

Introduction to 2nd Thessalonians

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[0:00] Turn in the scriptures to Acts chapter 16 and we pick up the reading at verse 40 of chapter 16 and we'll read on into verse 9 of chapter 17.

After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left. When they had passed through Empiriphus and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica where there was a Jewish synagogue.

As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue and on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead.

This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ, he said. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

But the Jews were jealous. So they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city.

[1:15] They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting, These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house.

They're all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus. When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil.

Then they made Jason, and the others postponed and let them go. Tonight we begin a series on 2 Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians is a very exciting little book. It's exciting because we get to look at the end. Maybe you've never done this, but I have.

In the middle of a very exciting, suspenseful novel, and things are just going terribly. It didn't seem like there was any way for this to end well.

[2:31] I've skipped ahead, and I've read the end, and everything's going to turn out okay. It's all going to be fine.

I don't know how it happens, but I know it's going to happen. So now I can read my book without having a stroke, and I can take it easy. 2 Thessalonians is exciting because Paul tells us how it all ends, and it all ends very well for us.

I'm glad to say. 2 Thessalonians is exciting because we're introduced to a very interesting character. You've heard rumors about him, but here you actually get to meet him.

He has different names. The man of lawlessness, the man doomed to destruction, or in the King James Version, the son of perdition.

He's the Antichrist, and we get to meet him in 2 Thessalonians. And it's exciting because Paul tells us about the last battle between Jesus Christ and this man of lawlessness.

[3:43] And it's exciting because it turns out to be a very anticlimactic battle, really. You've been in situations like this.

You've sat down. You're excited to see this football game between the number one team and the number two team, and you're all excited about the game, and you pop your popcorn, and you grill your hamburgers, and you sit down, and by the end of the first quarter, the game's over.

It's 35 to zero. The number one team is just playing mop-up the rest of the game. 2 Thessalonians tells us that's what the battle is going to be like at the end between Jesus and the most wicked, the most powerful man in all of human history.

And it's very anticlimactic. Chapter 2, verse 8 says that the Lord Jesus will overthrow him with the breath of his mouth and with the splendor of his coming, and destroy him with the splendor of his coming.

So as soon as Jesus walks through the tunnel and onto the field, the game's over. That's how it's going to be. So Paul tells us about that in 2 Thessalonians.

[4:58] But best of all, I think 2 Thessalonians is exciting because this is an open book. It's another open window on the heart of our Lord Jesus.

And as you see and hear the Apostle Paul dealing with this very young church, you can see and hear Jesus dealing with us and how he treats us.

And so it's exciting to go through this book and think about that what we're doing is turning the pages on Jesus' heart for Grace Fellowship Church and what he thinks about us and feels about us. Jesus has some things he wants us to hear. He has some things that he wants us to do. He's glad about some things and he doesn't like other things.

But whatever it is, it's the voice of our beloved. And it's like a love letter come from a spouse who is very far away and it warms our hearts.

[6:04] And that's what 2 Thessalonians is. It's a love letter from our Lord to us. And it has his smell about him. It has his love about him. And that should thrill our hearts.

Well, I have three things I want to talk about tonight. And the first one is called A Few Things to Know and Remember. A Few Things to Know and Remember. Before we begin this book, there's some things that we need to know.

And there's some things that we need to remember from about a year ago when we did 1 Thessalonians. You need to remember that Thessalonica was a very important city.

It was a very important city. It was the metropolis of Macedonia. What is a metropolis? It means mother city.

It's the mother city of Macedonia. Macedonia. And so it was the biggest city in the province. It was the most important city in the province. It was the most important city because of its location.

[7:08] The most important east-west road in the whole Roman Empire ran right through the middle of Thessalonica, the Ignatian Way. And a messenger could leave Caesar's Palace, head south, go across Italy, go across the Adriatic Sea, land in Greece, get on the Ignatian Way, and ride to the end of the road in a small town called Byzantium.

And he could do it in 21 days. And that's remarkable because no one could do it faster until railroads were invented in the 1800s. The roads were that good, and this was a very important road. This is the road that Paul and Silas and Timothy took as they left Philippi that we just read. They left Philippi. They go through these two smaller towns who have no Jewish synagogue, and they go to Thessalonica.

And on this road, they would have traveled with all kinds of people. They would have seen pilgrims and traders and heralds and philosophers and Roman colonists and you name it.

Everyone who had somewhere to go was on this road with Paul and Silas and Timothy. Well, Thessalonica was important not only because of the road.

[8:22] It had a very good seaport. It was the best seaport in Greece. And so if you were to go down to the docks, you would see ships from all over the Roman Empire there.

And you would see ships loaded with grain from Egypt. And you would see ships that are now loaded with timber from the north that are going down, and they're going to be transported throughout the Roman Empire.

Thessalonica was sort of like New York City is today. New York City is not the capital. It's not even the capital of New York. But it was the capital city of business.

And that's what Thessalonica was. It was the most important business city in the Roman Empire. It was big. It was important. It was wealthy. It was full of life. It was full of comings and goings and hustle and bustle.

And that's life in Thessalonica. Another thing that you need to know is that Thessalonica was a free city. It was a free city.

[9:26] And being a free city was a big deal. You could coin your own money. You could rule yourself in however you wanted, provided that what you did was okay with the Roman Empire.

But you could rule themselves however they liked. There were no Roman troops allowed to be garrisoned inside the city. So you didn't have to put up with Roman soldiers marching around and

causing trouble, as Roman soldiers would have a tendency to do.

And best of all, there was no tribute to pay to Rome. So this was a pretty good deal. There was no tribute, and you had all the protection of Rome. And so they enjoyed this privileged status in the Roman Empire.

And the question is, how did they earn all those perks? And the answer is, they earned those perks by being incredibly loyal to Rome.

Thessalonica, and this is very important to realize, they as a city had aligned themselves completely with Rome. If Rome said jump, they said how high.

[10:36] And if Rome said quack like a duck, they said, well, how long should we do that? Everything that Rome wanted, Thessalonica was going to give them. And so Thessalonica, as a city, had sold itself, body and soul, to Rome.

Their status, their perks, all depended on staying on the good side of Rome. And that's why in Acts 17, which we just had read, that's why the Jews had that one accusation, that they are defying Caesar's decree, saying that there's another king, one called Jesus.

And did you hear the response? When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. So as soon as their status with Rome is threatened, everything goes haywire.

And they go crazy. And so much that Paul and Silas, they have to sneak away in the middle of the night. So Thessalonica was a very worldly city, a very pragmatic city, a very secular city.

And it should remind you of a place that you know. Free, yet chained to this world. The home of the free, and yet enslaved to sin and to spiritual realities.

[12:03] That they had sold themselves to something other than God. Well, Thessalonica was a very diverse city, religiously speaking. It was a melting pot.

So it was sort of like where we live, where everyone practiced all sorts of religious beliefs, and kinds of religion, and ideologies, and philosophies.

Everything and everyone was worshipped in Thessalonica. And surprisingly enough, the Egyptian gods were worshipped in Thessalonica, which is very strange.

But they had a very important part in the city. And so the gods that God defeated in the Exodus, he faces again here in Thessalonica.

Aphrodite, the goddess of love and sex, was one of the most important deities in Thessalonica.

Archaeologists, for some reason, have discovered lots of figurines of Aphrodite in the cemeteries of that city.

[13:05] But religion wasn't just an add-on to life. That's the way we view things a lot of times. We're basically secular, and you go to church, and that's just sort of your religious thing.

That's not the way life worked in Thessalonica. That's not the way life worked in the ancient world at all. If you were... Religion was part of the civic life, the city life.

It was also part of your job. If you were a trade guild member, and so you had a god that you worshipped, that you prayed to, just because that's what you were.

Let's say you're a blacksmith. And just part of being a blacksmith, you go to the Union Hall, and they call the meeting to order. And so we call this meeting to order.

The first order of business is, we need to pray to Hephaestus, the god of the forge. And so that's the first order of business. And then the second order of business is, well, next Thursday, there's this parade through town, and we need someone to carry the image of Hephaestus around the city, and we have our songs, and we need to set up the choir in order to sing.

[14:15] That's just part of being a blacksmith. And that's how life was. Work and worship went together. And that is one of the reasons why life was so hard for a Christian in this culture.

It was hard to stay employed for very long if idolatry is just part of having a job. Maybe the worst of all was the imperial cult.

And that was a big deal in this city. Remember, Thessalonica had their hearts on Rome. Their hearts were set there. That's where their expectations were.

They loved Rome. And so central to that relationship that Thessalonica enjoyed with Rome was worshipping the emperor, praying to the emperor.

The whole city wanted to stay on the emperor's good side. And so they would sing hymns to him, and they would worship him in every civic event. Well, that's life in Thessalonica.

[15:18] When they sang the doxology, you would sing, and praise Rome, from whom all blessings flow. Praise Caesar, Senate, and Roman host.

Thessalonica was a very different city than what we live in. But in many respects, in the most important respects, it's very similar to where we live.

So let's dive in, then, to the text. Those are a few things that you need to remember. And I think those things will help you to understand kind of what's going on in Thessalonica at the time when Paul is writing this letter.

So if you're not there, turn in your Bibles to 2 Thessalonians. And we'll just read the first two verses. Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, and God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace to you from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[16:28] who is writing this book? Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Paul was a middle-aged man by this time, probably young 50, 51, 52, or something like that.

We don't know much about Silas. We don't know much about Silas. He's probably a Jew from Jerusalem. We do know, according to Acts 15, that he was a prophet, and that he was used to encourage the church in Antioch.

And so Silas, he has this heart for the Gentiles, just like Paul does. He was one that the apostles, when they had their council in Acts 15, they gave him the letter to send, to deliver, to the Gentile churches.

And apparently, Silas loved the Gentiles, working with Gentiles so much, that after he was done delivering this letter, and he went to Antioch, and then he reported back to the apostles in Jerusalem, at some point, we don't know sure when that was exactly, but he made his way back up to Antioch.

And it seems that he felt, that's where he felt at home. So there was this Jew whose heart was turned towards the Gentiles.

[17:48] And so when Paul and Barnabas, remember they had their falling out, well, it was natural that Silas would be the one that Paul would take. Silas was the best man on hand.

And then there's Timothy. And you know about Timothy. He's rather a timid, nervous, young man. This is his first trip out into the world, as far as we know.

And he's young. He's working with Paul as a son. And he wasn't the one to go into a situation and take control very easily. He didn't dominate things.

He couldn't take leadership like Paul, who apparently could go into any situation. And he would find himself at the center of attention and he would have something to say. And that doesn't seem like Timothy.

So maybe if you aren't Paul, if that's not your personality, you should be encouraged. Because Timothy was the exact opposite and yet God was using him. God was using Timothy and God can use you too.

[18:59] So much to... Timothy was so useful. Paul said in his letter to the Philippians, I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.

So Timothy was not this great mover and shaker. He wasn't the one out in the forefront making things happen. But he loved people. He loved people. And that qualified him to sit down with Paul and Silas and write this letter to the Thessalonians.

He took part in the first letter and he takes part in this one. So that's who wrote it. And as you read the book, you'll notice that there's a lot of we's in this book.

The same with 1 Thessalonians. Every now and then, Paul's voice comes out to the forefront and there's this I. And you know that Paul is the one standing behind this letter. He's the one that is leading...

He's the moving force behind the letter. But this is a collective effort. And you can tell that by all the we's in this book. All three are very interested in what's going on in Thessalonica. They cared about them.

[20:07] They loved them. They were praying for them. And that was so important for the church of the Thessalonians to know. They were under a lot of persecution.

Things were very difficult in Thessalonica. They were young and they needed to know that Paul, Silas, and Timothy, the people that had brought them the gospel, had not abandoned them but they were still caring for them.

And so that's why you have Paul, Silas, and Timothy. They're very interested and so they write to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

And here we find the second thing that I want to say. Being saved makes all the difference in the world to your status. Being saved makes all the difference in the world to your status.

Now, before Saul, or before Paul and Silas and Timothy met them, who were these people? Well, they were Thessalonians. They lived like Thessalonians.

[21:14] They worshipped whatever God they had and they worshipped this God and that God. And remember, they were in the city of Thessalonica and they were of the city of Thessalonica.

And so, they belonged to the people of Thessalonica. And along with the whole city, their heart is set on something else. Their heart is set on business.

It's set on staying in Rome's good graces. They belonged to the people of Thessalonica but now, Paul addresses them totally different. And this is what we saw this morning.

The gospel makes a drastic difference in who we are and what we are as far as our status. He says, to the church, to the called out ones.

They used to be in Thessalonica, now they've been called out. They've been called out and they're now part of a different community. They don't find their primary status anymore in being of the Thessalonians and being in that city.

[22:15] Now it's in God our Father. They have a new location, a new status. They used to be in Thessalonica, of Thessalonica, and now they are in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. So, how in the world did that happen? How did they get this drastic new identity? Well, 1 Thessalonians, Paul says, our gospel didn't come to you simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.

And that was the powerful call that brought them and made them to be the called out ones. And so, the gospel came, and the gospel was not just words.

It was power. And the Holy Spirit was behind it. And there was deep conviction such to the point that it cut them off from what they used to be and what they used to love and what they used to think.

And it brought them into God's family and into Jesus Christ. A radical difference as far as their status goes. And so, Paul could say, in God our Father.

[23:24] Now that doesn't sound very shocking to us. But who were these Thessalonians? They were Gentiles.

They were foreigners. Strangers. They had no, they had nothing for God to say that you are my children. They were outside of the family of God.

And now Paul can say, we're in the same family. We pray to the same Father. We talk to the same Father. And He listens to us. And He listens to you.

You've been adopted. And that changes everything. So, the people in Thessalonica had their hearts set on Rome. What will Rome do? How will my business go?

How will they treat us? Will their wealthy patrons, the people that we have to stay in good graces with, will they keep blessing us? But not these people.

[24:24] Not the people that Paul is writing to anymore because they have a heavenly Father that loves them and knows them and keeps them. They have a Father who knows what they need before they even know what they need.

And He has loved them so much that He gave them His Son to die for them. He gave them Jesus Christ to be their mediator, their protector, their Lord, their defender.

Everything that the Thessalonians needed, they had found in God. their Father. And what about you, brothers and sisters? Isn't the same thing true of you?

The Gospel has made a radical difference in your status, in your identity, in your community. You were orphans. You were children without a Father and then now you are children of the Father.

You were outside of Christ and now you are inside of Christ. And so you don't have to live like your neighbors. You don't have to live like the other Thessalonians all around you.

[25:30] You don't have to live like the other people in Bremen or South Bend or Plymouth or wherever you are from because you don't have your heart is not set in the same place. Your power, your strength, your help, your blessing doesn't come from the same place that theirs does.

You don't have to live for the world and the powers that be. You have a Father. And so it doesn't matter what this official does or that official does because who are they compared to our Father?

And who are they compared to your Lord? Remember at the last day, Jesus blows on the most powerful man in history and he withers and he's gone.

He's destroyed by the splendor of his coming. And that's the power of the gospel for you. You are in the United States but you are not of the United States.

God has graciously, sweetly, kindly drawn you out of this world. He's changed your status. Well, perhaps these words aren't for you.

[26 : 41] I'm very well aware that some people here are in Bremen and they're of Bremen. They're of this world. And so you still belong to the world and you're still hoping in people and your faith is resting firmly on them.

And so you wake up and you get dressed and you get dressed for them. What will they say? What will they think about me? What will they, will they still like me? Because I need that. I need them to give me their blessing.

And I know you don't say those words consciously, but those are the words of your heart. I need these people. I'm trusting in these people. And you don't know the incredible freedom it is to be one of the called out ones.

To belong to the church of God. And if you don't, then I pity you. And I don't mean that patronizing in a patronizing way because it is hard to live in this world.

It's hard to be controlled by this world. To live for their opinions because the world promises so much and then gives so little.

[27 : 50] And the world is so cruel. Its threats are so cruel. And its heart is so mean and small. So I pity you. So if you aren't part of the ones who can say God is my Father, God is our Father, then listen to me.

Because Jesus Christ says, all who call on me on the day of trouble, I will deliver them. If they are weary and they come to me, I will give them rest. And Jesus is saying, I have forgiveness of sins in my right hand.

I have love for you. Everlasting love in my left hand. And you can have them both if you take me.

And so why not hear what Jesus is saying when he says, come, come out of the world.

Come out of your sin and give yourself body and soul not to Rome, not to this world, not to your friends, but to him, to Jesus. Because he can save you from your sins.

And he can save you and drastically change everything about your life. We saw it this morning. The old creation is gone. That is a wonderful thing that everything that I am and everything that I could be and my hopes and my dreams and the things that I'm depending on could be totally removed.

[29 : 04] and then replaced with something new. Jesus died so that all who would come to him could be completely forgiven.

And so you could come even now. Why wait until you have to... Why wait? Why wait another night? Because Jesus is offering salvation today.

And your status could be totally changed in a day. So, the gospel makes a drastic difference in our status.

And that brings me to the third thing I want to say. A changed status means a changed... A new... A changed status means a new power to live. A changed status means a new power to live.

So, my dear brothers and sisters that you live in the favor and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father.

[30 : 05] And that's what Paul says next. Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, these words are a greeting and so we don't want to, you know, put too much emphasis and read too much into it and overplay their significance.

It is a greeting but I think it's more than a greeting. It's a blessing and it's also a blessing from God and that means that you're looking now to a different source for your hope.

When a Greek person said hello he said kare which is a form of the word grace. And when a Jewish person said hello he said shalom which means peace.

And Paul is saying, you know what, neither of those things by itself is enough for you. It's both grace and peace to you. Grace and peace to you.

It's the fullest greeting that someone could give. It's the fullest blessing that someone could give.

And the wonderful part of this is this is a greeting not from Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

[31 : 10] It's from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. God is greeting these Thessalonians. God is sending grace and peace.

And it is a greeting but it's also a revelation of God's heart to these Thessalonians. The Thessalonians live on new power. The Thessalonians like every Christian, every Christian here

lives on God's ever coming, ever arriving, ever flowing grace and peace to their lives. And so the grace that met you this morning is the grace that meets you tonight and the grace that will meet you tomorrow. It is all coming from Him and it's ever arriving, ever showing up. And brothers and sisters, that makes all the difference in the world and how you live. That should have put a smile on the face of the Thessalonians and it should put a smile on our face. The world was persecuting them. The world, it was not peaceful for these Thessalonians. And these words came full of hope.

[32 : 17] There is grace and there is peace to be had from God and from the Lord Jesus Christ. God is smiling on them if no one else is. And His attitude toward them was wide open with grace and peace, everything that they needed.

He knew them. He was aware of their need. They weren't in this conflict alone because that's one of the hardest things is when you are suffering, it is so easy to feel cut off, to feel alone.

And so this greeting comes and says, you're not alone. God and Jesus Christ knows you and they're greeting you and they're coming to you with help. So, imagine that you are fighting in a war and your general sends you to defend a little plot of land and he says, retreat is not possible. We have to make this stand here. You have to stay here. You can't fall back. You have to stay. And, so you're going to have to fight. But, everything you need, if you need anything, just pick up the radio and call me.

I will send reinforcements. I will send air support. I will send supplies. Whatever you need, I have. And so you get your shovel out and you dig in and you lay out some barbed wire and you clean your weapon and you wait.

[33 : 38] and then you start to see the enemy coming. And the enemy starts pouring in on you. And with horror, you see that there are way too many of them for you and your little group to defend.

But you can't retreat. The position must be held. And so now you're in the thick of it. You're in hand-to-hand combat and you're barely holding on and the sweat is dripping in your eyes. And you have blood on your uniform. But with a heroic effort, you throw back the enemy and there's a pause in the battle. And you sit there in your foxhole and you start to lose hope because you can't survive another attack like that one.

There's too many of them. And so you begin to despair. But then suddenly, you look from the rear, coming from the rear position, you see a man running up.

And it's a messenger from the general. And he says somewhat breathlessly, OK, remember what the general said. If you need anything, I have it for you.

[34 : 47] Just pick up the radio and I will send you reinforcements. I will send you help. I will send whatever you need. I will send supplies. And so there you are, covered in blood and sweat and you're breathless and the enemy is ready to charge again.

But help is at hand. There is help ready. And now things take on a different hue. Things are now, instead of despair, you start to have hope. You're not in this alone.

And that is what Paul is saying here. Paul is the messenger and he's coming from God. And that's what he's saying to these dear believers. All the grace and all the peace that you need is at hand and it's available to you.

He's ready. He's willing to give you grace and peace. And brothers and sisters, it is my privilege and it really is my joy to tell you that that is true of you.

Often we struggle to believe that God actually cares about us. Yes, God is great and he's he's so great and he's so powerful and somehow his greatness distance him, distances himself from us.

[36 : 11] Or that's what it appears like that he, because he is so great, he's so complex that he really can't relate to me here. Here I am. But the Bible says, the same Bible that says God is holy, holy, holy, also says that he's slow to anger, abounding in love, full of compassion.

He is ready and willing to help his people. And brothers and sisters, so this is God's greeting to you. Wherever you are in your life, whatever trials you're going through, God is saying there's grace and peace from us to you.

Well, what trials are you going through? Maybe it's not persecution. It's probably not. Could be. Probably not. Maybe God has put you in a different battlefield, in a different location, and he's telling you this is where you're supposed to be and you defend this position.

And so, that's where you're at. It's not persecution, it's something else. And wherever you are, God is saying there's supplies for you. There's help for you.

And you're not alone. His heart is ready to give you all the hope, all the love, all the self-control, all the patience, all the wisdom that you need.

[37:33] And so maybe you're fighting the battle in a busy, busy schedule. And you can't retreat. You have to stay where you are.

And life seems to be a whirlwind around you and you're barely holding on. Well, this is God's greeting to you and grace and peace from our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I'm ready to give you peace when everything else is in chaos and I'm ready to smile when professors and when demanding bosses are hard and unsympathetic.

I'm ready to smile when everything else around you is hard. And maybe moms, perhaps you're growing just frustrated and tired with raising your children and taking care of your husband and sometimes it's like you can't even tell the difference between the two and they're so demanding. demanding. That was sort of a joke but it's also sort of true, man. We can be so demanding. But that is the place where God has put you, isn't it?

[38:49] That's the field. You aren't in Thessalonica but you're on the home front and you're fighting it out to be patient, to be disciplined, to stay cheerful.

And so do you hear God's greeting to you? Grace and peace to you. Whatever you lack, I have. Maybe it's a very difficult marriage and it's hard.

It's hard. You have problems. And there are problems that are too hard. to figure out. And there are problems that take too much wisdom and too much self-control and too much strength and you don't have it.

But this is God's word to you, his greeting to you, that there is grace and peace for you as well. Whatever field of battle you're in, God's heart is ready to help you.

And so we are in different places. But wherever we live, wherever we're fighting the battle, and we all have a battle to fight, the power that we live on isn't people anymore.

[40:07] It isn't Rome. It isn't the people at our work. It's not our family and it's not our children. It's not our husband or wife. The power that we need to live is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father and they are saying, we're coming to you with it.

We greet you with it. And so the storehouses of heaven are open. God has given us a son. How much more will he not give us all things that we need? And so the storehouses of heaven are wide open and God stands ready to give you everything that you need, every grace that you need.

And the beautiful thing is, is that some of that grace is going to come to you in the form of 2 Thessalonians. And every sentence has God's kind heart written on it.

Every sentence and every paragraph has Jesus' love in it. And so may God give us the grace to not only read 2 Thessalonians but to hear it and to believe it.

and then to put it into practice. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, thank you for your kind heart to us.

[41:27] We certainly do not deserve it. And we certainly need it. And so Father, we thank you that Jesus Christ has opened the way that we can come to the throne of grace.

and that all the help and all the grace, all the peace, everything that we need, you have at hand and your heart is turned towards us to bless us.

And Father, the words that we went over tonight were not very new, but I pray Father that they would be encouraging. That wherever we're at and we're struggling right along with the Thessalonians, that we would find you to be there with us.

That we would believe that you are there with us. And that you are upholding us by your righteous right hand. That you are defending us. That you are giving us grace when the world is throwing water on us and our faith is threatened.

That you are pouring oil. And I pray, Father, that you would pour oil into our hearts and warm us. Give us grace to trust in you when life is difficult.

[42:37] And give us grace to keep growing into seeking to obey more and more because of your goodness to us. Thank you that we don't have to trust in people, that we can trust in you.

Father, for those who are lost, I pray that you would call them out as you called out the Thessalonians, as you called out so many. Father, what a sad state they're in.

Will you please have mercy on them for your own name's sake and for their good? Because you are compassionate, God. Show yourself compassionate. We pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.