

So not only should we guard the gospel personally, it shouldn't be something that we just kind of write down and go, well, there's our statement of faith done.

It should be personal, relational. It's not only something that should be doctrinal, it should be true. But listen, it should also be missional.

Here's what he means. Verse 8, now we know that the law is good and how we hate that truth.

[ 30 : 01 ] The law is good, right? That's the first thing, the law is good. So long as, and this is what he says, if one uses it lawfully.

And then he defines what it is to be used lawfully. So he's saying, look, okay, don't throw the baby out of the bath water, right?

The law is good so long as you use it properly, i.e. you use it lawfully. Then he says, okay, let me tell you what it is to use the law lawfully.

Understanding this, verse 9, that the law is not laid down, would you circle that word not, highlight it, do whatever you want to do. It is not laid down for the just.

But for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinner, for the holy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, for sexually immoral, for men who practice homosexuality, for enslavers, for liars, for perjurers.

[ 31 : 15 ] And if Paul has missed anyone out of that list, it is for whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine.

Now, can you make a note that this isn't a random collection of things that Paul is just annoyed at? Paul hasn't come off social media this one morning and he's like, I'm done.

And he made a list of just things that he wants to berate. this is a portrait of lives unreconciled to God. He isn't just listing bad behaviors.

He's showing us where false teaching leads. And we've got to get this, right? This isn't just a list of don'ts. This is a result, a sad result.

If the gospel is distorted, if Christ is replaced with performance or pride, people don't just get confused. Listen carefully.

[ 32 : 24 ] They get enslaved. This isn't a matter of, well, we believe this and they believe that and, you know, we'll just agree to disagree. Nonsense.

When the gospel is distorted, people don't just get confused, they get enslaved. That's why Paul has made that list. Here is a list of enslaved people.

Scripture is clear. The end of a Christless life isn't just emptiness now. It's separation from God forever in what the Bible calls hell.

That's why he's making this list. He's not saying, well, you know what, those people are quite fine just to live their life and as long as they don't, you know, come into contact with someone else or the church, you know, just let them get on with it.

No, Paul's pastoral heart is saying, these people are not free, even though they think they're free. They're in slavery. And that's breaking Paul's heart and it should break our heart.

[ 33 : 32 ] You see, the gospel is missional. Guarding the gospel is missional. So the law is good, Paul says, if one uses it lawfully, it's not for the just, but it is for everyone else.

In Romans chapter 7, you remember he tells his own story. There he says, what shall we say? Is the law sin? Question mark. By no means.

Exclamation mark. Yet, if it had not been for the law, like if the law hadn't existed, he's saying, I would have not known sin.

And what he's saying is I wouldn't have been aware of sin. That's what he's saying. For I would have not known what it is to cover it if the law had not said you shall not cover it. So listen, Paul says, I've got reading Exodus 20, where the Ten Commandments are.

And all was good until the last one. I was doing okay. Why? Because I hadn't actually robbed anyone. I hadn't actually killed anyone. And yet, I woke up one morning and I saw my neighbor's new chariot and I wanted it.

[ 34 : 49 ] I coveted. Saw my neighbor's new kitchen. Coveted. Saw my neighbor's lifestyle.

happy wife, happy hubby, two children, golden retriever, wanted it. And he says, I realized that the law was a matter of the heart.

And so right after reading about the law in Exodus 20, it's almost like he goes, I started reading Exodus 21. You know what Exodus 21 is about? He's read about where the slaves are set free.

Isn't that crazy? How God has set up Exodus 20, here's the law. Exodus 21, here's how you can be a free person. Here's how you can live free. He says, I realized here you have the law that I can't keep.

Here's the law and then I'll never be set free. Because I can't keep it. I'm always going to be a slave. I'm always going to be enslaved.

[ 36 : 01 ] To something. And so the law became a burden to me. That's what he writes in Romans. It became a burden and a curse.

That's what he writes in Galatians. And so I did more because God loves me more when I do more.

We think that, don't we? God loves me more if I do more. And I stop doing bad things because I'm right with God if I don't do what those other people do.

And I'll make sure that I vote in the right way. And I'll send my kids to Sunday school or at least I'll send them to my grandparents, their grandparents. And I'll ensure I pray more and give more and serve more so God must be pleased with me.

And he says that was a burden and a curse because it didn't set me free. I got stuck in the Exodus 20, 21 cycle of life. You see, a distorted gospel doesn't just mislead.

[ 37 : 10 ] It divides wounds, deceives and enslaves. And then it's almost, you know, as you read Romans, he almost says, you know, to my uttered amazement, I started reading Exodus 22.

And in Exodus 22, God sets up the sacrifice, the death of an innocent substitute to release me from the demands of the law and actually set me free.

And I realized, Galatians 3, that the law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith. And now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.



And so he says, the law is good when used properly, when it's under a guardian, when it steers you to the sacrifice of another, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and it's that that sets you free.

when it's a burden when it's used. burden and a curse. And the problem is, Paul says, is that you have teachers of the law who are telling people that they should do this and they can't do that and they should do this other thing and they can't do the other thing, but the aim of the law isn't behavior modification.

[ 38 : 25 ] it's not getting people to do the right thing and stop them doing the wrong thing. That is not the aim of the law. The aim of the law is love.

The aim of the law is introduce them to real love for the first time. And when they're introduced to love for the first time, being so overwhelmed by it, they then turn to him and love him back.

The aim of the law is to welcome the prodigal home with the open arms of a father. You see, it's not the law that ultimately leads people to Christ.

Romans chapter 2 is clear. Paul says that it's God's kindness that leads someone to turn to Christ. Once you go through that cycle of here is the law, I can't keep it.

Here is my enslavement, that's my actuality. Here is the sacrifice of Jesus for me on the cross, demonstrating love for me. And he says, I'm not going to hold any of that stuff against you.

[ 39 : 36 ] You are now free to come to me. That's real love. And it's Christ's kindness then that draws us to him. And then he says that this is verse 11, in accordance with and aligns with or affirms the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

So what do we do with that? What do we do with this? Well, maybe a couple of things, maybe three things.

Firstly, don't assume the gospel, guard it. Don't assume it, guard it. If we assume it, we'll stop believing it. It's possible to sit in church for years and be very religious.

Very possible even to use the right language and slide into a distorted gospel without even realizing it. We need to guard our hearts from believing that you can earn God's love.

We need to guard our minds from voices that sound spiritual that pull you from Jesus. Guarding the gospel.

[ 41 : 00 ] Secondly, we need to guard the gospel together. Paul wasn't telling Timothy to fight alone. He's writing as the pastor to this church.

The whole church is called to hold the line. Parents, God's love. You guard the gospel when you tell your kids not be good necessarily but trust Jesus.

We refuse or we guard it when we refuse to buy the lie that identifies us in performance or popularity. Thirdly, guarding the gospel, we should do it with joy.

The aim, Paul says, is love. The gospel isn't just defended, it is displayed. The world doesn't need to hear what we believe as much as it does need to hear, see the way that we display it.

Guarding the gospel should make us the most humble, the most hopeful, the most joy-filled people on the planet because at the end of the day, the gospel we guard is the gospel that has already guarded us.

[ 42 : 24 ] But Jesus stepped into our danger, took us in, bought a judgment that should have come to us because we are lawbreakers, and then set us free.

That's why the gospel is worth guarding. That's why this church, our church, must be dangerous in all the right ways. The dangerous gospel says no matter who you are, no matter what you've done, no matter how deep the shame or heavy the sin, you can't outperform that.

You can't out-intellectualize it. You can't educate it. You can't be better than it. You can't earn it back. The gospel says that no matter who you are, what you've done, where you've come from and what you carry, Jesus is enough.

Enough to forgive every failure, heal every wound, break every chain, raise the dead to life, set you free. That's why the gospel is dangerous.

It destroys pride. If we react to the gospel in a negative way, that is flesh, pride, and ego talking.

[ 43 : 53 ] What do you mean, give up my meritocracy? What do you mean, give up the way I try to prove myself? The gospel is dangerous.

It destroys pride, it dismantles fear, it tears down the gates of hell, and sets people free. free. And so let's turn to God now and ask him again, once again, to set us free.

Father, thank you for your love displayed on the cross. Thank you that love is offered to each and every one.

Lord, we thank you that though we are not worthy, you have made us worthy. Lord, we recognize this morning, Lord, that we oftentimes do not have pure hearts.

We do not have good consciences. We do not have genuine faith. At least we don't display those things. We think that oftentimes if we do good things, as opposed to bad things, maybe even come to church, that you will look more favorably on us than we think.

[ 45 : 40 ] And we ask God that you would remove that thought from our mind. that none of us are worthy, that all of us have strayed from you, offended you, and all of us are enslaved, have been enslaved one way or another.

And yet we thank you for Exodus 22. Lord, we thank you that you show us that through your sacrifice, we can be set free. you said who the son sets free, is not just free, but is free indeed.

Lord, and so we ask this morning, Lord, that you would help us to guard what you have entrusted to us. Lord, that we would come to you not as someone who is a fearful judge, even though you are, not someone who is a sovereign king, although you are, but as a father with open arms to welcome back a rebellious son.

Lord, give us hearts to run to you. Lord, without a certificate in our hands, without a list of good deeds that we've done, without any attempts to prove that we are worthy, Lord, we rest and we say thank you for the provision of forgiveness and salvation through Jesus.

And we want to grasp it, Lord. Lord, and help us as we grasp it, Lord, that we would and our church would become a dangerous place.

[ 47 : 39 ] Not because of some external threat, at least external in this world, but because of an internal threat, the Holy Spirit working through us.

Working through us in love, displaying the truth of the gospel each and every day. Lord, help us to do that. Lord, we know. Lord, we haven't quite got that right.

We want to admit that to you. There's too many times where we will not say something and we should have said something and we don't say something or we say something and we probably maybe shouldn't have done.

Lord, we need wisdom. And sometimes, Lord, we have acted in ways that do not reflect you. Lord, and again, Lord, this isn't behavior modification.

this is the Holy Spirit working his way out in us. So, Lord, we say we need more of your Holy Spirit. We need more of your love to transform our hearts.

[ 48 : 51 ] Lord, help us, we pray. Lord, help us to be able to not only articulate what is true but also live out the truth of it.

So, Lord, as we sing these next few songs, Lord, we ask, would you impress this truth on our hearts, Lord, and impress these words on our hearts, Lord, that we wouldn't just be people who agree or disagree this morning.

Lord, but we would leave this place dangerous people because we have the gospel. Lord, and Lord, watch our world, here we come, with your gospel, to change it, believing that even at the gates of hell, you should build your church, and there's nothing that hell can do about it.

Lord, we ask you in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.