

1 Thessalonians 2:13–3:13 - God's Word

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[0 : 00] Thank you. We are in 1 Thessalonians. So if you have a Bible, turn with me there. And I was just thinking this week, you know, Friday was a glorious day for teachers. Not! For anyone else, but for teachers it was a glorious day. And I was talking to a colleague who was, you know, going on holiday. And it's certainly holiday season at the moment, isn't it? And I was thinking about, you know, holidays and holiday seasons and kind of thinking about the message for this morning. And we are there, aren't we? Pretty much. Holiday season, people are thinking about where we're going to go to escape for a little while. And if you're anything like me, and I'm glad Laurie's out and doing the children this morning because she'll just be mocking me from the back quietly. She won't say anything, but I just know. I just know that, you know, that's what she's thinking. But I do like to plan. I like to, if we're going to go away,

I like to plan. And I am known to create a spreadsheet or three for a weekend break. And I just like to know. I like to know where I'm going. I like, you know, I don't want to be disappointed. I'd like to plan out my day. I like to know what I'm doing in that day, where I'm going, potentially where I'm going to eat. I'm going to be looking at reviews to see whether it's worthwhile. And some of you blokes are like, yeah. And some of you ladies have got your head in your hands. But I think that's okay. And, you know, in the old days, and I was thinking about this yesterday, actually, I peered up in my study. And in the old days, you used to have a travel book. Do you remember those? Like some of you are like, no. What's a book? So a series of pages that would tell you all about the city. I was peering up in my study, and there was one from Rome. I actually think it belongs to Norma. And it's a travel guide of Rome.

And Laurie and I went to Rome a few years ago, and we took that book with us. And every day we went out. We took that book with us every day. Now, of course, these days, it's on your phone, isn't it?

And you have the wonderful privilege of GPS. You don't get lost. Or you still get lost, but now you know you're lost. And you know that you're wandering into a part of town that you shouldn't be wandering into, right? Or it tells you, you've still got three hours to walk before you get to the next destination with a travel book that you're oblivious to. So, you know, you have a book or a travel guide on your phone. The point is you're traveling with it. You take it with it wherever you go, right? You don't just leave it on your shelf when you go away. You pull it out often, perhaps several times a day, just to check. And over the course of your holiday, over the course of your break, it shapes how you travel. It shapes what you avoid or what you don't avoid. What you do with your time. What you do with your money. What you do with your energy. That's a travel book.

Travel guidebook. Now, compare that to a cookbook. That's different, isn't it? Like a cookbook, you're not likely to stay there on holiday, let alone carry it around with you wherever you go.

[3 : 38] Can you imagine? Like you're in Rome and you're queuing for the Colosseum and out pops like a cookbook. And you know, you're reading about all of the delicacies of Italian cuisine.

Some of you like now, oh, my mouth's watering, right? But you're not gonna, you're not really gonna do that. Why? Because the purpose is different. Your cookbook, you're only really getting out for a specific purpose, aren't you? Most likely, most likely, if you've got cookbooks, like we've got cookbooks, you probably use one recipe in a whole book, right? Most likely, you bought the book for that one recipe and you've never looked at it again. Well, look, this morning, Paul begins this new section of 1 Thessalonians by saying that the Word of God has to be a travel guide rather than a cookbook. You have to take the Word of God with you, alongside you.

You can't just get it out on special occasions. Does that make sense? So look at what he says, 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 13 is where we pick it up. Paul says, writing to this church, he says, we also thank God constantly for this. And then he's going to describe what he is constantly

thankful for. He says that when you received the Word of God, you heard from us, or that which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the Word of men, but as it, as what it really is, the Word of God, which is at work in you believers. So that word receive is an interesting word. It's the Greek word paralambano. And it means that para means to come alongside or to be alongside. And so it's this idea that it's not about reading along on a Sunday, like you're all doing so well this morning, right?

It's not about completing your daily Bible reading plan, which you should all be doing each day. It's about taking the Word of God along with you.

Paralambano. It's to take alongside or to take with you. It's about letting it guide you. It's a guidebook. That's what he's saying.

[6 : 15] It's life's guidebook that should help us and direct us and challenge us to reflect its wisdom in the things that we do. It's what the Jews, if you remember in the Old Testament and certainly in the first part of the New Testament, we see them doing is that they write out the law, stuff it into little boxes and then tie the boxes, you know, to their head and their heart, right? Because they understood they wanted to take the Word of God with them wherever they went. And so Paul says that when this happens, he says when you receive the Word of God and then accept it as the Word of God, it is, look at the at the end of the verse, at work in you believers.

Now look, we are all aware, and if we're not aware, I'm going to make us aware this morning, that there is a contrast between hearing the Word of God and seeing it work in our lives.

Is that like true? Or is that just me? Like what I mean is that sometimes we hear the Word of God preached and we leave here completely unchanged and unaltered, like completely. And I think that it's often the case that, like if I've learned anything about preaching and if I've learned anything about growing as a Christian, is that the work of God, and this is true, that the work of God is generally a slow work.

Right? And so there's a danger for us to kind of want to kind of go, well, I don't feel that changed from a Sunday morning. But if we're doing that for 10 years, that's a problem.

It's not only a slow learning, which is to be expected, but also a different kind altogether. I mean, like if we were to take a poll on the main learning points from last week's sermon that Andy brought, my bet is, my hunch is, that we would barely know without consulting our notes if we took notes.

[8 : 37] This is a challenge for us. I'm laying it out. Like I have conversations, not regularly, but frequently.

No, that's the same thing. Sometimes. And I know this in my own heart. So I'm not pointing the finger at anyone. I'm pointing the finger right at me. And like I'll come away and this is a running joke with Laurie. We'll talk about the sermon. I'm like, I don't even remember half of what I said. And she said, well, how can you expect other people to know? And look, I would certainly have difficulty recalling Andy's points from Romans 12.

I know Romans 12. It's about sacrifice fundamentally. It's about love. And then it goes on about serving one another. But that's only because I know Romans 12. Even though it was so well delivered and so well thought out, I'm struggling to recall that.

And to, again, to a certain degree, this is an expectation. That is to be expected. Why? Jesus warned that the seed can be sown and it can be ineffective.

[9 : 58] Jesus warned that. As either the seed is sown on hard hearts, preoccupied hearts or unprepared hearts. That's essentially the parable of the sower. And it wasn't the sowing that was the issue. It was the hearts that was the issue.

That's what Jesus concluded. And so this is then the cause of Paul's praise. This puts in perspective Paul's praise.

Because if we struggle with this, if we know that this is an issue, it wasn't an issue for the Thessalonians. The Thessalonians had positioned themselves to the degree that they were able to receive the word of God.

And they accepted the word of God as the word of God. And because of that, the word of God was at work in their lives. And the issue is, if we come away either on a Sunday morning or over a period of time, which is actually probably more beneficial, and we're going, I'm not too sure the word of God is having any effect in my life.

Then we need to go back and ask ourselves, are we receiving the word of God and accepting the word of God as the word of God? He says, look, he says, we thank God constantly for this.

[11:17] And it seems that when this received and accepted word of God is at work, like, it's almost like, how do you know?

You know, I was joking this morning with some guys about checklists. I'm a massive fan of checklists. That's just because I've got a terrible memory. Okay. Kind of ties in quite well. I like a checklist. I like to make sure I haven't missed anything. Right. Before it's too late. And so you might want to kind of go, well, look, Paul is then saying there are five visible outcomes of God's word at work in our lives in this section.

Five visible outcomes. Five things that we can look down this list and go, this is at work in my life. How do I know that God's word is at work in my life?

It's a great question, isn't it? We've been talking about the balance between the word of God and the spirit of God. What happens when those two things collide? Like, I think the answer is here.

[12:25] Like, how can you see it in your life? How do you know that God's word is at work in your life? Being empowered by the spirit? Five things coming on the screen.

Unity, we have it. Opposition, we experience it. Encouragement, we give it. Love, we practice it. And holiness, we grow in it. I'll give you two minutes to write that down.

So that next week, when we ask it, no, we won't. There's not going to be a test. Don't worry. So five things that Paul is highlighting in our text.

When he says, look, you guys received the word of God. You've taken it along with you. You use the word of God as a guidebook rather than a cookbook. You don't just get out on Sunday mornings, right?

You use it. It guides your life. The principles and the commandments and their encouragements, the promises you own. And you've accepted those as if it's from God to you.

[13:32] How do you know that then that is at work in your life? Where he's going to highlight five things. Let's look at the first one in verse 14. He says, Now look, what is interesting is that he says that they became imitators of the churches that are in Judea.

Did you notice that? So you remember that Paul and Silas and Timothy have been going through kind of Greece and Macedonia and that kind of area.

And they'd come up to opposition. They'd come to Philippi and had been run out of town. They'd come to Thessalonica. They stayed there for a couple of weeks. And Paul kind of snuck out because like he was going to get beaten up again.

All right. And he eventually headed to Athens. We see this in the text in a moment. And he was worried about the church in Thessalonica. So he sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to find out how they were doing.

But look, this is not Judea. Thessalonica is in Greece. I checked. I also checked that if you wanted to, you could drive from Thessalonica to Jerusalem.

[14:52] Like today, you could if you wanted to. It would take you 27 hours nonstop driving. There are some roadworks in and around Ankara, just FYI. You could also walk it.

It would take about 14 days nonstop walking. I've no idea what you do with that information other than Thessalonica is nowhere near Judea.

And yet Paul says that they have become imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. It'd make much more sense for him to say that are in Macedonia.

That's close-ish. Or Philippi, because we've just gone from then. Philippi is a great church. I mean, like they've even got a book of the Bible named after them. But he doesn't say that.

And this is what is intriguing to me. That they wouldn't have known the churches in Judea. They wouldn't have known what was going on in Judea. Why? Because they're in Greece. But Paul says that they are like those who've received and accepted the word of God there also.

[16:01] You began, he's saying, you began to behave like everyone else who has received and accepted the word of God.

Like you weren't out there forming some new religion or practicing some strange practices that no one else was. Although you didn't know the churches of God in Judea, you were formed by the same spirit of God who is in Judea.

Does that make sense? This is the same people of God. And Paul is quick to highlight the fact that there is unity. When the word of God and the spirit of God is at work in us, there is a great unity between us here in Southampton and our friends in Kiev.

There is great unity in the church of God. We are all moving and being directed towards the same thing in the same way. Why? Because it's the same word and the same spirit of God doing that directing.

And we should take great comfort in that. Like that we're part, a very small part, of a very, very big family. unity. Because you are formed by the same spirit, you have unity with other believers.

[17 : 20] And so Paul is quick to say that. The next thing he's quick to say is that with that common unity comes common opposition. Now we don't like that one so much, do we?

We're like, unity I'm okay with unless you don't like people. Unless you're one of those. But opposition, we don't like.

But that's what he says at the end of verse 14. Check it out. He says, For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews. So he's talking about the churches in Judea who suffered from the Jews, who killed, and this is the same Jews who are persecuting the church in Judea, verse 15, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and drove us out and displeased God and opposed all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved.

So, as always, to fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them at last. So once again, look, the context is Acts chapter 17, Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

they spent two to three weeks teaching in the synagogue, in the city, and many come to know the Lord and they had to leave in the middle of the night in fear of their lives.

[18 : 40] And this is Paul speaking about the Jews who were actively persecuting Christians as they were leaving or in town and then, you know, leaving town.

As the gospel is going out, he said that the danger is that the gospel is being hindered going to the Gentiles by this Jewish sect, actually, that we see following Paul from city to city.

What is interesting, of course, is that he mentions that the same thing that's happened to Paul and Silas and Timothy and the same thing that they'd witnessed in their own city is the same thing that's happening in Judea and was the same thing that happened to Jesus.

There's a common unity, but also there's a common opposition. And we can expect opposition. We will expect opposition internally in our own hearts.

The things that I want to do, they're the things I don't do. The things I don't want to do, they're the things I do. That's opposition right there. And sometimes that's the most powerful kind of opposition. But then there's also opposition from our side.

[20 : 02] And Paul says, look, there is this commonality that we should expect if the word of God is at work in your life. Like, I don't know how many times I had this conversation with people when they say, you know, I'm really struggling with this sin or that sin.

I'm really struggling. It's really getting me down. I'm like, praise the Lord. And they're like, looking at me like, are you crazy? I'm like, look, if the word of God and the spirit of God was not at work in your life, you wouldn't care about your sin.

But the very fact that you care about your sin isn't evidence that the word, the word of God and the spirit of God is at work. Like, the moment you get to a point where your sin doesn't concern you, that's when you should be, that's when you should be concerned.

And so, it's clear that these weeks that Paul spent in this city impacted the life of Paul.

And we know that because look, look at verse 17. He says, since we were torn away from you, he says, we didn't just leave. We didn't just go to the next stop.

[21 : 03] We were torn away for a short time in person, but not in heart. We endeavored the more eagerly with great desire to see you face to face because we wanted to come to you.

I, Paul, again and again, but Satan hindered us. Look, can I just, can I just tell you if you don't notice already, the battle is real. The battle is real.

The battle will keep you from reading your Bible. The battle will keep you from going to church. The battle will keep you from going to life group. The battle will keep you from everything that is holy.

For what is our hope?

Verse 19. What is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.

So he's saying, look, when you received and accepted the word of God, there was opposition, but the rewards were incredible. Like, look at the language he uses for them.

[22 : 12] He says that they, they were his hope, joy, crown of boasting, glory and joy.

And so he says, therefore, beginning of chapter three, therefore, when we could bear it no longer, and he's going to use the same word in verse five, that word bear, and it's, in classical Greek, it means to stop a leak.

Right? So he's saying, look, we could, and I love the, the, the, the analogy. He says, we couldn't stop leaking. Constantly, dripping on our hearts for the concern we had for you.

He says, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone. So we sent Timothy, our brother, and God's co-worker in the gospel of Christ to establish and exhort you in the faith that no one be moved by these afflictions.

For you yourselves know that we were destined for this. And look, this must have been incredibly difficult for Paul to have sent Timothy back. This was not a, this is not the actions of a wise leader making plans.

[23 : 35] If you know anything about Athens, that is where Athens, where Paul came face to face with all of the Athenian philosophers. And, depending on your view of reading that part of Acts, like 17, 18, and 19, and then 1 Corinthians, which is basically what he wrote to afterwards, he was pretty unsuccessful in Mars Hill.

Like, he gave a good defense of the unknown God. But he even confesses in Corinthians, like, we didn't, there was no one who turned to the Lord because of it. And because of that, I'm only going to preach Christ and him crucified from now on.

But to send Timothy back, he was doing more than just allowing Timothy to go back and minister to these Christians. He was communicating to this church, this new church, his love for them.

And sending Timothy was a great sacrifice for Paul. But he was also expressing his own love and trust in God because he says that he was willing to be left behind in Athens alone.

Paul was going to lose out in many ways by sending Timothy back. But his love for the church meant that he would be on his own. And do you notice how he describes Paul, how Paul describes Timothy?

[24 : 59] He says, we sent Timothy our brother. And I don't think that Paul is simply using the term Timothy as a brother in Christ. Their relationship was deeper than that. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, which we'll get to in September, something like that, he says that he calls Timothy my true child in the faith.

And so sending Timothy back, I believe, was a great sacrifice for Paul, both in terms of ministry, potentially in Athens, but also personally. And so he says that we sent Timothy back to you.

And then verse 4, he says, for when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction. Just as it has come to pass, just as you know, for this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

So this kind of goes back, did they receive the word of God? Or did it fall on stony ground? That's what he wants to know. But now Timothy, he says, has come back to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us and we long to see you.

For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we have been comforted about you through your faith. And so now Paul turns from talking about opposition and he starts to talk about being encouraged.

[26 : 39] Notice that carefully where he says that he had received comfort. In all our distress and affliction, we have received comfort or we have been comforted about you through your faith.

And I think by, this is an interesting way to write, I think, from Paul because he's telling them that their love for him has comforted him.

and he's telling them that. He's reminding them of his love for them by telling them that they are comforting him.

He is expressing his love and gratitude for them. He wants them to know and be encouraged that their faith isn't ending with them. Their faith is encouraging him.

that their faith is giving him a lot of love. And you see this in other places in the letter. You know, we already read how Paul says in verse 19 of chapter 2, he calls them hope and joy and crown of boasting.

[27 : 49] And so, you know, imagine being in the church and reading that from Paul. You're like, we are what? How encouraging that must have been. And so, look, the key thing to understand is that Paul is encouraged and either through affliction, either through oppression, even through the

hard times of loneliness there in Athens, he's letting them know actually how they are encouraging him.

He makes them aware of it and then in verse 8 and 9, he lets them know that he thanks God for them. He says, for now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord.

Like, I don't know whether that's just an exaggeration, but he's like, now we live, like, now we can live, now we can just get on with things. Like, we've been paralysed up until this point because we didn't really know how you guys were doing, but now we know how you guys are going, we can carry on and you've made it possible that we can carry on.

For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you? For all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God. As we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.

In every one of Paul's letters, apart from one, he tells the people reading that he is thankful for them. And it's a good pattern for us.

[29 : 19] That his life is better and much better because of them. And in doing so, he's saying your life in Christ, it's received by me and encouraging me.

It is my motivation to keep going. And so then in verse 11, he comes to this fourth thing that we see in a life where the word of God is at work.

so we see unity, opposition, encouragement, and now love, we practice it. Verse 11, now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you.

That word direct just means to clear the way, just means to remove obstacles. miracles. The word direct appears three times in the New Testament, twice in these letters, and it's crucially linked to what comes next.

So Paul, yes, he's saying something practically, like I'm praying that God enables us and removes all of the barriers that we would be able to come to you and see you face to face.

[30 : 37] face. And then he says, then he says in verse 12, he says, may, or verse 11, where he says, may our God, Father himself and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you.

He says, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you. So Paul's prayer that God would direct their way to come to them is linked to them increasing and abounding in love.

That's crucial we see this. But notice something else is that Paul is not asking God that love would increase and abound.

Do you notice that? That's not what he says at all. he prays that they might increase and abound in the practice of love.

And that's a completely different thing. Like you can have technically, like if you think of love as a thing, you can have all the love that you like, but if you're not practicing it, then it's a love.

[32 : 01] And this is Paul's point. Paul isn't saying, well, you just need more love. He said, whatever love you have, you need to practice it, you need to show it. You need to increase and abound in it. And notice where that love is going to, it's love for one another.

And again, look, what is interesting is that the phrase one another comes from the Greek word, aleilon, which is used 59 times in the New Testament, and it's always attached to a command.

Do you get that? Write that down. love is always connected to a command. So, for example, in John 13, 34, which is probably the most famous, Jesus says, a new command I give to you, that you love one another.

Love is a command. This really answers the question about how we show that we love one another, right? You might say you're loving others, but John, in 1 John 3, says that unless you're able to call it out and name it, it's not love, right?

It's what he says. He says, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth. Let's not just talk about love, let's see it in action.

[33 : 20] What are you doing that proves that what you say is true? Are you encouraging one another?

You might say, well, I say encouraging words, different, different, different, different. You might say encouraging words, it might not be encouraging. Don't know how many times that's happened in my life.

Hey, bro, I just want to encourage you. You know, you come away, it's like, I feel encouraged. I just feel like I just got punched in the mouth. Are you caring for one another?

Are you serving one another? And look, you know, we talked about this a little bit before, you know, the people that are serving us this morning, they are loving us.

They're not just on a rotor. I mean, they are on a rotor, and you know what I feel about rotors, but they are on a rotor. But they're loving you. they weren't just thinking about loving you this morning. [34 : 26] Like, they showed up. They put chairs out in nice, neat rows. They set up, they did the preparation. They brewed the tea and coffee that most of us who are now caffeinated are super thankful for.

I think sometimes we take all of these things that we do in church, the service that we do in church, and we go, it's being done.

Why? Because they're on a rotor, and they're just on a team, and they're just serving. It's like, no, let's call it. This is, in the New Testament, that's called loving each other. When they were here early this morning, when they were praying about which songs to lead us in, when they were working on practicing the songs, you know, none of that just happens, you know, do you know that? Like, they don't just, they're great musicians, but they just don't rock up and jam, okay? They're not like thinking on the spot, what song shall we do next, right?

I don't know what I'm doing here, by the way, this is, I think this is playing guitar, right? They're not doing that, they've been preparing, they're people preparing and working with the children this morning.

[35 : 46] All of these people are sacrificing their energy and thoughts and time, giving up rest and relaxation and whatever else they may be doing, why? To fulfill a rota? No, to love us.

So we can name it, we can call it out as something this morning. Listen, love isn't some mystical invisible candy floss. Love is a thing, it's a commandment.

And Paul says that the evidence of the word at work in us is that we increase and abound in it for one another and for all.

lastly, time is nearly gone, unity, opposition, encouragement, love, lastly, holiness, we grow towards it.

Verse 13, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness holiness. Before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

[37 : 06] There is something deeply wrong when we give the impression that knowing God is really just a matter of knowing the right things about God. like you know the story and you know the words and you sing the songs and that's all that matters.

And here Paul prays that God might establish, that word establish is used a couple of times already in our text. It means to strengthen, to firm up or to pack down.

And it has the idea of our heart that is no longer swayed by emotions. Like again, you know, the emotions of sinning.

There should be emotions that surround sinning and not following God. Making the decision to walk away when he's calling you to come close, sinning.

You know, there's regret and there's shame that often accompany sinning for the Christian. depressive kind of questioning about our salvation that comes quite closely afterwards.

[38 : 28] But this word means to be fixed and anchored in the promises of God regardless of your working out. God's work.

And this is why it's linked to the work that is being done in you. There is a work that is being done in you.

But that work isn't a quick work. Are you finding that? It's like a long work. It's a slow work. Like if this was school, God would be the best teacher and I'd be doing catch-up lessons.

Like I'm slow to learn. Right? And I think we all are in that regard. it's a long process. And sometimes we can get really frustrated with ourselves.

I can get frustrated with me and I'm like, you know, why? I should be there by now. And this word establish means to allow the Holy Spirit to keep working on you and not give up.

[39 : 40] It's not to be swayed by those emotions. It's not certainly to be undone by those emotions. To not grow impatient with God's work with us.

To establish, to pack down, to make firm. And the reality is, the truth is, is that our lives don't get fixed overnight.

Our lives don't get fixed by one sermon, one Sunday morning, one prayer meeting. They just don't. And I'm not saying that those things should be ignored. Far from it.

They're building blocks. They're gradual steps in the right direction. But the reality of the Christian life, and the reality probably for most of us, is that the Christian life takes work.

And the Christian life is a series of steps forward and steps back. And so he says, look, we are called to be blameless in holiness.

[40 : 44] And this is Paul's grace here. He doesn't say, I want you to be perfect in holiness. Like, because if that was the case, we might as well just pack up right now and go home, eh? Because being blameless is different than being perfect.

perfect. This doesn't mean sinless perfection, but a genuine, consistent devotion to God.

It's about living in a way that reflects God's character and everyday choices. Moral purity, integrity, and love. And so Paul here is arguing and praying in this section that we as believers in Jesus would receive as a travel guide and accept the word of God as the word of God and then recognize this work in us.

And maybe it's good for us this morning like that we would pause. As the musicians come and lead us, we would pause and recognize that work in us.

That God is at work in us. And maybe the question is, is God at work in you? How do you know? Are you sharing the same kind of behaviors and thoughts with other Christians?

[42 : 10] Is there unity? Do you experience that inward and outward opposition? That's not an encouragement to go out this afternoon and be obnoxious and draw opposition.

I'm not saying that. But all of us will experience to one degree or another opposition because of our faith. Are we able to be encouraged by others and encourage others?

Are we actively serving, loving, helping, encouraging others? Are we growing in holiness? Not perfect, but being perfected. And so maybe as the musicians come up, maybe it's good for us to recognize and ask that question of our own hearts.

Is this the Lord's work in us? Is the Spirit moving in us? And if not, why not? And maybe if not, then maybe this is a good day, maybe this is a good time, just maybe to recommit that our own lives to Him and ask Him to help us.

Father, we do, Lord. We ask, Lord, that you would help us this morning. Amen. Lord, we want to follow you.

[43 : 25] Lord, we want to do what you ask, Lord, but that just seems sometimes to be hard. Lord, we lack the joy that we think we should have.

We're not always encouraged in the way that we think we should be or we need. Maybe there's sins that are besetting us, coming up, that we think maybe that should have been dealt with long ago.

Lord, our walk sometimes just isn't as, well, it's not as perfect as it should be.

And so this morning we pray that your Spirit would search our hearts. Do that searching and finding work that you are so good at. Lord, we believe that you are here.

We believe that you are active and among us. And so speak to us. Speak to our hearts this morning. Lord, maybe you don't want to call something out. Maybe you don't want to exhort anything in our hearts. You know what we need.

[44 : 38] Maybe you just want to encourage us. Maybe we haven't thought about our Christian walk as being the long, slow burn. And maybe we have been discouraged.

Lord, would you encourage us again of your work in us? That we may be the same person that we were a week ago, but we're not the same people that we were a year ago or ten years ago.

And that's not because of our work, that's because of your work in us. Would you remind us of that today? Maybe it's going to take someone who knows us better than we know ourselves or who sees our blind spots better than we see our blind spots to tell us that this morning and we pray that you would give those people words of knowledge and words of wisdom to speak to each other and encourage us in that.

Maybe that's what we need. Maybe we need just to settle our hearts before you again and recognize that you're the king.

And we want to live in your kingdom while on this place, in this place. And Lord, we want to be, we want it to be said of ourselves that we were blameless and holiness at your coming.

[46 : 06] Whenever your coming is, Lord, would you find us blameless? Lord, we know that in that moment you are going to perfect us. Lord, but we need to be found blameless in holiness.

And so maybe this morning our devotion to you is wavering a little bit. Maybe we've come here this morning and we don't really know why we've come. Sunday morning is what we do.

We do what we do. Would you encourage us again, Lord, that this is your house, this is your place. And you've called us for a reason. You give us a purpose. Lord, as we just meditate on these things, as we move into singing about you and singing to you, Lord, we pray that you would stir our hearts towards you.

and would that be the best evidence of your work in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray.

[47 : 28] Amen.