

1 Thessalonians Chapter 1

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. It's good to be back. Thank you for your prayers for us. We're away on holiday. We had a lovely time and lots of stories to come back and tell you about various things. Brushes with the law and other stuff like that so that will get you appetites.

But we thank God for his keeping mercy. We thank God for the freedom we have to come and worship him. But we of course thank him especially for the wonderful good news, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul, when he writes to the Romans, our thought for this morning is this, in verse 16, he says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.

The power of God is brought through the good news of Jesus Christ to bring us to faith and to bring us to know his love and forgiveness for ourselves.

We have a wonderful gospel, a wonderful message, a wonderful truth. So let's sing together in our hymn books, our first hymn, 150. Great is the gospel of our glorious God where mercy met the anger of God's wrath.

[1 : 1 6] That gospel of Jesus Christ, Jesus crucified and risen again. Let's stand and sing, 150. Through that great gospel, of course, we can come to God.

Come to him as our Heavenly Father and come to him in prayer. So let's do that now. Let's pray together. Oh, Heavenly Father, we come to you this morning as those who cannot begin to express our thanks and gratitude for the gospel of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that great gospel, that wonderful good news, the greatest message in the whole of time and history and space, the great message, O Lord, that you are the God who loves us and desires us to know you and to be in our right relationship with you, the God who longs that we should know life to its fullness here and life everlasting beyond death.

That, O Lord, that love which brought down from heaven God himself, the Son, to take on our frail humanity and live the lives that we live. Live through the suffering. Live through the difficulty.

Live through the trials and the heartaches of life. But that you came especially, Lord Jesus, primarily that you should die in our place. That you should die bearing the punishment we deserve.

That you should die to set us free from the judgment that hangs over us because of our sinfulness, our wretchedness, our wickedness, our selfishness and our pride.

[2 : 5 6] Oh, that you should die in our place and take from us all God's anger against our sin. And that you should willingly do that so that we might be forgiven and accepted and loved.

That we might be set free from the curse, as it were, that hangs over us. From the hell that awaits us and the punishment that we deserve. And that, Lord, the evidence of this, the proof of this is in that you rose again from the dead.

You conquered and triumphed over sin and death and hell. You rose again to life everlasting. And you are our ever-living Savior. Our everlasting rescuer and redeemer.

And we thank you that this morning, that for anyone, whoever we are, whatever our past, whatever our lifestyle, whatever our deeds, whatever our regrets and our guilt, whoever puts their faith and trust in you, Lord Jesus, receives that full pardon, that gift of life, that promise of heaven.

And, oh Lord, nothing can take it away once given. Lord, we thank you. This is the gospel, the great and wonderful gospel of Jesus. And we thank you that, again, you have brought us to hear that gospel and to believe that gospel and to know the power in our own lives of that gospel.

[4 : 14] Thank you. It's not just something that we hope, have an expectation of. It's something which is real and part of our lives today. And that's why we come to worship you. That's why we long that the very worship of our hearts, the praises of our hearts may be given to you.

For it's what you've done for us, nothing that we could possibly do for ourselves or to earn your love or forgiveness. Thank you, oh God, that you are such a merciful, gracious, good, faithful, kind, loving, heavenly Father.

And we come and ask that this morning as we bring our worship to you, as we come to hear your word, what you have to say to us. Lord, again, we may come with hearts that overflow with thankfulness and gratitude, but hearts that overflow with love for you who first loved us.

Love, Lord, for you, the God who saves. Love for you, the one who is ours and ours for eternity. Love that moves us to action and to live those lives of love.

That show and declare your love to a loveless world. We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. 186.

[5 : 30] 1186 in the Church Bible or 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 in your own. We're going to read. Chapter 1's only got 10 verses, so we're going to read through chapter 1 into most of chapter 2 because we're going to follow the theme that Paul has to speak about here, which is about how these believers became believers, how these people in Thessalonica, this city, became Christians.

So let's read from verse 1, page 1186. Paul, Silas, and Timothy. To the Church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace to you. We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers and sisters, loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you, not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction.

You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord. For you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering and with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

[6 : 59] And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia.

Your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. We'd previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God, we dare to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition.

For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God, to be entrusted with the gospel.

We are not trying to please people, but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed. God is our witness.

[8 : 16] We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ, we could have asserted our authority. Instead, we were like young children among you.

Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so he cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well.

Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship. We worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you.

You are witnesses, and so is God, for how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

And we also thank God continually, because when you receive the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it. Not as a human word, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is indeed at work in you who believe.

[9 : 26] You brothers and sisters became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus. You suffered from your own people, the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out.

They displease God and are hostile to everyone in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way, they always heap up their sins to the limit.

The wrath of God has come upon them at last. We'll stop there. So if you can and have a Bible to hand, then please do turn to 1 Thessalonians chapters 1 and 2, page 1186.

And we're not going to be expounding every part of this, but going to be pulling bits and pieces from it. And I'll explain why in a moment. As we've already been thought this morning, as we've been thinking, time is passing, and within around about 11 weeks, we should be holding our first week-long evangelistic mission for several years, certainly since I've been here as minister.

Now, this week of mission is a great step of faith for us as a church, and it depends upon every single believer working together and being a part of it.

[11 : 04] We cannot run this mission, this event, with just a few of us contributing and getting involved. And so over the coming weeks, you will be finding out ways in which you yourselves can be engaged and involved and play that important part.

However, it does raise this whole matter of evangelism, because no matter what else we do as Christians, no matter what else we're involved with, whatever work we do, then we are to be engaged in this most important task, this vital task, which comes, as it were, from the very lips of Christ himself to us and is found in what's often referred to as the Great Commission of Matthew, chapter 28.

Just read that to you. This is after Christ has been raised from the dead. The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubt it. Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you.

Surely I am with you always, the very end of the age. Many Christian writers, some Christian writers, have considered this to be the eleventh commandment given by God in his word.

[12 : 54] And as you know, over the past months, we've been looking particularly at the ten commandments revealed in Exodus and the rest of Scripture. And in one sense, we are prepared now, ready now, to see just how important obedience is and how important the commandments of God are in every generation and time.

And I think it's right for us to consider this indeed as the eleventh commandment, as being a vital part of God's call to us and a vital part of our obedience in following him.

And so what I want to do is over the next several weeks, I can't tell you how many weeks or for how long it will be, but certainly for the next several weeks, I want us to think about how this commandment impacts our lives and particularly, how is it that we ourselves can keep this commandment?

How is it we can keep God's word? How is it we can be obedient to him in this matter of evangelism? And so we're going to do that in the coming weeks.

But I want to lay the foundation this morning for that by really asking that basic question, or answering rather that basic question, why is evangelism something that I must do?

[14 : 18] Why is it a command that I must obey? Why is it that Christ calls every single Christian believer to be an evangelist, a witness for him?

Now in answering that question this morning, I want to look at three reasons why evangelism doesn't take place. Three reasons why some people would argue, in fact, that this commandment of Jesus to go and make disciples of all nations comes out again in Luke, it comes out again in Mark as well, and in one sense it comes out in John clearly too.

Some Christians believe that this commandment is not necessary. We don't need to preach the gospel, we don't need to evangelism, it isn't for every Christian to be someone who takes the name of Jesus Christ and the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

And so I want to answer some of those arguments, some of those arguments that have arisen and are active in the life of the church worldwide, nationwide, perhaps even ourselves.

The very first argument that I'm going to deal with is a particular problem within churches similar to ourselves, that is, what I might call reformed churches, evangelical churches.

[15 : 50] Reformed churches are those churches that hold to the beliefs of the Reformation. Now, what does that mean? Well, through this year, in fact, there's going to be a great deal of celebration, events, and special occasions celebrated by churches and Christians to remember the 500th anniversary of what's often considered to be the beginning of the Reformation in 1517 with a man called Martin Luther.

And so reformed churches are those who hold to the teaching of the reformers. They're called reformers because their very purpose was, 500 years or so ago, to see the church reformed, changed, brought back to the teaching of the New Testament and to the truths that had been neglected and lost and forgotten and even rejected by the church of that time.

And we are those who are reformers, reformed in that sense, believers. And so this first objection stems particularly from those, that group of reformed churches.

And I've used the title, it's a title you may have heard of before, called Hyper-Calvinism. Hyper-Calvinism, extreme Calvinism. Well, what is that about?

Well, it's named after a man called John Calvin. He was one of the leading reformers from that 16th century. And one of the things that he, along with many others of the reformers, rediscovered in the New Testament was a truth that God chooses who becomes a Christian.

[17 : 32] Long before they're born and long before they hear the gospel, God chooses them to come to faith in Jesus. And it's here in this passage in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 and in verse 4.

For we know, brothers and sisters, loved by God that he has chosen you. It crops up all the way through Jesus and many others as well speak about it. It's often spoken of election or predestination as well.

Well, this truth that was rediscovered and spoken about by the reformers is a source of great and wonderful joy for Christians. It speaks about God loving us before we loved him.

It speaks about God setting his love upon us and determining and choosing to save us. It's something that makes us want to worship him for his grace. It's a wonderful truth that we don't fully understand.

And let's be honest, we don't fully understand, but it's something that makes our hearts delight in the fact that God, out of his love for us, chose to rescue and save us. Now, the problem with hyper-Calvinism is this, that they have taken that truth of God's word and the truth that was rediscovered by the reformers and they've come to the wrong conclusion that God saves people, those he's chosen, without any involvement of human beings, without any involvement of Christians.

[18 : 59] their belief is that no one needs to be told the gospel because God himself, by his Holy Spirit, will bring those people who are chosen to faith in Jesus.

The gospel evangelism is not an important thing. It's not part of God's purposes in saving. But that, again, goes completely against what the reformers taught and what the Bible teaches and, in fact, what we see here.

Because if you notice that very passage, that very verse, verse 4 of chapter 1, which speaks about being chosen, tells us how Paul knew that the people were chosen.

How? For we know, brothers and sisters, loved by God that he has chosen you. How do we know that? Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but with power.

In other words, the reason that they knew that these people had been chosen by God was because when they spoke the gospel to them, they believed it and were saved. And you see that coming out again and again through this whole passage.

[20 : 04] That's why I read through chapters 1 and 2 because again and again Paul talks about how they preached the gospel, shared the gospel, lived the gospel, spoke the gospel, how they spoke the word of God to them.

It's all about the activity in one sense that Paul and the others were engaged in which led to these people coming to faith. And in fact, to say that God doesn't use evangelism and God doesn't want us to speak the gospel goes completely against the whole life of Jesus because we know that when Jesus himself came into this world, we're told in Mark chapter 1 at the very start that he went into Galilee proclaiming the good news of God saying the time has come, repent and believe the good news.

So Jesus himself was an evangelist and we know that's exactly what he taught when we read through the rest of the gospel records. We read there just one part, Matthew 28 where he tells them to go and make disciples and to go and speak and go and teach and go and proclaim.

And of course, that is exactly what happens to the whole of the book of Acts, isn't it? It's just a record of one person or another, Peter or Paul or Timothy or Silas whoever it is, taking the gospel, speaking to people, sharing with people, talking with people, doing evangelism and churches as well doing it and people coming to faith.

And particularly, of course, he and 1 Thessalonians, Paul himself. He was somebody who we told was and speaks very much so about how he shared and was delighted, he says in verse 8, to share with you the gospel.

[21 : 43] Now, it is true, there's no doubt about it, that God can save people and, in other words, bring them to faith in Jesus without any human intervention.

He can do that. He's God. He can do whatever he likes. He's not limited in any way. He has all power. He's sovereign. And yet, God has determined, God has planned, God has purposed, God has chosen that it's through us, it's through Christians, that other people can hear the good news and be saved.

That's what God has done. He's determined it. He's chosen it. That's what Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians chapter 1. He says this, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

God was pleased through the preaching, even though it seems foolish, even though it seems a strange way of God doing it, to use fallible people, faulty people like us, yet that's God's way of doing it.

And when we think about it, well, it makes logical sense, doesn't it? As Paul writes elsewhere in Romans 10, how then can they call on the one they've not believed in?

[22 : 56] How can they put their faith and ask Jesus to save them who they've not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they've not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

So it's a logical thing, isn't it? For someone to come to faith in Christ, they need to hear about the message of Christ. Well, how can they hear about the message of Christ unless someone tells them the message of Christ?

And that's the work of evangelism. Every single one of us, every single Christian here this morning, no matter our age, no matter our background, no matter our education, no matter our failings, our sins, no matter who we are, we are, as it were, couriers of the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

We are the ones that God has sent, commissioned, called, given this incredible life-saving message to that men and women may hear about.

Without your voice, without your witness, that life-saving message of rescue cannot be heard. And so, God has chosen to use us to evangelism.

[24 : 16] Now, the second reason is something which is far more common and perhaps something that we know much more about. And it's the reason why, again, many churches and some Christians as well are not engaged in evangelism.

And I'm putting it under the umbrella of one word, but really it has many degrees, many sort of differing types of level of belief and unbelief.

And I'm using the title universalism. Universalism. Simply because it means this, that there is a belief that every person, all people, universally, will go to heaven.

universally, will be saved. Universally, will be in heaven with God when they die. And so, according to this teaching, which is very prevalent amongst, as I say, the churches of our day, it doesn't matter what religion people follow or any at all.

It doesn't matter, in one sense, how they live their lives or what sins they commit. In the end, God is love and therefore God will accept them into heaven and they shall not face any judgment or punishment.

[25 : 34] Now, there are shades, of course, of that sort of teaching and, as I said, different degrees. There would be some who would say, well, you know, the very worst people, Hitler and all those awful people, the really bad people, they won't get to heaven, but, on the whole, generally, everybody else who isn't too bad is going to be there.

Now, alongside that teaching, therefore, and under that umbrella of universalism, is, of course, the denial that there is anything of a place called hell. There's a denial that there is any future judgment to come, that there is any place where God will punish wickedness for all eternity.

And, again, that denial of hell and denial of God's eternal punishment, again, has varying degrees. For some, it will be, well, they'll sort of go through a purgatory, they'll go through this suffering, sort of nasty place for a little while and then God will let them come into heaven after a certain amount of time.

There are those who would simply say that after death, well, there's no hell, they just cease to exist. Those people who have not put their, have not, not going to go to heaven, well, they'll just cease.

As if they'd never existed at all. They're completely annihilated. As I say, that's a modern teaching. It's something that we hear again and again from many parts of the church, the Christian church around the world and around our nation.

[27 : 10] In fact, it's the majority view, I would put to you. But, of course, the reality is this, that being in the majority is very rarely being in the right. The majority very rarely have got it right.

And you see, if we believe or hold to or think of these teachings as being correct, then really we are, first of all, making the Lord Jesus Christ out to be a liar.

Because he is someone who went to very great pains to teach the reality that, first of all, not everyone will go to heaven. He made it very plain and very clear and that's why he warns again and again that not everyone is going to get to heaven.

In fact, he says quite the opposite. In Matthew 7, he warns this, he says, enter through the narrow gates, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it.

So his warning was this, that there's a highway, a road, where many people are on and they're heading to destruction and many are going that way. He made it very clear that not everyone will be saved and not everyone will be in heaven.

[28 : 25] And he made it very plain as well that there is such a place as hell, a place of terrible punishment for those who will not follow him and will not trust him.

In Matthew 25, he tells of the very end of the world. He talks about the time when he will come again and he says this, all the nations will be gathered before him, that's before the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He'll put the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left hand.

And he goes later on to say, as he speaks to those on his left, he will say to those on his left, depart from me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life. Now, either Jesus is wrong or he's a liar or he's speaking the truth.

[29 : 31] To say that all people will go to heaven, to say that there is no eternal hell is to either call Jesus a liar or an idiot.

And that's how serious it really is. And once again, it goes not only against the very words of Jesus, but it goes against the very words of the rest of the Bible, even here in 1 Thessalonians.

Remember how Paul spoke about 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 10, that Jesus is the one who rescues us from the coming wrath, God's wrath, God's anger, coming punishment.

And he speaks about at the end of chapter 2, verse 16, the wrath of God has come upon them at last. So the whole of the New Testament, the whole of the Bible is about warning that there is a reality called hell and that it is a place that we must do everything to avoid.

So the people of our generation, the people of today, the people that we mix with, the people that are in our workplaces, the people who are in our shops, the people who are in our neighbours, they are in the most dreadful danger, a danger far worse than that of terrorism, far worse than Brexit, far worse than famine or drought or war.

[30 : 54] war. They are in a place of terrible, terrible danger and we cannot lie to them.

We cannot deceive them. It made me think about the terror and the awfulness of the genocide of the Jewish people during Second World War.

how is it possible to get, in places like Auschwitz, how did those Nazi guards get those people to willingly go into those gas chambers?

And if you look at it, you'll find out what happened. They told them that by going into those rooms they were going to be cleansed, they were going to be fumigated, they were going to be cleaned. And so they went in because they thought there was no harm in it.

They thought there was no danger in it. And dear friends, they believed a lie which cost them their lives. And as long as we don't tell people the truth about hell or as long as we pretend that it doesn't exist, then we are worse than those Nazi guards.

[32 : 13] Because we are sending people into death thinking that they're going to be okay. Now, I think it's fair to say that amongst ourselves here this morning, those two reasons not to do evangelism don't really hold any water.

I don't think those are the real, those are the problems that we face. I don't think we are hyper-Calvinists and I don't think that we are, if I can put it, universalists. I don't think we believe those things. We believe what Jesus says.

But there's a third reason why many Christians do not do evangelism and I think it's the reason that's mostly the problem for us, at least for myself and I'm sure for you as well.

And it's got little to do with doctrine, it's got little to do with what we believe, it's got to do more with that struggle which we all face when it comes to evangelism and that is fear.

Fear. I think it's the main reason why Christians don't share the gospel with others, it's certainly the main reason why I don't, I think it's the main reason why churches are not evangelistically minded to share the gospel and to reach the lost, I think it's fear.

[33 : 33] Fear of being rejected by society, fear of being ridiculed by folk, fear of being isolated and so on, fear of what people would say about us or to us.

Well, even in the Lord Jesus' day there were those who were afraid, afraid to publicly, as it were, confess him as their saviour and their messiah, people who would not speak of him.

We read about them in John chapter 12 and verse 42 and we're told, at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. Yet, because of the Pharisees that was the religious establishment, as it were, they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

That's quite a harsh conclusion, isn't it? And I don't think that it would fit into, we would fit into that category here this morning.

I don't believe that would be the case, that we love praise from men more than praise from God. Nevertheless, I think that we can come close to that position at times, particularly when we will not or do not share the gospel with people because we do not want to lose their acceptance or their praise.

[35 : 01] once again, alongside this fear of what people will say to us or what they will do to us, at least in an ostracizing sort of way, I think we have to confess that often our problem is that we lack a genuine love for the lost.

We lack a genuine concern for them and for their eternal state. I found it wonderfully challenging and encouraging that when Paul spoke to the Thessalonians, he tells them about why he shared the gospel with them.

It's there in verse 8 of 1 Thessalonians 2. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well.

That was a real challenge to me. Because we loved you so much, and he goes on about that love, doesn't he? He says, we loved you as a mother loves children. These were strangers to him. They weren't his family, they weren't part of his community, there were people in this far-off land, if I put it that way, of modern-day Greece.

And yet he says, because we loved you so much, we continually cared for you and gave ourselves to you and labored for you and did all these things to make sure that the gospel, the good news of Jesus was spoken to you.

[36 : 24] And it was costly for him to do that, wasn't it? He says there himself about how he suffered to share the gospel with them, how he labored, how it was painful and difficult for him and for those.

He says there in verse 9, surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship. We worked night and day in order not to be a burden to you. and he says earlier on about how we dared to tell you his gospel, verse 2, we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition.

So whatever we face and whatever we're afraid of, I don't think it comes anywhere close to what Paul faced and endured there. But he did it because of love. What I hope for us to do in the coming weeks between now and our mission in May is I want us to be, spend some time looking at how we can fulfill this commandment.

Not by making us feel guilty and I hope that though there may be a certain sense of conviction for all of us here this morning, it's not simply to beat us around the head or you around the head and say what awful church we are, what we should be doing more of, why we, so on and so forth.

What I want us to do is to draw some practical, helpful encouragement from those who've gone before us in the scriptures particularly and how the Lord has used them to witness and to share Christ.

[38 : 01] I want us to be encouraged to obey this commandment of Jesus. This commandment which in obeying will deliver us from those fears because Christ does not want us to be a people of fear.

I mean, we know that. We know that He doesn't want us to be afraid of the future. He doesn't want us to be afraid about whether we're going to lose our job. He doesn't want to be afraid. Why should we therefore think He wants us to be afraid about this commandment?

Of course He doesn't. He wants us to be set free from that fear. And so what I hope that we will do is we will find that actually the Lord will help us and deliver us from those fears.

That we will be more at liberty and freedom to witness, to share, to speak and to be those who the Lord works through our great joy and to the salvation and blessing of others.

But I leave you again with this, I think, important and vital thing that I want us to take from God's Word this morning. This commandment of Jesus, this commission of Jesus, this is what sometimes called the 11th commandment, is not a take it or leave it portion of Scripture.

[39 : 13] It's not something that we can just say, well, that's for so and so who got those gifts or that's for those people or for the young people or it's for the more mature Christian or it's for so on.

I want us to take on board that this commandment from Jesus is to us, to me and to you and therefore to respond and say, Lord Jesus, I want to obey your Word.

I want to keep this commandment. I don't want to make excuses for avoiding it but I know that I need your help. And to that end, let's pray together now.

There's so much, oh Lord, that we've got to learn.

There's so much, Lord, that we just don't know and understand. And there's so much, Lord, about us that you do know and understand and not just in the general sense but in the individual sense, the personal sense.

[40 : 13] And Lord, we do know that it's because somebody shared Christ with us that we're here. It's because somebody spoke to us of Jesus that we've come to love you and trust you.

And so we know that in spite of all the failings of our hearts and our lives, your Word has taught us that it's through us and people like us that others will be saved and others will come to faith.

And others will know the joy of Jesus. Yet, Lord, we confess that in our hearts there are fears, doubts. Yes, Lord, there's even lovelessness, a lack of love.

And so we pray, please help us and fit us and prepare us. Not just because we have this week of mission coming up but because in our lives day by day, we want to keep your commandment and your Word.

Oh, Lord, help us, we pray, to look to you, to trust in you. Whenever we look to our own resources, we will inevitably be afraid because we see we are so lucky. But, Lord, you want us to look to you.

[41 : 24] Just as with all the commandments, we cannot keep them. But, Lord, we know that you are the one who helps us and enables us, Lord, to live them out in the spirit with which you've given them.

Be with us then, Lord, and help us. Prepare us and prepare this town for your wonderful good news to be proclaimed. That, Lord, there may be many who even today are on that path to destruction who may be snatched, saved, rescued.

We ask these things in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, who came for that express purpose to save the lost. Amen. Amen. And they are strong in the strength that God has given.

With shield of faith and belt of truth we'll stand against the devil's lies.

And on in old his heart of Christ, Lord, reaching out to those in darkness. Amen. Amen. Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will.

[43 : 16] And may he work in us what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.