

## 2 Timothy 2:20-26 - Clean Vessels, Gentle Servants

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] All right, so we are in 2 Timothy chapter 2.

! And so if you have a Bible, go ahead and turn there.! And then we're going to get into it.

So Paul Timothy, writing to Timothy, says this. Now, in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honourable use and some for dishonourable.

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonourable, he will be a vessel for honourable use. Set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

So, flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies.

[ 1 : 1 1 ] You know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance, leading them to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. Lord, and as we think and meditate upon these things now, Lord, we ask that you would give us focus, focus on you. Lord, we pray, Lord, that we would have hearts ready.

Lord, we just want to hear from you this morning. Lord, we believe that you have something to say to us. Lord, your word is already spoken.

And so, Lord, we pray, give us ears. Lord, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So, we are, again, working our way through this letter of Paul to Timothy.

And we come as far as this verse. And the thing that Paul is challenging us or asking us about this morning is really about what kind of person I'm becoming.

[ 2 : 2 9 ] You know, we know that Paul has spent his entire letter preparing Timothy. And actually, you could argue that the passage that we're looking at this morning, these seven verses, are actually the pinnacle of this letter.

This is the climax of this letter, right in the middle. Everything that Paul wants to say in this letter is found in these verses. And so, he's been saying, look, Timothy, keep going, endure.

He's been calling him to guard the gospel, to remain faithful, to suffer well, to resist quitting when things get hard. And now, again, as we come to probably the most central part of the letter, Paul now moves away from external pressures to now kind of internal formation.

This is where the letter, if you'd thought the letter was deeply personal to start with, now he really goes personal with Timothy. Paul is no longer talking really about opponents out there, although he's going to mention it a little bit.

He's really talking about the condition of our hearts. And the question that Paul places before Timothy, and the question that he's placing before us this morning, is simple but certain.

[ 3 : 41 ] And it's this. If God were to pick up your life and use it, what kind of vessel would he be holding? Ouch. If God were to pick up your life and use it, what kind of vessel would he be holding?

And why this is relevant is because there is a quiet assumption that many of us carry in the Christian life, and that is this, that usefulness to God is about talent, it's about visibility, or it's about spiritual intensity.

And we assume that God is most pleased, he is more pleased with the polished, with the confident, with the gifted, with the strong.

Don't tell anyone your struggles. Don't tell anyone your problems. Don't be shy. Step up, be gifted.

That's what God approves of. But just to remind you, Paul is writing this letter from prison. It's not very visible. He has no platform.

[ 4 : 56 ] He has no momentum. He has absolutely zero security. And yet, he is utterly convinced that God is still at work, shaping lives, preserving truth, and forming a people who are unashamed of who they belong to.

And so, this is really the heart of the letter. Are we unashamed of who we belong to? Everything Paul has said about guarding the gospel, enduring hardship, or remembering Jesus Christ, comes to rest here in these verses.

Are we the kind of people that God uses? Not a perfect person. Not a loud person.

Not a powerful person. But a surrendered person. So, the first thing that Paul says here in verse 20, and there are two main things that Paul says, and then three kind of so what things that he says.

So, two main things, three so what things. So, the first main thing is in verse 20. And again, Paul comes back to, and we've heard this every single time since we've been looking at this letter, is, remember who you are.

[ 6 : 12 ] Remember who you are. This is what he says, verse 20. Now, in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, and you might be going, not in my house.

There are vessels of gold and silver, but also wooden clay. Some for honorable use and some for dishonorable use. So, look, Paul begins with this image that Timothy would immediately understand.

It's a large household. Now, I don't know whether you've ever had a National Trust membership. Anyone had one of those? And you spend your days kind of going around like the little rose garden, and you go into the house.

It always comes with a house for some reason, but there's a house. And you do the tour in the house. Why? Because it's free, and you've got kids, and you don't really want to pay. And so, you do the tour, and you're going through the house.

And so, what you see, this is what Paul is actually alluding to, kind of like, you know, Chatsworth House or, you know, one of those National Trust houses. You go through the houses, and what you see are items used publicly and proudly.

[ 7 : 18 ] You think about, you know, you go through the lounge, or you go through the dining room, right? And the dining rooms are normally humongous, aren't they? Only two people live in the house, but the table is long.

And the table is decorated. And the table is decorated with gold and silver cutlery, the best china, crystal glasses, and they're on display.

And if you've got little kids, that's where your heart fails. Grab them by the hand, walk them through as quick as you can. There, on the table, you find silver, gold, china, crystal.

You won't find wood and clay. It'd be quite an odd thing, wouldn't it? The point is not status. The point is usefulness and purpose.

And this is what Paul is saying. He says, God has a house. And look, you know, you go through that main dining room, and then you work your way around, and eventually you come to the kitchen or the scullery.

[ 8 : 31 ] What do you find in the kitchen or the scullery? You don't find silver or gold, do you? You find wood and clay. You don't find china and crystal. You find metal pots.

And so, look, this is exactly what Paul is alluding to, that God has a house, a household, a family. And in that family, there are vessels that have a different purpose. He's not referring to, you know, Romans 9, where Paul is writing about Israel and Gentiles.

He's simply referring to, he's not referring to those who believe and don't believe. The context is God's family, God's house. So, okay, so what does honorable use and dishonorable use mean?

Well, when Paul talks about vessels for honor and dishonor, he's actually drawing on something that every household understands. And the moment I say it, you'll get it.

Because there's always a temptation to use things for purposes that they were never meant for. The nice mug becomes a pen holder. The good towel becomes the dog towel.

[ 9 : 43 ] The knife becomes a screwdriver. The takeaway container becomes a temporary storage that somehow lives in the fridge for three months. We've all done it.

There's things that are designed one way, but are being used another way. And in that moment, of course, it feels practical. But Paul's point is simply super sobering.

When something isn't used as it is designed, it eventually gets treated as something else. It doesn't change the reality.

The knife is always a knife. No matter how you use it, what do you use it for? So their identity hasn't changed, but it's been repurposed. This is Paul's point entirely.

He's saying, look, when we stop living out of who we are in Christ and we live for a different purpose, we don't suddenly become useless. We just slowly forget what we're made for.

[ 10 : 51 ] We're being repurposed. We're being used for something else. And so Paul says, look, in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but there are also vessels of wood and clay.

That's not his main point. He's not trying to say, oh, you know, these guys are silver and gold. These are the untouchable guys. And everyone else, us lot, we're just wood and clay. He's not saying that.

He's saying, look, there's a purpose. Different things, different purposes. And so remember who you are. Remember who you are in Christ, who you are before God because of God.

Then look, the second thing he says in verse 21, he says, live set apart. So remember who you are, live set apart.

To be an honorable vessel, those two things need to happen. Remember who you are, act out of your identity, and then to live set apart. Here we are, verse 21.

[ 11 : 53 ] Therefore, and now he makes the point, if anyone cleanses himself for what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use. If you start living for the purpose for which you are made and saved, you stop borrowing your identity from the world and start living unashamed before God.

You don't become someone new. You finally become who you actually are in Christ. And notice the language that he uses.

He says, therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use. Set apart as holy. Now, you know, for those of you who were around when we were working our way through Leviticus, that is striking, isn't it?

That we are a vessel set apart for God as holy, for a purpose. Useful. That's a great thing, isn't it?

Useful to the master of the house. Ready for every good work. And look, the cleansing that Paul speaks of there at the beginning of verse 21 is not self-salvation. This is repentance.

[ 13 : 06 ] This is surrender. It is the willingness to say no to what dishonors Christ. Because you know who you are in him. It is almost like the knife saying, I'm not going to be used as a screwdriver because that dishonors my purpose.

And look, notice the progression. Set apart as holy. Useful to the master. Ready for every good work. That's the progression. Set apart as holy. This identity language. Who do you belong to? You belong to God.

If you're a Christian this morning, that's who you belong to. That's your identity. Being set apart. Useful to the master. That's relational language. He knows you. That is scary and wonderful all at the same time.

Ready for every good work. That's calling language. You've been sent by God. See, we've said this before and we'll say it again.

Calling flows from identity always. Always, always, always. And then look, verse 22 to 26. Paul is going to give us a series of really, really practical things to think about.

[ 14 : 21 ] Right? All working out of these two. Okay? So, the danger is, we take these in isolation. We look at those three and go, well, I'm just going to do those three.

But they've got to flow out of remembering who we are and living set apart. And the first one is found in verse 22. You might ask, so what? So what does this mean for Monday?

Well, the first thing it means for Monday is that you run towards what forms you. You run towards what forms you. Verse 22. So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

So there's two commands in that verse. I'm actually going to look at three commands in total, three imperatives, but there's two in that verse. Flee and pursue.

So what is Paul saying? Well, look, I think what he's saying is that there are behaviors, there are things that we do or there are behaviors that the honorable do, that the dishonorable don't do.

[ 15 : 40 ] So those who are living according to their identity do certain things that those who are living a different way don't. And Paul is trying to contrast behavior to kind of like this running away from with behavior to be embraced, right?

So he's saying there's certain behaviors that we should be doing. There are behaviors that are running away from, and then there's behaviors that we should embrace. Now, look, I mean, I'll be completely honest.

It's not entirely clear what range of behaviors these are. And I almost want to thank Paul for that. Because, like, I like checklists.

You know that? I like checklists. Dun, dun, dun, dun, dun. Still on my to-do list. Still working on that, right? Paul's not giving us that. He knows that there will always be something else that is not on that list that falls into that category, whatever that is.

And so he says, look, there are attitudes, there are behaviors, all covered by youthful passions. And these are probably what Jesus speaks about in Mark chapter 4, describing them as the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things.

[ 17 : 09 ] And I think, like, if we're super honest, we've all been caught out by those three from time to time. Maybe that's the current state of affairs right now.

The cares of the world, the things that the world worries about, we're called not to worry about those things, not to be anxious about those things. The deceitfulness of riches is always dangling in front of our faces, isn't it?

And the desires, and I love what Jesus says, he just says, the desires just for other things. Like whatever that other things is, it's there, other things. And whilst we might not know what is covered by youthful passions, we know what it means to be consumed by the cares of the world, don't we?

We know what it means to be tempted by the deceitfulness of riches. We know what it means to be attracted by other things or to other things. And so Paul is deeply practical and deeply vague all at the same time.

He's saying, look, faithfulness actually isn't a vague spirituality. It has a direction. It has an action. There are things to flee, to run away from.

[ 18 : 33 ] And that's not a slow meander away, is it? Right? That's not like, oh, I'll deal with it when I have the emotional capacity. It's flee.

Run away. It reminds you of Joseph in Potiphar's house, right? To flee, to run, to get up and go. But listen, there are also things to pursue.

And the things to pursue then are listed as four things. So flee, youthful desires or youthful passions.

But then pursue. If you wanted another word for pursue, you might want to go chase after. Right? Chase after. So flee, get up and run, chase after.

Now, I don't know how many of you guys have dogs. We have kind of like a surrogate dog, I think. It's not our dog, but it lives in our house. It's not our dog, but it eats our furniture. And so, Harley is his name.

[ 19 : 34 ] He's lovely, actually. If you throw a ball for him, that is the definition of pursuing. Don't you wish our own hearts were like that towards God more often?

That we pursued with that intensity. But this is the, this is the, the force of that word that Paul is using. Pursue. It is about turning and moving in the right direction.

And there might be grace there to say, well, I have moved and I'm walking in that right direction. But are we pursuing? And look, he says, I know that, I know human hearts, Paul is saying, and I don't want to just tell you to pursue.

I want to give you four things that I want you to pursue. Don't just kind of run around like a headless chicken. I'm pursuing, I'm pursuing. I don't want, I'm pursuing, but I'm pursuing. We've all done that as well sometimes.

What do we focus on? Well, Paul says, righteousness, faith, love, and peace. Now, I don't think, again, this is necessarily a checklist for us to follow. This is more a description of the kind of life that knows who they are in Christ because of Christ.

[ 20 : 53 ] Because the idea of righteousness here means to be put right. And it's the idea of not only being made right with God, because that's something God does for us and to us, but now we live in right relationship with him.

That's righteousness. Another word for righteousness is just rightness or right, being upright. And I think as I was thinking about this this week, like, you know, what does that actually look like?

What does rightness look like when it comes to my relationship with the Lord? Rightness. I think what it looks like firstly is that honesty with God about your life.

Like, that's right. Do you know what I mean? It's like if there was a balance and you kind of go, well, here's my life and here's my honesty level, that they're right. They're the same. Like, about how you feel, how you walk within, the struggles that you have, the challenges that you're facing.

Are you right? Like, do you sit down and just have a heart broken before God and go, I know that I'm not, like, even anywhere near perfect. This is my struggle right now.

[ 22 : 05 ] I know that I've been hiding that from you. I know that that was impossible. But here it is. Right. Right. That second word is faith, which I think flows out of that.

Because sooner or later, when you're right with God, you discover that you can trust God. You can trust God with that stuff. Right. He's not on the internet blogging about you. Right.

He's not in that secret prayer meeting going, well, you know, I just want to pray for Brother Simon. He's going through these challenges. Let me tell you what these challenges are. He's not doing any of that. You can trust him.

You can completely trust him. That's what that word means. So we're right.

Our behavior matches our identity and matches our honesty with God. It produces in us greater faith in God. We're able to trust him to a greater degree.

[ 23 : 02 ] We're able to cast those struggles to him and challenges and burdens on him and then really trust him for those. Right. It's a hard thing.

Maybe one of the hardest things in the Christian life. To be bearing a burden and come before God and cast that burden to the Lord and then leave it with him and walk away.

I don't know a greater challenge than that. Than just to say, God, this is your burden now. It's not my burden. And then give no thought to it afterwards.

That's a challenge, isn't it? But Paul is saying, look, once you have been honest with God and you've been vulnerable with him, if you like, because he knows all this stuff already.

This is about surrender. Then you learn the character of God that is completely trustworthy. He's always faithful. And then Paul mentions love and peace as being kind of this horizontal and relational outworking of that faith in others' orientated service.

[ 24 : 23 ] Like, can you see how Christian maturity is simply not about resisting sin? It's about recovering our true identity. For so long, I think many of us lived in denial, right?

Managing appearances. We see this all the time. Managing appearances, chasing approval, chasing, or choosing the safety of people's opinions over the freedom of God's truth.

We're afraid of being judged. We talked about there is a fear of being judged, but we have the wrong judge. When we're in front of God, He's the right judge. But we set up the wrong judges in our life.

That leads to fear. So we've learned to lie. We lie to ourselves, we lie to others, and eventually, sometimes, we lie to God. How are you?

I'm fine. God says, how's your soul? It's fine. God knows better, but we haven't got to the place yet where we're honest, where we're right. We're right. And so we're afraid of being judged, not because He doesn't see, but because shame convinced us it was easier to hide than to be known.

[ 25 : 40 ] But now in Christ, righteousness means we can finally live right before God. He's made us right, so we can be right, live right. We can be honest, exposed, and unafraid because our identity was never something we earned for our own performance in the first place.

And because we didn't win it through our own righteousness, there's nothing to maintain in that way. We can't lose it when we come to Him with our mess.

And so grace doesn't demand pretending, it invites truth. And that same freedom reshapes how we then trust God. Faith is no longer pretending certainty or suppressing doubt.

It's choosing. Choosing to lean towards God even when the outcome is unclear. Where we once tried to stay in control and protect ourselves by lying, by being dishonest, we now learn to trust because we are known.

We don't have to manipulate, rush, or panic our way into security. We trust. We trust not because life is predictable, because life is anything but predictable. We trust because God is faithful and our identity is secure even when our circumstances aren't.

[ 27 : 07 ] It transforms how we love each other, how we love others. Love no longer becomes a strategy to be liked or a strategy to be needed or validated.

we're free to love honestly because we are no longer desperate for approval. The judge is God and he's a good and kind judge.

We can stop using people to feel what only God can give. We can listen without defending, forgive without keeping score, showing up without pretending.

See, secure identity produces this kind of life. This is the kind of life that Paul is talking about. And then finally, it births peace.

Not the absence of conflict, which would be a lovely thing in our lives, wouldn't it? But it's the presence of rest. it's the absence of striving.

[ 28 : 19 ] It's the absence of trying to keep score. It's the absence of trying to measure up. Peace comes when we stop living fractured lives and we start living right lives before God.

Peace comes when we stop living with one version of ourselves before God and one version of ourselves before other people and one version of ourselves in private.

When we no longer have to perform or hide that noise, quietens and the heart settles.

This is what the psalmist talks about all the time. Be still. Know that I am God. And so look, this is a slow, deep work of grace, isn't it?

This is God by his spirit forming his people, his house, who are unashamed, rooted and free. But notice also that Paul writes in verse 22, along with the word flee and the word pursue, he says you need to do that together.

[ 29 : 38 ] Look at the end of verse 22. He says, so flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those. And you might say, well I'd quite like to do that on my own, thank you very much.

But Paul's instruction to Timothy is actually the way that we are to help each other flee and pursue is that we do it together. That's interesting, isn't it?

So we're reminded again that shame thrives in secrecy. But grace grows in community.

Right? You can't outrun sin on your own, can you? You're never meant to pursue holiness by yourself. And then look, thirdly, third command, it's up there somewhere.

Verse 23, oh sorry, second point, verse 23 is to drop the arguments that don't heal. Like we could spend an hour just talking about that, couldn't we?

[ 30 : 50 ] Drop the arguments that don't heal. Verse 23, have nothing to do with, that's one Greek word, that's one word in the Greek, it literally means avoid or reject. So have nothing to do with, avoid, reject, it's an imperative.

It's a command. Have nothing to do with foolish and ignorant controversies. You know, and that's a, you know by experience, Timothy, you've been there, you wish you could turn back the clock and you can't, you know that they breed quarrels.

I love how Paul phrases this. He says, there are controversies that are foolish and there are controversies that are ignorant.

And then there are controversies that make you think we probably should not be spending so much oxygen on this conversation because it's foolish and ignorant all at the same time. That's the worst kind of controversy, foolish and ignorant.

Paul says, avoid those ones. And again, look, this is an anti-truth, this is anti-ego, right? Paul is not saying doctrine doesn't matter, he's saying that some conversations do not clarify truth, they inflate self.

[ 32 : 03 ] Insecure faith loves winning debates, loves it. Mature faith loves forming people.

Paul is calling Timothy and us to discernment and the discernment is simply this, not every issue deserves your energy. Like, I wish I had that as a plaque on my forehead as a young man.

And by young man, I mean a week ago. Like, that's just true, isn't it? Like, Paul is just nailing it for us. Not every issue deserves your energy, not every issue, not every argument honours Christ.

And thirdly, look, time is almost gone. Oh, that's a lie. I've got ages. Thirdly, thirdly, never lose hope in grace.

Never lose hope in grace. Verse 24, the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome, but kind to everyone. Wish those two words weren't there.

[ 33 : 23 ] You've got to be kind just to the people that you like? No. You've got to be kind to everyone. Can't tell you how many times I've failed to be kind, just kind.

God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will.

This is one of the most countercultural descriptions of leadership in the New Testament. In fact, I've had conversations about leadership before in secular settings, and I've kind of almost quoted this verse.

I'm like, this is radically different from what you'll pick up off the bookshelf in Amazon, right, about leadership. Paul is saying strength is not volume, authority is not aggression.

The servant of the Lord is marked by kindness, patience, and gentleness. Why? Because the goal is not to win arguments, it's to restore brothers. He says that even, like he's talking about his opponents, God may perhaps grant them, the opponents, repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth.

[ 34 : 52 ] Now notice that flow. The actions of the Lord's servants being kind, correcting his opponents with gentleness, may, underline, may, not guaranteed, may, produce repentance, which does lead then to a knowledge of the truth.

So Paul is not suggesting that we don't have a choice to repent, or that repentance is somehow forced on us. He is saying that repentance is a free choice response to the work of God.

So here, God may grant repentance, but only after his opponents encounter the kindness of God on display through the servant of the Lord.

That's the flow of that text. It's what Paul wrote in Romans chapter 2, verse 4. He said that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance. This brings conviction of heart, awakening the conscience, and draws the opponents to God.



So grace makes repentance genuinely possible, but it doesn't make it inevitable, sadly. Scripture consistently presents repentance as a real, meaningful response to God's gracious initiative.

- [ 36 : 13 ] a turning in the heart of God's opponents, enabled by grace and freely embraced by the human will. And in this way, God remains the author of salvation, and humanity remains responsible to respond.

God's God's God's effect of kindness. We shouldn't underestimate the effect of grace.

We should not underestimate how we live our lives. Because in putting God's kindness and goodness on display, opponents might find grace.

grace. And so this becomes then this verse actually a breathtaking vision of grace. Because Paul isn't saying to Timothy, you know what you need to do, Timothy, to establish your authority there in the church is you need to go to war with those opponents.

And you need to stamp your authority. You need to get a crowd together and you need to kind of like get him into a room and have a boxing match and you need to win. That's what you need to do. Paul isn't saying that to Timothy.

- [ 37 : 30 ] He's saying it's not about winning. Christ has done all the winning on your behalf. If you're secure in that, then you can love your opponents. You can pile kindness on your opponents.

You can pile grace on your opponents. And if they respond by repentance, then praise be to God. And if they don't, then they don't.

Keep praying for them. It's a seagull. That's my best guess.

But someone might want me to check it out. Otherwise, we're all in trouble. People watching the video, I have no idea what's just going on. So, look, Paul is reminding Timothy and us that no one argues their way out of bondage.

repentance is not something that we can force, shame, or debate someone into. Change in the human heart is not produced by pressure, but it's produced by mercy.

- [ 38 : 38 ] Paul says in verse 26, and they may come to their senses. I love how he says that. It's like, that means just that they're out of control. But they may, they may come to their senses.

and escape from the snare of the devil after being captured by him to do his will, which is amazing, isn't it? He's talking about there is a reality of evil, and that is headed by a person called the devil.

And that devil is out to get people, to do them harm. Paul says that some people are so entangled that they don't even realize it.

you know, they're like the lost sheep caught in the thicket. They're like the lost coin through the cracks of the floorboards, completely lost. But they don't even realize it.

They're not necessarily villains, they're captives. That's what he's saying. Caught in patterns, in lies, in sins, in fears, that promised freedom, but delivered chains.

- [ 39 : 46 ] And yet, even their hope remains. No one is too trapped for God to save. No one is too far gone to come to their senses.

Which means your gentleness matters, your patience matters, your steady, unflashy faithfulness matters. Because God often uses who? Ordinary, grace-shaped people to open the eyes of those who are bound.

And so, look, in closing, let me just say that this passage is not a call to perfection. It is a call to availability. God is not asking for your polish.

He's asking for your heart's surrender. Unashamed identity leads to humble obedience. And so today, the invitation is simple.

Lay down what dishonors Christ. Again, if God was to hold you up, to lift you up, and then use you, or want to use you, what kind of vessel would he be holding?

[ 41 : 01 ] Is it a vessel filled with righteousness, faith, love, and peace? So as the band come up, we're going to pray, and we're going to break bread this morning, and this is a really, really good time, you know, just to receive again who we are in him, and to place ourselves honestly, humbly, in the hands of the master.

Why? Because look, the most powerful vessel in the house, and not the most impressive ones, it's the one that is clean, surrendered, and ready.

And so look, as we come to the table this morning, the invitation is not to try hard or clean yourself up before God, but to come honestly, to come, stop hiding, stop arguing, stop pretending, to place yourself again in the hands of the master of the house, who knows exactly who you are, and what you're made for, and if you're weary, listen, grace is still strengthening you.

If you've wandered, grace is still inviting you home. If you're entangled, grace is still able to awaken your heart. Identity comes before calling.

And grace always comes before effort. So let's come unashamed, receiving again who we are in Christ, offering ourselves afresh, clean, and available for whatever good work he wants to do next.

[ 42 : 45 ] Father, thank you for your word. Thank you that it is like that dividing knife that cuts between the stuff that we think is important, the stuff that is really important.

Thank you, Lord, that your word speaks to us through your spirit. as your spirit calls out deep unto deep, your word says.

It doesn't just challenge our behavior, it challenges who we are, who we are, where we've come from. Lord, we want to thank you this morning, Lord, that you know everything about us and yet you still love us.

And while that is a paradox to us, while that is something that we cannot really grasp, Lord, we grasp it by faith.

Lord, we thank you this morning that those who call on your name will be saved. We thank you this morning, Lord, that as we come and call on your name, Lord, there is no fear there of being rejected or being disapproved because Jesus has already been approved on our behalf.

[ 44 : 29 ] Thank you, Lord, that as we call upon his name, it's not just calling on some words, but it's asking that you would affect all of the accomplishments of Christ to us and that you would again remind us this morning, deep, deep in our hearts of who we are, not because of our own goodness or of our own performance or because we've won your approval.

Lord, thank you that we can come to you and in all honesty, Lord, say that we have struggles, we have wearies, we have challenges, and we can lay them before you, and we're still learning to lay them before you and not pick them up again, but we can lay them before you without any fear of judgment or fear of being rejected, without shame.

And it's all because of Jesus. It's all because of what you did, Jesus, on the cross. And so Lord, as we come and remember what you've done, by simply just taking this cup and taking this bread, we're remembering what you've done.

And we're saying again, thank you. Thank you that we get to sit at your table, not just once, but for all eternity, not because we've deserved it, but you've reserved a seat for us.

And so Lord, we ask as we take this cup, break this bread, this bread broken for us, resembling your body that was broken for us. this cup full of juice, resembling the blood shed for us.

[ 46 : 47 ] Lord, your body was broken so that ours wouldn't be. And the truth is, quite often, the devil would like to beat us up way more sometimes than we beat ourselves up about our situation.

And Lord, by faith, we take this this morning and remember that you've made us righteous. And we thank you for that. And so Lord, just would you help us?

Would you help those who are struggling? Would you help those who are facing challenges this morning? Lord, to give them to you. Lord, would the words of these songs that we sing, hungry I come to you, Lord, would that be true in our own hearts?

Hungry, we come to you. Why? Lord, you're the only one. Like, there's no one better to come to to be fed. There's no one better to come to without emptiness.

There's no one better to come to when we're struggling and when we're challenged and when we have difficulties. No one better. In fact, Lord, there's no one else. And so even in that simple line, hungry I come to you.

[ 48 : 03 ] Lord, there's our admission that we need you. Lord, in our faith that we're coming to the one, the only one who can help us. So thank you.

Thank you for helping us. Thank you for saving us. Thank you for raising us and sealing us in the heavenlies. Thank you that you've done all of that. You see it as though it has already happened. Lord, thank you for sending your spirit as the one who is working in us and through us right now.

And so Lord, we come with faith, we come by faith that all of these things are true. In the name of Jesus. Amen. So we're going to break bread together and our normal custom here is that as we sing, you just leave your chair.

Amen.