

The Kingdom Forcefully Advancing

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[0:00] Matthew 11, and I'll read the first 19 verses. After Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, He went on from there to teach and preach in the towns of Galilee.

! When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, Are you the one who was to come? Or should we expect someone else?

Jesus replied, Go back and report to John what you see, what you hear and see. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me. As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John.

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes?

[1:18] No, those who wear fine clothes are in king's palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

This is the one about whom it is written, I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you. I tell you the truth, among those born of women, there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.

Yet, he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John, and if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

He who has ears, let him hear. To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others.

[2:34] We played the flute for you, and you did not dance. We sang a dirge, and you did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he has a demon.

The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

But wisdom is proved right by her actions. May the Lord send His Spirit to glorify Christ as His Word is preached.

I ask you to keep your Bibles open there to the Gospel of Matthew in chapter 11. Since we are now looking at some brief sayings of the Savior on these Sunday afternoons after a fellowship lunch, taking a break from the Proverbs, we come to Matthew chapter 11, and we will be looking at one verse in particular.

I will tell you what it is in a moment. But Jesus speaks of violence in this passage. We don't see it so much in our translation, but the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing as the Kingdom of Heaven has been violently advancing.

[3:56] It is the word for violence. And violence is something we almost always look upon as something negative. Gang violence is a blight on any city. It's a dubious distinction to be named to the top ten most violent cities in the country.

If a movie has too much violence in it, we might not watch it for that reason. Violence on TV and in video games is blamed for epidemic violence among youth.

And Jesus, who was a man of peace and who advocated turning the other cheek and showed mercy to his enemies surely could not be championed for the cause of violence. But if that's our thought, maybe we need a bigger concept of who Jesus is.

And maybe we need to read all of our Bibles instead of just certain portions of them. Because while Jesus didn't come to set up an earthly kingdom, and He doesn't come with a literal sword and

destroy the Roman Empire and establish the Kingdom of Israel, Jesus did come to establish a Kingdom.

You can't read through the Gospel of Matthew without learning about the Kingdom of Heaven. That's much of what Matthew writes about is the Kingdom of Heaven. Other Gospel writers refer to it as the Kingdom of God.

[5:10] But Jesus came to establish a Kingdom. And there was and there is still a war to be fought in establishing that Kingdom.

And war is violent. We've seen it in our own lifetime. Some of you have seen wars that I did not see. But we've all seen the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And know that war is violent. And so, you can't read the Gospels or you can't live your life really without seeing what Jesus says in Matthew 11 and verse 12.

It's true. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully, violently advancing. And forceful or violent men lay hold of it.

But what does that mean? And there are a host of interpretations of this verse. And different ways you can translate these words. And the actor or the middle voice or the passive voice.

[6:11] I'm not going to get into all those details. I'm going to tell you what I think the right translation is. And we'll go from there. And if you want to talk about the differences afterwards, I'd be happy to do that with you.

I think the NIV gets it right, especially in the first half of the verse. The Kingdom or the middle of the verse. The Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing.

And we want to see two things this afternoon. The Kingdom's violent advance and violent attacks on the Kingdom. Okay? The Kingdom's violent advance and violent attacks on the Kingdom.

And so, the Kingdom of Heaven forcefully or violently advances. Now, some people think that this is the Kingdom's suffering violence.

It could be a passive. I said I wasn't going to do this. I'll do it just a little bit. The Kingdom's suffering violence either from enemies of the Kingdom who want to see it destroyed or from people who really want to get into the Kingdom.

[7:08] And so, they violently attack the Kingdom doing whatever they can to get into it. A positive sense. But again, I think the NIV gets it right. The Kingdom is violently advancing.

We'll talk more about what that means in a minute. But notice the timing of it. It's from the time of John the Baptist until now when Jesus spoke those words. And it continues on until He comes again as we'll see.

You see, John the Baptist marked a turning point in the history of redemption, in the history of God's dealing with His people. He was the last of the Old Covenant prophets. Many had prophesied in Israel for years and years that a Messiah would come.

John is the last of those Old Covenant prophets who foretold the coming of the Messiah. And John is even more blessed than they because he got to see the Messiah with his own eyes like Simeon and Anna did in the temple.

And John is unique because he's an object of prophecy as well. It was prophesied that one would come preparing the way in the wilderness. A second Elijah would come. And that's John the Baptist.

[8:11] And so, he's the object of prophecy, but he's a prophet too. And he comes at this crucial point in the history of God's people. He's the very last of those prophets who were looking forward to the coming of Christ.

But, he never got to see the death and resurrection of Christ. He died before then. And so, Jesus says, as great as John the Baptist was, as significant as he was, the least person in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.

And that means if you're in the kingdom of heaven today, if you're trusting Christ as your Savior today, you're greater than John the Baptist. You have privileges that far outweigh his.

Because you look back on the redemption that Christ accomplished as a completed thing. You look back and know that what Christ came to do, He did. It has been accomplished.

You're not looking forward to it, anticipating, not sure when it's going to happen, hoping, but it actually has happened. That means we're very privileged people. Peter says in 1 Peter 1 verses 10 and 11, concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke of the grace that was to come to you searched intently and with the greatest care trying to find out the time and circumstances to which

the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

[9 : 31] Those prophets were looking forward to it, trying to figure out when it was going to happen and what was going to take place. And we don't have to do that. It's happened. We have it recorded for us in the pages of Scripture.

And that makes us a most privileged people. The work has been done. We are part of a new, a better covenant. Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant. And so we're more privileged even than John.

But it also means we live in a greatly challenging and difficult age. The Kingdom has come. Jesus started it. He inaugurated it. He began it.

But it hasn't been consummated. It hasn't been brought to its fullness. It hasn't been completed. And it won't be until Jesus comes again. And so we live between the two comings of Christ while the Kingdom is forcefully advancing.

Until the day Jesus spoke those words and today until He comes again. The Kingdom is forcefully advancing. And so we're very privileged but we live in a challenging age of the Kingdom of God advancing.

[10 : 36] Well, what does it mean that the Kingdom advances violently during this time in between Jesus, between John the Baptist and today? Well, we see it in the Gospels already, don't we?

We see that this world that is the domain of Satan in the hearts of sinful men where Satan rules doesn't like that Jesus came. Satan doesn't like giving up any ground and so it's going to be a battle to take ground for the Kingdom of God.

And Satan himself comes and tempts Jesus. And we see the battle beginning already. And Jesus overcomes. He doesn't give in to the temptation. And then we see it further in the Gospels.

We see Christ praying to His Father in Heaven, Thy Kingdom come. It means it's not all the way here yet. There's advancing and progressing to be done.

Christ and His disciples waging war against the powers of darkness of the Kingdom of Satan. Casting out demons again and again. These demons who would seek to keep others out of the Kingdom. They're doing battle.

[11 : 41] It's a violent advance. It's warfare. It's not something that's easy. Something you can do like you're just taking a walk in the park. When Jesus sends His disciples out, He warns them of the dangers that they'll face in advancing the Kingdom.

They'll be among wolves. They'll be flogged. Families will be divided because of their teaching. They'll be hated. They'll be persecuted. The spread of the Kingdom will be forceful. It will be violent. Because Satan doesn't want to give up that ground.

It's war. And Jesus says, don't suppose that I've come to bring peace to the earth, but a sword. God. That's why Paul tells us to put on the full armor of God.

There's a battle to be fought against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil and the heavenly realms. And it's not just seen in the New Testament.

It's seen after that. As the church advanced in the world, is it an easy thing? Was it an easy thing for the church to advance? To spread out? But, we saw it when Paul, we'll go back into the New Testament for a second.

[12 : 49] As Paul goes out, was he successful? Yes. Did it come easily? No. Where did Paul write the letter to the Philippians from? He wrote it from a Roman prison.

It was a difficult work that Paul did. He was persecuted. He was flogged. He was beaten. He was stoned and left for dead. He was imprisoned more than once. Not an easy thing to be preaching the Gospel and spreading the Kingdom.

And don't you see it today? We'll talk of this more in a moment. You see, the spread of the Gospel is not an easy thing. We don't hear of our missionaries bringing in converts by the hundreds and thousands without any sort of opposition.

It's a forceful advance. Is it an easy thing for you to go out and to witness and to see somebody else brought into the Kingdom? No. We find ourselves hesitant and ashamed and without the right words to say.

And we find that it's a struggle to advance the Kingdom. It's forcefully advancing. You feel the force of temptations that are directed at you.

[13:58] You see the hard hearts of your own children, other family members, friends. Jesus never said the spread of the Kingdom would be easy. The Kingdom forcefully advances.

It's a battle. It's a war. How often in Scripture do we see the language of warfare? And if you've got a weak stomach for violence, then be thankful that it's not blood and guts that we're talking about, but it's something even more important than your bodies and your blood that runs in your veins.

It's souls that are at stake. And so the violence of the Kingdom is really more significant than physical violence that the Church sometimes mistook for advancing the Kingdom.

The Church sadly has sometimes taken up the sword and tried to violently advance by shedding blood. And that's not what Jesus is talking about. But we're told to fight the good fight, to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

That we're more than conquerors. That's battle language. That we're to put on that full armor of God. That's the language of going to war. And the reason the Kingdom must forcefully advance or one of the reasons is the second half of the verse or the end of it.

[15:11] Forceful men lay hold of it. And here again, there's debate. Is it violent men seeking to do harm to the Kingdom? Or is it fervent men seeking to enter the Kingdom? I tend to think it's the former.

Men attacking the Kingdom seeking to keep others out. That's one of the reasons the advance must be forceful is because the attack against it is forceful. So, violent men are laying hold of the Kingdom and trying to keep people out of it.

We want you to be in the Kingdom. There are people that don't want you to be in. And they're going to try to keep you out. And there will be those that try to get those who are already in the Kingdom out.

Satan does that work too. Tempting those that have put their hope and trust in Christ. Trying to drag them away. Satan, whose domain is this world and the hearts of sinners, doesn't like that domain shrinking one convert at a time.

That's one less person under his rule. One less person under his authority. He doesn't like to see churches established. That's a stronghold, a toehold in a place that was once under his dominion.

[16:16] Satan's not going to take that lying down. It's going to be a battle, a forceful advance as he attacks us. And so, he'll stir his followers to violently oppose the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is under attack at the hands of violent men. Again, it was true in Jesus' day. You see all the demon-possessed ones that they're seeking to keep from the Kingdom.

Jesus understands the nature of different sorts of enemies when He tells the parable of the soils. The parable of the sower. He goes out to sow. And it's not just easy work. All the seed that falls down doesn't immediately spring up and bear fruit.

No, some of it lands on the path. And what happens to the seed that lands on the path? Satan comes and snatches it away. That's the word that's right here in our verse. Lay hold of it.

Satan comes and lays hold of it. Because he doesn't want you to receive that word. And so, be turned to Christ. Another seed falls on rocky soil. And trouble and persecution because of the world come.

[17:18] And others fall away. Satan sees that seed seed has begun to take root. And does he say, oh, it's too late. I'm going to give up on that one. No, he goes after them with persecution from the world.

And he attacks those trying to go into the kingdom. Those that are seeking entrance and tries to pull them away. It's a violent thing. And then some seed falls on thorny ground.

And the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, Satan will use these things to drag others away from the kingdom. There's another seed. It's growing up. So Satan sends, I'll send the deceitfulness of riches.

The cares of the world to that one. That'll choke that one out. That's violent. That's someone violent attacking those who would seek to enter the kingdom. That's why Peter tells us to be on the alert for your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Resist him! Standing firm in the faith. That's violent language. It's war language. Stand firm. Resist him. Don't give any ground to him. You see the violent attacks against the kingdom in the early stages of the church as the Roman Empire tries to crush this vibrant, new, growing Christianity by persecution and torture and murder.

[18:36] Killing them. Execution. You tell those early Christians and martyrs that the kingdom wasn't under violent attack and they'll laugh at you. Their physical lives were at stake because of what they believed.

Because they had become a part of the kingdom of heaven. Far greater than any earthly Roman Empire. And it's carried on throughout the ages. The church has faced persecution from those, sometimes from the church itself.

The reformers faced opposition from the church while they tried to faithfully proclaim the gospel. It continues today in countries where converts to Christianity are persecuted, imprisoned, beaten, and yes, killed for their faith.

That happens in our world today. It's not a thing of the first and second century only. It's happened throughout the ages and it happens today. People are killed for their faith.

It continues today when secularists seek to limit the influence and free expression of religion even right here in our own free country.

[19:46] The kingdom is under attack here. It continues when so-called churches today promote a gospel of self-help and positive thinking and health, wealth, and prosperity and never mention sin and so you don't need to be pointed to Jesus as the Savior of sin and so doing they're attacking the kingdom of heaven.

It is under attack. You think the advance of the kingdom isn't violent with violent attacks against it? We've already noted how Scripture speaks in warfare language.

Our hymnal takes the words of Scripture and writes that we have 14 hymns under the heading the Christian warfare. It's a violent thing.

Even though we tend to think of violence as something negative, we must be violent in advancing the kingdom because our enemy is as well. And we must be prepared for his attacks.

What does that mean for those who are kingdom citizens? Or for those who would be citizens of the kingdom? We're not going to go into detail today about the armor of God.

[20:55] We've spoken of that before from Ephesians 6 and necessarily how to do battle. I just want us to be realistic about the fact that we are in a battle today. I don't want us to be naive.

To think that I can just live my Christian life and never expect any trouble. Any opposition from the world around us. I want us to have our eyes opened and to be realistic about the fight that we're in. So whatever your view of this verse is, whether it's violence being done against the kingdom or whether we're to be forceful in our efforts to enter the kingdom, it's clear that there's a battle.

And it is a violent battle. And we must take up the armor and fight. If we're to be part of advancing the kingdom because violence is being done against us, then we must be prepared as the hymn says to fight manfully onward.

And so if you're outside the kingdom today, entering the kingdom isn't going to be easy. I'd be doing you a disservice if I lied to you and told you it was easy.

And no problem. And we're going to balance this in a couple of months probably. We're going to get down to the end of Matthew 11 and we're going to look at verse 30 and we're going to see for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

[22:15] And there are blessings for being in the kingdom. It's not all pain and suffering and violence, okay? There's a balance here. And Jesus balances His own teaching. And we're going to come back to it and balance it, okay?

And so there's blessings to be had. Far greater blessings than the world will ever be able to give you. And so seek those blessings in Christ. But today I want you to understand that it won't be easy to get into the kingdom.

There are going to be things that oppose your entrance into the kingdom. People that try to keep you out. Friends that try to keep you away. That try to convince you that all of that stuff that your parents do and all that church business isn't really important.

In fact, it's a waste of time. It's foolishness. You might have friends right here in this building that unintentionally or intentionally try to keep you away.

After a service when you're convicted and you're thinking about the Word and you go out those doors and then your friends come and they fill your mind with anything but what you just heard.

[23:16] That's Satan doing war. Doing battle. Trying to keep you out of the kingdom. He'll use whatever methods necessary. He'll hold the pleasures of the world before you and hide the consequences of your sin to keep you out.

It will be a battle and so you must fight through these obstacles by God's grace and beg Him to give you mercy. You need to be like Pilgrim's Progress. Bold and courageous man seen in the house of the Interpreter.

And I think I've read this part of this passage before but it's one of my favorite pictures in all of Pilgrim's Progress. Christian goes into the house of the Interpreter and he shows him different pictures.

There's lessons. And the Interpreter took him again by the hand and led him into a pleasant place where was built a stately palace beautiful to behold at the sight of which Christian was greatly delighted.

He saw also upon the top there of certain persons walking who were clothed all in gold. Then said, Christian, may we go in thither? Then the Interpreter took him and led him up to the door of the palace.

[24 : 18] And behold, at the door stood a great company of men desirous to go in but they darest not. There also sat a man at a little distance from the door at a side table with a book and his inkhorn before him to take the name of him that should enter therein.

He saw also that in the doorway stood many men in armor to keep it. Here's your enemy. The ones trying to keep you up. Many men in armor to keep it. Being resolved to do the demand that would enter what hurt and mischief they could.

Now Christian was somewhat in amaze that last one, every man started back for fear of the alarmed men and that's what Satan wants. He wants you to turn back in fear and to give up. Here's all the opposition to you getting into the kingdom.

He wants you to turn tail and run and many did except for one. Christian saw a man of very stout countenance come up to that man that sat there to write saying, set down my name, sir.

Which when he had done, he saw the man draw his sword and put on a helmet on his head and rushed toward the door upon the armed men who laid on him with deadly force. But the man, not at all discouraged, felt a cutting and hacking most fiercely.

[25 : 28] It's violent. So after he had received and given many wounds to those that attempted to keep him out, he cut his way through them all and pressed forward into the palace at which there was a pleasant voice heard from those that were within, even of those that walked on the top of the palace saying, come in, come in, eternal glory thou shalt win.

Getting into the kingdom is no easy business. You'll have to cut and hack and give and receive many wounds. And you can't do it in your own strength. You need to be a man of stout courage, but all your strength and courage in the world on your own won't get you in.

You depend on the grace of God. Say, God, be merciful to me, the sinner. Help me to get through all this opposition that Satan will put there. Set down my name, sir. And by God's grace, you come to Christ today.

You shove aside those obstacles and say, yes, those are fearful things, but by God's grace I can enter in. It won't be easy, but you can enter in by His grace.

The kingdom forcefully advances. You must make your way forcefully into it. And there will be great delight and rest for you. My yoke is easy.

[26 : 38] My burden is light. We'll come to that at a later time. But you find that once you've gained entry, that once Christ has brought you into His kingdom, the attacks don't stop.

Satan wants to drag us back out of the kingdom of light into His kingdom of darkness and He'll use again whatever means necessary. The same things He tried to keep you out of the kingdom with. He used to try to get you out of it.

Showing you the pleasure and hiding the pain of sin. Fighting temptation isn't easy, but it must be done. Jesus talks about, He uses violent language, He talks about cutting off right hands and plucking out right eyes and dealing with our sin.

Not an easy task. That's violent business. We must be fortified against sin. One of the ways you know you're profiting from the Word is if you're fortified against sin.

And so, you read this Word and it strengthens you to fight off those temptations that will come. And they will come. It's a battle. And there will be times of respite as well.

[27 : 40] Don't let your guard down then. Restock. Prepare for the next battle. Stoke your mind with the Word of God so that when the next attack comes, you're ready. And enjoy those times of respite in between the attacks that are sure to come.

Another observation to note, perhaps on a church level, it means that the work of evangelism, church planting, and missions will be war.

The kingdom violently advances. And here, the kingdom has a toehold in Bremen, Indiana. But Satan doesn't want us to be here.

He wants this part of the world back. And so he's going to do everything he can to tear us down, to tear us apart. Here we are in the midst of a building program.

You know what would be a successful building program for Satan here? To have a nice, beautiful addition, new, complete, and done, and to have maybe half or a third of us left to worship in it.

[28:44] Or none of us. And so he'll use that to stir us up to dissension and to pride and to inflexibility and so to division. Don't expect it to be an easy thing that we can do in our own strength and we depend on God each step of the way and pray for grace.

He doesn't want to see churches established in other places and so the work of planting those churches won't be easy. He doesn't want us to go any further than Bremen.

And if we, by God's grace, continue to survive here and thrive here, He doesn't want us to use this as a launching point for the Gospel to go out to other places whether at home or abroad.

God, when you're rock climbing, I've used the word toehold a couple of times today. You view our church here as a toehold.

When you're rock climbing and it's a face of rock and there's little crevices where you can get your fingers in, if you can ever find a toehold, you just need about that much rock just sticking out from the face somewhere and if you can get your leg on that, you can put all of your weight, you can thrust off with that leg and reach much farther than you could have without that toehold.

[29:54] It's a sweet thing to find a toehold when you're scrambling on the face and to find a little handhold and then to push off and to go further. Satan doesn't want that to happen here.

He doesn't want this to be a toehold where from here we branch out and spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. And so it will be a battle to do so. The work of missions will be difficult.

He doesn't want us to be involved in that work and He will tempt us to stay away from it. Whether our missionaries go forth to established churches and jungles where people are trapped in the power of ancestor and spirit worship, or whether He calls missionaries to go to strongholds of devil worship or to modern cultures that are bound to secularism and deny that there's a God at all, or they follow the God of this new paganism that declares all is one and all is God, or whether they go to another monotheistic religion that seeks to destroy all other religions.

Wherever God sends His missionaries in the world, it will be a struggle. A battle. Churches won't be established without efforts of the powers of darkness to pull them down.

You ask Andy Hamilton about the forces of darkness in the land of China. You ask David Vaughn about the power of secularism in France. Satan doesn't care what belief system keeps you out of heaven.

[31:16] He doesn't care He doesn't care which one. He'll use all of them so long as you're not following Christ. And so it doesn't matter to Him if it's secularism or ancestor worship or new paganism.

They're all equally good for Him as long as it keeps you out of the kingdom of heaven. The gates of hell will seek to prevail against the church, but Jesus promises that they will not.

On this rock, I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against us. And there's our hope today. I want to leave you with a message of despair.

Yes, it's violent. It's hard work. The kingdom advancing is going to be opposed. But it's a sure fight that we're in. The good guys win in the end.

That's the message of the book of Revelation. I've told you this before, but if you read Revelation and you see all these strange things that you don't understand, get the big picture, Jesus wins in the end.

[32:20] Victory is guaranteed. I hope you feel your need for divine aid in this battle. We can't do it in our own strength. And so we go forward in the strength of Christ who has already won the battle.

You know, at the cross, He dealt the death blow to Satan. Satan still has power in the earth to do the things that we've talked about. But the deadly blow has been, the fatal wound has been dealt. He won't survive it. And when Jesus comes again, His kingdom, Satan's kingdom, will be no more. It will be destroyed. And the kingdom of heaven will be consummated, brought in its fullness.

So does that mean, well, we've got a guarantee of victory. So do we sit back and relax then? It says that we're going to be okay. No, it's a battle. We're to fight. We're to take up the armor of God, the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness and have our feet fit with the readiness to carry the Gospel of peace and the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

And press forward for the cause of Christ in the earth, praying that God would guide us, guard us, and keep us to the end in the midst of this violent fight. In the words of Revelation 17, 14, they will make war against the Lamb.

[33:44] His enemies. They will make war against the Lamb. It will be violent. But the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings and with Him will be His called, chosen, and faithful followers.

Sweet promise, isn't it? There will be a war. But Jesus will overcome. And with Jesus, we'll be us. By God's grace.

His followers. His chosen ones. And so it's a battle. It's a war that we're in. But the outcome is assured. And so you come and join us if you're not part of the Kingdom of Heaven. If you're not, you're on the losing side.

Your destruction is assured. Your defeat is guaranteed. So come and be a part of the Kingdom of God as we advance forcefully, as we advance violently by the grace of God.

And come and find victory in Christ. He is King of kings and Lord of lords. And with Him will be His called, chosen, and faithful followers. Let's pray together.

[34:48] Our Father, we pray that You would give us grace to understand something of the nature of the Christian life that You have called us to that it will not be easy. That it is indeed a battle.

That it is warfare. And that we must be prepared for the attacks of the enemy. We pray that You would strengthen us to advance Your Kingdom in this world. Do a mighty work tearing down strongholds of Satan here and abroad where the Gospel has not yet been named.

We pray that You would come in Your might, in Your power, and strengthen us to live for Christ in a world that hates Him. And strengthen churches that they might proclaim the Gospel faithfully.

That Satan's domain might crumble convert by convert, church by church, mission field by mission field. So that Your name might be magnified. So that You might be made great in all the earth.

And so we pray that You would do that work even in our midst. Come and add to Your Kingdom this day. Draw in lost sinners through all the obstacles. Give them help and strength and grace to come and follow and run after Christ.

[35:57] So give us grace to fight the good fight, to endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. And so to bring honor and glory to Your name, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.