

Conclusions

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[0:00] 1 Thessalonians 5, beginning in verse 12. Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you,¹ 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.

[1:12] 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. We have a problem.

Paul is wrapping up things in his first letter to the church in Thessalonica, and he finishes his letter with a flurry of terse commands.

In these 12 verses, there are 11 commands. And that could be overwhelming for you listening. That could be overwhelming for me, whose job it is to speak on those things.

[2:22] The good news is that everything that Paul is going to tell us tonight, and that God is going to tell us, can be simplified into two commands. So all these 11 commands are going to be fitted into these two commands.

To love the Lord your God with all of your heart, and your soul, and your mind, and your strength. And to love your neighbor as yourself.

So all 11 commandments are running into those two commands. Those two categories. And so what we have before us here is, Paul is showing us how to love God, mostly.

And how to love our neighbor. And so we have a problem, because we have so many commands to deal with, but it's a good problem. Paul is going to be very explicit about what it means, and how we can love God.

So, if you keep that in mind, if you keep that and say, this is a portrait of what it means for me to love God, then this shouldn't be a laundry list of do this, and don't do that, and do this.

[3:32] And that can be boring, and it can be overwhelming. This is a portrait of what it means to love God in your everyday life. And so it shouldn't be boring. It should be very exciting.

God is going to show us his heart for us, and what he wants us to do in return. Well, last week, Paul addressed relationships within the body.

How we relate to different kinds of people, how we relate to pastors, and how we relate to various groups within the church. And this week, he's still talking about relationships, but he's not talking about relationships within the body, but the Christian's relationship with God.

And the NIV breaks down 1 Thessalonians 5, 16 through 28, into four short paragraphs. And the paragraphs aren't inspired.

They're not a part of the original text. And so there's nothing divine about them, but they happen to be very helpful tonight. And so we're just going to divide the sermon into four sections, and they correspond to the four paragraphs that you probably have in your Bible.

[4:49] So first, in the first paragraph, he's going to show us and tell us how we should react to God's initiating love for us in Christ Jesus.

So he's going to show us how to react to God's initiating love in Christ Jesus. Look at verse 16. Be joyful always.

Pray continually. Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. This is God's will for you, for us, in Christ Jesus.

And that in Christ Jesus is absolutely crucial. In Christ Jesus is the context where we can do these commands, where we can obey these.

He, Christ Jesus, is the only environment where we can have joy always. And it's in Christ Jesus, that is the only place where we have any hope of coming to God and being accepted continually.

[5:54] And he is the only place where, and no matter what circumstance we find ourselves, we can find some reason to say thank you. So Paul is anchoring these commandments in the cross.

He's not just laying them out there for us and says, do this, and if you don't, you're going to feel horrible and God's not going to love you or anything like that. He's anchoring these commands in the cross.

So God's initiating love for us. And how do we react to that? We've been brought into Christ. God has brought us near. And so this is what God's will is for you, for us.

We used to be far away. We used to be strangers, foreigners to the covenants. We had no mediator.

And so we had no one to stand between me. I had no one to stand between me and God. No one to stand in the breach between God and us.

[6:59] And we had no relationship with him. We had no access to the throne of grace. When we were in the hour of our need, we could not come to him.

We had no access there. We didn't want God. We didn't need to talk to God. We didn't want to talk to God. And we didn't want God.

But praise God. Praise God. He didn't leave us in that situation, in that place. He didn't leave us to ourselves. And so by his grace, he brought us into Christ Jesus.

And so he had mercy on us. He forgave us and brought us near. He turned our world upside down. And he gave us Christ Jesus out of sheer grace.

He gave us Christ Jesus to be our mediator. And so now we have full and complete access to God. And in Christ Jesus, we've had worlds of life.

[8:06] Oceans of life opened up to us because now we have God. Now we have God. And so we were strangers and he made us children.

He adopted us into his family. And we were poor and he made us rich. And now we can come to God. We have full access.

And so in Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus, God gives us a wonderful, full life. He gives us a life-giving relationship with him.

So the question is, how do we react to that? And Paul tells us. He says, be joyful always.

Be joyful always. In every circumstance that you find yourself in, in the coming week, you have a reason to be happy. To be joyful.

[9:03] Because God is your friend. And that should take care of all those kind of problems.

They're not going to make the problems go away. But in those problems, you have a reason to be happy.

Because God is for you. So moms, when you're totally worn out and it's 5 o'clock in the evening and your children are driving you crazy.

And your hubby rolls in and he expects the world from you. You can rejoice. Your husband might not get it.

Your husband might be insensitive. But God isn't. He knows your needs. He loves you. And he says, you need.

And here I am. You are thirsty. Come and drink. You're tired. I never sleep. I never slumber. I wake up excited every single morning.

[10:02] And I am completely excited about you now at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. You are tired. I am not. And I am with you. So rejoice. Rejoice.

No matter where you're at, brother or sister, in the coming week, you have a reason to be happy. Will you forgive a Lord of the Rings illustration?

You're going to have to because I'm going to do it. In the final book, the return of the king, Gandalf, the wizard, and Pippin, the hobbit, are, they're standing way up high.

They're standing out and they're looking over the city of Minas Tirith. And Sauron, the evil wizard, has filled the sky with this horrible, thick, black cloud.

And he will attack the city in a few days. And no more help is coming. Things are very grim. And they're standing there and they're looking out on the scene.

[11:11] And suddenly, Gandalf laughs. And Pippin looks up at Gandalf and he's staggered by what he sees. He can't believe that in the middle of this situation, Gandalf is laughing.

And listen to what Tolkien wrote. In the wizard's face, he saw at first only lines of care and sorrow. Though as he looked more intently, he perceived that under all there was a great joy, a fountain of mirth, enough to set a kingdom laughing were it to gush forth.

So things were grim everywhere. But underneath all of Gandalf's concerns and sorrows, there was joy. There was a fountain of mirth, of happiness.

And there was joy there that could look out on the horror of what was coming and what was all around them and still find a reason to rejoice. And so Pippin saw joy that didn't depend on your circumstances.

And brothers and sisters, that's not just a fiction. That's not just out there. That is what you have. You have a reason to be happy.

[12:26] And no matter what, you have a fountain inside of you if God has saved you. God in Christ is for us. And so Paul says, let the fountain flow.

Don't stop it up. Let it go. Strive to be happier and happier every day in God. Be joyful always. And that's the only or that is the proper response to God bringing us into Christ Jesus.

Well, how should we react to God bringing us into a relationship with him? Well, secondly, we pray continually. Prayer, praying is talking to God.

So what is Paul saying? He's simply saying, talk to God a lot. He's your best friend. What do you do with your best friend?

You talk to him a lot. Pray continually. And of course, that doesn't mean we are doing nothing but praying all the time. There's other things that require a mental effort that we're going to have to take a break from prayer and give our attention to.

[13:41] It does mean that we should be praying continually throughout our day. At set times. And primarily, this means that our prayer switch is turned on.

It's set to on. The line is always open. And we're using it frequently. So the automatic position in our life, Paul is saying, is since God has saved us, the automatic position in our life is God is here and I should be talking to him.

It's kind of like your furnace at home right now. Is your furnace always running in the winter? Well, hopefully not.

But the switch is always turned on, isn't it? It's ready to kick into action the minute the temperature drops below wherever you've set it at, wherever it's supposed to be.

And that's the way it should be in our prayer life. The switch is on and the slightest thing should set, should fire up prayer. So, do you see God's heart for you in this?

[14:53] What is God wanting? Where's his heart at? He wants you to live in constant fellowship with him. He's not tired of you.

He doesn't get tired of you. He doesn't get annoyed with you. He wants you to talk to him. And so this isn't something that we have to do.

This is something that we get to do. Because God is our friend. And this is our privilege as adopted sons and daughters. We get to walk and talk with our father.

And we get to walk and talk with him all the time. And so Paul is saying, let's do this continuously.

So let me ask you, does God sometimes interrupt your life and whatever you're doing and make you pray?

Or is it the other way around? Does the world sometimes interrupt you from your prayer, from your praying? Does it interrupt you from your fellowship with God and make you take care of something?

[16:00] So what's the automatic position in your life? Is it towards prayer or is it towards the world? Have you set your heart on the father? He saved me.

I love him. And that's where my heart is. Or have you set your heart on the things of this earth? And you can tell by whether your prayer switch is on the automatic, it's on, or if it's off.

And we all have room to repent. We're all too much in love with this world. And we don't love God enough. And so we don't talk to him like we ought to.

So God has saved us. And he has loved us. And so our response should be that we should talk to him. We should pray continuously.

Well, how else can we react? We give thanks in all circumstances. And so we were once ungrateful. That's what we were.

[17:02] We were ungrateful. And now that God has saved us, we should be supremely grateful people. No people, no one should say thank you as much as me.

Because everything that I get in this world is grace. I didn't deserve it. Why can I say thank you? Because he's working for my good all the time.

Everything that he is doing, all things work together for my good. And so our good things should make us say thank you. We didn't deserve them.

We didn't deserve that. The only reason we have them is Jesus Christ. And so the only reason that tomorrow morning when you wake up and you drink your orange juice and you eat your cereal and that is a blessing from God and not a curse is because Jesus died for you.

Every single one of your blessings, there's a rope from that blessing to the cross. And you should trace that rope.

[18:07] And when you find yourself at the cross, you should say thank you. Well, it's not just our good things. It's also our bad things, our painful circumstances, our hard times, the hard people, the frustrating things in life that are so complex and they seem so absurd and we can't understand them.

And those things, as frustrating as they are, can make us say thank you. Because we know that in all things God is working for our good.

And so when we're unemployed, we're underemployed, money's tight and things are starting to get really hard, we can say thank you because we have food. We can say thank you because he's treating us as sons.

He's disciplining us as sons and not illegitimate children. No one owns an illegitimate child.

And so they can act however they want. The dad might give them money, but he doesn't give them his heart. He doesn't give them his attention. The father doesn't love them enough to discipline them.

[19:27] But that's not us. Our father gives us good things. But on top of those good things, he gives us discipline because he loves us. And so his discipline is not a sign of his disfavor.

In fact, it's a sign of his great affection for us because he's treating us as sons that he loves. And so even though it's not pleasant all the time, sometimes life is not pleasant.

A lot of the time it's not pleasant. But we can say thank you in every circumstance because of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. So how do we react to God's initiating love in our life and saving us and calling us into Christ Jesus?

Well, we rejoice always. We pray continually. We give thanks in all circumstances. Well, that's how we should relate to God in Christ Jesus.

How we should react to that relationship. Now, we move on to the second paragraph. And this paragraph completes the Trinity. And this is how we should relate to the Holy Spirit.

[20:39] So look at verse 19. 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.

So we begin with do not put out the Spirit's fire or don't don't quench the Spirit. So the Holy Spirit is like a fire and he's within us and he's burning and he's stirring us up and he's warming us and he's moving us to action.

And he's helping us to burn with zeal and fervor and excitement for God. And so Paul says don't quench the Spirit. He's at work within you.

Don't quench him. Don't put a damper on him. Don't pour water on him. And that's sort of a strange idea. But he tells us exactly what he means in the next verse.

Do not treat prophecies with contempt. Don't treat prophecies with contempt. So what exactly does that mean? What exactly does that mean?

[21:48] What are these prophecies that he's talking about? Well, we don't have a lot of time, thankfully. We don't have a lot of time to go into it.

But there are a few things that we can say about them. Prophecies were Holy Spirit inspired words.

So they were the Spirit's work within the body of Christ. And so that's why he says don't quench the Holy Spirit and don't hold prophecies in contempt.

When you hold prophecies in contempt, you are quenching the Holy Spirit. And so they were Spirit inspired. So Paul's saying you have to be careful with them.

You have to be careful with them. But at the same time, so they're Spirit inspired. But they were also under the control of the person who was giving them.

[22 : 43] So in 1 Corinthians 14, you don't have to turn there. It says, Paul says, The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of the prophets. For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace.

So these prophecies, they weren't like the Holy Spirit came on a person and the person lost consciousness and started uttering weird, profound things.

They weren't puppets. They were under the control of the person. There was a human element involved in them. So what else can we say?

Well, prophecies were not primarily about the future. I think in English that can trick us and trip us up because when we think of prophecies, we naturally think of this is the future that we're talking about.

I think we have the wrong idea if we think that most of the time the prophets and the prophecies were always about the future. Even most of the Old Testament prophets, they talked about the future and they talked about it a lot, but even the way they talked about it, everything was also directed to the people that were right in front of them.

[23 : 56] And a lot of things were directly related to those people. And so the Holy Spirit used the prophets to speak his word into people's lives, to warn them, to encourage them, to comfort them.

And so the people that the prophets were talking to were us, yes, but in the first place to those people that were right in front of them.

And so sometimes there was a future aspect to it, but some of the time and a lot of the time there wasn't. It was mostly the people right there. Well, the New Testament prophets, I think, were the same.

We only have one prophet that I could find, and I'm pretty sure I'm right, other than the apostles that predicted future events. His name was Agabus, and two times he predicted the future, and he was called a prophet.

But most of the time, that was not what the prophecies were about. That's not what prophecy was about. It was about speaking powerfully into the people's lives, to comfort them, to encourage them, to exhort them.

[25 : 14] And again, listen to 1 Corinthians 14. Paul says, But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.

And he who speaks a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. So prophecy was mostly about the strengthening, encouraging, comforting God's people, with the idea of, I'm going to edify, build up the entire church.

So in a lot of ways, it's very similar to preaching. But it's not exactly that. Because there was this extraordinary aspect to it that we no longer have in the church.

The Spirit seemed to be more directly engaged with giving them the words, with helping them, with revealing what they needed to say, to help the people, to speak.

And that lasted until the Scriptures were completed. God's revelation was done. And so, that is when prophecy stopped.

[26 : 29] Well, that was before this. What Paul is talking about was before that time. And so now prophecy was going on in Thessalonica. And the Spirit was working.

People were speaking to one another and encouraging them. And they were speaking powerfully. The people were being edified and strengthened and comforted and encouraged.

But, you know, that wherever God sows wheat, Satan is busy sowing tares. And so, presumably, there were people who were calling themselves prophets, who were saying all sorts of false, outlandish, wrong, unhelpful things.

And so the temptation was, we're just going to throw it all out. No more prophecy. That's it. It's too dangerous. Better safe than sorry. So that, it's done.

And that's the temptation. And Paul says, no, no. We can't go that way. The Spirit is at work. And so we need to think about this and be careful about what we're doing.

[27 : 39] So we need to be careful that we don't quench Him when He's at work. And so it's always easier for us, isn't it, to throw the baby out with the bathwater and to think of things completely in black and white and that's it.

It's always easier to overdo our objections and our rejection of something and instead of thinking carefully and thinking with some nuance.

Well, Paul called them to think. And he says, test everything. Hold on to the good and avoid every kind of evil. Well, how does that, how does all this translate to us?

Well, prophecy as it was then is not going on now. But prophecy does have a lot of overlaps with preaching. So both are owned by the Holy Spirit.

Preaching is a gift of the Holy Spirit, as was prophecy. They were, they're both for the encouragement and the strengthening and the edifying of the entire church. And so they share the same purpose to a great degree.

[28 : 49] So how does that translate to us? Well, when our pastors preach to us, we need to be careful how we receive it. We don't hold them in contempt.

We don't ignore them. We test it all. Well, how do you do that? Well, we have to test it with what we know for sure.

And so we hold up the preaching of the word to the word of God. We hold up the preaching of our pastors to the word of God. And so if it agrees with the word, we hold on to it.

We cling to it. We obey it. We love it. But if it's wrong, well, what do you do?

You avoid it. You throw it away. So that's the right way to handle this. But the wrong way is to throw it all out and so quench the Holy Spirit.

[29 : 50] I believe that God is speaking to us in the preaching of his word. And so he's stirring up our affections. The spirit is working and dealing within us and he's warming us to the truth and he's prompting us to action.

And sometimes the word, it comes through less than ideal men, doesn't it? It doesn't come in the prettiest box. But the spirit is working.

And so we don't quench him. We're sensitive to him. And so we need to listen as he speaks to us through the word preached. And we need to obey. Because obedience, and I'm sure you've seen this in your own life, but obedience is the best way to have more of the Holy Spirit flowing in your life when you're walking with him.

That's when you find the greatest comfort and the most power when you're obeying him. And that's what we need. We need him at work in us. That's what grace fellowship needs.

And so we can't afford to quench him. We have to be sensitive about how we receive the word of God when it's spoken through men. And not only our pastors, but whoever speaks to us the word of God.

[31 : 14] Well, we move on to the third paragraph. And this isn't how we relate to God. This is how he relates to us. And verse 23 begins, May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through.

So we're switching. This is no longer a command. Paul is entrusting them into God's hands. And so this is Paul's wish.

This is Paul's prayer for them. And in his prayer, we see how God relates to us. And so Paul says, in the midst of all this, in the midst of the confusion and the persecution, the problems, all the problems that we have, we have great reasons to be encouraged because God is so wonderful.

He's so wonderful in the way that he relates to us. The way he treats us. He's the God of peace.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you.

He's our God of peace. He makes peace with us through his son's death. So our sins separated us. We were not at peace with God.

[32 : 35] And he was not at peace with us. And he couldn't. And he wouldn't join us in our battle against sin and death and hell and all the things that were coming for us that we were enslaved to.

He wouldn't be our ally because we were a rebel. We were part of the opposition. He was the offended king. But he reconciled us.

The one who was offended brought the reconciliation about. He brought peace. And so he gave Jesus Christ to cover our sin. And Jesus propitiated God's wrath.

And that's a big word. That is an important, important word. Propitiation means that Jesus soothed God's anger.

He took it away. So Christ took God's wrath on himself. And so there was none for us. There's none for us.

[33:44] And now there's peace. And so now he is our God of peace. And he comes with the palm branch in his hand. And he comes now as not an enemy but as a friend, as an ally in the battle.

And he comes and gives us grace. And he gives us a new life. And he takes us from Satan's kingdom. And he brings us into the kingdom of his son whom he loves.

And he comes to us with grace. And he pours out the Holy Spirit on us to sanctify us. To help us with those enemies that we could not deal with.

And so God sanctifies us. We're not left to obey all these commands. We're not left to ourselves. You're not left to yourself to sanctify yourself.

It is your responsibility. But it's also God's work in you. And that is what Paul is focusing on now. Take heart. You should take heart.

[34:43] Because God is for you. And he is serious about sanctifying you. He didn't send you out into the world into this dangerous wild world alone.

And there's times when it feels like that. But God is with you always to sanctify you. Well, how serious is God about our holiness? Well, more than we are, usually.

Almost always, I would say. He sanctifies us, it says, through and through. So God isn't interested in some surface cleaning. He isn't like thousands and thousands of homeowners right now who are, you know, slapping paint on the wall and maybe changing this or that to give the house curb appeal and to sell that house quick.

And so they clean up a few things and they do some superficial work on the house. But inside, what do you find? Well, inside there's mold on the walls or on the studs and there's water leaks in the closets and the bathrooms.

And what looks so good really on the inside isn't. But God isn't dealing with just surface issues.

[36:02] He's not interested in throwing some paint on the wall of our life. God's work is thorough. And so God has access to our innermost parts to sanctify us.

I was reading in Hebrews in my devotions this week and I came to these very familiar verses. For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword.

It penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and the attitudes of the heart. Nothing in creation is hidden from God's sight.

Everything is laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. And that is God's work in us to sanctify us.

His word searches us and it penetrates us to our deepest places. It divides things that humans can't imagine dividing. And the Lord lays us on the table and He cuts us open and He lays us bare and He goes down to the deepest recesses of our heart.

[37:17] The heart that we can't know and that's where He's doing His work of sanctifying us. And so He finds sin in places that we thought were pretty good and He works on levels that we can never reach to sanctify us.

And so look at your salvation. What kind of access does God have? Well He can change the attitudes of the heart. The way you just think about everyday things.

The way you think about the Word of God. He can change those. And so before your salvation you were unhappy. And you were self-righteous.

And you were proud. And the pastor said repent. And it bounced off you like you're a concrete wall. nothing.

Nothing. It did nothing to you. And then God changed your attitude. And He gave you joy in believing. He gave you humility instead of that self-righteousness.

[38:18] And so God changed the deepest parts of you to save you. And now He does the same thing through your whole life. He goes on changing you through and through.

He changes attitudes and desires. And so He doesn't settle for the surface issues. We're happy sometimes to settle for I don't lie and I don't do this and I don't do that.

But God wants all of us. Our entire being holy. And so He digs and He digs and He claws and He claws until we're made new.

And sometimes it hurts. But He loves us too much to stop. and so He's faithful and He will do it. Well, He's not only our sanctifier, He's our keeper. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[39:17] The one who calls you is faithful and He will do it. So He faithfully keeps us all the days of our lives. He works on us to sanctify us. And He keeps us blameless on that last, final, great, terrible day.

And He keeps us blameless on that day. He keeps us body, soul, and spirit. And so Paul isn't saying there's these two things in you, a soul and a spirit.

He's just saying every part of you from no matter how you look at it or what you call it, every conceivable part of you, God will keep on that day.

And He will hold you blameless at Christ's coming. And so on that great day, you will stand before Christ Jesus and He will judge you.

And He will look over your record. And on that day, there will be nothing but spotless righteousness. His righteousness. And He will look over your person.

[40:22] And He will look into your heart. and He will find nothing to blame. He will look in every nook and cranny of your soul and it will be perfect and spotless.

There will be nothing but holiness. And you will be blameless on that day. And so, brothers and sisters, your dreams of sinlessness will come true because of what God is doing in you.

And so now you hate sin, you hate its presence, but it's there. And you hate the way you feel and you think sometimes because our thoughts are so God-dishonoring and so ungrateful and so disgusting and so little so much of the time.

it's horrifying and we hate it. And one day all that will be undone and we will stand before Him perfect. And so God, He's going to keep sanctifying us up until that day and then in the blink of an eye we'll be like Him.

We'll be like Christ. And Jesus will say, well done, good and faithful servant. Come, enter your Master's joy. So God is faithful and He will do it.

[41:45] And so when I look at what do I see? I see many people who one day will be absolutely holy and you will be absolutely beautiful.

and that day is coming. Praise the Lord, it's coming. And it's coming because He is faithful and He will do it.

We must be hastening on. We come to the final paragraph. Paul says, pray for us. Paul, the apostle, the great apostle, needed prayer.

Silas and Timothy needed prayer and they weren't too proud to ask. What about you? Will you ask for prayer when you need it?

Will you pray for your pastors, your spiritual leaders, your missionaries? Will you pray for them? We make a big deal out of praying for them and we should because they need lots of things.

[42:58] They need a lot of money and help and more people and all sorts of things that are real and they need it but more than anything they need God at work. They need God's grace and so pray for them.

Pray for them. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. You're a family. Act like it. Grace Fellowship, you are a family and so you should act like it.

If God's love has come into your life and he's adopted you into his family and he's put you all together with all of your brothers and sisters, it should affect the way you even greet each other.

The way you interact with each other. He's made us a family and so we act like that. We have the affection of a family.

I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. So Paul puts the solemn charge. He almost binds them with an oath that the pastors read 1 Thessalonians.

[44:12] And it was God's word to them and it's God's word to us. They needed it and we need it and so we should keep reading it over and over again.

And finally, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Paul began his letter with grace and peace to you and he ends in the same place.

And so he ties up this entire letter with this beautiful bow of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And his grace is what we have seen in this letter. his grace to save in chapter 1. His grace to give them first love and to endure persecution and to still keep growing in faith and hope and love.

And it was his grace that gave us the ability to encourage our brothers and sisters. and it was his grace that helps us to live lives that are pleasing to God.

[45:23] And it was his grace to live as children of the day and of the light in this dark and perverse generation while we wait for the coming of the Lord. It's his grace at work in us to do those things.

And it's his grace that we need to relate to each other to be patient all the time and to forgive one another and not seek revenge. And it's Jesus Christ's grace that is the environment where we can relate to God as his children.

Where we can rejoice always and pray continuously and give thanks in all circumstances. It's Jesus Christ's grace that was on display in this whole book.

And so he ends with that. And Jesus' grace is all we need because Jesus is all we need.

Let's pray. Our Father, we thank you for introducing us to Jesus Christ. And we have found in him everything that we need, everything that we've longed for.

[46 : 39] And we have found every reason to rejoice. Jesus, will you forgive us, Father, for how sad and melancholy we have been so much of the time over not getting our way, over how our plans have been foiled.

And forgive us for not rejoicing always and praying continuously and giving thanks in all circumstances. Will you show us Jesus Christ again?

Holy Spirit, show us our Savior and his love for us. That is what we need to sanctify ourselves. That is the power, the only power, that can go to work in the deepest places of our heart and to heal us and to cleanse us and to keep us.

So, Father, my prayer is that you would make every believer's thoughts to swell, thoughts of Jesus Christ to swell and to grow, and that thoughts of him would be precious and constant throughout this coming week.

week. And, Father, my prayer for those who don't know you, who don't know your son, will you make worshipers, will you convert men and women and boys and girls who will love Jesus more than anything else.

[48 : 24] And we ask these things for your glory, for your honor, that you would make a name for yourself and the earth. And will you help us to see that glory and to be overwhelmed and to fall down and worship.

And, Father, I just pray that you would protect us, keep us from the evil one, and work in us your glory.

And take from our hearts and our lips praise for yourself. and we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.