2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

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[0:00] Take your Bibles, go over to 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, 2 Thessalonians chapter 3. Our text this morning will be verses 1 through 5. 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verses 1 through 5, where we will be at as we just continue to make our way through this letter of Paul called 2 Thessalonians.

If you are physically able and desire to do so, would you join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God with one another and then we will pray. The word of God says, Father, we do thank you for this day.
We rejoice in the day you have given us and it is good to be gathered together with brothers and sisters in Christ. It is truly good to be encouraged by our fellowship with one another.
Lord, it is good together in this place where you are in our midst as well. So, Father, we pray that you would direct our hearts, that we would be overwhelmed by your love and your steadfastness. We would be overwhelmed by your person, that the glory of Christ would resonate and radiate in this place, that you would help us to see your word in its truthfulness. Father, may every distraction be bound.
[1:51] May every hindrance to our perception and reception of the gospel be pushed aside. May we be focused on but one thing as we gather together and that is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Christ be magnified in our midst. And as we see you and as we come to know you, may our lives be radically changed because of our understanding and the relationship that we now have been strengthened therein.
Lord, be glorified in this moment. And we ask it all in your most precious and holy name. Amen. You may be seated. If you were to take out of the back of your pew in front of you there, I'm not asking you to do it, and you would see the prayer card that is for the golden offering.
Now, if you want to do that and you're led to do that, I'm going to encourage you to. Just don't do it right now because now is not the time. But if you were to take that out and you were to look at it, you would see that on the front of that prayer card is the second half of Philippians 127.
Those that were gathered together with us yesterday as we had the church picnic at Henry Horton. By the way, thank you for being there. Thank you for all those who brought food and the dishes. And it was wonderful.
[3:05] And we left full. And we left a little heavier than when we came. And it was a wonderful time of fellowship. But if you were to notice that, you would see that in our understanding of that, when we planned our picnic, we wanted to walk worthy.

If you were to read that verse, you'd say, but only you conduct yourself, depending on the translation, conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel. The legacy standard gives a literal translation to live worthy of the gospel message which you have been called.
And so it is the living of a life of citizenship, being worthy of the gospel. But the second half of that verse is the focus of what is on that prayer card. It is the striving together for the advancement of the gospel.
Very quickly, we saw that as we lived worthy of the gospel, that it meant we were citizens united to others of a different realm. And because of that, we would strive together.
If you were to look at the front of your bulletin, you would see a quotation there of a Bible verse from the book of Ephesians. Both, by the way, Philippians and Ephesians letters of Paul. And there, as you look at the front of your bulletin, you would see it has the emphasis of bearing one another's and loving one another and caring for one another.
[4:17] Here in the passage before us, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verses 1 and 5, We are again confronted with this reality that we are not individuals living in isolation, but rather we have been bound to other believers.

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We are living in the beautiful unity called the body of Christ. And it is of paramount importance. It is important because as Paul is writing to the church at Thessalonica, they were living in a world that was at conflict with their very existence.
Paul did not have very long to remain in the city of Thessalonica. He was only there probably a number of weeks, at most three months. We know that after the church was birthed and he began to raise up leaders, there was persecution that arose in the city, not only against Paul, but against the believers that were already there.
And because of that, Paul was forced to flee and leave. And he went on to other places. He ended up in Athens and Mars Hill message and all the great things. God was moving him.
But God had solely ordained only to leave him there for a short period. But yet these believers, the church would remain. Paul would encourage that church with 1 Thessalonians.
[5:34] We believe there's another letter in there that is lost to us. We don't have to worry about it being, quote, lost to us. Because that just means that God did not ordain that it was the word of God. I'm sure there are many letters historically lost among believers.

But that does not qualify them to be a part of the canonization of Scripture. The ones that God wants us to know about are the ones that we have before us in the 66 books of the Bible. Okay? We can have absolute confidence in that.
Don't go searching for lost letters. Because if you start searching for things which are lost, guarantee you, my friend, you will be lost very soon. Because your mind will be distracted and you will be distorted and you will see all numbers of confusions.
And it is much better to focus on the truth. When you absolutely know the truth, you do not have to worry about anything that is apart from the truth. And when you have these 66 books figured out, then come to me.
For one, I would like to hear from you because you've gone a lot further than I have. You come to me and we'll see if we can find you something else to work on. But until then, we've got all of glory to figure out what in the world God is telling us in the depth of the mind of the word of God.
[6:43] But yet what we find is Paul is writing to this church encouraging them to remain steadfast. Surely there is an illusion in each chapter of 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians of the coming again of Jesus Christ.

But the purpose was not just to say, hey, Jesus is coming. But rather, it is to encourage them in light of his imminent coming. It is to encourage them to steadfastness and to hope in light of the reality that there will be a day that this Lord and Savior they have heard about, they will also stand before. They will give an account. And one of the matters in which they are strengthened is their part and portion in the greater body of Christ. Friend, the church is important.
I believe in the church. I believe in the universal church that there is but one body, one bride. I believe that that body is exhibited and is lived out in various what we call denominations, but it is the bride of Christ.
I do not believe there is any, now this may get me kicked out of some, maybe to get me welcomed into others, but stay with me here. I am just telling you what I believe in my personal convictions. I do not believe there is any particular denomination of man that has all the truths absolutely figured out and is the only one.
[7:59] Okay, I just do not believe that. I believe that when we get into the presence of our Lord and Savior, we will be amazed at the diversification of his bride and we will go, I never expected that.

But then there will be those that look at us and say, I never expected you. And then we will say, well, amen, we are all here and we are all here for the same reason. Okay, so we are not here to get into doctrinal differences between denominations, but I believe in the universal body.
But I also believe in the local body called the church. Here it is War Trace Baptist Church. It is absolute conviction of the reality of scripture that every New Testament letter is written to a local body of believers called the church.
The book that you have opened before you is written to the church at Thessalonica and it is referred to as Second Thessalonians. It is written to a local body of believers. So when we isolate ourselves and separate ourselves from a local body of believers, we are ensuring that one of the means and measures in which God has given us to strengthen us to remain faithful has been cut away from ourselves.

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The church is important. Not because the church needs you to hold the pews down. They are bolted to the ground. I promise you they are not going anywhere. Not because you say, oh, pastor, you say that because your pay is dependent upon the church body.
[9:22] Well, I have got better news for you. I have a higher employer than the church. I do not believe why I am blessed that my paycheck has War Trace Baptist Church written on it.

And it comes to me by means of that. My calling is from the Lord and therefore my dependence, my friend, and I mean this with all sincerity and truth. My absolute dependence is not upon you or War Trace Baptist Church but upon the Lord of the church.
It is the head of the church that I go to and I say, Father, I am in desperate need. And he takes care of that. Now, he blesses me through the blessing of the church body. And you say, why do you say that?
Because if I ever thought for just a moment that I was absolutely held accountable to you, then I would tailor every one of my messages to appease you. And I would be concerned if I offended you.
And then if I maybe, oh, wait a minute, I don't want to mess around. And then I may want to know how much you give. And just for a side note, there's only one family in this whole body that I know how much they give and that is mine.
[10:23] And I don't want to know. I have no desire to know. Why? Because I don't need you here to give. I don't need you here. You need to be here the same amount of reason I need to be here.

I need the encouragement that comes that only you can bring to the body. And you need the encouragement that only others can bring to the body. Why? Because the admonition is to stand firm in a world that is antagonistic against us too often.
Brother Ivan has just shared, we are a light. We are a city set upon a hill. We are the salt of the earth. And if there is anything that we have noticed is that darkness does not like light.
And salt tends to bring discomfort. And the world doesn't always want us to be the salt and the light. And it's pushing against that.
And we need to be encouraged to remain. And one of the means to do that is through the local body. You say, Pastor, this is a long introduction. But it's a very important reality.
[11:31] Because Paul here, he is about to admonish some believers in this body called the church at Thessalonica. He is going to get on to some men for their laziness.

He is going to do that. He is going to say, some of you say, well, Jesus is coming back. I am just not going to work. And they are going to quit working. And this is great. I love this line, by the way. I don't know what it is. Maybe my boys try to say I am a little bit hard.
Some people say I am a little bit, you know, old school. But I love this line where it says, if a man doesn't work, he doesn't eat. That's a pretty good line. I like that. It makes sense to me. It's pretty simple, right? If a man can physically work, if a man chooses not to work, then if a man doesn't work, he doesn't eat.
To me, it solves a lot of the world's problems. Maybe not. Maybe I am too simple and narrow-minded. But I call it biblical. It's right there in front of us. Paul will say that. If you don't want to eat, don't work. Don't be lazy.
Now, I am not talking about, I have been one of those. Hey, I have lost jobs. I have been laid off from jobs. I know what it's like to be and want. I'm kind of like Paul. I understand that. But before Paul admonishes them, he writes to them about how much he needs them.
[12:40] And he unites himself to them. And then he requests something of them that is so amazing. The very people he is about to rebuke.

He says, oh, I need you. And do you see it there? He says, finally, brethren. By the way, he's very clear when he's writing here in case you said, well, there must have been some nonbelievers in the church.
He's very clear when he gets to the rest of the chapter that he's not talking about nonbelievers in the body. And so if we want to stay biblical, that teaching resides with the believers.
He says, don't disown them, but rebuke them as a brother. Don't hate them, but correct them. So he's talking about family members here.
He's talking about people he's united to. And he's giving us here this reason why we so desperately need the body, even though maybe there are struggles with it and its complexities and all this.

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[13:45] This others, you know, I was speaking to someone just yesterday. And they're talking about an individual they met. I said, you know, they just don't have a hard time fitting into any church. So they just do church at home. It's much easier to do church at home.

I understand, especially in today's day and time. Because at home, if I'm by myself or if I surround myself with the people I want, nobody says anything against me at home. And if it gets too offensive, I can just cut it off.
But here, it is so important. Why? Because of why Paul begins to speak about it. He says, finally, brethren, look at this. Pray for us. Do you notice that?
Paul is about to rebuke them. But yet, his first request, before he says, let me tell you what you're doing wrong, he makes a petition of them. He says, pray for us.
He said, well, I'm not so sure I'd want them praying for me. You know who else he says to pray for us? I've read. I went back and looked. He has the church at Corinth to pray for him as well. As a matter of fact, it seems as if Paul had kind of a habit of asking the most messed up churches to pray for him.
[14:56] The churches with the biggest problems and the biggest struggles, he would say, pray for us. Well, I think I want a believer who's not going through anything.

You know what I have found is the ones who are going through some stuff are the ones usually that are spending the most amount of time in the throne room. And the ones that are going before the Lord in repentance and brokenness, those are the ones that are going before the Lord in the throne room.
And those are the ones that we need and request. And so Paul is like, pray for us. Why? Because he wants to share with them that there is something greater than the conflict that chooses to divide them.
The enemy always wants to highlight the conflict. But Paul here talks about the passion that unites them. He said, I want you to pray for us. And there's a passion that unites us.
I want to ask, what unites the church? What really brings the body of believers together? You can tell biblically what unites the church by what the church is gathering together praying about.
[15:57] And as the church prays and as they fellowship and as they do all these things and the prayer life of the church really is the magnifying glass of the passion of the church.

The prayers of the individual highlight the passion of the individual. If all we're concerned about is personal safety. If we're passionate about safety, we will pray about safety. If we're passionate about ease of life, we will pray about ease of life.
One of the most disturbing things that I think, and I say this knowing that I am advancing on the other end of the spectrum. And a lot of people, I know I'm blessed with a lot of people standing beside me that remind me that the golden years aren't always so golden.
And I understand I'm drawing ever so nigh of those. Some of you say, oh, you're just young. Well, yeah, okay. Define young for me. I was at a men's thing not too long ago.
Brother Rodney, I'm going to call you out on here. Brother Rodney, we were at a men's thing not too long ago. We had all the men here. We had like 15 men here. And I realized that Brother Rodney and I, I can only say this because we've been going to men's events now for 25 years together.
[17:04] And I looked at him. I said, hey, brother, we used to be on that end of the table. And on that end of the table were all the 20-something-year-olds with the young kids. And I said, we're not on that end of the table anymore.

We're on this end of the table down here. He was at the very end. I sat in the middle because I wanted to pretend like I was still there. But we don't really belong on that end of the table anymore because we were talking about our grandkids.
It's a big difference. And so I understand this. But here's where we have to be careful. So much of our prayer life gets into this life preservation mode.
And we're more passionate about preservation of life than we are the preparation of eternal life. But what does Paul say?
Pray for us. And it's important. This is very long drawn out. But notice, Paul has already told them that he is praying for them. If you were to go back to the end of chapter 1, it says, for this reason, I pray for you.
[18:08] For this reason, I lift up my prayers for you. So if we want to see the commonality here, the passion that unites them, we need to see what Paul is praying for them. And what he requests

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that the church at Thessalonica pray for him.

He says, I'm praying that our Lord Jesus, there's a lot of extra words there. You can read it there in verses 11 and 12 of the first chapter. But essentially, what he's saying is, I'm praying that you would live worthy and that the Lord would be glorified in your life.
Read it without the insertions of the commas and all those other things. So what he's saying, he says, I pray that you would live worthy and live according to your calling so that Christ may be glorified.
So what's the prayer of Paul for the church? That Christ is glorified in the believers. And what does he ask the believers to pray for him? Pray for us. Notice what it says.
It says, but pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified. This is Paul, shipwrecked, beaten, left for dead, in hungers, in thirst, sometimes well-fed, sometimes almost starving, stripes without number.
[19:23] But he never asked, pray that my body would feel better. Pray, he never asked, you know, he never asked, pray that this thorn in my flesh will be removed.

He says, I prayed three times. And the Lord says, my grace is sufficient. So he said, okay, I gave up on that. He never requests the church to pray that the thorn, whatever the thorn is, some think it was an impediment of the eyes.
Some think he was stooped over. We don't know. But it really doesn't matter. He said there's a thorn in the flesh that helped him humble him because he was a man who was caught up into the third heavens and saw things that were unspeakable.
And so God gave him this thorn to humble him. And sometimes we have thorns to humble us because he's shown us something glorious about himself. So you don't get the glory, the glorious visions of Christ without the humility in the world because then you have pride.
Pride tends to creep in. And so we understand this. He had this thing that would kind of bring him down. He never requests believers to pray that the thorn would be removed. You know, he never does.
[20:21] He never requests any church that he asks to pray that his next meal would be provided. He never asks to pray, just pray that God will give me a safe voyage on that ship.

He doesn't. What he says is, he says, pray for us that the word of the Lord may sound forth and he be glorified. On the other side of that, he always prays for the church that Christ would be glorified.
Here's the passion that unites them. That Christ be glorified. That Christ be glorified. The greatest concern of Paul was the glory of Christ, not the comfort of man.
And it was a passion that moved him to understand he needed the church because that's the bride of Christ.
That's where Christ is most seen. If I'm not present somewhere, but someone needs to get a message to me, or someone wants to convey something to me, and my wife happens to be there, then 10 times out of 10, they'll go up to my wife and say, hey, would you let Billy Joe know, or would you mind telling me Joe?
[21:57] Or if they want to know, you know, how Billy Joe would respond to something, they'll go to her. Why? Because that's my bride. No one knows me better than my bride. I've had people ask me all the time, you know, why do you refer to her as your bride?

Or why do you not? Because I love the terminology here. She's my bride. We are the two have become one flesh. And so a lot of times, people, I don't know why, they don't want to ask me something, but they'll ask her something.
Why? Because they know that she'll know. And she's like, you know, people, they have questions for you all the time to come ask me. I don't know why they want to ask me. But they know that she'll know. Why? Because that's my bride.
And she is a representation of me. And the church is the bride of Christ, which is a representation of him.
And so when people want to know what Christ would do, or how Christ would behave, or how Christ would act, they ought to be able to look at the church. And Christ is glorified, not the church. Not the individuals.
[22:59] That Christ be glorified. And Paul's prayer request for the church is pray that in me, people don't see me, or I'm not preserved, or I'm not sustained, that Christ be glorified in me.

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And it is a passion that unites them in a world that is antagonistic against them. Because it's not a personal concern.
It's a sacrificial surrender. And he says, I need that. So finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will be spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you.
And he talks about that there in the very introduction. And he says this reality, this is my passion. This is my passion for you. This is the passion I want you to have for me. So here, let me go ahead. You say, Pastor, how can we pray for you?
I get asked that time to time, and people tell me they pray for me, and I love the fact they pray for me. I had a message this morning from someone outside church. They're praying for you, brother, and I appreciate that. You say, Pastor, how can I pray for you? Here's a simple way you can pray for me.
[24:01] Pray that Christ be glorified. May God be glorified, even if Billy Joe's never seen. And anything in my life that becomes a hindrance to the glory of Christ would be removed.

Or a distraction. Or a distortion. That Christ be glorified. May that be my overarching passion.
And may it be the passion of the church. That which we guard. And guarding is going to cost us something. So we are strengthened through a united passion.
But we are encouraged here through the battle that we all face. I love sports. I wasn't the most athletic guy growing up.
My personal sport that I loved the most was baseball. Some of you don't like the game of baseball. And I understand it. Baseball is a slow game. A good game of baseball is like one to nothing. That's a great game of baseball.
[25:05] And I love it. You know, like nine innings, one to nothing. That's not really exciting. And now we try to mess with the sport. I'm a purist. I'll go ahead and tell you. I'm a purist. I don't like the pitch clock. I don't like all the, I don't like the, you know, taking the umpire out of it.

And looking to see if that was actually a ball or a strike. I like the humanity in it. I like that. For one, I was a catcher. I liked making a ball look like a strike. And, you know, the umpire calling a strike. I liked that. I like not that humanity is right.
But I like the human element. I love the game of baseball. The reason I love the game of baseball is because the game of baseball can be controlled by one person. A one to nothing ball game was really broke open because one guy stood at the plate, swung the bat the right way, and made a great hit.
One man could control it. A softball, one woman could control it. And you could dictate to the sport. And it was really individual. And I liked that because I could just do my thing. As long as I did my thing right, then I was held accountable to me.
The older I got, I never played any other sports because, really, I was barely good enough to play baseball. I wasn't really good enough to play anything else. I began to like team sports. And I coached baseball, but I coached other sports a little bit more.
[26:05] And the reason I liked it is because then you were dependent upon the people going to battle with you. And there's a great imagery there because when you battle alongside someone, you understand the importance of the other individual.

And it builds a unifying factor because you're entering into a common battle. And every piece and every part has to matter. And every portion has to work together.
And what Paul says here, he says something that reminds them that it's not the church in Thessalonica that's in a battle. He's in the same battle they are.
And that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men, for not all have faith. So what does that mean? Well, the entirety of the second chapter was reminding them that there were evil people among them with false teachers and false prophets.
And that they were wrestling among evil men there in that city. And what Paul is saying is, I'm in the same fight. I'm battling the same enemy.
[27:09] Even though I'm not with you, I'm fighting the same enemy over here. And since we're on the battlefield together, all of a sudden we have this common ground. And we have this thing that brings us together. It ties us with one another because we've experienced that.

You're fighting the enemy. I'm fighting the enemy. And all of a sudden we have this common tie. And I need you. And I exhort you to keep me in mind.

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Too often believers think that they're facing an enemy that is unique to them. Scripture overflows with the reality that we face no new trial nor temptation.
That whatever we're going through is not unique to us. That we're facing the same enemy and fighting the same battles that men and women before us have fought.
And as it would say in Hebrews chapter 12, we have a great cloud of witnesses who have overcome. Some of those overcomers were the ones that were killed.
[28:15] At the end of the 11th chapter, by the way, the ones that were sown to, the ones that were killed. The world was not worthy of them. They overcame. From the world's perspective, they lost. From heaven's perspective, they were victorious.

Why? Because they are the great cloud of witnesses standing in heaven going, we made it. And we are surrounded by the testimony of the overcomers. But we are also walking in the presence of other battlers.
Other people engaged in the same fight. And it encourages us to continue to press on. For the glory of Christ. Why?
Because the enemy is the same. We're not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against the powers and principalities of the inner spiritual forces of darkness. You know that. You say, oh, pastor, you don't know about these people in my life, and you don't know the habit they're creating. Right, well, you've got people, I've got people, but we're not fighting people. There is but one enemy. One of the great benefits that I have as a pastor is that people come to me and they say, hey, pastor, would you pray for us?
[29:24] We've got this going on. Now, I say this as a benefit, but I want you to hear the rest of it. And usually what is brought to me is one of the hardest things that this individual has ever faced.

And it's something that is really difficult, and it's trying, and it's a trial. And I'm not thankful that that person is coming to me, that individual is bringing this news to me, or that they're sharing this truth with me.
But what I'm thankful for is that the moment they do that, I can say, you know what, I talked to someone recently, just walked through the same battle. And I can encourage them, you're not alone in that. There are others fighting the same battle.
They're a little farther down the road from you. They're taking their stand in the field and swinging the sword until their hand goes numb. And they're trudging on.
So don't lose heart, my brother or my sister, for the battle can be fought. The enemy is not bringing new tactics. It may be new in your life, but there are other people fighting the same battle.
[30:25] And we need that fellowship of commonality because it encourages us in this world that we are to be the salt and the light in, that when the battle rages, it is the same enemy that everybody's fighting.

And if that many people are fighting the same enemy, then surely we are more than victorious through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. And the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. The gates of hell do a pretty good job against me. As an individual. When I fight in isolation. And when I'm tired. But not against the church.
I love the accounts of David's mighty men. I love the guy who fought in the field of barley. I love the guy who went into a pit on a snowy day and killed a lion. I just love it. Why?
Because that's the kind of guys you want around you. Why did he kill the lion in the pit? The lion's not getting out of the pit. I don't know. Maybe just to show he could. That's cool. I need that. Why do we have to know it was snowy? I don't know.
[31:29] But I like those guys. Because David didn't fight alone. David, you know the story when David fought Goliath, right? How many smooth stones almost told you.

How many smooth stones did he pick up? Five. Five smooth stones. And you know the answer, right? You know why he picked up five smooth stones. Is it because he was afraid he was going to miss? No.
No. It's because Goliath had four brothers. So in an act of faith he says, I'm not only going to kill you, but I'm going to kill your brothers too. I'm going to kill you and your brothers. He had the confidence to run at a giant with a sling and a stone.
I don't think he was afraid he was going to miss. Because if you miss once, it's kind of game over. You understand that, right? So he got five smooth stones so he could kill Goliath and kill his four brothers behind him. It is attributed unto David that David killed Goliath's brothers.

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But did David kill Goliath's four brothers? No. David's mighty men killed Goliath's four brothers. Successively, if you start reading, you read the accounts. One of David's mighty men killed this one. [32:27] Another one killed this one. Another one killed this one. Another one killed this one. When you read it, but it is told that David killed Goliath and his brothers. Why? Because David wasn't fighting the battle alone. You may pick up the stones, but you need other people to swing the swords and the spears with you.

You're fighting the same enemy. And by picking up the stones in the presence of a company of others, you are telling them, I want you to join with me in this fight. And it is the thing that ties you together.
And Paul says, pray for me. Not only that Christ be glorified, but because we're fighting the same battle. And it's hard over here.
But he says, but I'm not going to lose heart. Why? Because there's a faithfulness that sustains me, and it's the faithfulness that sustains you. Look at what our text says. He says, and that we will not, and that we will be rescued from the perverse and evil man, for not all have faith.
We know that. Look at this. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from every evil one. Now, he transitions, pray for me that I will be rescued, but the Lord is faithful, and he will protect you.
[33:42] He's encouraging them. Because I'm sure the mind of the believers at Thessalonica was, man, if Paul can't even overcome them on their own, what hope do we have? I mean, he's Paul.

You know, the man who not only met the Lord on Damascus Road, but also was like three years with him in the wilderness. Went to the school of Christ after the school of Gamaliel, so that's pretty cool. You know, he was in the presence of Christ.
He saw revelations. And if he can't help but struggle in the battle, what hope do I have? Well, the Lord is faithful. The Lord is faithful.
And it's the faithfulness that sustains Paul. It's the faithfulness that sustains the church. It's the faithfulness that sustains each and every one of us. And we need to be reminded of the Lord's faithfulness.
And you are not reminded of the Lord's faithfulness living in isolation. You look around, everybody there is defeated. But when you can stand in the company of the body of Christ, and you can see those who have fought, and those who have made it, and those who have went before, and you can be reminded that God is faithful in Christ, and there's the testimony of that faithfulness.
[34:49] Paul is a testimony of the Lord's faithfulness to this new church. And you can be encouraged by that. Then you can say, yes, I'm trusting in his faithfulness, not my ability.

I'm trusting in his goodness, not my efforts. And then he goes on a little bit further and says, we have confidence in the Lord concerning you.
What confidence do you have in other believers? This is why we're so cautious about this thing. This is why we're like, well, I don't know if I want to entrust my struggles and struggles and all these things. I don't know if I really want to open up to other people because then they'll know everything. And I don't really have a lot of confidence in these people. Well, that's fine. If you ever put your confidence in man, then man is always going to fall short. But what if we go back to what he had just said in the verses prior to this and understand that they were chose for salvation from the beginning.
So God ordained them to be saved. But then what if we say, and I have confidence in the Lord concerning you. My confidence is not rested in my own abilities.
[35:52] And my friend, just for frankness, and I don't mean this to be offensive, my confidence is not in your abilities, but my confidence is in the Lord concerning your abilities.

That when he saves you and redeems you and calls you, he knew what he was doing. And that he is faithful to you, he is faithful to me. So I don't know if I want to open up to these people.
Well, then you're saying, I don't know. I'm not going to have enough confidence in Christ that he knows how to build his church. Let's count on his faithfulness, not man's faithfulness.
Because that's what sustains us, which leads us to the last thing. There's a transformation that we so desperately need. And I'm almost through. And again, it's another connecting point in this passage of Scripture called 2 Thessalonians.
There's a transformation we need. Look what the text says. May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ. May the Lord direct your hearts.

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[37:00] Now, that's not something new even to this letter. Because if you go back just to verse 16 and 17 there. Now, may our, and this is in the second chapter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts.

So now, in just a matter of a few verses, he has said, may the Lord strengthen your heart. Notice here, the ability to be strengthened in the battle and the ability to be united with other believers called the church is a transformation of the heart.
It's not a matter of making up your mind. If you say, well, I'm just going to get it into my mind. I'm going to do this. The enemy is going to bring something else in there to change your mind. It's a matter of the transformation of the heart.
This is why I began this with the fact that I love the church. Not because the church is always lovable. Because sometimes we're not.
But because my heart has shown me Christ loves the church. And he says, may the Lord strengthen your heart.
[38:21] And may the Lord direct your heart. And here in context, he says, may the Lord direct your heart into what? Into the love of God. And the steadfastness of Christ.

Now, the original wording here is unique. And I'll end with this. Because the question is, and I know you came to your mind as soon as you read it. You said, what does it mean? Does that mean that we are to love God more and be more steadfast like Christ?
Or we are to have a greater love for God and more steadfastness towards Christ? Or is it meaning that I need to look at the love that God has and the steadfastness that Christ possess?
That's exactly what you thought. So I'm going to answer it for you, right? Because in original language, the wording is almost like a play on words. It can mean both. And many Bible scholars, and I agree with them, tend to think that Paul wanted it to mean both.
So here's what he's praying for. And this is what he's requesting. This is what we need. Because here's where the transformation happens. May Christ direct our hearts to see the love that God has for us more and more.
[39:25] May our hearts be transformed with the love of God. So that we can begin to love God more.

When you understand the love that he has for you and the love that he has for others, then it will automatically create within you a greater love for him.
You do not naturally, nor do I naturally love him. But his love for me overwhelms me and makes me love more and more.
Because he loves me in spite of me or because of me. And he loves me in all of my fallacies and all of my mistakes. And he loves me with such unconditional love. And he loves me with such sacrificial love.
And I am compelled, as Paul would say elsewhere, by the love of God. And so I love him. I have a love for God because of the love of God.
[40:24] And in the same meaning, because Christ is so steadfast. What does it say in Hebrews? Consider Jesus.

The author and perfecter of our faith. Too often we spend time considering ourselves and considering what we ought to do. And considering what study we need to take in. And considering what devotion we should give.
And considering how much we should attend. And considering, considering. And all we're doing is considering ourselves. But when we consider the steadfastness of Christ. And he never gives up. And our considerations are on Christ. And we're looking at the steadfastness of Christ. What it does is it creates a steadfastness within us. And we want to be as Christ.
And we want to be so steadfast for Christ. That we can be encouragement to those around us. We need the body. And what a glorious means that God has given us to be strengthened in the world.
[41:35] As a part of the body. Let's pray. Father we thank you for this day. We thank you for this word. Lord even the challenges that it brings to us.

And I pray. Oh Lord I pray. Help us to fall in love with you more and more. Each and every day. There are great needs within this place.
There are great needs within this place even now. Some of them more than individuals. Lord. So as we come to this moment. This time of invitation.

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Or time of prayer. Lord if there's one here who needs another portion or part of the body. May we be moved.
And have the confidence in Christ to do it. That we don't fight alone. That you may be glorified. [42:34] And that you would be seen. And we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. may may may