

How the Gospel Advances

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 November 2009

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] The Lord is our King. He rules over us, defends us from our enemies. He is our priest. He died for our sins and pleads with God for us. And he is our prophet. And he teaches us the will of God. And he does that through the scriptures. So let's take the Bible as we have our prophet address us tonight. Our king, priest, prophet.

But first Thessalonians chapter two, he has a word for us. First Thessalonians two. And I'll read the first 16 verses. You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know. But with the help of our God, we dared to tell you his gospel in spite 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 men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We're not trying to please men, but God who tests our hearts.

You know, we never use flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed. God is our witness. We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.

As apostles of Christ, we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.

[1:39] We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

Surely you remember, brothers, 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, of 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 received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

For you, brothers, became imitators of God's churches in Judea, which are in Christ Jesus. You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out.

[3:12] They displease God and are hostile to all men 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. West Point is a different kind of school.

At West Point, you can learn about chemistry and English, along with other ordinary courses. And then you take some not-so-ordinary courses, like strategy and tactics.

And at West Point, they study the men and the methods and the motives and the results of epic-making battles.

Battles like Waterloo, when Napoleon, who had been rampaging throughout Europe, was finally put to a stop.

[4:20] Or the Battle of Thermopylae, which, where 300 crazed Spartans stood in a narrow pass and stopped the Persian army and were wiped out.

Well, why do the men and women at West Point do that? Why do they do that? Because if they're going to fight and they're going to win in their present-day battles, they have to know what works and what doesn't work on the field of battle.

And tonight, we're going to study some old generals, some old generals at work and how they waged war in first-century Thessalonica.

So, Generals Paul and Silas and Timothy are going to show us how they advanced the kingdom of God where they were. They aren't going to give it to us in lecture form.

It's not going to be any do this and do that and do this. They're going to give us a firsthand account of what they did and how they built the kingdom. And if you want to know how you can build the kingdom of God, then watch and see.

[5:36] Watch and see Paul and Silas and Timothy. If you want to know how you can build the kingdom of God in high school, where you're at, or at your work, then this should be very interesting to you.

We're all called by the Great Commission to advance Christ's cause. And Paul and Silas and Timothy are going to show us how they do that.

We're going to be looking at 1 Thessalonians 2, the first 16 verses. And it breaks down nicely into five questions. Five questions. The first question is, what kind of men were these?

What kind of men were they? If you want to advance the kingdom of God, like Paul and Silas and Timothy, then you have to be the right sort of person. The right sort of person.

The reason the Battle of Thermopylae is so famous is because there were 300 battle-scarred, crazy, maniac Spartans there.

[6:38] There weren't 300 farmers from Manitoba. There weren't 300 bankers from Wall Street there. There weren't 300 pretty boy Hollywood movie stars in the Gap.

There were 300 scarred, battle-hardened veterans that knew they were going to die, and they stood anyways.

Well, if you want to advance the kingdom of God wherever you're at, you have to be the right kind of person. So what kind of men were these? They were resilient. They were resilient.

Look with me at verse 2. We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi. Remember, in Philippi, a mob had swarmed Paul and Silas and Timothy, and the authorities had beaten them, and they had thrown them into prison.

And here they are a few days later. A few days later, they drag their bodies into Thessalonica. The blood on their backs are still seeping.

[7:45] They have bruises all over. And they could have said, forget this. There's too much opposition. We need to go home, and we need to rest.

The Jews are too entrenched in this area. We need to wait and maybe see what will happen. But that's not what they did. What did they do? Well, they drug their bodies, beaten and battered though they were, into Thessalonica.

And with God's help, they dared to tell them the gospel. See, Paul and Silas and Timothy were resilient. That means they could bounce back from a hard time.

Paul, or pain, wasn't going to take them out of the way of their duty. So they had some thick skins. They had a holy stubbornness that wasn't so easily turned aside.

And brothers and sisters, if we're going to advance the kingdom, if you're going to advance the kingdom wherever you're at, you're going to have to have some of that thick skin too. You're going to need some of that resilience.

[8:51] And so when you say something for Jesus at your job or at school or wherever you're at, and they give you a strange look, and you just totally shut down, and you be quiet, and you're cowed into silence, then you're not going to advance the kingdom of God.

If you face a little worldly meanness, and then all of a sudden collapse in on yourself, and you start wallowing in your self-pity, then you're never going to advance the kingdom of God.

But men who are resilient, who can take a licking and keep on ticking, those are the kind of people that roll back Satan's darkness, who can actually save souls from death by God's grace.

So they were resilient men. What kind of men were they? They were courageous men. They spoke the gospel in the face of opposition. Look at the end of verse 2. We dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.

They knew there was going to be a price to pay, and they paid it gladly. So within two months, Paul and Silas and Timothy are going to be swarmed by another mob, and they're going to be ran out of town.

[10:15] And they knew that. They knew the opposition was coming. Courage isn't being naive about what's going to happen. It's seeing the trouble, and it's trusting the Lord at the same time.

It's seeing and trusting God in the face of danger. Now, in the 19th century, Africa was the great mission field.

Africa was where the missionaries were going. The average lifespan for a man, for a missionary when he hit the continent of Africa, was eight years.

That was the average. Most of them didn't even come close to making it to eight years. If you do the math, you could have seven people live two years, and one person live 50, and that average is eight.

So you've got to understand, most of these people, they didn't make it past their first or second year. Most died way before eight years. So let that sink in for a second.

[11 : 18] Let that sink in. If you were a missionary, you were going to be there a few months, and then you would watch your wife die, and then you would die.

Or you would watch your husband die, and you would be there alone. And that is what they signed up for. And do you know what happened?

Thousands and thousands of men and women left their homes, and they went to Africa. And as soon as they crashed on that shore, and then they burned out.

They died. And for everyone that died, another one took his place. And slowly, the darkness in Africa was rolled back. New people heard the gospel.

New tribes and new nations heard the gospel. And new churches were planted. And thousands and thousands of people were saved. Cowards didn't open Africa.

[12 : 21] Courageous men and women opened Africa. Men who knew the price, and they paid it. They knew the price, and yet they trusted God that this was what He wanted.

And so what kind of people are going to advance the gospel at your work, at your school? Well, courageous young men and courageous young women who trust in God despite their fears.

What kind of people are going to advance the kingdom of God at your work? Well, courageous men. And in your neighborhood, courageous men who know the fear and yet trust God anyways.

And that's the way it's always been. And that's the way it's always going to be as long as we're here. So what kind of men were they?

They were courageous men. They were resilient men. They were holy men. Look at verse 10. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, blameless we were among you who believed.

[13 : 30] The kingdom of God is a kingdom of righteousness. It's, the kingdom of God is the rule of God in men's hearts.

And so you know at the heart level, the kingdom is going to be beating after holiness because the king is holy. And that means the kingdom will be holy.

Now, God, he can draw a straight line with a crooked stick. He can use unholy men and he does. He does all the time. But that's not his normal way.

Holy men have always been the most useful. Think of Moses, the meekest man in the whole world. Think of Luther and think of Calvin and think of Augustine and think of Athanasius.

These were men that were very different from each other, very different personalities, and yet they were all holy men. And that's what made them useful. They were righteous men and they were great men because they were great in holiness.

[14 : 44] Holy men adorn the gospel. They make it beautiful. But dirty men, they defile the gospel. When holy words, when righteous words come out of an unholy mouth, they make those words dirty.

They don't make them, the words are still true. The gospel is still true, but they aren't beautiful anymore. So the kingdom, it advances best when there's holy men with holy mouths and holy hands and holy lives pushing it forward.

And that's what kind of men Paul and Silas and Timothy were. They were men that were focused, that were living holy, blameless, righteous lives.

So what kind of men were they? They were resilient men. They were courageous men. They were holy men. And that answers that question. The second question, what was their motivation?

What was their motivation? It wasn't man. Verse 4 tells us that. We are not trying to please men.

We're not trying to please men. Now churches are full of pastors and men that are trying to please their people.

[16 : 05] And people want to hear about how to become wealthy and how to live their best life now. And so the preachers are glad to tell them that. They tell them what they want to hear. But Paul and

Silas and Timothy weren't those kind of preachers.

They weren't telling people what they wanted to hear. Now their message gave joy. The gospel gives joy. And it does help people live better lives now.

And it gives hope. But their message, it wasn't shaped for a sinful, unregenerate man. What he wants and their desires.

They didn't have a message that flattered people. They didn't have a message that made people feel good about themselves. They preached repentance. And that means they preached sin. And so they're preaching sin and repentance.

And repentance is never popular. You tell someone that you need to stop doing that. That is sinful and wicked. And I'll almost guarantee you they're not going to like you.

[17:13] Repentance is never popular. But they didn't preach to be popular. Well, what was their motivation? It wasn't money. It wasn't money.

It wasn't men and it wasn't money. Some people want to be involved in ministry because they see it as a way to be rich.

They're usually horribly mistaken. They see it as a way to make money. To even just earn a living.

Some pastors are nothing but hired hands.

They see the ministry as a job to do. And it's a good work. They don't love the people. They do it for the pay.

And they serve. Well, you have to do something. And this is a good thing. So I might as well do it.

Well, Paul and his company weren't that way.

[18:14] That's not what kind of ministers they were. They weren't money grubbers. They didn't ask anything from the people that they preached to. As a matter of fact, they worked twice as hard so they didn't have to.

Look at verse 9. You remember, brothers. You remember, brothers, our toil and hardship. We worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone.

They weren't in it for the money. They were working twice as hard as everyone else so they didn't have to have money. Well, what was their motivation then? It wasn't men and it wasn't money.

Well, we already read it. We're not trying to please men but God. We don't try to please men.

We try to please God. We work night and day. We do all this. We suffer all this in order to make God happy. In order to make God happy.

[19:15] And Paul says, God is our witness. He examines our heart and he knows the motivation, what's moving us. And we're not doing this for any selfish reasons.

We're not doing this to get praise from you. We're doing it to get praise from God. And God sees at the bottom of all this. And he knows what we're after and we want to please him.

And that is the great motivation that stands behind every and any successful ministry. When the Lord sees a young man or a young woman who wants to please him at their school and at their work and at college.

Or he sees a mom or a dad trying to advance the kingdom in their family and at work just to make God happy.

That is a person that the Lord can stand behind and bless their ministry. And he is pleased. He is pleased. He says, that's a work that I can bless.

[20:21] Because when I give them success, they're not going to be puffed up. They're going to give me the glory. They're going to make me happy. They're going to be rejoicing in what I've done.

So let me ask you, is that your motivation? Do you want to please the Lord? Concretely, everyday sort of things.

Do you want to make God smile? Moms, why are you doing what you're doing with those little children and with those older children? Are you trying to please God?

Is that who you're worshiping? If you are, then take heart. Because God is pleased. Pleased. Paul wasn't trying to do something that it couldn't be done.

Paul wasn't striving for something that he couldn't obtain. He wasn't saying, we do all this, we suffer all this, we go through all this and we do work night and day to make God happy.

[21:17] But God isn't happy. He's not satisfied with it. We can never make Him happy. Paul was saying, we do all this to please Him.

And He is pleased. So college students, why are you doing what you're doing? Why are you doing those papers? Why are you taking the major that you're taking?

Are you trying to please God? Are you trying to please God? Older folks, what are you doing with your retirement? How are you spending those years?

You can please God in retirement. See, you can retire from the post office and you can retire from the factory and from the office, but there's no retirement in the kingdom of God.

When you're in the kingdom, you work until you die. There's no retirement there. So are you using your retirement to advance the kingdom? Are you using your retirement to please God?

[22:19] Are you trying to please God? That was Paul's motive. That was what was beating in his heart. That's what he gave his back to the whip for. That's why he preached the gospel.

And if we want to be successful, if we want God's blessing on our ministry, then that has to be the motivation that is driving everything that we do. I want to make him happy.

I want to see him smile. That's their motivation. Third question. Third question. What was their message? What was their message?

Four times he tells us. Four times. Look at verse two. We dared to tell you the gospel. Verse four.

We speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. gospel. Verse eight. We loved you so much that we delighted not only to share the gospel of God, but our lives as well.

[23:24] And verse nine. We preached the gospel to you. See, the kingdom of God. We're talking about how does the kingdom advance? The kingdom of God advances on top of, on the back of, the gospel.

Where the gospel goes, that's where the kingdom of God goes. Now, some people are confused and they think, social justice is the way the kingdom of God comes.

And most of liberal Christianity from the last century, that's what they preached. They preached a gospel of social justice. We'll make the kingdom of God come when we change society.

So, we'll feed the poor and we'll build the hospitals and we'll give people new rights and social ills will be turned around and war will cease and love and goodwill for all men will come.

And that's the gospel. Now, all those things are good. They're very good. Evangelicals have probably too long ignored those things.

[24:31] But, that wasn't Paul's message. That wasn't what Paul was about. He preached the gospel. Well, some people think the kingdom of God comes when you put on a good show.

You put on a good show. So, if we can have the right music and the right lighting and the right people up front and we do the production just nice, then people will flood into the church and people will be changed.

And so, what do they do? They spend long hours preparing the music and the lighting and the production and why? Because they think that is the important thing.

Music is good. Music is good and all that. But that wasn't Paul's message. He preached the gospel. He was a one-hit wonder.

He was a one-hit wonder. He played the gospel no matter what situation. That was the song that he played. So, I'm in prison. I'm locked up in Philippi.

[25:35] and there's an earthquake and the doors are thrown open and a man calls out for help. Well, I know what to say. I know what to say. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

So, I'm on the hill in Athens and I'm surrounded by the elite philosophers of the world. I'm surrounded by the smartest men with the best ideas in the world.

I know what to say. The gospel. I'm in the synagogue with the Jews. I know what to say. The gospel. And now, look, the church, Peter is backsliding.

He's quit eating with the Gentile believers. What was Paul's response? It was the gospel. Brothers and sisters, do you see what we must be about?

Do you see what we must be about if we're going to see the kingdom of God advance in our lives, whatever they may be? It has to be the gospel. It must be all about the gospel.

[26:38] So, what do you do, high schooler? You're sitting in class, or you're sitting at lunch, excuse me, and there comes a debate about whether God exists or not. Does he exist?

He doesn't exist. He does exist. What do you do? Well, you don't ignore the question. You do the best thing that you can. You answer the question as best as you can, but you don't stop there, because believing that there is a God doesn't save anyone.

It doesn't bring the kingdom of God into their lives. The gospel is the message that saves high school young people. And so, what do you do?

You answer the question, and then you go further. You go and you talk about God, and then you talk about Jesus Christ, and you talk about sin and repentance, and you talk about how sins can be forgiven.

What we learned about this morning, that God can press the delete key on all those sins because of what Jesus Christ did on the cross.

[27 : 47] So, if you want to see the kingdom of God come in wherever you're at, if you want to see the glory of God march at your school, then you must speak the gospel.

Being a good person won't do it. Talking about, just talking in general about God, that won't do it.

Being a visible Christian, but with no words, that won't do it.

The gospel alone is the message that can save sinners. Well, why must the gospel be our message? Look at verse 13. Why must the gospel be our message?

We also thank God continually because when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it, not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Why must the gospel be our message? Because the gospel alone is the word of God. The gospel isn't man's words. It's not my idea.

[28 : 59] It's God's word. It's God's word. It didn't come from the mind of any man. It didn't come from the heart of any man. The gospel is the message that came from God's mind and from God's heart.

And he spoke it to us. Too often I fear that we think we have to do something. We have to add something to the gospel. The gospel isn't enough.

There's so many competing messages. There's so many voices being heard today. We need to do something that will really set our message apart. Or I need to make the gospel sound just right.

Or it will get lost in the shuffle. gospel. But we don't have to do anything to it. We don't have to do anything to it.

We can't add anything to it. And we shouldn't take anything away from it. Because the message is the word of God. It comes from God and it comes with his authority.

[30 : 05] It comes with his power. And so when you tell your next door neighbor the gospel, you're not taking on your lips the ideas and the thoughts and the philosophies of men, you're taking on God's word, his power, his authority.

And so you're not dallying, you're not playing around with ideas and dreams and I think this and I think that. You're taking on your lips God's word, God's message to sinners.

And so the gospel alone is God's word and it alone can work. It alone can work. All the ideas out there.

There's so many ideas floating out there in the world, but none of them can work. But the word of God goes to work in those who believe.

We just read it in verse 13. So men's words have no power to change anyone. Men's ideas, all of history is a picture of the worthlessness of men's thoughts and ideas.

[31 : 18] Men's words can't bring God's kingdom, but the gospel can because the gospel can work. The gospel is like a carpenter and he's building a house and he shows up every day and every day he's working and every day you could see more and more work being done.

So the floors are sheathed one day and then the walls are studded the next and then the trusses are on and then the roof is shingled and on and on it goes.

This carpenter goes to work. And every day the house gets further and further along. And that's the gospel. It works.

It works visibly. It works hard in the people's lives because where the gospel of Jesus Christ goes, that's where the Holy Spirit goes. And see, it's not just me speaking up here.

It's not just men proclaiming the gospel that gives it power. It's the Holy Spirit working through his word. So what other message can we have? What else can we say?

[32 : 26] The Holy Spirit is attached to the gospel. And so if we want the Holy Spirit's power, if we want divine power, if we want God to be at work, then we need the gospel.

The gospel. The gospel alone brings divine power. The gospel alone brings the kingdom of God.

And so if you want to see the kingdom of God come in your children's life, in your friend's life, in your neighbor's life, in your workmate, in his life, the gospel has to be the message.

That was what Paul and Silas and Timothy did. That was their message. question four, what was their method? So the message, the method, what was their method?

Two things. They shared their lives with the people and they spoke to the conscience. They shared their lives and they spoke to the conscience.

First, they shared their lives. Look at verse 7 and 8. Verses 7 and 8. Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

[33:55] Resilient, courageous soldiers. They're coming into town bloodied and beaten. They've paid the price. There they are.

Resilient, courageous, but gentle like a mother. And they're present. A gentle, present mother. Who shares a child's life like a mother does?

Who enters into the games of the children like mom does? Who loves them and takes care of them and picks them up and gently holds them like mother?

And so who's in and out of their bedrooms? Who's always with them? Who's helping them and teaching them like mom does? Well, mom and her children, they share life together.

And I know sometimes that moms, that is not what you want. That is not what you want. You want to be a hundred, a thousand miles away. You're saying get me out of here.

[35:04] But we all know that mom does her best work when she's with her children. And this is our pattern for advancing the kingdom of God.

We don't send in gospel, sniper bullets from 500 yards away to our boss. And we're miles away and we shoot him with the gospel.

And we don't lob gospel grenades into our neighbor's lap. And we don't send over remote controlled gospel missiles into our friend's house.

We have a sword, don't we? We have a sword. This is the sword, the gospel is the sword, and you have to be close in order to use it.

So get into your neighbor's heart. Get into their life. Get into their house. Not so much that you make them sick, but be their friends. Share your life with them.

[36:06] Share your life with your fellow workers. Love them. Care for them. And speak to them the gospel. That was Paul's method. He was present with them like a mom is present with their children, and he was gentle with them, and he's loving them and sharing his life with them.

Well, what was their method? He shared their lives. Secondly, he spoke to their consciences. Paul switches metaphors on us in verse 11. So we're talking about moms and mothers, and look at verse 11.

For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his children, his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

So the picture that Paul paints for us is a dad. And he's down, he's hunched over, and he has his face in his child's face.

And he's looking right into his child's eyes, and he's speaking words to them. And they're not soft, cozy words. They're pointed words that go right for their conscience.

[37:23] He wants to see a change. He wants to see action. And so, he's using pointed words. The New American Standard says, exhorting, encouraging, and imploring.

He is serious about this. Paul could be gentle like a mother, and yet he could use pointed, sharp words like a father. So, here's a dad, and he's taking his son out to play baseball, and we'll say he's four or five years old, and he's never played before.

And at first, it's hard. Isn't it? You probably know this. It's hard. He can't hit. He can't catch. He's throwing like a girl, no offense, but he's not what dad wants him to be.

So, what does dad do? Dad starts talking to him. Come on. You can do this. You've got to try harder.

No, no. You have to stand like this. You need to put the bat up here like this. You need to remember what I said. Remember what I'm telling you. Okay, you need to change this. This is not working.

[38:33] You need to do this better. Good work. Keep it up. Good job. Oh, come on. You can do better than that. I've seen you do better than that.

And then, so what happens? The boy gets discouraged and dad encourages him. And the boy gets a little cocky and arrogant and the dad puts him back in his place. And what happens under his dad's words?

The boy, with a lot of practice, becomes a baseball player. He starts out not very good, but under dad's words, pointed words, sharp words, he becomes a baseball player.

Now, Paul was like that to the Thessalonians. He wasn't speaking to hear his own voice. He wasn't wasting words. He wanted to see action.

He wanted to see a difference. And so he encouraged and he implored and he cajoled and he exhorted them to live lives worthy of God.

[39:34] It wasn't, there's the gospel, take it or leave it. Do what you want with it. That wasn't his attitude. No, he wanted to see them take this on board and have it totally transform their lives.

And so he was like, he was saying, you need this. You need this gospel. You need to believe it. You must believe it. Verse three, for the appeal we make does not spring from error and pure motives.

This is an appeal. He is serious about it. He is begging them to believe. And then when they do believe, he is saying, live worthy of the gospel.

Now that you believe, live worthy of God. You have to change in this area. He talked to them and he talked to their consciences. He wanted to see them convicted and then change what they were doing.

So you're doing well here, but you can do better. This needs to change right now. So he talked to them. And if we want to see the kingdom of God advance where we're at, we have to speak to their conscience.

[40:53] We can't say, take it or leave it. Do what you want. We have to be willing to get in their faces. Gently, but in their faces, and speak pointed words.

Words that might sting because pointed words usually do. And that was Paul's method. So, talk about what kind of men they were.

Talked about their motives and their message and their method. And now question five. What was the result? What was the result? what? Some believed and some didn't.

Some believed and some didn't. People were saved and became part of that great universal church that had begun 20 years ago in Jerusalem. They just become just like them and joined that church and others refused to believe.

They heard the message and they joined the Jews who persecuted the first believers, who were hostile to all men, who didn't want to see anyone saved.

[41:59] They didn't believe it and they don't want to see anyone believe it. And we see that in verses 14 through 16 and we won't take the time to read it again. But there are those who are the Lord's sheep and when they hear the Lord's message, they follow His voice.

And others hear the gospel and say, what is that? that's just nonsense. It's pure nonsense. And they heap ridicule on those who believe and they keep others from believing.

And so there are those who hear the word of God for what it is, the word of God. And there are those who hear the word of God and they mistake it for just words of men.

And so some of you are sitting in your chairs and you're doing that exact thing right now. You're wondering, when is this going to be over? I know, you know, the gospel is foolishness to you.

You don't understand what I'm saying. You know the gospel. You know the gospel. You know the Son of God became man and He took on our humanity.

[43:18] He became a real man. And He was tempted and He was tried and He suffered. and you know that and it's nothing to you. You know that He lived 33 years and He never sinned one time.

Not in His head, not in His heart, not in His hands. He was perfect. And we can't even understand that. He was the perfect Son of God who never sinned and they murdered Him.

They murdered Him. And you know that He didn't stay dead. That in three days He took His life up again. Because it was His authority.

I lay down my life and I can take it up again. In three days He took it up again. And you know all that. And it's nothing to you. It's a story that you should tell your children.

children. So God is saving sinners by sacrificing, by giving up His Son, and it's nothing to you.

[44:27] Isn't that amazing? God is doing the most great, wonderful, awesome thing in the whole world, and you look at it and you say, that is just something else. That is just the words of men.

That's one more thing. And you know intellectually that works can't save you. You know that in your head because if you've gone here any length of time, you know that.

And you know it's not by works that we're saved. And you know that. And you know you have to stop fighting God and start trusting Him to save you.

And you know that you must repent. But you're still sitting there. And I ask you, what are you waiting for? What are you waiting for? You know that judgment is coming.

You know death is coming. You're young now and it seems like life will last forever. But you know it won't always be that way. It won't always be so.

[45:27] You'll die and you'll face judgment. And God will hold you accountable for everything that you did. He'll hold you accountable for this message.

And so, how will you stand? How will you stand? How will you be able to stand on that day? And you're doing exactly what the Jews did before you.

You're heaping up your sins. You're piling them up. Sermon after sermon. Rejection after rejection. You pile them up higher and higher.

What's the end of that? Where does that go? Where does that path take you? Look at the end of verse 16. The wrath of God has come upon them at last.

The wrath of God has come upon them at last. See, this might be a take it or leave it matter to you. You might say, this is no big deal.

[46:30] Tomorrow, or the next day, or the next year, or the year after that, I will take care of this. It's just not that important right now. And it's not a big deal to you, but it is a very big deal to God.

God is absolutely serious about what you do with the gospel, about what you do with Jesus Christ. So do you see that?

It says in verse 16, the wrath of God has come upon them at last. He will destroy you. He will ruin you if you play around with the gospel.

He will set his face against you to destroy you every day forever and ever if you ignore the gospel. So stop.

Stop. Stop playing around. God's not playing around and you think it's a game. So come to Jesus. He's the only one who can save sinners.

[47:34] And God is still inviting you. If you've heard him a hundred times, then come. I heard the gospel hundreds of times. And he said come.

And he moved me and I came and he accepted me. If you've heard the gospel a thousand times, come. Come. He's still inviting you in.

The gates are still open. The doors are still open. Whoever comes will be saved. So stop playing around. And come to the Lord Jesus.

Let's pray. Our heavenly father, who can measure your grace is higher than the mountains and deeper than the deepest ocean.

You found out me. You found out us. your gospel has reached us. The good news that Jesus saves.

[48:37] And you not only sent the message, you sent the spirit to come and make it real to us. Pray that you would kiss us again with the gospel.

Make us see and understand afresh what Jesus Christ did for us. and father, there are some here who have not believed.

They know that they should. And yet they love this world and they love their sin. We pray that you would bring deep conviction to them.

Conviction and full assurance that what is being spoken, the gospel, it is true. Will you make it real to them? And will you send them running to the Lord Jesus?

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that the promise still stands, that all who come to you, you'll receive. And so you are there with your hands open even now, waiting to receive sinners.

[49:46] We pray that you would draw them to yourself. And we pray this for Jesus Christ's sake, for your sake, Lord Jesus, for the glory of God, make new worshipers this evening and make us old worshipers to have a new song in our hearts and in our mouths for what Jesus Christ has done for us.

And will you help us to go? And wherever you have put us, there are many, many different places. Will you help us to advance your kingdom with your message, using your methods, being the kind of men and women that you've called us to be?

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.