

How to Run the Race; Pursue Holiness and Peace

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Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God.

And that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. See that no one is sexually immoral or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

[1:30] You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire to darkness, gloom and storm. To a trumpet blast or to a voice speaking words that those who heard it beg that no further word be spoken to them because they could not bear what was commanded.

If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned. The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, I am trembling with fear.

But you have come to the Lord. But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy announced to Congress a race. It was the race to the moon, if you remember.

[2:56] The United States was late entering. The Soviet Union had launched the first satellite. The Soviet Union had sent the first cosmonaut into orbit. The Soviets had better equipment.

They had a head start. But nevertheless, President Kennedy said, we are entering the race, and we are going to win the race before the end of the decade.

was impossible. It was impossible unless we paid an extraordinary cost in human effort and money.

And it was impossible unless thousands and thousands of people worked for years and years. And they worked together.

And they sacrificed. The race was going to be costly. But the glory was going to make it worth it. So with the announcement made, President Kennedy became a cheerleader, a coach for the runner.

[4:01] The next year, he reminded everyone, we choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.

Kennedy knew how to inspire a nation. And seven years later, you'll remember, Neil Armstrong stepped off of a ladder with one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind. And he touched the moon. And at that moment, the pursuit was worth the cost. Well, the author of Hebrews is doing the same thing that President Kennedy did.

He's announcing to you a race, a pursuit. Will it be easy for you? No, it will not. It will cost you unknown effort, unimaginable pain, and sacrifice.

Is it absolutely necessary for you? Yes. If you don't run the race, you will not go to heaven. If you ever want to see Jesus, you have to run the race.

[5:12] Well, last week we saw the author is telling this church how they have to run the race, not just for themselves, but for other people.

They have to run in such a way that those lame, the limping, the spiritually weak can be healed. But he wants us to all run so we all finish the race.

And so this week, the author begins to tell us exactly how we're going to do that, how we are going to run so that we can finish the race and achieve the prize.

Look with me at verse 14. Make every effort to live in peace with all men. Hebrews 12, 14. Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy.

Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. He says, first, if we're going to run in such a way that the lame are healed, we have to pursue peace.

[6:13] The ESV says, strive for peace. The NASB says, pursue peace. And he puts us on notice right from the very beginning that if we're ever going to make it to the end, we have to pursue peace with all men.

And so the words translated in the NIV, make every effort. It means to strive eagerly, to earnestly pursue. So he's not calling us to some half-hearted jog where we can take our time.

He's calling us to an all-out chase. So a man is kicking down a door. And inside this mud and stone house, huddled in a corner, there's two or three children and a mom and a dad.

And the man who kicked down the door, he grabs that husband. And he throws him on the ground and he ties him up. And he hauls him off to prison.

The husband's crime? He's a blasphemer. And as soon as he hits the dark prison's floor and the door is locked, Saul of Tarsus looks on his list at the next person.

[7:24] And he will pursue that person until he has him in that prison. Again and again it happens. Saul of Tarsus was a violent man, he said. He persecuted Christian men and women to the death.

He stayed up late. He thought about how he could persecute Christians. He traveled great distances. He plotted through the hours of the night and he took no rest.

He made every effort to kill every single Christian that he could lay his hands on. And that changed on the road to Damascus. And he saw a great light and out of heaven a voice thundered, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?

And Saul said, who are you, Lord? I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Two times Jesus used the word persecuting to persecute.

And it's the same word that is in this text. It's the same word that the author uses here in Hebrews when he says, Pursue peace. Pursue peace.

[8:33] Make every effort to live in peace with all men. So the Lord is not calling us to an afternoon stroll. He's calling us to an all-out chase.

He's calling us to kick down doors. He's calling us to plot through the night. He's telling us to scheme in order to have peace with everyone.

To have peace with all men. Well, why does he say that? Why does he say that? Because, brothers and sisters, we are really good at getting into little quarrels.

And little tiffs. And stupid arguments. We're good at that. We're good at taking offense. And not forgiving. And passing on gossip.

We're good at fighting. Because we're selfish sinners. So dad comes home from work. And something less than ideal is on the table.

[9:32] Less than his favor is prepared for dinner. And so he's upset. Because his world has turned out not to be his world after all. And his wife didn't predict what he wanted.

And so out comes a snide little comment. Just a little one. And of course, you know, his wife hasn't been at the office all day.

She's been operating this three-ring circus that is her house. And so she offers a few remarks for his consideration. And so there's an ever-exploding, escalating bit of selfishness, sarcasm, and even sadism where you're cruel to them.

We're good at fighting. We're great at fighting. But peace often eludes us. Peace is something that we have a hard time achieving. But peace is worth achieving.

It's worth achieving. It's worth the effort. And so that's why the author is saying, earnestly pursue it. Because we're not naturally inclined in that direction.

[10:49] And it wouldn't register on us how important peace is unless he said, earnestly pursue it. Well, he says, earnestly pursue peace for another reason.

Because God has earnestly pursued peace with us, hasn't he? He made every effort to live in peace.

We declared our independence in Eden. And we kept the fight up generation after generation. We disdained God's rule.

We disdained God's glory and majesty. We saw no glory in him. And so we traded God's glory that's perfect and beautiful and wonderful for images of men.

And money. And sex. And popularity. He gave us life. And breath. And everything we have. He fed us.

[11:50] And he cared for us. And for his kindness. We turned our back on him. We scorned him. And we did not thank him. We were enemies of God in our minds.

Sometimes thoughts of God would come through our minds. Thoughts of the truth would float across in our radar. And what we would do is we would suppress the truth.

We would kick it out of our minds. We hated even the thought of a God to rule over us. We hated his glory. We hated his majesty. We hated his laws.

We were enemies of God. And for his part, God was the enemy towards us in a lot of ways. He had a just hatred of our sins.

We weren't the best smelling things in his nostrils. Every time we sinned, we were taking his glory and dragging it through the mire.

[12:51] And we were offensive to him. But, God was a peacemaker. He sought to reconcile us to himself when he was the offended party.

He sought to bring peace where there was hatred and conflict. And what did he do to bring about peace? What effort did he take to bring about peace?

Well, our sin had pulled down infinite glory. His honor had to be restored. His justice had been offended.

And it had to be remedied. Our sin incurred an infinite bill of wrath. And it had to be paid. If there was going to be peace, an infinite sacrifice had to be made.

But not a single one of us could pay it. Well, what we could not do, God did, by sending his own son in the likeness of sinful men. And on the cross, God the Father made peace with us.

[13:59] God the Father made God the Son pay the bill that we owed. God the Father made God the Son suffer the infinite wrath and justice of infinite glory.

Offended. And God the Father made God the Son suffer for his people. The death of Jesus Christ. The God man was the cost of peace. So the only perfect man to ever live had to be torn to shreds. The only beautiful, the only precious, the only sinless, pure man had to be beaten to a bloody pulp and nailed to a tree and hung up naked in complete humiliation.

For peace. For your peace. So your peace came at the cost of God's own Son. Your peace came at the cost of the murder of a spotless lamb.

[15:09] So why should we make every effort to live in peace with all men? Because God has made every effort to live in peace with us. He has earnestly pursued peace.

Just like we were called to. So, with the cross before us, with Jesus before us, aren't our arguments really ugly?

With the cross before us and the cost of peace staring at us, how can we do anything except pursue peace with all men?

If we have received such a grace, then we should walk worthy of it. We should walk in a way that brings glory to what he has done for us. Why should you earnestly pursue peace?

Because it's good for the lame. That would be a third reason. And that's what the author probably has most in mind. He's just talked about, you have to run in order to strengthen the lame and strengthen the limping.

[16 : 22] And peace is good for the limping and the lame. So imagine a herd of wild elephants. You have a herd of wild elephants in Africa.

And you have some big daddy elephants. Some medium-sized mommy elephants. And a few baby elephants. And it's hot outside.

It's Africa. It's dry. And this herd is going towards the water. And just as they get there, just as they get to the watering hole, there breaks out this fight between these two big bull elephants.

Who wants to drink first? And so they don't fight with words like we do. They fight with their bodies and their tusks. And they're shoving each other around. And as they fight, more and more of these elephants are getting involved.

Until everyone's fighting. Everyone's tearing themselves apart. Now let me ask you. What's going to happen to those little baby elephants?

[17 : 31] Well, they're going to be trampled to death. Or they're not going to have their mommies and daddies anymore. You see, when people fight, it's the weak that hurt the most.

It's the weak ones that are trampled. It's the ones that are limping through life. The limping Christians are the ones that are left hurting the worst.

So why should we earnestly pursue peace? Because if we don't, it's not so much the strong that suffer. They do. But it's the lame.

So here are two pastors in the same church. And they start arguing about something. And they don't pursue peace. They don't earnestly pursue peace. Well, what happens?

Well, in our story, this church splits. And some of the people go this way and follow Pastor A. And some of the other people follow Pastor B over here. And so this church is ruined.

[18 : 33] Now, who's left with the wreckage? Well, it's everyone. But most of all, it's the weak. It's the limping. It's the hurting.

It's the confused. They're the ones that needed all their brothers and sisters to help them. And now they're left with only half of them. And they're the ones that don't know who is right and who is wrong.

They don't know what's going on. They're trying to make it to the end. And they're limping. And people are tearing each other apart. It's the lame that are hurt. They're the one that's going on. So here's a mom. And here's a dad. And they constantly bicker. And they don't pursue peace. And so they decide to get a divorce.

Because they don't want peace. They want to be right. So who's left picking up the pieces? It's the children.

[19 : 29] It's the ones who needed peace. They're put in the middle. And they're left looking around wondering what's happening. What's going on with mom and dad?

It's the little ones that are left confused. It's the limping that are just trying to make it through life.

They have to pick up the pieces of everyone's selfishness. So brothers and sisters, when we don't pursue peace, that ruins the church.

That hurts the limping and the lame. So we have to pursue peace. Because the spiritually sick that we heard about this morning, quarreling hurts them.

It doesn't heal them. It disables them. It doesn't make them run better. Fourth, why should you earnestly pursue peace? Peace.

Because peace is the fallow ground that grows holiness. It's the ground. It's the good ground that grows holiness.

[20 : 34] So look at verse 14 again. Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy. There's a connection between peace and holiness.

Peace is the good ground that holiness grows in. Remember James 3.18. Peace makers. Peace makers. They sow in peace. And what do they raise?

They raise a harvest of righteousness. Out of the good ground of peace, righteousness springs up.

Now, I can imagine in most families, and we'll say most families in this church, that on the whole, how holy those families are, are going to be connected to how peaceful those families are.

The families where mom and dad are always arguing and complaining are not the good grounds where children grow in holiness. And it's not the good ground where mom and dad grow in holiness.

If dad is always going at it, at his teenage son, always fighting with him. Well, neither of them are growing very holy. So dad, if that's you, if you're always getting into an argument with your son wrongfully, getting into an argument with your son, you need to realize that that's not helping your son become holy.

[21:57] That's throwing rocks into the field of holiness. And no plant can grow where all those rocks are. So husbands and wives, if you're always fighting, all you're doing is throwing rocks in the field, and holiness will not grow.

And the holiness of a church is directly tied to how peaceful we are. How peaceable that church is. So the day that you start arguing with one another is the day that holiness starts to die.

And holiness is snuffed out in this church. So pursue peace. So pursue peace. Well, how are you going to do that? How are you going to do that?

We recently went through the series, The Peacemaker. And I don't want to say everything all over again, but I thought it might be helpful if we just reviewed.

There were four steps to peacemaking. And it's been a little while, so maybe we can take a refresher. Do you remember the four steps? The first one was glorify God.

[23:03] Glorify God. If you're seeking to glorify God in your life, in everything, you're going to have a lot less arguments. You're just going to have a lot less arguments.

If you're seeking to glorify God in your arguments, most of those arguments are going to end up with a peaceful resolution. Number two, get the log out of your own eye.

Remember this one. Before you go correcting other people, make sure that you don't have a big glaring problem in your own eye.

Take care of your own problems first. So don't attack your teenage son for being a slob when your bedroom is a pigsty, too. And don't attack your teenage daughter for being worldly when you spend four hours a night watching TV, too.

Get the log out of your own eye. Number three, gently restore. Gently restore. Remember, you're dealing with people that are worth more than worlds because they're made in the image of God.

[24:14] And you don't handle something that valuable roughly. So if anyone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

And a gentle word turns away wrath. Remember the gentleness of Jesus. Remember the gentleness of God in restoring us when we had offended him.

He was inviting. He was gentle in drawing us to himself. So gently restore. Number four, step four, go and be reconciled.

God reconciled us to himself when we had a mountain of debt against him and a hell of punishment that was our due.

And he paid that. And so go and be reconciled. God was proactive in reconciling us. So you go and take the initiative and be reconciled to your brother.

[25:17] Be reconciled with that person that has offended you and you have offended them. Go and be reconciled. Well, that's how we pursue peace. Well, blessed are we if we don't only hear it, but we go and do it.

Jesus had a beatitude. He said, blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God. And that is what we want to be. Well, the author is not done telling us how to run to heal others.

How to make level paths for our feet. How to run in order to win the prize. And so he says next, pursue holiness. In the Greek, it simply says pursue peace with all and holiness.

There's not an extra verb there. Just peace. We're pursuing peace. We're pursuing holiness. And so God is calling us to pursue holiness with the same passion and vigor and violence and zeal as that we're supposed to pursue peace.

And he gives us a reason that we need to pursue holiness. Because without it, no one will see the Lord. No one will see the Lord.

[26:33] Remember, we're fixing our eyes on Jesus and we're running with our eyes on him. And if we're ever going to finish, if we're ever going to get to the finish line and we're ever going to get to Jesus, he says, you have to run in such a way that you're pursuing holiness.

Because without holiness, you will not reach the finish line. You will not reach the Lord. Well, what does that mean? What does this verse mean? What does pursuing holiness and seeing Jesus in heaven have to do with each other?

Doesn't that make my morality a condition to seeing Jesus?

And if I have to be holy to see Jesus, well, how holy do I need to be? And what about faith alone through grace alone?

Those are some of the questions that I think a lot of us have. Those are the questions that I would have as I looked at this text. Well, to explain the text, I want to try to answer those questions.

[27 : 44] What are some of the possible answers? First, we're going to have some bad answers. These are some of the answers that people have tried to make of this and they're bad. So how would a Roman Catholic answer those questions?

How would a Roman Catholic explain this? That if we're not holy, we won't see the Lord. Well, he would look at this and say, well, of course we need holiness. Holiness, we need holiness to see Jesus and go to heaven because we're saved by our works as God works grace in us.

And how much holiness do I need? Well, I just need a little bit more than my bad, just a little bit more than my sin. Well, that's wrong on so many levels and so many ways that we don't need to talk about it right now.

Another answer, another bad answer is we'll just ignore it. It's there. We'll ignore it because it doesn't fit with us.

Easy, easy believism says I'm saved by grace alone. And if I add anything to that, if I add any holiness or any condition to that, well, then you're adding works to grace and you're ruining the gospel.

[28 : 55] You're throwing away the gospel of grace. So what we'll do is we'll ignore it. And they probably wouldn't go out and say that, but that's what they're going to do.

But we can't ignore it, can we? Because at the end of the day, it's still sitting there in our Bibles that without holiness, no one will see the Lord.

Then I guess we're going to have an Arminian view that would say, well, of course, because we can lose our salvation, we have to have holiness in our lives.

Because if we aren't holy, we're not going to heaven. And so the way that you stay in the way, the way you make it to the end is by continuing to live and believe as a Christian.

And that's what's meant by holiness. And so I have to have my holiness in order to be saved, in order to be secure. And that's probably not doing justice to them either.

[29 : 58] And that's skipping a lot. But I think that's the gist of what they're going to say. And I think you can see why that's wrong. Because we can't lose our salvation. The premise is wrong.

It's impossible for the shepherd, the good shepherd, to lose his sheep. It's impossible. Grace doesn't get us into the door.

And then we stay in by our faithfulness and our working. Salvation is Jesus Christ and his grace from first to last.

What he starts, he's going to end. So what's the answer? How are we going to answer and explain this text? How do we unravel it? Well, here's another possible interpretation.

And this is the last of the, I don't think it's quite right. And it's sort of the normal, this is what I'm calling it, it's the normal, generic, reformed answer. And if you had to pin me down and you've wrestled me to the ground and you said, which one do you pick?

[30 : 59] I'd pick this one. But I wouldn't like it. And this is why. The normal, reformed answer, I think, would go something like this. We need to have holiness in our Christian life.

Because holiness is the genuine sign. A sign of genuine conversion. So I have to have holiness or I won't say the Lord because holiness is what shows me and everyone else and even in the judgment day that I have the law written on my heart.

Because when God saves us, he gives us a new heart. And out of that heart, I'm going to work and I'm going to do things that are holy. And out of my new heart, I'm going to do these things that are pleasing to God.

And so my holy life then is my sign and the sign to everyone else that my conversion is true. And that God has really set his love upon me and he's really taking me to heaven.

And I will see the Lord. That is all true. Don't think I'm contradicting it. That is all very true. But I think if we read this passage with those theological lenses, with those theological eyes, then we're going to miss what he's saying.

[32 : 20] If we put that particular spin on it, we're going to miss what he's saying. He's not saying pursue holiness so that you can know that you're the genuine article.

That you're the real thing. That your faith is genuine and you'll persevere to the end. The author didn't have in mind our Arminian Calvinist debate when he was writing.

He had a bigger problem on his hands. He had a church that was starting to slip away. They were tired. Their hands were getting limp.

Their knees were giving way. They were ready to fall away completely. So Judaism was tempting them. And they're downhearted. They're weary and doing good. And he needs to encourage them. And he needs to motivate them. And so they need to know how dangerous their position is. The position that they're in right now is too dangerous to mince words.

[33 : 21] And so he gives a straightforward, with no qualifications, warning. And he says, if you don't have holiness, you will not see the Lord. Okay.

So I think that's the thrust of what he's saying. Well, then the question comes up. Well, how much holiness do I need? How much holiness do I need? I mean, no one is perfectly holy, right?

Only Jesus is perfectly holy. So how much holiness do I need? And that's sort of the basic problem with all the views. We end up asking ourselves, well, how much holiness do I need?

How much holiness do I need to outweigh my sin? How much holiness do I need to secure my position? How much holiness do I need to prove that I'm genuine?

Well, how holy do you need to be? I think if we ask that question, we're missing the point. Parents, can you relate to this?

[34 : 22] You're sitting at the dinner table. And mom and dad are there. And you have your boy and your girl. It's your typical American family.

And everyone has their food on their plates. And everyone's getting to work. And they're eating that food. Except for the youngest. The finicky, picky, skinny little child.

And they're dawdling over their food. And now the meal's over. Everyone is almost done except for her. And so you say, eat your food or you're not getting any dessert.

Now what's the question that that child's going to ask? If they're anything like my child, they're going to say, well, how many bites do I have to eat? And that's a childish question, isn't it?

That's a childish question. That's a question from someone who doesn't know what's good for them. When you say, eat your food or you won't get any dessert, how much food do you want them to eat?

[35 : 28] We want them to eat as much as they can. We want them not to ask. We don't want to say, oh, just eat four bites and then you can have your dessert.

And we'll probably do that a lot. But that's not what we want. We just really want to say, eat your food, eat it until you're nice and full. And when you're full, stop. So now can you imagine the people who this letter was written to, they get this letter in the mail and they read it and they read Hebrews 12, 14.

And then they start to ask themselves, well, how much holiness do I need? And the author would probably say, you're missing the point.

You're missing the point. You don't need to be worried about some minimum. You don't need to be worried about just four bites. You need to pursue holiness. Eat until you can't eat anymore.

Get as much of it as you can. Don't ask me questions. Don't tell me to give you criteria. You pursue holiness. Because if you don't, you're going to hell.

[36 : 38] Well, wait a minute. Wait a minute. Doesn't that, again, make my eternity rest on my morality?

Doesn't it just, at the end of the day, boil down to works righteousness? And it doesn't. And I'm going to tell you why. Because holiness in Hebrews, in the book of Hebrews, is not an abstract set of good works.

It's not a list of do's and don'ts. Holiness in the book of Hebrews is all about Jesus. Holiness is never lived apart from Jesus.

It's lived as we live and follow him. Holiness, going back to the very beginning of Hebrews. Holiness is listening to God's son because he's the final word from God.

Holiness is worshiping Jesus. Holiness is worshiping Jesus because he's greater than all the angels. Holiness is following Jesus because he's greater than Moses.

[37 : 50] Holiness is found in resting, resting, sabbathing in the finished work of Jesus. Holiness is lived with Jesus as our great high priest.

And as he's interceding for us, we have a holy life. Holiness is living life under the new covenant in his blood. Holiness is being cleansed by his once for all sacrifice.

Holiness is found in pursuing love and following him and calling him the most precious and valuable thing. Like Moses, who considered the treasures of Egypt to be nothing compared to the pleasures that were to be found in Jesus.

So the pursuit of holiness, when he says pursue holiness, it's the pursuit of Jesus that he's talking about. And see, these people, they were thinking about skimping on Jesus.

Because they could go back to Judaism and they'd be morally upright. They'd be good, upstanding citizens and they would have their holiness.

[39:02] But they wouldn't be holy. They wouldn't be really holy. And they wouldn't ever go to heaven. They could have their morality in their one hand.

And they would have their passport to hell in the other. If they sought their holiness outside of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is the way to heaven.

He's there now. And if we want to live with him then, then we have to live with him now. And if we want to live with him then, then we have to pursue him now.

Now, the pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of Jesus Christ. So let me ask you, how much Jesus do you need? You need all of him.

How much holiness do you need? You need all of it. So if you're pursuing a counterfeit holiness, a holiness without Jesus, then you're hugging a mirage.

[40:13] So are you pursuing a counterfeit holiness? Or are you pursuing Jesus? If you don't have this holiness, the holiness of Jesus, then you'll never see the Lord.

So does that register with you? Is that sinking in? Because without holiness, you're completely poor in God's eyes.

You're not dressed for the feast. You're not ready to see the Lord. You'll be thrown outside. It's not morality. It's not religion.

It's Jesus that the author is after. So I ask you, are you dealing in morality and religion? Or are you dealing in Jesus Christ? God is telling us a message through this passage.

And it's, don't lose out. Because you've settled for a false, a counterfeit holiness. Any holiness without Jesus is a sham.

[41:22] But, if you will hear his call, if you will hear the call and forsake the Christless life, the life without Jesus, and you cling to him alone, then he will save you.

If you hear his voice while it's today, he will save you from yourself. See, right now, if you are living without Jesus, you're hugging this mirage.

You need save from yourself because you're deluded. You think you have something when you don't have anything. So let it go. And run to Jesus, is what he's saying.

He is the way. And he's the truth. And the life. And if you come to the Father through him, God will freely pardon you. He will wash you, cleanse you, and in the last day, you will see the Lord.

So, when Kennedy announced the race to the moon, he held it before the American people, and he said, this is a glory.

[42:34] This is something glorious and good. And if we would come together as a people and run the race that he had set up before us and run hard and sacrifice and make every effort and pursue it, then we would have something wonderful.

And men did. Men gave their all. Three astronauts died trying to get to the moon. And God is holding before us Jesus Christ.

And he is more beautiful than a thousand stars. He's more beautiful than all the moons and the whole universe. And he's saying, if you run hard after him, you will have him.

If you run hard after Jesus, in the last day, you will see him. And that is something that should warm every Christian's heart. That is something that should protect us.

That should be something that motivates us to reach out to the sick, the lame, and help them to run. Because we all want to be there.

[43:37] We all want to be there and seeing him. And then, it will be beautiful. It will be wonderful. And the pursuit will be worth it.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for the opportunity to just meet with your people. Thank you that there is blood that has been sprinkled that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

And that is why we are able to be here. Because of our own, we are naked before you. We have no goodness to claim of our own.

And we are full of shame. Thank you for the Lord Jesus and for his sacrifice that has cleansed us from our sin, that has brought us to you.

Thank you for seeking us when we didn't want to be sought. Thank you for loving us when we did not love you. Father, will you help us to pursue peace with one another because of what you've done for us?

[44 : 51] Will you help us to pursue holiness? Because the pursuit of holiness is the pursuit of our beautiful, wonderful Savior. Will you paint him before our eyes?

Will you strengthen us in our inward man that we could grasp how much you have loved us in Jesus Christ? Thank you, Lord Jesus, for not shirking the cross.

But you saw the joy that was before you and you scorned it and you embraced it. And we are your prize. Will you help us to act like your prize?

To walk in such a way that you would be glorified. You are our groom. Help us to be your bride.

Help us to be your bride this week and speak of your beauty and your goodness and your graciousness to everyone we meet, just like a bride would speak of her groom.

Will you help us to do that? You've shown us your glory. Will you help us to display it to others? We pray these things in your precious name, Jesus.

[46 : 06] Amen.