

Encouraging One Another (part 2)

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Date: 29 November 2009

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[0:00] 1 Thessalonians 2, 17, and we'll read through chapter 3 and verse 13. But brothers, when we were torn away from you for a short time, in person, not in thought, out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you.

For we wanted to come to you. Certainly I, Paul, did again and again. But Satan stopped us. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes?

Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens.

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and God's fellow worker in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith so that no one would be unsettled by these trials. You know quite well that we were destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

[1:15] For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.

But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.

Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith.

For now we really live since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.

[2:32] May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

Imagine what it was like for the Thessalonians to read the letter that we call 1 Thessalonians for the first time. I don't think there was any way that they read it just once that first day.

As soon as it was over, I'm sure they said, hey, let's read that again. That was good. Because I know when I get an encouraging letter, an encouraging email, I just can't read it once.

I have to read it at least two or three more times. And the whole of 1 Thessalonians is very encouraging. But the part that we're talking about tonight and that we talked about last week is probably the most encouraging part of the whole book.

It's certainly the most affectionate. Paul and the others who are writing, their love is just exuding, radiating out of this passage. He wants to build them up.

[3:59] He wants to encourage them. He wants to put a new bounce in their step. They were facing some pretty serious difficulties. And they were facing some of the same realities that you and I face in our life.

They faced a tempter, Satan, who was trying to make them give up on their faith. And if you have your Bible still open, you can look at 1 Thessalonians 1 and chapter 3, verse 5.

It says this, For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.

They needed encouragement because they were facing a tempter, the same Satan that we face. And they were facing persecution from an ungodly world.

Verse 4 tells us that. And they were challenged with all sorts of the same kinds of sins that still plague us today.

[5:08] Sexual sin, laziness, lack of love. And chapter 4 gets into that. They were facing great difficulty. And so Paul writes to encourage them and build them up.

And in doing so, he gives us an example. He shows us how we can encourage one another. He shows us how Christian men and women and Christian grandmas and grandpas and Christian boys and girls should encourage their brothers and sisters.

So we saw last week two things of how to encourage one another. And we said the first way that they can encourage one another was through heartfelt involvement.

There couldn't be any distance between them if they were going to encourage one another. And we have to get down and dirty in the trenches of people's lives if we're going to do them real good and encourage them.

Paul never shied away from relational closeness. He didn't want any of that distance there. And he said to the Corinthians, our hearts are wide open to you.

[6:18] And we need that same kind of heart that's wide open to our brothers and sisters if we're going to encourage them. And we saw last week, secondly, that if we're going to encourage our brothers and sisters, we have to confront trials, the trials that they're facing head on.

Some people ignore the trial. And try to encourage the other with just idle chatter. And some people like to play a shell game where they end up somehow hiding God's sovereignty in the trial.

They hide the fact that God is at work. And so they take the legs right out of any ability to encourage their brother. God predestines us. He destines us, predestines us to those trials.

And so there's a lot of factors on why trials happen in our lives. Satan is at work. We ourselves are at work. We make choices. Men, other men are at work.

But behind it all, we can't stop believing that God is sovereign in all these things. That he is orchestrating all these trials for our good. And so we can't.

[7:28] There's no way that we can encourage our brothers and sisters if we stop believing that God is sovereign. Well, this evening we're going to look at three more ways that we can encourage one another.

And the first is that we stand firm in the Lord. We stand firm in the Lord. Remember the situation. Paul has sent Timothy to find out about their faith.

He couldn't go, and so he sent Timothy to encourage them. And now Timothy has just come back with a wonderful report. He's brought good news. That's the word gospel.

He's brought this good news about their faith and love. And we see the results of his good news in verse 7. Look at that. Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution, we were what?

We were encouraged. When Paul heard how they were standing firm in the Lord, he was encouraged. So he set out to be the encourager, and he became the encouraged.

[8:36] And the ones that needed encouraged now became the encourager. And so he says, you're standing firm in the Lord, and now we really live.

We were in a bad situation. We're under persecution and in distress. But in the middle of it all, we've been encouraged by your standing firm in the Lord. So here is the way that we can encourage our brothers and sisters, just by standing firm in the Lord.

And here's a special opportunity for our brothers and sisters here tonight who are suffering, who are under trial, that they can encourage their brothers and sisters.

That's where the Thessalonians were. They were in a bad place. They weren't in a great situation. They were suffering. People were persecuting them.

And yet, in the middle of that, they were able to encourage Paul just by standing firm. And if you're suffering tonight, and when you suffer and go through trials, don't think that you can't encourage anyone.

[9:51] Don't say, you know what, I don't know how I could do that. I'm under this burden. I am weighed down. I need encouraged. How can I possibly encourage them?

Because it isn't true. God has given you a way to encourage your brothers when you yourself need encouraged. And how do you do it?

You stand firm in the Lord. Well, how do you stand firm in the Lord? You do it by keeping your faith resting on Jesus Christ. Paul said, I received good news about your faith.

That is, your believing. You're under these trials, but you're still believing. And when you go through these horrible trials, when you go through difficult times, there's this horrible temptation to fall away from Christ Jesus.

There's a horrible temptation to stop believing. And so, to say, you know what, I can't go on. This hurts too much.

[11:00] If Jesus Christ was everything that he said he is, then I wouldn't be suffering like this. Or you can begin asking yourself, how can Jesus be good?

How can he really love me? How can he be real? How can he be the Lord? How can he be my Savior if I'm allowed to suffer like I am? And I'm not talking about, you know, that philosophical question.

You know, how can God be real if all these bad things happen? Huh? You know, you get that from some smart aleck college freshman that has never really suffered in his life.

That's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about a believer who is really suffering. And the pain shakes him to the core of who he is.

And he says, how can I go on believing? But when he does, when he still goes right on believing God's goodness and God's power and God's faithfulness right through the pain, right through the trial, right through the suffering, that's what it means to stand firm in the Lord.

[12:19] Well, how do you stand firm in the Lord? How can you do that to encourage others? You keep right on loving your brothers and sisters. You see that in verse 6. Let's look there. Timothy has brought good news about your faith and love.

He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us just as we long to see you. The Thessalonians were full of love and affection for Paul and the others, just as he was for them.

And some critics, no doubt, were arguing and saying this to the Thessalonians. You know, see, things have gone south here. You're falling into these hard times.

And what happens? Paul packs his bags and he's out of town. He abandons you when the going really gets tough. That's what some were saying. But the Thessalonians weren't believing it.

They weren't buying it. They kept right on loving Paul. They kept right on loving Silas and Timothy. They longed to see them just as Paul and Timothy longed to see them. And they thought long on those pleasant memories that they had of that short time together.

[13:31] Isn't that what people do who love one another? They think of their time together with fond memories. Well, we keep loving our brothers.

That's how we stand firm in the Lord. Because in the middle of the trial, the tempter comes with the temptation to give up on your brothers and sisters.

To stop loving them. And your heart will grow cold. And you will grow cynical towards those people that you are called to love. You'll grow cynical towards your own brothers and sisters.

And maybe you've felt it in your own life. Maybe you've sensed it in your own heart. And you've seen it. You're in maybe some difficult financial situation.

And just then, it looks like all of your brothers and sisters there have no problems. They have money falling out of their pockets. And you look at their prosperity.

[14:33] And you envy them. And you quit loving them. Or maybe you're in the middle of a painful illness. And all your brothers and sisters are doing fine.

And something begins to happen. You begin to get a jaded eye towards them. And when you look at them, you see people that can't really relate to you. And when they talk to you, all their words are empty.

They don't really care about me. And so, your heart, it grows cold towards your brothers and sisters. Or maybe your heart's just drawn away from the public gathering of the saints.

So, I'm in pain. I am depressed. I feel bad. What good is it going to be for me to go to church?

There's no point to it.

I can't do any good there. I'm no use to any of them. And they can't help me either. What is the point? I am tired. I'm sad.

[15:36] I want to stay home. What I really need to do is stay home and just watch this movie to sleep a little longer. Just take a break from them. Well, when you're under a trial, that temptation will

come to you.

And you'll be like a dog. They go off to die on their own. And so, you go off to wither away. But in the middle of it all, if right there in that pain, right there in that depression, you see right through the tempter's lie.

And that's what all that is. It's just him lying to you. When you see through all that, you see the big lie and you say, no, that is not true. They love me.

Jesus loves me. And I'm going to love him and I'm going to obey him. And he tells me to go and meet with him. And so I will. And so you obey him. That is how you stand firm in the Lord.

You go right on believing. You go right on loving your brothers and sisters. And when you stand like that, when you stand firm in the Lord, what do you do? You encourage them.

[16:45] You encourage them. Paul says, now we really live. Before, it wasn't so much. But now we are full of joy. Your life, your endurance, your faithfulness and love have overflowed.

And they've come into our heart and into our lives. God's grace has overflowed into our lives from you.

And we're full of joy. And we're full of thanksgiving because you are standing. So in all our sorrows and all our distress, we have joy because of your perseverance.

Paul says in verse 9, how can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

We're standing in a trial too. But in the middle of the trial, we have joy. And what's the source of our joy? What's the source of our encouragement? Why can't we stop praising God?

[17:49] Because you're standing firm. And so, brothers and sisters, when you stand firm, what is the result? Your brothers and sisters are encouraged. And in turn, their hearts are lifted to God in praise.

And God is glorified. Could this be one of the reasons? Could this be one of the reasons for your trial? That your brothers and sisters could see you standing firm in the Lord and praise God for his great power in your life.

So who gets the glory when you stand firm? Well, it's not you. Everyone can see that you don't have the resources to do it then. It must be God.

God must be at work. And so, when I see a young lady with a dental accident, and she stands firm in the Lord, and she keeps right on trusting, I know that isn't her.

I know that's God at work. And so we praise God for his faithfulness. And when I see a young man who has a work accident, and he goes right on standing firm in the Lord, who gets the praise for that?

[19:00] God does. And so we praise him. Because alone, we can't do anything. So, brothers and sisters, tonight, if you're sidelined from your normal activity because of some trial, because of some pain, then don't lose heart.

Don't lose heart. God has just rearranged things in your life so you can honor him in a different way. He's changing your work for a while. He wants you to stand firm in the Lord and encourage your brothers and sisters, and in so doing, bring honor and glory to himself.

So if you keep on standing, if you keep on believing, and keep on loving through the trial, you can encourage your brothers and sisters. So don't lose heart if that's where you're at.

Because you have a work to do. And you can do it because Christ Jesus. Because you can do all things through him who strengthens you. And Jesus is at work and he is available.

The Holy Spirit is working through you to even encourage in your time of great discouragement.

Well, now we come to verse 10.

[20:16] Verse 10. Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. And here we find the second way to encourage our brothers and sisters.

And that is by supplying what is lacking in their faith. faith. This gets into what are the words that we say to encourage them.

And maybe you're thinking, well, I'm convicted. I was convicted last week. I know I should be encouraging my brothers and sisters, but sometimes I don't know what to say. I don't know where to begin.

Well, here Paul gives us some direction in that. We get a clue as to what his thinking was behind encouragement. Paul wants to come to supply them what is lacking in their faith.

And that's not the subjective faith that we were just talking about in verse 6. Timothy has brought us good news about your faith and love. That was faith as in believing. This faith that he's talking about here in verse 10 is the same faith that we were talking about in Jude last week.

[21:30] Build yourselves up in your most holy faith. This faith is the things that we hold to. The object of the faith. We're talking about our knowledge that we get from the Bible that teaches us this is what you should believe.

That is the faith that we're talking about. Now, the Thessalonians were in a dangerous place. They were in a dangerous place because they were uninformed. Remember, they're just baby Christians. And they really don't know a whole lot about what they should be believing. They're uninformed of the faith. They don't have all the facts. And that is leading to discouragement.

And you should realize from that that sometimes ignorance is the reason why people are discouraged. At the end of chapter 4, Paul needs to tell them that just because some of your brothers and sisters have died, that doesn't mean that they lose out on the coming of Christ. And he gives them some doctrinal teaching. He tries to make up in a short span what was lacking in their faith. And then at the end of that passage, where he teaches them, he says, therefore, encourage each other with these words.

[22:53] Until Paul was able to make it back to Thessalonica, the Thessalonians had a job to do. They were to take the teaching that Paul just gave them in that short span and to encourage one another by teaching one another, by explaining some of the facts of the faith, by reminding some of those people of some of the things they have forgotten.

So how can you encourage each other? Well, look for the gaps. Look for the misunderstandings. Some of the things that might have been forgotten.

Look for those in your brothers and sisters who are discouraged or who need encouraged. Not to judge them. Not to look down on them and think that you're better than they are.

But to help them. So let's take a case example. A case example. We have a sister in the faith and she comes to you and she is discouraged about her life.

Okay? She does the dishes. She disciplines her children. She serves her husband. She teaches Sunday school at church. She's getting tired of it all.

[24:05] It's like she's on the merry-go-round at the fair going around and around and the music is loud. There's lots of noise and they're moving fast.

But it's like she's not getting anywhere. Well, what can you say to encourage her? Well, remember last week we said you need to address the problem head on.

You need to confront it. You need to remember God's sovereignty. God has put her in this position. You don't take away from that. You listen to her. You seek to understand her.

Remember we talked about you need a heart level involvement. So you do that. What does she say? You ask to get to the bottom of it. And what do you say?

Now that you have some information, what do you say? Well, you... This is where we find Paul's example so helpful. There's something lacking in your sister's faith.

[25:06] There's something that maybe she's forgetting that she needs to be reminded of. She's not an unbeliever. We're not saying that. It's just... Her faith is a worldview.

It's the way that she looks at life. It's the glasses that she uses to look at the world around her. And she's looking through the wrong set of glasses. She has the wrong prescription. And so there's no wonder that she's getting a headache as she's looking around.

So you ask yourself, what is lacking? What is she forgetting? What does she need to know for the first time? Or what does she need to be reminded again for the tenth time?

Find out what is lacking. Find out what is missing. And open your mouth, open your Bible, and you fill in what is missing. So discouragement, it's like water coming into a basement.

Right? Why does water come into a basement? Because somewhere there's a chink. There's a missing place in the cement. And so your job as an encourager is to fill in that missing hole.

[26:15] And your job as an encourager is to take the Bible and give her the truth that she needs. Well, the sister in our example, she's disappointed with her children.

She's disappointed with her husband and with the church. So let's look for the missing link. And as you talk to her, you listen to her, and you notice that she's looking at those things as basically a reward.

If I work hard at these things, they should reward me. And so she's pouring out her life to her children. And they still aren't everything that she wants them to be. They don't appreciate her. And she's going to church and she's teaching Sunday school. But you know what happens? Parents, they don't thank her. And she wants her husband's approval, but for whatever reason, he's not giving it to her like she wants.

And she wants to be rewarded for her work. She wants to be rewarded from those things. Well, you've started to put your finger on one of her idols.

[27 : 22] She's getting her satisfaction, her reward, not from God, but from men. She wants to be rewarded by her kids and by the church and by her husband.

Well, you've discovered then what is lacking? What is askew? What's wrong with the way that she's looking at things? And so if you're going to encourage her, you have to set that right.

You have to gently point out this is where I think you're missing something. You're not understanding the faith all that well here.

And you need to show her from the word of God that her reward, it doesn't come from men. It comes from God. And show her that people, her kids, her husband, her church, they can never make it all worthwhile for her.

They can't do that. But God is her great reward. And God is looking down. And God is looking at that situation. And when she obeys for him, he will reward her.

[28 : 31] Well, we can encourage her with that. You encourage her with the facts of what God is to her and what men can never be to her. Well, we encourage each other as we fill in what is missing in our brother's faith.

And that leads to another question we really need to ask. Are you prepared to do that? Are you prepared to correct what is lacking in your brother or your sister?

Do you know the human heart? Do you know your human heart? And what areas that you have the tendency to go down and where that leads you? Well, your brothers and sisters are a lot like you.

They're going to have the same temptations and the same trials. So do you know the human heart? And do you know the word of God? Can you minister the word of God to them?

If you don't know your Bibles, if you don't know what the faith is, then what are you going to say? You don't have the truth in your gun.

[29 : 38] You don't have anything to fire at them. So what are you going to say? Well, hey, man, I heard that you're having a rough time of it. I hope you feel better.

That's a nice sentiment. But it isn't a lot of help. What they need is a strong dose of biblical truth. And you need to give it to them. You need to know what's in the Bible, know what the faith is, and be able to give it to them. They need a fresh view. They need a fresh view of God's mercy.

They need to know how the gospel applies to their situation wherever they're at. So be ready.

Memorize Scripture. Be prepared. Because if you're not prepared to give them the Word of God, then you don't have anything to give them.

You're like a doctor without his medicine. They need penicillin, but you don't have it. And you need to know the truth.

[30 : 41] You need to know the truth, not just for your sake. We do put a lot of emphasis on that, and rightly so, that the Word of God is able to change us.

But we need to know the Word of God, not just for our sake, but for our brothers and sisters' sake. None of us live and die to ourselves here. God has knit us together into one body.

And so if I know the Word of God and I'm able to give it to you, then that's good for you as it is for me. So we're a member of the same body.

And the hand must be ready to encourage the eye, and the eye must be ready to encourage the foot, or however it is. We need to be ready to encourage one another.

Well, how can we encourage one another? Stand in the Lord. We saw that. Stand firm in the Lord. Supply what is lacking in their faith. And finally, tonight, see God as the source of all encouragement.

[31 : 43] Really, all that we've said up to this point is meaningless. It is pointless unless we pray that God would encourage our brother and sister, that God would encourage His people.

All our efforts, all our words are useless without prayer. unless God works. And so Paul prays in verses 11 through 13.

And we don't want to take a lot of time to talk about these things and go into a lot of detail because we're going to come to each of them later as we look at this book. But Paul prays for three things. He prays for an opportunity to encourage them. Look at verse 11. Now, may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.

Remember, Satan has been blocking up this path. He wants to go to them, but Satan is standing in the way. And so Paul prays for the Father and the Son to move Satan out of the way and to give them an opportunity to go and see them.

[32:54] And we're going to have to pray for opportunities to encourage our brothers and sisters. And I think most of the time we have lots of opportunities, but we have to pray for a certain closeness, certain particular opportunities that we can go and talk to our brothers and sisters.

A lot of times we have physical, there's no physical distance between us. In this day and age when you can send an email across the world, physical distance is not the problem.

But rather, we have a relational distance. We're apart from them. And so, if we're going to encourage them, that relational distance has to be closed.

Well, how do we overcome that distance? We pray. We pray that God would give opportunities to grow closer to each other so that we could really encourage one another.

and we pray that God would bless those efforts. Some of us are naturally very outgoing. They have no problem getting in there with people and breaking down the walls and the reserve that people have and being able to encourage them.

[34:08] I think God gives the gift of encouragement to some people. He commands us all to encourage one another. Some people He gifts with that ability. And others of us really struggle.

We feel shy. We feel awkward. It's like we don't know what to say. We feel embarrassed to even say it. Well, who can help us cover that distance?

Who can help us to overcome that? Well, God can. God can. He can do that. He can move Satan out of the way. He can move our awkwardness out of the way.

And so, it's going to take effort on our part. Yes. But we join that effort with prayer. And we ask that God would give us success. Second thing Paul prays for, that their love would increase and overflow for each other.

That their love would increase and overflow for each other. Love is the source of encouragement. It's where encouragement comes from.

[35:14] And love is the end of encouragement. It's the reason for encouragement. Paul prays that their love would increase and then overflow for each other just as ours does for you.

So, where does love come from? Where does increasing, overflowing love come from? We sang it. John says in 1 John 4, Dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. who alone can give us a heart to really want to reach out to our brothers and sisters and to encourage them except for God.

God is the source of love. God is the source of encouragement. So, why do we love God? Because He first loved us and He sent His perfect Son to die for us.

And so, when our eyes are opened to that love, when we're meditating on Christ's love for us and what His love cost Him, that He came from heaven to earth and He became completely poor, completely weak, He gave up His glory, well, when we see that, when we see that He's doing that for us, loving us, then something happens in our heart.

[36:42] Love erupts in our heart and that's where encouragement will come from. We love because He first loved us. So, God Himself is the source of encouragement.

He's the fountain of love. And so, if we're going to love, we have to go to the fountain. Because if we're going to encourage, we have to go to Him. So, when a person is born of God, something happens in their life.

They used to not care about the brethren. They didn't care. But something begins to happen. They begin to love the brothers. Now, He longs to see good done to them.

And He wants to see them overcome Satan and overcome sin. And when He sees them down, He wants to pick them up. And when He sees them battered by Satan, He runs and He wants to help them.

He wants to encourage them. And He starts saying to Himself, if I can encourage them just today, that will be one more day that they can keep fighting on. Well, God is the source of love.

[37:50] And He's the source of encouragement. And if we want to encourage, then we must pray for more love. We must pray that our love would increase and overflow and that in turn, our brothers' and sisters' love would increase and overflow as we encourage them.

God doesn't produce love in our hearts, then all our work will be pointless. If God doesn't increase love in their hearts for Him and for the people, then we will have not encouraged anyone.

The third thing that Paul prays for is enduring holiness. God is the source of enduring holiness. He says, may He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones.

What is the purpose of encouragement? The purpose of encouragement is enduring holiness. Holiness that lasts all the way until Christ Jesus comes with all of His holy ones to stand before Him holy and ready to be judged.

That is the purpose of encouragement. We want to make our brothers and sisters holy. We don't just encourage to make people feel better. Because people's comfort, that's not the end all.

[39:23] That's to make people's comfort a God. That isn't a worthy enough goal. But when we make people's holiness the end for encouragement, why we're going to encourage you is because we want to see you holy.

Then we honor and glorify God. Because holiness is about God. When you're holy, you're obeying God, you're worshiping Him, you're loving Him. And so that is what we want to see produced in them.

Well, what is the source of that? God. God has the ability to reach into people's heart and to strengthen their hearts. With our words, we can't do that. But He can.

And so Paul prays that God would give them heart strength, power in their heart that they could be holy. See, this world and Satan and their sin, it's all too much.

All of these things are facing us and it's all too much for us. We can't be holy on our own. We can't make others holy on our own. We need almighty strength. We need almighty grace.

[40:29] to strengthen their hearts so that they will just persevere to the end. So God alone can make this encouragement effective. And so we must pray.

We can talk all day. We can quote scripture. But if God doesn't strengthen the heart to holiness, then our encouragement is in vain.

And so we pray, just as Paul prayed, that our feeble words would reach into the places that we can't go and would give them strength, would give them hope, would give them holiness.

Well, if we're going to keep encouraging our brothers and sisters, then that means we're going to have to keep the line open to God. We're going to have to keep praying and bathe all of our encouragement in prayer because he is the source of encouragement.

He's the fountain where it comes from. And so we keep that line open as we pray, even as we're thinking about what we're going to say, we pray, and even as we're saying it, we pray, and as we go away, we pray that God would give them love and holiness.

[41:46] Well, what have we seen tonight? we saw how we can encourage one another. We can encourage one another by just standing firm, by going on in faith and love, and we can confirm or we can encourage one another as we look into our brothers and sisters lives and see what is lacking, where they need built up, and we can supply that with the word of God.

And as we see God as the source of all encouragement, that encourage our brothers and sisters. Well, may God give his grace to make us faithful to do that for one another.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for the word of God. Thank you for the instruction that it gives us, for the direction that it gives us.

Father, I pray that you would make the gospel so shine into our hearts and into our lives that we would be able to encourage our brothers and sisters more and more. Will you help us to see that as our duty, no matter how difficult it is, and see in you, God our Father, that you are the source of encouragement.

You can make our hearts overflow with love, and you can make our brothers' hearts overflow with love. So, Father, we pray that you would give us opportunities to encourage one another.

[43:13] Will you break down some of the walls that are in our congregation, whatever they might be, and help us to reach out to one another and love each other and be able to build each other up.

Father, we pray that you would continue to give us strength, that we would have holiness, that we would stand in holiness before the Lord Jesus when he comes to judge.

God, that we would have love, that we would convict sinners, show them Jesus Christ, continue to work on them, show them what is lacking in their life.

They have no faith, they have no love, and they have no hope. And we pray that you would go and rescue them, that you would set love's fire in their heart, love for you, and love for the brethren.

We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.