

2 Thessalonians 3:6-18 - When You're Discouraged ... Watch This!

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[0 : 00] All right, good morning, everyone. It's good to see you. Happy summer. I feel like it's finally arrived, right? It's going tomorrow. So make the most of it this afternoon. Summer is over from tomorrow. The trees will be turning brown.

Our log burners will be on. Guarantee it. You mark my words. It's not thus saith the Lord, but I'm just telling you. All right. It's good to see Steve's younger brother here this morning.

Sorry, I'm away for one week and I swallow a joke book and then all of a sudden it's carnage. Good, good. It's good to see you. Let's just commit this time to the Lord and then we're going to open our Bibles to 2 Thessalonians.

Father, we just want to come to your word, Lord, and just again submit our hearts to the leading of your spirit. Lord, we pray that you would give us ears to hear what he's saying to us.

Lord, we believe, Lord, that your word is the authority for our lives. Lord, and so we just not only open our Bibles, Lord, but we bow our hearts to it.

[1 : 13] Lord, we submit our hearts to it. Lord, if there's anything here that our hearts just wrestle with, Lord, we just pray that we would come with it, come to it with an attitude of, you know, we're wrong and you're right.

Lord, and ask you to deal with us, Lord, and to just to do what you do so well with us and disciple us and discipline us and exhort us and encourage us.

So, Lord, we just come with that heart to you this morning, Lord, and ask that you would help us to understand these things. We will read, Lord, and we will agree that they're not difficult to understand, but they're difficult to do, as is so much of your word, Lord.

And so we ask, Lord, for the power to put these things into practice. Lord, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Have you ever had to carry the weight of work or at work, at home or at church, because someone else didn't put it in their share?

Like, you're putting in the time, you're staying up late, you're cleaning up the mess, and someone else is working hard or hardly working. We've all seen it, haven't we?

[2 : 39] It's frustrating. Paul sees this in the church too, not in the workplace, but in the church. And he was frustrated. He was concerned that the underlying reason for that lack of work was not motivation, was not education, but it was a misunderstanding of the gospel.

And so he writes now in the final part of this letter to the church of the Thessalonians, chapter 3. And he's previously said, you know, I want you to live like this with the fact that Christ's return is in view.

I want you to work like this. And then he goes back at the end of this book to, well, dealing with idleness.

Remember in the first letter he wrote about this topic. If you just turn over the page to chapter 5 in the first letter, verse 14, he writes this. He says, we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle.

Encourage the faint-hearted. Help the weak. Be patient with them all. And we saw that when we went through that part of that chapter, that this was really not just about lazy people.

[4 : 11] This was about people who are perhaps breaking their commitments too often. This is the person who is regularly late for everything.

With no good reason. And traffic isn't a reason. And then someone has to accommodate them in some way.

And you know what I'm talking about. Oh, so-and-so is late, so therefore I have to do this. If they were on time, I wouldn't have had to do this. We get frustrated at that, don't we? There's pride

talking, that is. This is the person who regularly forgets their slot on the church rotor. Regularly. Like, we all do it every now and again. Like, we were in our little prayer circle this morning. And none of us knew who was leading the service. And I was sweating, thinking, I'll bet it's me.

I'll bet it's me. I'll bet I haven't checked and I haven't prepared, right? And that can happen from time to time. But the person who regularly is on the phone Saturday night, oh, I can't make it.

[5 : 20] Or doesn't even do that. Just doesn't show up on a Sunday. And then someone else has to fill in their slot at the last minute. This is the person who is more a consumer instead of a contributor. Always critiquing what's wrong, but never lifting a finger to help or change it.

Paul's words here are to admonish those people. And the word admonish means to teach about proper behavior.

What is the proper behavior? And it seems that this hasn't taken place since Paul wrote his first letter. Like, this change hasn't happened because now Paul is writing his second letter and he has to repeat himself.

Now, I know, like, none of us need to hear anything twice, right? Like, all of us, when we hear something for the first time, we're like, snap, got it.

And our behavior changes immediately, doesn't it? Well, no, of course it doesn't. Like, we need that second time, that third time, that fourth time. May I say the fifth or sixth time? Laurie's like, it's been 30 years.

[6 : 28] What are you talking about? Like, you need it regularly, right? And so, here he finds himself repeating himself. Only this time, he's not saying admonish the idol within a sentence that it could get lost in.

The exhortation is much stronger. Let's read it together. Verse 6, 2 Thessalonians chapter 3. He says this, Now we commend you, brothers, in the name of the Lord.

Like, that's some weights right there. Okay? We command you, brothers, in the name of the Lord, that you keep away from any brother who's walking in idleness, and not in accord with the tradition that you receive from us.

Like, that's heavier, right? That isn't a, oh, by the way, admonish the idol. This is heavier. It's harder. It's stricter.

And look, he begins with a command. It's not a suggestion. Keep away from. That's what he's saying. And look, can I just say that there is no other way, and we might want to think about this, but let me just save you the homework.

[7 : 43] There's no other way to translate that. Like, there's no other way to make it sound a little bit more soft or to dumb it down. What it means is what it means.

Avoid, withdraw, distance yourself from the one who is idle. Now, the interesting thing is, again, this word idleness, because, again, it means more than just someone who isn't working.

It's not synonymous with the word lazy. This is a military word for being out of step.

And that would be a really, really good way to translate it. You know, when you've seen on telly or maybe you've seen in person those big parades. Maybe it's Troop in the Colour or, you know, when we had Queen Elizabeth's funeral, you know, the whole world saw it.

And in this country, you know, everything is drilled to the nanosecond, right? And we don't really see people, soldiers, out of step.

[8 : 49] Why? Because they have a drill sergeant who has helped them, in one way or another, to stay in formation and keep straight lines.

And Paul's command is to stay away from those who are out of line, those who are out of step. Why?

This is a really important question. Like, what does it matter in the grand scheme of things that someone's been a little bit flaky on the church rotor? Like, really?

Like, we would all agree there's probably a lot more things to worry about, bigger things, more important things, more urgent things than, I was going to say, who serves the coffee? Maybe not.

That's important, by the way. Anyway, why is Paul making this point again? Why is he making it again for the second time and this time devoting a big chunk of his letter, considering there's only three chapters, a big chunk of this letter, to what we should do with those people who are out of step, out of line?

[10:03] Here's simply the reason. We measure ourselves off of each other. We measure our position off of each other. You know, when soldiers are in line and they come to stop, if you've ever watched, there'll be that command to, and you'll hear it, to either dress right or dress left.

And then all of the soldiers will do a little shuffle. They'll look left or they'll look right. They'll do a little shuffle. Then they'll snap their heads back in line.

Do-do-do-do-do-do all the way. What are they doing? Well, they're not looking at the soldier 100 meters away. Who are they looking at? They're looking at the guy right next to them.

And they're getting themselves in line with that guy. And that guy is getting themselves in line with the next guy to him. And so on 100 meters down the line. And Paul is saying, look, this is really important.

The way that you stay in step with God is that you measure your position by who you surround yourself with. So Paul is not harsh.

[11:10] He's loving. He's not saying, kick him out of the church. He's protecting the church from something called spiritual drift. Now, look, we all know that spiritual drift doesn't happen all at once, right?

We don't get up in the morning and once say, you know, today I'd really like to be lukewarm. Like, I don't think, like any Christians are saying that.

Like, drift is gradual and it's subtle. And the last person to realize it's happening is you. The last person. And the tragic thing is this, that drift requires no effort at all, does it?

Like, you've all seen, you know, the RNLI kind of warnings at the beach, you know, to keep your eyes focused on a set position on the beach so that you know if you're drifting.

And you've all probably been, like, on a dinghy or even maybe just floating and all of a sudden, you know, where you started on the beach is not now where you are. It doesn't take effort, does it?

[12:25] It happens when you're swimming, you stop looking around as an example. It happens when you stop praying. It happens when you stop pursuing Christ intentionally. Drift fills the space where discipline used to be.

You get rid of discipline, all of a sudden, something's got to fill that gap. What is it? Drift. That's why the writer to Hebrews said this in chapter 2, verse 1.

He says, therefore, we must pay much attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. Pay attention to what we have heard. Pay attention.

Keep swimming. Keep your eyes on others. Otherwise, you're going to drift. And notice that the verb drift is not jump.

It's not rebel. It's not walk away. It's drift. Just slowly floating from truth to indifference, from devotion to distraction.

[13:43] C.S. Lewis in his book, Mere Christianity, and if you haven't read it, make it your summer reading. He says this, if you examined 100 people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many would turn out to be reasoned out of it.

Most people, he says, just drift away. You don't argue out of Christianity. You don't reason out of Christianity. You drift away.

So if drifting, and this is the difficulty, if drifting is something that slowly takes place and is often seen by others first, how do we diagnose it?

It's an incredibly challenging question. Not theologically or even, I have some questions, but practically doing it is really challenging.

Because if you're the last one to know, what happens? Someone says to you, like, I think you're spiritually drifted. No, I'm not. Right?

[15:00] Because you don't know. You don't know what's in your blind spot. That's why it's called a blind spot. But everyone else can see it. So if it happens slowly, and you're the last one to see it, and others see it first, how do we diagnose it?

Like, how do we become consciously aware of it? Well, let me ask you some questions that you can ask yourself. And this isn't a public kind of confession.

This is just, you know, this is between you and the Lord, your heart and his. Diagnostic questions.

And these diagnostic questions aren't supposed, this is not me trying to beat you up and, you know, ruin your Sunday afternoon.

Right? Again, this is for us to ask our own hearts, could this be true of me? So here's some questions.

I don't know whether I put them on the screen. I probably didn't. Here's some questions. What has most of my attention right now? The things of God or the things of the world?

[16:12] A few note-takers, I'll just give you the question, pause, let us think, let us reflect. What has most of my attention right now?

Is it the things of God or the things of the world? Second question, do I find it easier to scroll, binge, or shop than to sit quietly with God and his word?

If so, why? Right, that's a super challenging question. Do I find it easier to scroll, binge, or shop than to sit quietly with God and his word?

If so, why? Third question, am I contributing to the spiritual momentum of my church or coasting on the work of others?

And I will say, look, if we make eye contact during these reflection questions, there's no judgment from me. I'm just talking, all right? Like, we haven't just kind of like, ding, and it's like, that's a message for you.

[17:24] It's not, all right? Just safe on the emails. It's just not, right? This is, again, between you and the Lord. So, am I contributing to the spiritual momentum of my church or coasting on the work of others?

Fourth question, I think. what am I tolerating in my life today that I would have confessed and repented of a year ago? What am I tolerating in my life today that I would have confessed and repented of a year ago?

Next question, what sin have I made peace with instead of waging war against?

What sin have I made peace with instead of waging war against? Next question, if someone lived like I do Monday to Saturday, would they become more like Christ?

If someone lived like I do Monday to Saturday, would they become more like Christ? Two more questions.

[19:12] Because I know you're enjoying it so much. What would it look like for me to return to a place of spiritual fire and faithfulness this week?

What would it look like for me to return to a place of spiritual fire and faithfulness this week? And then lastly, is there a small, specific act of obedience I've been avoiding that God is prompting me to take?

Is there a small, specific act of obedience I've been avoiding that God is prompting me to take? And so, the challenge is this, where Paul says, keep away from the brother who is idle.

He's saying this because whoever is next to you is not necessarily a problem for them because they're out of line, but they're going to make you out of line.

You're going to be out of step. And so then, having made that command in verse 6, Paul goes on to give an example in verse 7.

[20:47] He says this, For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us because we were not idle when we were with you. Nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it.

But with toil and labor, we worked day and night that we might not be a burden to any of you. So he's saying, look, we lived what we preached to the best of our ability.

Like they weren't perfect. But we lived what we preached. We were in line. That's what he's saying. And look what he says in Acts chapter 18.

You know, he talks about, or it's Luke writes, and he says that in Luke 18 verse 3, that he makes mention of how they were of the same trade.

He stayed with them. He worked. For they were tent makers by trade. That's Paul. He worked. He worked. 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. We looked at it when we were there. He says, for you remember, brothers, our labor and toil, we worked day and night that we might not be a burden to any of you while we proclaim to you the gospel of God.

[22:01] So then he says in verse 9 in our text, it was not because we do not have the right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. So he's saying we had certain privileges that we didn't exercise.

We could have, but we didn't. And the reason was, he says, that you need an example to imitate. And he wrote a similar thing, of course, to the church of Corinth in 1 Corinthians chapter 9.

He says, is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? What he's saying is this. He's saying, why should Barnabas and I go out to work so that we can eat and pay the bills and also do the work of ministry?

That's not his point, but that's how he started. He says, why is it that all of us have to work, but you have the freedom to withdraw from ministry whenever you feel like it?

That's Paul's point. Right? Paul is saying, we have to go to work because we need to eat. And we have to do ministry because that's our calling.

[23 : 28] So why do you then get the opportunity to withdraw whenever you like? Why do you get the opportunity to come late? Why do you get the opportunity to reign in sick?

Why do you get the opportunity? We don't get that opportunity. That's what Paul is saying. Paul is saying, surely, if that is the case, then we, Barnabas and I, we can stop working.

If that's the case, that's what we can do. Why don't we get that option? And so he's addressing the double standards that go with this kind of idleness.

Like we can just walk up and we think it's not going to affect anyone else. Look what he says in verse 7 of that same chapter in 1 Corinthians 9. He says, who serves as a soldier at his own expense?

Like this is, this is Paul's comedy. Right? And every now and again you see Paul just kind of bringing out an illustration. You just think, that's ridiculous. Right? Can you imagine, you know, going onto the battlefield and then having to pay for your own bullets?

[24 : 35] That's what he's saying. It's like, who does that? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends the flock without getting some of the milk?

Do I say these things on human authority? And now he appeals to the Old Testament. He says, does not the law say the same thing? For it is written in the law of Moses, you shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.

And he says, is it for the ox that God is concerned? Does God really care that much about the cow? Is that the point of the law? That we would care for the cow?

It's a rhetorical question in Paul's comedy, right? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake because the ploughman should plough in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.

If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do we not even more?

[25 : 45] Nevertheless, and notice what he says, and this is in connection with 2 Thessalonians, we have not made use of this right. We've given up that right, Paul is saying.

It is a right. And Paul could cast that in at any, pardon the pun, cast that in at any point. But he's saying, look, I'm giving up that right and here's the question why. But we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ.

Paul is saying, look, I have these certain rights. I'm giving up these rights. Because if I don't, the gospel is going to be impeded. Now look, personally speaking, let me just say this.

I get asked on a fairly frequent basis why I work a full-time job and pastor a church. Like, why don't I just go full-time? Like, I ask myself that question every single Monday morning.

I promise you. And I'll tell you in my own heart, I was convicted of this passage, 1 Corinthians 9, 30 years ago.

[26 : 57] The answer is the same as Paul gives. Right now, what is the best thing? The best thing, the good thing, is for the gospel that I work.

It is not always going to be that way. It may be that one day I stop working a full-time job and it will depend on the question or the answer, when is it good for the gospel?

Not when we have a healthy bank balance. Not when I'm exhausted. When is it good for the gospel? Paul says, it was his right to ask the church to support him.

It was his right to ask the church to do the same in terms of the workload. But he gave up that right because the condition wasn't right.

There were other things that were more important to focus on. And so he's saying, look, he's using himself as the example and saying, look, those people who are out of step, out of line, lazy, idle, they don't get the gospel.

[28 : 12] The gospel is at work. Why should you not be at work? Is it good for the gospel that you work? Yes and amen. So what's the problem?

Well, the problem is misunderstanding of the gospel. verse 10, he says this, for even when we were with you, we would give you this command, if anyone is not willing to work, let them not eat.

Had a really interesting conversation with someone many years ago who wanted to put someone out of the church, disassociate, disfellowship, and refuse them at the fellowship meals that we had because they didn't work.

Paul is not talking about those who won't, who can't work. He's talking about those who won't work. This isn't some kind of circumstantial thing, like being made redundant or being sick.

There is no grace at all, whatsoever, in the redundant person or the sick person being excluded from the fellowship life of the church.

[29 : 33] There's no grace there whatsoever. This, what Paul is talking about, is willful laziness. And the reason that they are being singled out is because this attitude catches.

Remember the line? like, if that person can't get away with rocking up the fellowship meal without contributing, without waiting in line, going straight to the head of the thing, filling up their plate, why shouldn't I?

You see, it tempts my flesh to do the same thing. And then you're looking at someone else and they're doing that and all of a sudden, well, just like the church of Corinth, there's a big problem. It catches, like soldiers in line, measuring the position of a person like this is going to cause the church to be out of step, not with each other, that's just a minor problem, they're going to be out of step with God, that's a much bigger problem.

The eating that Paul is talking about, again, is probably the fellowship meals that the churches would have. When the church came together to eat, he is saying, this is a problem because those people who contribute nothing are causing division, causing grumbling in other people's hearts.

[30 : 55] Why should they go first? They haven't done anything. In fact, he says in verse 11, for we hear that some of you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busy bodies.

You're not busy at work, but you're busy in other people's work. And that's the worst kind of division, isn't it? You know, you've got this person and that person and they're serving the Lord just as best they can, and all of a sudden you've got this idle person who's not really doing anything.

It's then criticizing those people who are working, like they are the master. And we want to serve each other, don't we? Amen? Of course we do.

But we have one master. Who is that? Jesus. Good, good answer. You've been to Sunday school. We want to serve each other.

We want to be humble in that, don't we? We want to love each other. But listen, there's no room for that kind of division. Paul is saying you can't share one of the most important and intimate moments in the life of the church, especially in a Jewish context, when they're breaking bread together.

[32 : 13] You can't do that and have that kind of division. And so he says, verse 12, now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly.

You know, there's a danger, isn't there, when you get that kind of situation and that kind of person, that they go out and create a banner and they say, look at the work that I'm doing, right?

Therefore I can eat. And Paul says, look, there's a danger to that too. Just return to your work humbly, return to your work quietly. He says, to earn their own living.

Verse 13 says, as for you brothers, do not grow weary in doing good. Now look, that phrase hits differently when you're tired, doesn't it?

Right? Don't grow weary in doing good. Because sometimes you're like, well, I'm not that weary. Okay, problem number one. He's just been addressing that.

[33 : 31] But don't grow weary to the point where you're just ready to grow in the town. And look, I do think that Paul is not just saying, talking about physical tiredness.

I think we all get physically tired, don't we? One person said, yes, come on. Like I'm not the only one. Am I? Okay, thank you.

God bless you. But listen, there is a physical tiredness that God in his grace has made the sun to go quiet so that our physical bodies can recharge every 24 hours.

But there is not always as obvious answer to the heart tired and the soul tired. I think sometimes we can be as heart tired and soul tired as we can physically tired, but we don't have that rhythm of the day when we are recharging.

Does that make sense? I was bold enough this week just to open an old journal and read through some of the comments I made from back then.

[35 : 05] I'll just say back then rather than give you a date. I had written at least I found five times things that I was tired of.

And I'm just going to share them with you, right? Because maybe someone here is also feeling tired from the same things. Tired of being the one who always forgives first.

Tired of showing up early and staying late. Tired of serving when it feels like no one sees. Tired of loving, people who don't love you back. Tired of praying for breakthroughs that don't seem to come. None of those relate to physical tiredness. And there is a weight that I think Paul is writing about and I think he's writing to the church and acknowledging that there is a weight that is different than a physical weight, a physical tiredness.

And we must plan our days around recuperating and refreshing our hearts and our souls as much as we do our physical bodies.

[36 : 22] And you know, one of the diagnostic questions I asked earlier is related to this. How much time do we binge, scroll, shock? there is a heart tiredness that comes from that.

Paul says it firmly but very, very gently. As for you brothers, don't grow weary in doing good. Don't grow weary in doing good.

Don't let your heart slow down in kindness just because you're tired. Don't let your hands drop in service.

Don't let your hope unravel in the waiting. Why? Because doing good matters. It really does matter. Doing good matters, and you know what? Jesus sees it. He sees every quiet sacrifice, every hidden act of faithfulness, every choice to love instead of retaliate, every pound given in secret, every prayer whispered in the night, he sees it.

[37 : 42] And he promises it's not wasted. Paul wrote the same thing to the church in Galatia, in Galatians chapter 6 verse 9, with the same hope.

He says, let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap if we don't give up. We've talked about it fairly often, listen, there is a harvest coming.

Do you believe that? There is a harvest coming, and you don't know how happy that makes me. there is a harvest coming, there is a resurrection coming.

And we don't see it yet, why? Because it's not in due season, that's what Paul has said. But it's coming, and what you sow in tears will become a field of joy.

So don't grow weary doing good, Jesus isn't finished yet. if he had finished, we wouldn't be here. Jesus isn't finished with you, and he's not finished with us.

[38 : 59] Paul realizes that not everyone is going to get that message. It's not going to land well with everyone. Maybe some people will hear it and nod their heads in agreement, but they still won't get it.

Maybe their hearts are so tired, maybe their souls are so tired. You know, when you get that tired, you just can't receive anything. Did you ever get there? So Paul says to the church in verse 14, if anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, have nothing to do with them, that they may be ashamed.

Like, what are you saying, Paul? I thought there was going to be some encouragement coming for those who are heart heavy and so tired. But Paul says, no, you know what?

The difficulty with heart tiredness and soul tiredness, that's between you and the Lord. You know, one of the things that I was convicted of stopping to try and say just in conversation with people, I can't remember where it is, it's been a couple of years, there were two things actually.

when people say, how are you doing? I got into this habit of saying, you know, I'm really busy. And I was really convicted just to stop saying I was really busy because I think you're as busy as you choose to be.

[40 : 23] And then the other thing was, I'm tired. Just to be convicted to say, I'm tired. Why? We're all tired. Aren't we?

I mean, unless you got 12 hours sleep last night and have done for the last week, you're tired. Maybe you're so tired you don't know it.

That's a different issue. Maybe you've gone past tired and you're exhausted. But you know that kind of language where we just go, I'm tired? And then it becomes the culture of the church where you go, how you doing?

I'm tired. I'm me too, man. I had to work three hours yesterday. Nearly killed me. That's none of you. I know that. But you know what I'm saying?

It can become something that we just like almost take pride in. Like, how are you? I'm busy. Oh, you work hard. Right? Yeah, good for you.

[41 : 22] I had Saturday off. And I think this is Paul's point here. He's saying, look, don't let either your work or your status in terms of how you are being used by God as your identity.

Don't let it become the church's identity. The church isn't a place where you come and discover that everybody's tired. Right? It shouldn't be.

That's what I'm saying, right? It shouldn't be. It should be a place where people come, where we come every week and we go, you know what? I'm hoping for a harvest. And I'm doing something about it.

My life is in line with that. So he says, look, take note, write down their names, those who are persistently and willfully rejecting this teaching.

Like, woe is me, woe is me, woe is me. It's like, come on, Jesus is bigger than woe is me, right? And then he says, verse 15, it's almost like Paul has kind of written it down.

[42 : 33] It's like, ah, sounds a bit harsh. Let me temper that just a little bit. Verse 15, don't regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother, right?

Like, don't take him out into the car park and throw stones at him, but take him for coffee and go, bro, I don't like your future.

If this is the way you're walking, this is where you're going to end up. We are good at throwing stones. You know what they're called today?

Emails. It's harder to make someone a coffee and stare at them in the eye and say, bro, this is not going well for you. We need to be better at the second one than the first one.

Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother, which means that church discipline is not punishment but loving correction. The purpose is restoration, not rejection.

[43 : 36] How we do things matters. Paul wrote to the church of Galatia again in verse one of chapter six, he says, brothers, if anyone is caught in a transgression, so this is sin.

He says, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness, humility. And then he closes this letter with a final benediction.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace. I love that. Give you peace at all times. I love that even better. In every way. I'm not like he's striking gold right now.

he says, look, you want to know the source of peace. You want to know the place that you need to go if you are so tired.

It's the Prince of Peace. The Lord of Peace himself. He's still the source of peace, even if the church is messy.

[44 : 51] the reason that Christ is our peace is because of what he says next. He says, the Lord be with you all. Like, that only makes sense if the Lord is with us.

Right? You can have peace in any kind of situation if you know the Lord is in the boat with you. And so he says, now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace out all times and in every way.

The Lord be with you all. I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand, which you might go, well, good for you. Welcome to the grown-up world.

But we know that when he wrote to some of the churches like Galatia in one point, Paul would often use scribes. We know that he had an eye condition and he would use a scribe to scribe for him.

And here he's saying, look, I'm writing this with my own hand. It is from me. It is not through someone else. This is the sign of genuineness in every letter of mine. It is the way that I write the grace, and I love that grace is the final word, don't you?

[46 : 10] The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. Lord, some difficult things for us, no doubt.

Lord, we commit our hearts again to you. And Lord, we pray this morning, Lord, that you would keep us from spiritual drift.

Lord, you would keep us from being heart tired and soul tired. You would refresh us. Lord, that we would rely, depend on each other, that they would be relying and depending on you as well.

Lord, that as we line ourselves up, as we position ourselves next to each other, Lord, we would be able to see that brother or sister that is not quite in line and help address that, but also it would address our own process.

Lord, ultimately we want to be in line with you and what you're doing. And Lord, and so we say again, Lord, whatever is good for your gospel, Lord, whatever is good, Lord, for the proclamation of you and your word, Lord, we pray.

[47 : 36] Help us to be in line with that. Lord, protect us from laziness and idleness. Protect us from division. protection. Protect us from pointing the finger at each other. Lord, we serve you, we serve each other, but you are our master.

And Lord, we pray as our hearts are quietened in this moment, Lord, as we come before you in worship, Lord. Lord, if we have heavy hearts this morning, maybe we've reflected on some of these things, maybe we've been just thinking about our devotion time this morning.

Lord, we want to just ask you, Lord, would you let us know if we've strayed? Would you let us know if we've drifted? But more than that, Lord, we want to see you as our lifeguard coming for us, rescuing us.

And we don't want to fight you. But we don't want to be swimming away from you into danger. Lord, our hearts are submitted to you.

Lord, to bring us back by your spirit. Lord, as we choose today, Lord, to ask you to save us.

[49 : 05] As we choose today, Lord, to take that one step of obedience. It doesn't have to be public. We don't have to tell anyone.

Lord, we confess these things to you this morning. And Lord, maybe we've grown a little bit tired.

Lord, maybe we've grown a little bit hopeless of the situation.

Lord, maybe we've been praying into something for many years. Lord, we pray. Lord, let us not grow weary. Let us not give up.

Lord, let us believe that it is a harvest and that doing good is good. And that you see it. And that one day we will hear those words, well done, good and faithful servant.

So, Lord, we want to thank you, Lord, for your word, Lord, but we want to thank you that you are the God who never gives up on us. Lord, you always give us an opportunity to turn to you.

[50 : 13] Lord, your word is always at work. You said that your father has been working from the day of creation up till now. And so, Lord, we want to thank you for that because, Lord, if you had given up, we wouldn't be here.

Lord, we might not even be alive right now. Lord, so we thank you, Lord, that you not only have worked and you've done that finished work on the cross, Lord, but by your spirit, you're still working in us.

You're still working for us. Lord, we thank you, Lord, we praise you. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.