

Relationships in the Body

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Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] 1 Thessalonians 5, and we begin at verse 12 and read to the end of the chapter. Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord, and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak. Be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always. Pray continually.

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire. Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything.

Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

The mail didn't come last Monday. It didn't come because we were celebrating Martin Luther King Jr. Jr. Jr. Jr. Jr. Jr. Jr. Jr. Jr. And whatever you think of him as a man.

[2:05] He did fight tooth and nail against racism. And that is a good thing. And he fought to unite a broken and fractured society. And now, thanks to his work and many other people's work, there's really very little outward forms of racism. But hatred and racism still lives in the heart of men.

And society is still fractured. If anything else, it's more fractured than it was 40 years ago. People move thousands of miles away, away from their homes and their families for work.

And families are broken routinely with divorce. And technology, which has benefited us so much, in many respects, has driven us further into ourselves and farther away from people and relationships. So people are now more and more isolated than they ever have been before. And they're just not displaced. They're unplaced. Nothing anchors them. They're floating in space.

In the past, many people had ties to their land and to their family. That's who you belong to. You belong to the land. And now, people are completely unplaced.

[3:40] They don't belong to their families. They don't belong to their land. They have nowhere to call home. And this is precisely where we see the beauty and the glory of Jesus Christ.

Because he is all about binding up relationships, restoring relationships, of bringing people into a new family, a forever family.

And so he saves wandering prodigal sons and unites them, reunites them into his family.

And he goes out of the feast and he goes and gets a stubborn, self-righteous older brother. And he pleads with the elder brother to come in and join the feast.

So Jesus Christ, that's what his business is. That's what he said he was doing. He's bringing people home. And part of his work of redemption is anchoring us, anchoring his people into lasting, meaningful relationships.

[4:49] 1 Thessalonians, maybe you've noticed, has a lot to say, has a lot to do with relationships. 16 times in this book, and it's not a very long book, 16 times in this letter, Paul says, Brothers, brothers, we are a family.

In chapter 2, he talks about his ministry with him. And how does he describe his ministry? He says, we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her children.

And then just a little bit later, he said, we dealt with you as a father deals with his children. And he talks about joy. And what is his joy?

They are. His relationship with them is the cause of his joy. They are his hope, his crown, his glory. And he loves them. And his heart is knit tightly with their heart.

Their hearts. And when it comes time to talk about pleasing God, did you notice how he talked about what we should do to please God? What kind of things did he say?

[5:59] He said, be sexually pure. But he said it in such a way, he said, don't take advantage of your brother. Don't take advantage of your brother.

You're a family, so you need to act like it. And he goes on to say now about brotherly love. We don't need to write you, but love each other more and more.

What kind of love is that? It's brotherly love he's talking about. And he says, stop loafing about. Quit being so idle. Mind your own business so you're not taking advantage of your brother's labor.

Instead, you should be working to provide for yourself. And so you're not dependent on anyone.

Pleasing God was all about relationships for Paul.

And what about the second coming? How does Jesus describe that? What is the context of that?

Well, it was these relationships are broken with death.

[6:53] And Jesus Christ is going to bring the relationship back together. He's going to bring all of his saints with him. And so we will live together forever.

Paul was a relational guy. And he thought a lot about relationships. And his Christianity was a relational Christianity.

Why? Well, because Paul was beating with the same heart as our Lord Jesus. And Jesus thought relationships were important. Jesus had 12 friends that he was especially close to.

And he said, I don't call you servants. I call you friends. And when they got tired, he said, let's go away from here.

We need to hang out. We need to relax and rest. And he poured his life into them. Not just into the masses, but especially into these 12 men.

[7:57] He developed these relationships. And so year after year, he taught them. And he encouraged them. And he lived with them. Relationships were important to Jesus.

Are they important to you? Is your Christianity more than just you and God? Do you think of it primarily as this thing that you do with God?

That you read and that you pray. And that's what it's about. I go to church and I worship God. It's God and me. And if it's all about you and God and God and me, but not so much about your brothers and your sisters, then you need to hear what Paul says to the Thessalonians.

And my goal is simple for tonight. I don't want anyone to walk out of this room and think that they can have a private Christianity, a little private religious thing going on with God, where their brothers and sisters don't factor into their life, where their relationship with their pastors is of little importance. And I don't want anyone to think that they're doing spiritually great if their Christianity isn't immersed in the body of Christ and these relationships.

[9:24] And if you're not developing those relationships more and more with the people here at Grace Fellowship. Well, Paul is going to tell us what our relationships should be like in the church.

And he first talks about the people's relationship with their pastors and their elders or their elders, and then how we should relate to different kinds of people within the church.

And then he gives two overarching commands about what should mark all of our relationships, regardless of who they are with.

So first, the relationship between pastor and the people. So we're in 1 Thessalonians, excuse me, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 12.

And he says, Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord, and who admonish you. So he's speaking again to brothers.

[10:26] That's everyone who is in the church. And he tells us to respect those who work hard among you. That is, the pastors or the elders who are over us in the Lord.

So in Christ's church, there's great equality. But there is not egalitarianism. And what I mean is, we're all equal in some respects, but Christ has put some men over others.

So Christ has set it up so some are over and some are under. And he puts pastors over flocks and flocks under pastors. And the pastors didn't put themselves in that position.

That was Christ doing. That was his work. And so we should respect the people that he has put over us. Respect those who work hard among you.

It means, when he says they work hard among you, it means they labor until they're tired. And some might say, but pastors don't do any physical work.

[11:33] How can they be tired? Well, there is a weariness that is worse than physical weariness. And it's mental, it's spiritual weariness.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians and he said that he labored under a constant concern for all the churches. They weighed heavy on his mind.

And you all weigh heavy on your pastors' minds. When you're not doing well, they lose sleep. And when you're doing well, there's more teaching and more training and more encouraging to do. And sometimes that means that you're working when you aren't doing well yourself. The pastor isn't doing well himself.

Sometimes you have to put food on the table and go without yourself. Sunday comes around no matter how the pastor feels. And so that's going to mean sometimes he labors until he's very tired.

[12:43] And sometimes it means feeling all alone. People can't know the burdens they carry. Or their faith would be so shaken it wouldn't be good for them.

And so the pastor has to keep it to himself. And there are problems that people never hear about.

There are problems that they never see. But the pastor must carry them alone sometimes.

And take care of them. And sometimes that means you have to say things that you'd rather not say.

Paul says they're over you and they admonish you.

Admonish means to correct a problem, to confront sin. And sometimes people don't like that. They don't like being corrected.

And they can fight against you. And it can be very hard. Well, what should our response be to our pastor's hard work?

[13:43] Well, we should respect them. And he goes on to say, We should also hold them high in love. Verse 13. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.

It isn't enough to respect them. We must love them. We must hold them high in regard because of their work. The highest regard in love because of their work. And so respect is the attitude that we're to have towards them.

And love is the attitude, but it's connected with action. And so God calls us more than respect. He wants us to see them loved.

And we hold them high in love. And so let's suppose you have a ruler. And this is what Paul is kind of saying. If you have a ruler, you know, something that you measure with, where should you mark your pastors?

Well, you should put them high up on the measuring stick of love. Put them near the top. Love them a lot because of their work.

[14:43] They live for you. They work for you. They work for your spiritual good, for your eternal good. So love them.

What other people pray for you like your pastors do? What other people plan and think about your everlasting good like your pastors do? They're seeking to do you good and give you God's word. So hold them high in love. Your love should have hands and feet. What can you do to show them love? Don't say, hey, I pay.

We pay their salary. Isn't that enough? Jesus said the worker is worth his wages. That was what he said about that. And so Paul says, hold them high in love.

So how can we show them? How can you show them your love? Write them a note. Write them a note. Encourage them in their work. Encouragement should be a two-way street between you and them.

[15:48] It should never be a dead-end road. They shouldn't be giving to you and you never reciprocate that back. It should be a two-way street. They encouraging you and you encouraging them.

But more than that, and this is the most important thing. Don't skip those things. But make sure if you don't do anything else, do this. Pray for them.

Pray for them. If you love them, pray for them. Satan has them in his scope. He has them especially marked. He has special temptations planned for them.

And don't say they could never fall. If you want to read a tragic list, read a list of Reformed Baptist pastors who are gone.

They're not in the ministry. Read that list and tell me that pastors can't fall. Good men can't fall away. So pray for them if you love them.

[16:46] If you love them, pray for them. Well, we respect our pastors. We love our pastors. And then we see, last of all, in verse 13, we should live in peace with each other.

And he's referring especially to our relationship with our pastors. Christ wants us to have peace with our pastors.

And so maybe the elders are not taking the church in a direction that you like. And you can disagree with them. No man is the Lord over your conscience.

But you must live in peace with them. Everyone has their own ideas. And a lot of these things that we're talking about, they can be very personal things.

They can be very important things to us. They're very close things that we're kind of talking about.

And we care about them a lot. And so when people don't do what we think is right, it can get us riled up.

[17:56] Well, if you love Grace Fellowship, and if you love your brothers and sisters, and if you love your pastors, then seek always to have peace with them.

If you disagree, then you must disagree in a peaceful way. So remember the things that we talked about in the Peacemaker series? Remember how a lot of things that people disagree about, the person should just overlook.

It should never even come up again. You overlook it all. Not everything is worth arguing about.

Sometimes it's best to just let it go. But what do you do if you have a problem with the elders, and you don't feel like, you don't think that you can let it go?

It's a disagreement that you just can't overlook. Remember step one of the Peacemaker series was, I will glorify God in this situation. And so we set it in our hearts to glorify God.

And glorifying God doesn't always mean, and doesn't necessarily mean, that we get our own way. If you disagree with the direction the elders are taking the church, before you do anything, set it square in your heart, that I want to glorify God in this situation, no matter what.

[19:22] And then next, what do you do? You get the log out of your own eye. Before you go picking bits of pieces out of your pastor's eye, sit down and make sure that you don't have anything coming out of your own eye.

And then you go personally to them. You go personally to them. You don't talk bad about them behind their backs. You don't complain about them over the dinner table.

That's not living at peace with them. So love them, respect them, and live at peace with them. And that's how you should relate to your pastors.

And if you do that, it will go well with you. They'll be able to work, and their work will be a joy to them. And that is of great value to you.

Well, now he talks about our relationships with various groups. And there's three separate groups that he talks about. Verse 14 begins, And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle.

[20:25] Warn those who are idle. The first group is the idle. It's hard to know exactly what Paul means by the word idle, or how the NIVs translate the word idle.

It's the only place this word is found in the New Testament. It's a military word. So imagine you're standing in line with a bunch of other recruits or a bunch of other soldiers, and everyone is at attention.

So everyone's standing straight in line, at attention, and you go down the line. And then there's this guy, and he's two steps back, and he's just totally out of line.

He's not doing what he's supposed to. He's not where he should be. He's neglecting what he should be about. That's what Paul is talking about. Or you can think about it this way.

Everyone's digging a foxhole. A hole in the ground that you have to get into because the enemy is launching an attack in the morning. So everyone in the unit is digging like crazy.

[21:26] And then over here, there's Gomer Pyle, and he's standing in line for food. He wants dinner. He's out of line.

He's unruly. He's not where he's supposed to be. He's neglecting what he should be doing. And Paul says, Brothers, warn those people. And the word again is to the congregation.

It's not just to the elders. It's to everyone. Brothers, warn them. So the pastor should warn those people to get in line. But everyone else should be saying it too.

It shouldn't just be coming from the pastors. The brothers and the sisters should be speaking too. Because we're all in this together. We're all in this together. And you know how it works.

If you're on a sports team, you're in athletics. If some guy is slacking off in practice, or in a game, what happens? The coach warns him.

[22:27] But not only the coach, but the whole team starts yelling at him. Because he needs to get in shape. He needs to get moving. If he's being lazy, everyone is going to let him know. And that's the way it should work in the church.

It should be the same thing. If you see a brother or sister falling behind, warn them. If they're being lazy. They're fiddling around with doctrines that they shouldn't be dealing with.

If they're neglecting the church. If they're dabbling in sin. It should be coach and team on them.

Pastoring people on them. Warning them. So how do you warn people?

With the word of God. You find the applicable scripture. You find the passages that apply. And you go and you talk to them. You talk to them prayerfully.

You stand in their path and say, Stop. Watch out. You're going the wrong way. You're going off the cliff. Stop. You warn them. And so no one can say, This isn't for me.

[23:30] This isn't my responsibility. This isn't my thing. Paul says, This is what the church is all about. I've put you in these relationships for this reason.

So that everyone can protect the brother that needs warned. And so if you're saying, Well, this isn't my thing. Then maybe you're the one out of line.

If you aren't warning the unruly, the idle, the out of line, then maybe you yourself are out of line.

You're not doing what Paul has called you to. What God has called you to.

So we have to learn to prayerfully speak the word of God into people's lives. And so that means getting past superficialities and dealing with people at a heart level.

And that isn't easy. That requires work. And it requires commitment. But Paul says, It's absolutely necessary. The idle are the first group.

[24:31] The second group is the timid. We encourage the timid. The timid are the afraid. They aren't unruly. They aren't standing around doing nothing when they should be doing something.

They're tired. They're discouraged. They're losing faith. They aren't standing like a brass pillar when the wave of persecution is coming. They're not standing. They're about to drown.

Well, how do you treat those people? Well, you encourage them. Maybe it's some kind of long-term trial. You're doing well in the beginning. When it first happens, you say with Job, The Lord gives and the Lord takes away.

That's week one. And then week 20 comes around. And it's a different story. It's harder then. You're losing heart. Well, how do you treat a person like that?

Paul says you encourage them. They're a delicate flower. And you don't go in there with big calloused hands and grab them and tear them apart. You don't crush them.

[25:32] You don't start warning them. Hey, you need to shape up. You uphold them. You encourage them. You build them up. You spoon feed them the gospel if necessary.

You tell them the good news about a gentle Jesus. A gentle Jesus who deals gently with His people.

And you talk about a father who knows how his children are made. But they're just dust. And you speak softly to them about God's goodness and about His love for poor, weak sinners like us.

So in a word, you encourage them. You warn the idle. You encourage the timid. You help the weak. You see that?

And verse 14. You want to help the weak. The weak refers to the spiritually weak, not the physically weak.

[26:33] It's not the same thing as the faint-hearted, the timid. This refers to people who are immature, who are weak, and they struggle with immorality.

They struggle with sin. And so Paul has already instructed the people on sexual purity, and that could be very well what he's talking about. These people are struggling to be sexually pure.

So what does he say to them? He says, Help them. It means hold on to them. Take them by the belt and keep them from falling into the pit. Keep them from falling astray.

Or another way, you can wrap your arms around them. That's what the word means. You wrap your arms around them, and you make sure they know that you are with them. You are here.

You're upholding them. And so how opposite is that to our normal practice? Our normal approach? And maybe this is just me.

[27:29] We see someone falling off into sin. And we say, Look at them. What a disgrace. I'm staying away from them. I'm not having anything to do with them.

Instead of holding them. We're more like the Pharisees than Jesus. And Paul says, No. Help them. Don't give up on them. If they sin, don't just give up on them. Hold on to them. Support them in their pursuit of holiness. Help them as they are trying to be holy.

Some people struggle with sin more than others. Some people struggle with certain sins more than others. And so what do we do with those people? We don't look down our nose at them.

And we don't forsake them and just let them go their own way. We get close to them. And we let them know that we're here. And we're watching. And we're here to help. And we put our arms around them.

[28:28] Well, how can you do that tangibly? In real life? Well, maybe you can get in there with them and say, Hey, sister. I know you struggle.

I know you're struggling. Can I help you? I'm going to give you a call at the end of the week. I'm going to ask how you're doing. And I'm going to pray for you. And I just want you to know that I'm here.

I'm here for you. And you're not alone. You're not alone in this. I'm with you. And that's how we can help one another. Maybe you can think of another way that you can get involved with someone as they are struggling with their sin.

You don't... If you see a man tied up and he's desperate to get out, you don't say, Well, what are you doing all tied up? You help them get out. The important thing is that we find some way to do it. So those are the three groups. There's the idle. There's the weak. Or the timid. Excuse me. And then there's the weak. Well, brothers and sisters, did you see that there's a different way to handle all sorts of different kinds of people?

[29:41] We just have three here. And we have to handle each of them differently. We can't treat people all the same. We can't act the same towards everyone. We can't relate to everyone the same way.

It's going to take real wisdom to know when you're looking at someone who is weak and when you're looking at someone who is idle or just unruly, out of wine.

It's going to take wisdom not to crush a flower with a warning when you need to be upholding them. Because a lot of times they're going to look exactly the same.

And we need that kind of wisdom so that when we see someone going off the cliff into sin, we're not encouraging them. And when we see someone who's wilting under the heat not to make it worse by warning them sternly.

Well, we need that kind of wisdom that comes from heaven that James talked about. The wisdom that is pure and peaceable and considerate.

[30:47] Heavenly wisdom considers people. It thinks about them. Where are they? Who am I dealing with here? What should I say?

We need that kind of wisdom. So wisdom is considerate and submissive, full of mercy. It's not hard-nosed, self-righteous, do it my way or get out of my way.

It's mercy. It's merciful wisdom. And so, we need that kind of wisdom to see a brother who's struggling in their sin. They want to get out and it's so hard for them to have mercy on them.

To not scorn them, but to love them and pity them. And so, Grace Fellowship, that's the kind of wisdom that we need working through all of our members if we're going to relate to each other the way Paul describes.

In the same way that Jesus wants us to. And so, if we're going to do this, if we're going to be relating to each other like this in a way that encourages and builds one another up, we better be on our knees praying for that kind of wisdom.

[31:56] Because if we don't have that wisdom, our good intentions will go out and it will ruin what we are trying to do. We need to be begging God to help us. Because we're not sufficient for these things.

We are not sufficient to speak to one another without His help. Well, Paul has two final things to say to everyone about relating to one another.

At the end of verse 14, be patient with everyone. Be patient with everyone. Patience is the oil that makes the church run smoothly.

We need to be patient with everyone, everybody, and everybody needs to be patient with me, with us. So we are sinners.

And the only way that this thing is not going to self-destruct is if we liberally oil everything with patience.

[32:57] So if I'm warning someone every time they fall, if I'm giving them a stern warning every time they fall, if I'm making a big deal out of every time someone disagrees with me and sins against me, then we don't need the enemy to come in here and destroy what's going on because we will do just fine blowing up the ship on our own.

And so, I have sin in my heart and you have sin in your heart and our sin is going to come out and it's going to splatter all over each other. And we will sink the ship in no time if we do not have patience.

And so, Paul says, show patience to everyone. And the final thing Paul says about our relationships with one another is found in verse 15. Make sure nobody pays back wrong for wrong but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else.

Paul sees a church in Thessalonica and God sees a church in Bremen, Indiana where people sin against each other.

And we need patience to deal with each other. We need long suffering. And Paul sees correctly. God sees correctly.

[34:17] So, we just don't sin. We're sinners. And so, that's going to cause us problems. If we don't guard ourselves, then when we are sinned against, what's going to come out is not patience.

It's revenge. Revenge. But you say, come on. Revenge at Grace Fellowship Church? Aren't we above all that? Well, maybe the most obvious forms of it.

Our fear of man will keep us from obvious forms of revenge. But, there are subtler ways of getting revenge that Paul is talking about.

So, brother sins against you and then he asks you to forgive him. And you say, I forgive you. But you don't really in your heart.

And you hold it against him. Whenever you see him, there's a black mark next to his name with that sin on it. And when he comes around, you leave.

[35:21] And you ignore him. And when he's not around, you can drop hints about him. And you harbor evil thoughts about him all the time.

Well, can that go on in a church? Yes, it can. And so, Paul says that no one's to have, no one's to take revenge on one another. Instead, we're to be kind to each other and to everyone.

So, the reaction, the reaction that we need is, I'm sinned against and in return, I show kindness.

And in the Greek, it's not so much try to be kind.

That kind of sounds weak to me. It's not a weak word. He's saying, pursue the good of that person. Pursue it. Chase it. It's not, well, I tried.

I tried to be, tried to do them good. I tried to be kind, but it didn't work, so I'm going to stop. Paul's talking about a concerted effort. It's a pursuit of something.

[36:21] It's the same word as persecute. You're chasing this. You're chasing their good. And so, when they sin, my reaction is, I chase them with good. I overcome evil with good.

And that sort of dynamic, it doesn't just apply to the church here. It doesn't just apply to the people in the church. This applies to everyone at work. When I am sinned against, my response is not revenge.

It's, I pursue, I chase good in their life. I find some way to do good to them. So, at the end, Paul has backed us into a corner and he asked me to do something that I have no power whatsoever to do.

He asked me to show grace to sinners. And how can I do that? Where am I going to get those kind of resources?

There's only one place where we can find that kind of grace working, and it's in our Lord Jesus. And only when the gospel has become a rich fountain in our own life, where we're drinking deep and it is meaningful to us, will we have the ability to warn others, to encourage, to help, to have patience, to not seek revenge, but instead seek their good.

[37:54] It's only when Christ is in our hearts working so that we appreciate the gospel. Only when I know my own sinfulness will I be able to handle other people's sinfulness.

And only when I know the greatness of Christ's dying love for me will I be able to show the same kind of grace to them. The gospel is the place where that patience comes from, that he tells us to.

It doesn't come from in here, it comes from the gospel. And the gospel is where that wisdom comes from, to be full of mercy and to be considerate. Because on my own, I'm not considerate. I'm not full of mercy. So think again, brothers and sisters, if you are struggling with this, if you want to grow in this, which should be every one of us, then think again of Jesus' dying love for you. When you had no way no way of earning his mercy, he went to the cross for you. And so men ridiculed him for you.

[39:03] And nails went through the creator's hands for you. And God frowned on his perfect son for you. And out of his wounds, out of his broken heart broken body, grace pours out for us.

Only when we're anchored there, only when we're on our knees before the cross, can we do any of the things that we've talked about tonight. It's out of his weakness that strength flows for us to have relationships that are meaningful, that are encouraging.

And his grace is all we need. His grace is all we need. And thank God that this church, the church, swims in his grace.

The grace of our Lord Jesus is all around us. It permeates us. It permeates all of our relationships. And so the church really becomes a place where sinners can be friends.

It's a place where people are forgiven. They're really forgiven. It's a place where people can fall and be restored to fellowship.

[40:25] They can fall and come back. And through God's grace, relationships are restored and in a very real way, heaven begins to break and shine faintly into this world.

people. And so the church is a special place because it's a place where there's the power by God's grace to have lasting, meaningful relationships with one another where we don't hurt each other, but where everything gets better and better.

And so if you're here and you aren't a part of this family, then look at it. You will never find anything so beautiful as what you find in the church, so wholesome, some place that is so much like home as the place where Christ dwells with his people.

So even now, Christ is saying, come in. He's inviting you in. He is going out into the streets. He's bringing in the prodigal sons. He is bringing in the self-righteous elder brothers.

And so he's saying, turn away from your sin and come to me. And you will find the home that you have been looking for.

[41:49] You can come and be forgiven and everything, all, every evil thing that you have done can be washed away. So come in and you can join all the happy brothers and sisters that Christ, has washed and he has cleansed and he has brought together.

And Jesus will restore you and he will give you the home that you have always longed for and wanted. He is just that good. Jesus is just that good.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, I pray that you would give us strength to see the height and the depth and the breadth and the length of your love for us.

That we would have the power to know what is incomprehensible. That is your love for us. God's love for God's love for God's love for God's love for And Father, I pray sisters who are struggling with legalism, who are struggling with not being satisfied, not rooted in the gospel.

And that is all of us at some point. And Father, I pray that you would bring the gospel home to them in such a powerful and sweet way that they would once again fall at the foot of the cross and worship our Savior.

[43:38] And Father, I pray for those who don't know you, who are strangers and foreigners to the promises of God, that you would bring them into your family.

Father, will you make some young man come to his senses tonight and ask himself, why am I here? What am I doing? And then run home.

Thank you that you are that kind of father that goes out and runs and meets and falls on their neck and kisses them and brings them into the feast. Thank you that you are that kind of God.

And thank you that you are that kind of God to us who fall so often. Thank you that we find you ever ready to forgive us and to restore us.

And Father, I pray that that grace would be worked out through all of our lives so that the brothers and sisters here would have relationships that are sweet and precious and that are encouraging and are good for them and glorifying to you.

[44:48] Will you help us to make disciples of one another more and more? Father, I pray that you would bless us as we go on our way. Bless the men at their work.

Bless the women at their work. Bless us all in our homes and with our children. Will you help this grace to permeate every relationship so that our children will be able to see Jesus Christ in us and our co-workers will be able to see Jesus Christ in us and they will ask, what is the hope? Why do you have this hope? And give us opportunities and give us courage to share Jesus Christ with sinners who need him. And so we pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.