

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

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[0:00] But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time, in person, not in thought, out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you.

For we wanted to come to you. Certainly I, Paul, did, again and again, but Satan blocked our way. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes?

Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be unsettled by these trials.

For you knew quite well that we are destined for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you, and that our labours might have been in vain.

[1:11] But Timothy has just now come to us from you, and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us, and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.

How can we thank God enough for you, in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. Good. Well, if you want to keep your Bibles open at that passage, if you're new to Cornerstone or new to the Christian faith, then what we do is we sort of talk through the passage, and I'll give some comments on some of the things that I think might be new to you.

[2:27] So, for example, this letter is written by a guy called Paul. Now, you maybe never heard of him before, but Paul was one of the people that God used in an extraordinary way to kind of spread the good news.

And those initial years after Jesus had risen from the grave, and he had a particular calling to go to those who weren't from a Jewish background. And so here we find him in northern Greece in a place in Thessalonica.

And God is doing amazing things. He was seeing people respond to the gospel who'd never heard the gospel, who had never been proclaimed in that part of Greece before.

And people were hearing it and were responding straight away, as in we learned last week, verse 13, that they received it. Chapter 2, verse 13, they received it. They heard it.

They accepted it. They believed it. The Holy Spirit landed the Word of God, the gospel, as Paul proclaimed it, as Paul explained it to them with great power and drew them into believing faith.

[3:31] And in many ways, just very similar to what Vivek was sharing about his experience, that he heard the gospel one day and he was responding to it the very next day, wonderfully.

And it's no wonder then that Paul elsewhere, when he's writing about this gospel that he's been proclaiming, he's writing to a bunch of Christians in Rome this time, he says the gospel is the power

of God and the word that he uses in the Greek language that he's writing is dynamis, from which we get the word dynamite.

He said it's dynamite as it is proclaimed in this extraordinary season that Paul found himself with the Holy Spirit was working in tremendous power in people's lives as the gospel was proclaimed.

Amen. Amen. I mean, to remember that this, you know, so this is early on, the first brushstrokes, if you like, of Christianity on the canvas of human history are being painted.

The first spots of rain that in time will bring seasons of just refreshing and throughout the globe, as it is proclaimed, are just beginning. And we're having sort of a first-hand account and encounter with that as we read his letter and his words.

[4:40] And as the gospel lands, as we've been seeing, it is both rejoiced in by some and received, but actually, some of the background to this letter, as Emily said, was that the others were reviled by it.

And so these young believers had to sort of usher Paul and Silas, who I'm quite sure were saying, no, we're happy to stay. But they ushered them out of town and said, look, keep in touch, come back, we'll be fine, and so on.

And so that's kind of where we're picking it up. And we've seen that this group of Christians in Thessalonica were modeling really authentic church in chapter one.

And then last week, we saw how Paul modeled authentic Christian leadership. We'll see more of that today. But also we'll see, you know, how authentic progress happens in the Christian life.

Maybe you've come along and you're thinking, right, you know, I'm interested not only in what Jesus teaches, but what does it look like to be a Christian? What does the Christian life feel like?

[5:45] And we're going to see some of that, just some of that in this passage. There's much more to it than that, but we'll see what's going on. I'm going to use the word apostle. Apostle, apostle was, it means sent one, and that was used to describe with a capital A, those kind of initial ones that God appointed to spread the gospel, both in the Jewish world and in the non-Jewish world, people like Paul.

So, we're looking at this passage under the title, Authentic Progress. And we're going to see the apostles' hearts, both proclaimed and practiced.

It's a heart of love. We're going to see the churches flourishing there in Thessalonica, even without Paul there. And then we're going to see and look at the apostles' prayer very briefly.

So, let's see, first of all, then, this authentic progress being worked out. First of all, as we see it in the apostle's heart, as he proclaims his heart of love. Love is a noun, as we see it proclaimed through his writing.

So, there in verse 17, he says, But brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time, in person, not in thought, out of our intense longing, we made every effort to see you.

[6:59] For we wanted to come to you, certainly. I, Paul, did again and again, but Satan blocked our way. For what is our hope, our joy, our crown, in which we glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus when he comes?

Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy. So, we get straight out, don't we, in this verse, Paul's strength of feeling and heart of love for these young believers.

He says, We were orphaned. The English word orphaned is derived from a compound word in the Greek. I've got it written here, but I can't pronounce it. A por fan is then tes, which, you know, we get the word orphaned, which means, and it's a group of words bunched together, which means being bereaved from.

We felt bereaved when we left, bereft when our hearts were, when we had to leave. And I don't mean to pull on the heartstrings of parents here this morning, but it pretty much describes, doesn't it, how we feel when we're dropping off our children.

Maybe it's for the first time at university, and we're, I'm going to cry already. Four years ago, I embarrassed myself hugely. My first child, we dropped them off the day before, and I was like, I'm going to hold it together, and then just burst into tears in the beginning of the service.

[8:14] So, you know, there's a bereft feeling, isn't it? If you haven't felt it yet, and you have kids that end up going to uni, I'm just warning you, it's coming.

But imagine that. You drop off a child, and, you know, there is no way to contact them. You know, back in the old days, when, you know, in the 1800s, when I was at university, you know, there was

maybe one payphone on the hall, you know, in the hall of residence, or wherever you're staying. You had to queue up. You might phone once a week if you're a bloke. Maybe it was more often if you were, whatever. But, you know, I'd phone once a week. And then, when I went out to work with IFES for a year in Poland, back in the 1990s, it was not long after the revolution, there were no mobile phones.

Even finding an international phone was quite an ordeal. So, writing letters, you know, the blue letters, the airmail things that you would sort of fold up and send, that was the thing. It was letters, even, you know, not that long ago.

And so, you know, I was a typical 21-year-old boy, clueless about how my parents were feeling. They would have felt that sense of bereftness. I mean, they gave me a big clue that even my dad was crying on the day that I left, and I very rarely saw him cry.

[9:33] But I, you know, 21-year-old, typical, just thinking about myself. And probably thinking, not much changed there then. But Paul has already said in chapter 2, verse 7, I say, that he has this kind of strong maternal feeling.

And then he goes on to say, I was like a father, you know, the best of fathers in terms of their, I might add a bit to you. So, in an age when writing, back there in Paul's day, writing a letter cost a fortune, no mobile phones, no WhatsApp, no Snapchat, no whatever, love's burden weighed heavy on his heart.

And it was separated, as he says, I was separated in person, although not in thought. And he said, I long to see, and again, literally in the Greek that he's writing, and he said, I long just to see your faces. So that longing, that intense longing, it's here, it's being unfulfilled, as he's saying.

And what we need to do is, when we're thinking about this, is remember what Paul's life was like before he became a Christian himself.

He hated the gospel. He hated Jesus Christ. He hated the church. In fact, he went out of his way to kind of persecute it. He dragged folks into prison.

[10:46] He got letters from sort of HQ, you know, in Jerusalem to go and to drag folks and put them on trial. And so on, he stood back, you know, and witnessed the murder of a Christian believer.

He would have been gladly numbered amongst the mob, hounding him there in Thessalonica, probably leading the charge. But no, he was a change, the power, the dynamite of the gospel. The encounter with Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit just transformed, changed his life from being one of the greatest persecutors, kind of terminator, if you like, of, you know, against Christianity to being one of its great proclaimers and advocates.

Paul was a changed man. And here we see something of the evidence of that changed life in the way that he's writing. The gospel of the love of God has poured out into his heart and it has transformed his heart.

It's transformed his life. And now he is experiencing, he experienced new and increasing capacities to love. And now we see that, that affection overflowing in this letter that he's writing.

[12:00] Evidence of one who formerly hated and persecuted the gospel. Now, one of its greatest advocates and just convinced of the truth and having experienced it in his own life.

And actually a little bit like Vivek was explaining, that was my own experience. Not everyone comes to Christ in a dramatic way, but, you know, that love of God was one of the markers just in my own life.

Like, Violet, I went to a church going back and I wasn't really that interested. But when God started sort of putting his hand on my life, one of the things that I experienced, the sort of decisive changing point, was when my life was just filled with a sense of the love of God from head to toe.

Having confessed him in my heart as saviour and Lord, just on my own and my own home. You know, God just filled my whole body with a sense of his love. One of the markers for me.

And we see that love evident here in Paul's life. It's a love, first of all, for God. It's a love for those around us, our neighbours, and, you know, which is the essence of the Ten Commandments fulfilled in our hearts.

[13:02] And that's what the promise is, that God will write these things on our hearts when the new covenant comes. But also it's a love for one another, which is the new commandment that Jesus added there in John's Gospel. Now, Paul is uniquely paced, isn't he, as an apostle?

Yes. And in a time of a powerful move of God, he's also a single man able to give as much attention to his own priorities as he chooses. But he models for us a life that has received the abundant, great affection and love of the Father through the saving work of the Son, and administered by the power of the Holy Spirit, a love in which he was refreshed day by day as he lived and sought the presence of his Lord.

Now, if I might say to those who are starting out university this week, maybe in your first year, maybe returning, you have choices in this coming week, don't you?

Some of you will be full on in your faith and unwavering and can't wait for the weeks ahead. Some of you will be full on in your faith and unwavering and will be full on in your faith.

In my own experience, I can say that we will never, you will never find the degree of love, value, meaning, acceptance, to the degree that you will find it in and from the Lord and what he wants to give to you.

[14 : 58] The prodigal, as Vivek mentioned, found that after having sort of wandered down the prodigal path. He returned to find the abundant love of the Father. Let me say, save yourself the heartache, secure yourself in his redeeming love today, this morning, and let him lead you in the coming years.

But believers, as we live out our lives, as we sort of think, how do I maintain this love? Because our lives can become so encroached by life, just all the stuff of life, can't they?

We can lose our sense of priority and kind of, actually in the midst of it, our sense of this abundant love. We can even become embittered by life's circumstances and find that love hard to find.

We can lose sight of it. God's love for us, our love for others, and so on. C.S. Lewis steps in on the issue in his book, *The Four Loves*, and says this. He says, to love at all is to be vulnerable.

Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. But if we want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give it to no one, not even an animal.

[16 : 15] Wrap it carefully around with hobbies, little luxuries, or you could add on to that business and work and so on. Avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness.

But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken.

It will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. It is to love, is to be vulnerable. And so we have to kind of make space to learn the language of love, to learn the ways of love, first in the presence of the Lord as we're receiving it, but also be prepared to be vulnerable to give it to others.

And that love, we might feel it abundantly in our hearts at times, but sometimes we're just not feeling it. Sometimes it is a choice because feelings are fickle. Depression or circumstances, just the stress of life can rob the feeling of love from us.

And we must then determine to walk in love's paths, even when we're somewhat numb by life or not really feeling it ourselves. Because love is not only a feeling, it's also a choice, isn't it?

[17 : 35] It's choosing to follow in the way of love, knowing that we are loved, even though our experience of it at that particular moment, because of circumstances, is not so full.

I think one of the trends, and I've said this before in society, that I think is a good thing, is there's much more affirmation of love around.

I want to encourage that amongst us and amongst our family, just those, I love you, is great love to you, and so on. To have that love, and to foster that love, and to enjoy, first of all, the love of God, and let that love overflow in our hearts as a church, and in our involvement in the Christian ministries that we're involved in, whether that's the Christian agencies that we're leading, or involved in, or volunteering in, as elders in the church, community group leaders, kids, youth, and youth leaders, in the teams that we're serving in within the church, whether that's welcome or set up, in the prison ministry that we're involved in, the street ministries, the campus ministries, whether you're leading the CU, or Christians in Sport, or Navigators, or Young Life, know the Lord's and enjoy, know the Lord's and enjoy the Lord's love for you.

And as a servant, as you seek to serve, and that's what leadership is, it's just serving, isn't it? Love those whom you're called to serve. Love one another. And, you know, sometimes we can find it hard to say, you know, I find just a knowledge of God's love for me hard, and therefore I might find it hard to love others and to share that love.

Well, let me give you a Latin phrase. Now, I don't know Latin, so I'm not showing off here. Okay, I learned this. And I've used it before. But sometimes, in another language, it can help us to remember it.

[19:31] Martin Luther coined the phrase, *simul justus et peccator*. What does it mean? At the same time, justified and sinner. That is the tension in which we live.

That we are justified by nothing other than the redeeming power of God's and our faith and trust in Him. And yet, at the same time, we know ourselves to kind of still, to be sinners before Him. But we hold that tension that He still loves us. And it's not that we just kind of use that as an excuse for liberty, for license. But rather, we use it for liberty and freedom of the Spirit to move on in the faith, in authentic progress, knowing that, yes, we stumble and fall.

Yes, we sin. But we are loved by Him. And He is there, encouraging us to stand up, to come to Him and say sorry and repentance, turn around from that, and to be able to walk on in love.

Not be held back, but to go on in authentic progress, knowing that we are loved. Not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done. That is the power of the cross that we need to hold on to continually, that Martin Luther learned to do.

[20:38] And so coined this phrase, *simul justus et peccator*. At the same time, fully justified and sinner. But see how the direction of the flow of love goes in His heart.

It is a serving direction. It's an outward direction. He says there, For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes?

Is it not you? Verse 19. What is He saying here? Well, in the same way that He sort of addresses the Ephesian church in chapter 5 of Ephesians. And talks about Christ's great desire to present His bride, the church, as radiant.

Spotless, without wrinkle. So He says, you know, husbands, love your wives. He uses the marriage relationship as an example of how Christ loved the church and so on.

Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. To make her holy. Cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word. And to present her to Himself as radiant.

[21:46] Without stain or wrinkle or any blemish. But holy and blemish. That holy and blemish. We're going to see that phrase come up again. His great desire is the passion and desire of Christ for you.

To see your lives changed. Set free from the things that bind us into the life that Christ has for us.

An increasing measure. We see echoes of that desire in verse 19.

He's saying, it's not about me. It's about you. Paul is not saying that it will not be the perishable things like silver and gold that I'm going to glory in on that day.

He's saying, no, no. It is the things that will last. It is kingdom things. It is eternal things. It is truly glorious things that I will glory in and rejoice in on that day.

Not only to see my Savior. But also to see the work that He did in and around and inspired me. Of lives saved. Lives turned around. And all of that worked out in a thousand different ways and decisions in everyday situations at home and at work.

[22:51] And a play in the lives of those in whom He encountered. So Paul had both the present and eternity in mind as he served.

If he just had the present in mind, the temporal, then he would err maybe just in trying to be a nice guy. A form of godliness without knowing its power.

If it was all just about the now and creating a nice community now. If he was just focused on the eternal, it could be that he would retreat from the present. Just sort of hanging on for dear life until Jesus came again.

But no, no. He was able to manage both, wasn't he? To be able to work and live in the world. He worked as a tent maker. He was out in the marketplace sharing Christ. He was navigating life in the different cultures within the Roman world in that day.

Holding on. Able to manage life in the different places that he worked and lived. But also knowing that there was a day in which his true hope was placed.

[23:50] And that's our attention, isn't it? We manage our lives in those circumstances that we're facing. Whether it's on the campus or in our workplace or in our neighborhood or in our families.

But we also are doing that in the light of our true hope. Which is heaven. And to be with him. And so we navigate the world in which we are living in a Christ-like manner.

Able to hold those things to intention. Able to continue to seek to be the aroma of Christ. Shining lights for the gospel. And to do that, we need to be refreshed in the things of him.

To sustain us in all the things that we're experiencing. To do as Paul did. To do as Christ encouraged us to do. To take time each day to be in the presence of him who loves us. And what a difference that makes, doesn't it? When we stop and we take time. Whether that's first thing in the morning. Whether that's at your lunchtime. Whatever. You know the time that works for you.

[24:54] Where you stop and you're just refreshed. Restored. Renewed. Helped. Encouraged. In the presence. It's interesting that he also says in verse.

Or he also says here in verse 18 and 19. For he wanted to come to you. Certainly I, Paul, did again and again. But Satan blocked our way. Let me cover that in the next section.

But what we've seen is love proclaimed. As a noun, if you like, in his life. Next also. We see that verb. That noun changed to a verb. As that love is put into practice. Chapter 3, verse 1.

So when we could stand it no longer. We thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. And we sent Timothy. Who is our brother and co-worker in God's service. In spreading the gospel of Christ. To strengthen and encourage you in your faith. So that no one would be unsettled by these trials. For you know quite well. That we are destined for them. I love these little biographical bits.

[25:58] That tease out more of the detail of what was happening in Paul's life. In addition to what we see recorded in the book of Acts. Which is a kind of history of some of the life and experience of the early church.

Acts 6, 17. Great chapter. Paul's time in Athens. Proclaiming to the Athenians in the marketplace. As one go at it. And they say, what is this babblers talking about? And then they say, we'd like to hear more about this up in the Areopagus.

Here's another. And he's had time to kind of think it through. And presents the gospel in a way that he thinks actually will connect with them. But that isn't all that was going on. They were still, they were concerned about the Thessalonians.

They were praying for them. They were kind of working out how, you know, how can we connect with them? How can we encourage them? And so they decided that Timothy would go.

And it's a 300 mile journey to go from Athens to the north of Greece. And so it would take them a little bit of a time to get there. And then come all the way back and find Paul and Silas this time in Corinth.

[26:57] Which is another 300 plus mile journey for Timothy. And so it's from Corinth that Paul's writing to them. So you can see some of the details, some of the things that are going through their minds.

The dynamics, our gospel spreading, strengthening and encouraging of believers. It's mission and maturity, isn't it? Which is an integral part of our cornerstone vision. As others phrase it, it's knowing Jesus and making him known.

Those were the key apostolic priorities. And they are the priorities of those who want to make authentic progress in and for the kingdom. I'm so grateful to be in a fellowship partnered with organizations who share that heart.

And, you know, under God, I'm excited to see just what God will do in the coming year. In us and through us and in spite of us. By his grace.

But in the midst of it, Paul's keenly aware that there is an enemy of the gospel. Who, chapter 2, verse 18, as I mentioned earlier, blocked his way. Who, you know, with his two allies of the world and the flesh, will bring trials and persecutions to unsettle.

[28:10] As Paul says in chapter 3, verse 3 and 4. In verse 4, the pickup. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that you would be persecuted.

And it turned out that way, as you well know. For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.

So we have one who's an enemy of the gospel. We have one, verse 5, who tempts away from the path. Who steals or chokes the seeds that are planted, as Jesus tells us in the parable of the seeds. So whether we are in our first year of university or our final years of life on earth, Paul's keen that we know that there is a devil and that we know his schemes.

That he is, as Peter describes, 1 Peter 5, 8, like a lion prowling to devour. Allying himself with the powerful desires of the flesh. That's sex, power, money, fear, lust, greed, pride.

[29:13] With the foolish philosophies of the ages. And the bright lights of the world to lure us away from Christ. And the path of Christ and Christ-likeness. To lure us into, maybe even to lukewarmness.

Or such a high expectation that we become disillusioned over time. We need to be aware of his schemes. And do you not, do you not ever think, oh that will never be me.

King David, the man after God's own heart, fell and so can we too. Encourage first years, most years, just to let folks know from the outset that you're a Christian.

It makes life a little bit easier as time goes on. And mostly, they'll probably respect you for it. But despite his concerns, despite Paul's concerns, and what does Timothy find and report?

Verse 6, But Timothy has just now come from us to you. And he has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us.

[30:23] And that you long to see us just as we long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution, we're encouraged about you because of your faith. We now really live since you're standing firm in the Lord.

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day, we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking your faith.

We see fines, the church is flourishing. It's interesting that Paul is somewhat apprehensive. There was, you know, such a short, he was there for such a short time.

The opposition was pretty severe. Would they be able to stand on their own? Would they be fine? Well, they were fine. And why is that? Well, we know that because, well, chapter 1, verses 1 and 2, Paul was praying and God was hearing.

But also we know that God himself was their God and was concerned for them and was looking after them. Paul was not present, but they continued the work based on the teaching and foundation that Paul had laid, the apostles' teaching.

[31:28] And see that pattern always through Scripture. What did Acts 2? The Spirit falls. What do they give themselves to, amongst other things? The apostles' teaching. And of course, there's the ongoing work of the Spirit sustaining them in the interim, in this in-between period before Paul comes back or Timothy.

So here's the thing I think we see here. I think that we're seeing here that nothing is wasted in God's way of working, in God's economy.

Where the foundations are laid, which is key. Where prayer is continued to be made, which is vital. But there's acknowledgement and understanding that God is sovereignly at work, behind and before and in and through and around things.

And he never stops being at work. Even where Satan is at work preventing things, as Luther again reminds us, that even the devil is God's devil. He's on a chain.

And even what he tries to do, God is able to circumvent. Satan can never outsmart God. The cross is evidence of that. And as we observed in our community group, maybe in yours, it was Ruth who pointed it out, that actually in God's providence, God preventing Paul from coming, or Satan preventing Paul from coming, meant that this letter was written in this way.

[32:48] God was able to do something in and wonderful through it. God preventing Paul from being there, let their faith grow. And in the midst of the circumstance, in the refining environment in which they were in.

And so the joy and delight is all the more, and the glory goes all the more to God. And Paul is able to acknowledge it. We thank God because of you. Our joy is overflowing because of the news that has come to us from you.

So here I think we're seeing some of the blueprints for the building of the kingdom, for authentic progress in the Christian life. Firm foundations, grounded in the authentic apostolic gospel and teaching, found in the scriptures.

Awareness of the devil's screams, much prayer, and a trust in the sovereignty of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who reigns and is seated on the throne. These are the things we need to be ticking, if you like, ticking the boxes off, if we want to see authentic progress in the kingdom.

And then finally, and very briefly, is the Apostles' Prayer. Verse 12, May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.

[34:05] May he strengthen your hearts so that you may be blameless and holy. There's that phrase again from Ephesians 5. In the presence of our God and Father, our God and Father, when our Lord Jesus comes with his holy ones.

He has a great desire that they would continue to grow in this high calling of love. Kept by the saving power of God, upheld by his love, as they seek to remain faithful to him.

But I guess the question is, these guys are going out to prepare coffee for us because they know the end is coming. I guess the question is, how are we sustained in that? You know, life is tough. We have real battles going on inwardly.

We have real battles going on outwardly. How can we be sustained in that love? Let me finish with this illustration. I've used it before. Forgive me for using it. But you know from the Greek mythologies, the story of Jason the Argonauts and the Argonauts.

And Jason wanted to go through where the sirens would sing so that he could hear their beautiful singing because it was legendary. But the tragedy was that their singing was meant to, it was so beautiful that it would lure ships to their doom.

[35:18] And so there were two ways to do it. One way would be to stuff the folks on the oars' ears with wax and tie him to the post with a, you know, and no matter what he said with the instruction, just keep going straight on.

Don't deviate no matter what I say. All so that he could hear the singing, or, or, he could pass through with the help of his friend Orpheus whose musical abilities were legendary.

And so actually he was able to pass through because there was a greater melody playing, a more alluring melody playing than the alluring melody of the sirens. And so in a sense that is, you know, that illustrates I think how we are to continue in love's cause.

That our lives, we let the greater and more beautiful melody of the gospel play over our lives and let it be louder and see and hear it as more beautiful than all the melodies of the world, if you like, that would lure us to our doom and to ruin.

To let, to refresh ourselves in the gospel and the presence, if you like. And be renewed in his love for us so that our love too may overflow.

[36:33] A fullness for ourselves and an overflow for others in the ministries that God calls us to and the everyday places in our homes and our workplaces. Let us let the beautiful melody of the gospel ring loud and clear and in all its beauty and glory in our lives.

Amen? Let me pray. God our Father bless you and thank you that the gospel is beautiful, that the gospel is powerful, and that you are faithful, and that you are good, and that you sit on the throne, that you reign over our lives, that you love us and you care for us.

Your affection is overwhelmingly abounding for us. Lord, would that be the things that we hear, that would those be the things that we refresh ourselves in this day and in the week ahead.

As the music of the world rings around us, may we hear nothing but the gospel melody ringing over our lives, that we are loved and that we are redeemed, that we are yours, and you have a path for us, that our identity, that our meaning, our value and purpose are founded beautifully in you, and we have a lifetime of exploring and developing and growing in these wonders.

Lord, lead us on in love's cause, we pray. Help us to be extravagant in our love for you and our love for our neighbours and our love for one another.

[38:02] We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.