

Warfare in the Wilderness

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning to all of you. My name's Tommy. I'm the rector here at Church of the Advent. And so if I haven't had a chance to welcome you, hopefully we'll get a chance to at least meet and shake hands after the service.

I want to make sure you know we do have a newcomer's brunch right after the service downstairs. So if you're new, even if this is your first Sunday with us, we'd love to have you. So please hang around and come downstairs and hopefully we'll get a chance to chat.

Many of you are probably familiar with the story of the Titanic. A movie came out about it. If you haven't seen the movie, I'm going to spoil it, but you had your chance. But the Titanic, obviously this incredible, as it was said, feat of engineering that was celebrated as a marvel of accomplishment, human technology, and it was said it was virtually unsinkable.

So when they set out on their maiden voyage, ship full of people, it wasn't even equipped with enough life rafts for half of the people, total number of passengers on board, and that's because they didn't think they would need the lifeboats because this boat was unsinkable.

Despite warnings about icebergs in the water, large icebergs that could tear ships apart, they ignored the warnings. The lookout didn't even have binoculars to look out for the icebergs.

[1 : 26] The captain did not slow down, but had the ship going full speed through the water because, again, this ship was celebrated as being virtually unsinkable, nothing to worry about.

Unfortunately, that was not the case. And as many of us know, a large iceberg tore a gash into the hull of the ship. Water came in. The ship eventually sank.

And over 1,500 people lost their lives. And this story, and it's just one story. There are many other examples throughout history that stories like this illustrate the same thing.

The danger of overconfidence. The danger of overconfidence. How when we are overconfident in a situation like that, it will invariably lead to disaster.

And in the passage we're gonna be looking at this morning, 1 Corinthians chapter 10, the first 13 verses of chapter 10, the apostle Paul is making much the same warning. He's warning us about the dangers of overconfidence when it comes to temptation.

[2 : 35] The message is essentially this, is that if we are overconfident when it comes to our ability to face and deal with temptation, that that road will invariably lead to disaster.

It will lead to catastrophe. So we're gonna look at this, and in this passage, Paul gives us several ways to be prepared for temptation when it inevitably comes, so that we'll know when it comes, so that we'll know how to face it, so we'll know how to overcome it together.

So we're gonna look at that. First, I'm gonna give us a little context so we know where we are, and then we're gonna look at what the apostle Paul has to say to us about overconfidence and temptation. Let's pray, and then we'll open God's word.

Lord, we thank you for your word, and we thank you for this season of Lent. Lord, this is a time where, as Jeff said earlier, we reflect on Jesus' time in the wilderness, and we go there with him, Lord.

We follow in his footsteps in this journey to the cross, to the tomb, to the resurrection, to the new life. Lord, we pray that you would bless us as we seek to walk with him, to journey with him.

[3 : 42] We pray that you would open these words, and through these words, we would come face to face with him and be united with him. Lord, that's our prayer, and we ask this in his holy name, in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. So first of all, let me give you a little context. We're dropping right into the middle of a letter here, chapter 10. This is a letter that Paul wrote to the Christians in the city of Corinth.

Corinth was a major urban center. It was the capital of the province, a lot like D.C. It was very cosmopolitan, and so the early Christians in Corinth had to ask a lot of the same questions that those of us who are Christians ask as we live here in D.C. in 2025.

They were asking, how do we live lives of faithfulness in a major city center with such an incredibly diverse population? How do we participate in public life when we are surrounded by people who have so many different beliefs, so many different values, so many different lifestyles?

How do we live lives of faithfulness in the public square? And the specific question that Paul is addressing concerns food. Should Christians eat meat that comes from animals that had previously been sacrificed as a part of pagan idol worship?

[5 : 00] That meat was widely available in the markets. When you got invited over to your friend's house to eat, a lot of times you would be eating meat that had previously been sacrificed as a part of pagan ritual, and so the Christians were asking, should we eat that meat or not?

Is it okay or not? And so this starts a few chapters earlier in chapter eight. Paul is trying to address this question. Some of the Christians were overly cautious. They were teetotalers.

They said, absolutely not. We need to stay far away from that. It's gonna corrupt us. It's spiritually corrupting. Others were more in the opposite end of the spectrum. They were almost brazenly overconfident.

They would say, you know, Jesus has forgiven all of our sin. He's done away with all the dietary restrictions. We don't need to worry about that. We've been set free. We should enjoy our freedom. We should be able to eat whatever we want.

Paul's answer is very interesting. He essentially says, not so fast. God has set us free. Technically, we can eat whatever we want.

[6 : 00] However, the freedom that you have can be easily lost if you're not careful. It has to be guarded. It has to be protected.

And at the beginning of chapter 10, which is our passage this morning, Paul is wanting to make sure that these Christians have the right perspective on their situation.

You need to start with the right perspective. So that's the first thing he gives us when it comes to temptation is, here's the perspective that helps us make sense of our lives and the place that we find ourselves in as a part of God's story.

Paul refers them back to the time of the Exodus. Now, if you know about the book of the Exodus, it starts with God's people living as slaves in Egypt. And then God raises up Moses.

And through Moses, God demonstrates his absolute power over Pharaoh and all the pagan gods of Egypt. And ultimately, he sets his people free. And God promises that one day he's going to bring them to a promised land, a home that he has prepared just for them.

[7 : 05] But here's where we need to pause if we're reading and paying attention closely and stop and sort of ask, why is Paul bringing this up here to these people?

The church in Corinth was full of Gentiles. For the most part, these are not Jews. The Exodus was not their story. These are Greek and Roman people. But Paul is referring to the Israelites in the wilderness as their forefathers.

He says, remember our forefathers. I don't want you to be ignorant of our fathers. So you understand what he's saying to these Gentiles. That was Israel, and that was their story.

But now that you're Christians, you are part of the church. And the church is the new Israel. So that was Israel, but now you are Israel.

You are God's people in the world. And so what he's doing is he's connecting that story to their story. He's saying their story is now your story by virtue of the fact that you're in Christ.

[8 : 11] You're the new Israel. And this is the perspective that Paul seeks to impart to us as his listeners. Even though we live in a different time, even though we live in a different place, spiritually speaking, we are part of the story of Israel, which means we are still very much in the wilderness.

He's saying they were in the wilderness, remember. Now as you continue in the wilderness, remember what happened to them. Now this is extremely important as it relates to the topic that we are exploring this morning.

What does it mean to be in the wilderness? Well, spiritually speaking, the wilderness is the space between. It is a space between freedom and fulfillment.

There's a space between, and we occupy that space. That's what the Bible refers to as the wilderness. Jesus has set us free.

We, those of us who are here who are Christians, Jesus has set us free from sin and death. We've been set free from slavery to sin and death. And he has promised that one day he's going to come again, and he's going to make all things new.

[9 : 29] He's going to restore the world. He's going to bring the heavens and the earth together. But he has not fulfilled that promise yet. That is still something that we're waiting for. And so we occupy this space between having been set free, freedom, and the fulfillment that one day God will make all things new.

So until that day comes, we are in the spiritual wilderness, which means the world is still broken. I mean, most people, you don't have to try hard to convince them that the world is broken. I was just having lunch with somebody this week, and we were talking about, we're both very concerned about the state of things. Right now in the world, the state of our country right now, we're very, lots of concerns, lots of anxiety.

We know the world is still broken. We still have desires and longings that go unmet. We still have to contend with uncertainty, and grief, and loss, and conflict, and decay, and breakdown. In other words, being in the wilderness means this world as it is, is not our home. And that's extremely important to remember. It's crucial for us to keep that perspective if we want to make sense of our lives.

[10 : 49] What this means is that, you know, let's just consider some examples here. When it comes to our work, we should all try to find stable careers, stable work, and hopefully that work, those of us who feel called to work outside the home, seeking paid work, hopefully, God willing, that work is meaningful, and we enjoy it, and it aligns with our gifts, and aptitudes, and abilities.

But no career is ever going to satisfy our desire for meaning and purpose completely. Because this is the wilderness.

It's not our home. We shouldn't expect that. If you're called to marriage, you should look for someone who shares your faith and your values, someone with whom I think maybe this is one of the most important things, someone with whom you can develop a deep, lasting friendship. Very important. But even the best marriage is not going to fulfill you. There's going to be stretches in your marriage, even if it's the best marriage, where you still feel lonely.

There's going to be maybe seasons where you wish that you weren't married. There might be moments here and there where you wish you were married to somebody else. There might be moments where you feel like, I have no idea who this person is that I married.

[12 : 10] I thought I knew them, right? That is to be expected. It's one of the things we do in premarital counseling. As we help people understand, it's very important to have realistic expectations about marriage.

This is the wilderness. This is not our home. So there's no person out there who's going to perfectly fulfill and complete you. The wilderness is not the place where God promises to fulfill all of our longings and desires.

That's going to happen when we're home. And the wilderness is the place where God prepares his people for their home. The wilderness is not a place of fulfillment and happiness and contentment. The wilderness is a place of profound transformation. It's a place where God works in the hearts and lives of his people. Now, sometimes Christians forget this.

There are famous, popular Christian leaders out there who make it sound as though when you come to Jesus, everything's going to get better. All of your longings and needs are going to be satisfied in him. Christianity is about living your best life now.

[13 : 13] It's a very popular message, but if you believe that and buy into it, you're setting yourself up for a lot of disillusionment and disappointment. One day that's going to be true. We're going to be satisfied in Christ, but not yet.

We're still in the wilderness. Now, here's why this is so important. This perspective is crucial because we need it to make sense of our lives. This world is not our home. With this reality comes a warning.

This is the second piece that Paul gives us. You have the right perspective. We're in the wilderness. With that comes a warning. The spiritual wilderness is a dangerous place. It is a dangerous place because the fact that we have unmet needs and longings, the fact that this is a place of struggle and hardship makes us extremely vulnerable to temptation.

When you're living your life with lots of unmet needs and longings, it makes you extremely vulnerable to all manner of temptation to sin. And Paul essentially makes this point. He says, listen, I don't want you to be ignorant. By the way, when Paul says, I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, he typically, it's a nicer way of saying, I think you're pretty ignorant of this. And so he says, I don't want you to be ignorant about what happened to Israel.

[14:32] Think about their story. And he's pointing back and he's saying, listen, they had every advantage you have. They had every advantage you have. And it didn't make any difference.

Look what happened to them. So he's saying, just like you, God set them free from slavery. He, in a very provocative way, says, just like you, they had their own versions of baptism in the Lord's Supper.

They passed through the Red Sea. They were in covenant relationship with God through Moses, the covenant that God had established through Moses. Just like you, God sustained them with spiritual food and spiritual drink.

Obviously not the bread and wine that we have here, but not the bread and wine that we have here. In some way, Paul is connecting this meal back to God's provision for them in the wilderness. God provided for you. He gave you manna. He gave you quail. He made water spring out of the rocks for you. And just like you, in a manner of speaking, Christ was with them, not in body, but in spirit.

[15:34] Christ was with them. The presence of God was with them, sustaining them, blessing them, providing for them. Nevertheless, he says, most of them were overthrown in the wilderness. Now, that word that he uses, overthrown, actually translates more laid low.

The image that Paul is giving us is, imagine a desert landscape littered with bodies. There's bodies everywhere you look.

Most of them were laid low in the dust. Now, why did this happen? Well, Paul cites multiple examples of times when the people of Israel were lured and tempted away from God into sin and idolatry.

Through the Old Testament, in places like Exodus and the Psalms, you see these references to being lured and enticed. And one of the words that you see showing up again and again around the sin of the people of Israel is the word ensnared.

They became ensnared by various things. Now, what has ensnared me? When I was a kid, my uncle told me that if I wanted to catch a bird, what I had to do was to sneak up behind the bird, maybe you've heard this, and to pour a little salt on its tail.

[16:50] Anybody heard this? Maybe it's just my family. Sneak up behind the bird, pour salt on its tail, and then my uncle said, well, salt will mean that the bird can't fly, and then you can catch the bird.

So I put on camouflage, and I went out in the woods behind our house, and I spent hours, if I'm honest, days, belly crawling around the woods with a salt shaker in my hand, trying to sneak up on birds.

Now, maybe I'm not the brightest bulb in the box, but I eventually realized that's not how you catch a bird. My uncle was a bit of a joke.

It turns out, if you want to catch a bird, there's a better way to do it. You need a snare. There's a reference in the Bible to the fowler's snare. A snare is essentially a loop of wire or string.

Typically, it has a slipknot so that it'll tighten up, and it's attached to a bent branch or a bent tree or some other spring mechanism. Maybe the boys will learn how to do this in trail life.

[17:55] Maybe you've already learned how to do this in trail life, but you lay the loop down, and you kind of maybe put some leaves over it so that you don't really notice it, and then you cover it with seed. You cover it with whatever the food is that the animal that you're trying to catch, and so the animal will come along, the bird will come along, and it becomes so focused on the food laying there in a nice pile on the ground that it doesn't notice the snare until it starts to eat, and it springs the trap, and it gets caught, and then it can't fly away, and it just has to hang there waiting to be killed and eaten.

That's the fowler's snare. And this, my friends, is how the Bible talks about temptation. And the Apostle James actually tells us how it works. He says, each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed.

Again, those Greek words are actually hunting and fishing terms. He says, lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is fully grown, brings forth death.

So he's painting a picture of what it looks like to be lured and enticed until we become ensnared. You start off with a need or a desire. It could be hunger or sexual longing or loneliness or the desire for safety or comfort.

And these desires are not inherently evil on their own. They're just desires. It's a part of what it means to be a human being living in the wilderness. We have desires. And so we have this desire, and then we come across, either in person or in our own imagination, that pile of food.

[19 : 37] You know, some way of satisfying that desire. And we come across a way of satisfying that desire that runs contrary to God's will. Right?

And you know in your mind that this God does not want me to do this, but it looks so good. It looks so satisfying. It's just right there. It would be so easy to take. Right? That's like the bird seed being spread over the ground.

And at this point, by the way, there's still no sin. You've noticed it. It's there. You feel the desire.

That would be a possibility for you. But at this point, there's still no sin. But then at some point, James says, we allow ourselves to be lured and enticed.

We sort of give ourselves to that longing. We begin to imagine what it would be like to have that thing. We begin to fantasize, to indulge the desire, to nurse it, to kindle the craving. So this is like the hungry bird.

We're lured closer and closer, and then the trap is sprung, and before we know it, at some point along the way, we went from just beginning to give ourselves to that desire to before we know it, we're ensnared, we're dangling, waiting to be killed and eaten by, as he references at one point, the destroyer, the evil one who is behind all of this.

[20 : 53] So, you know, an example of this, think of a classic example of David out on the roof seeing Bathsheba, who's married to one of his best friends, Uriah.

David is out there, a lot of commentators say, why is he out on the roof? What's he doing out on the roof? Was he hoping he might see something? And he's out there, and he's looking around, sees Bathsheba.

At this point, there's no sin, but instead of turning away, instead of immediately turning away and going back in, saying, that's, I shouldn't be doing that, he continues to look.

He begins to fantasize about being with her, and then he summons her, and then he sleeps with her, and he's ensnared. And then that just leads to more and more and more sin.

Ultimately, this leads to David arranging to have his best friend Uriah killed in order to cover up the affair, the affair that, by the way, everybody at this point already knows about.

[21 : 49] So here's what Paul is saying. He says, when we're still in the wilderness, which means we have all of these unmet desires and longings, the wilderness, we have to recognize, is a very dangerous place.

And it makes us extremely vulnerable to temptation. You're going along, and there are all kinds of promises of things that will fulfill these various desires. And he says, these are snares, and you have to recognize them for what they are.

It may not be obvious to you, but they're there. Right? Just to give one more example, maybe we, you know, what are some of the things we long for? A success, beauty, talent, influence, normal human desires.

But then you start comparing yourself. Right? You have this kind of temptation to comparison. And maybe it's online, maybe it's just your friends, the people you know, your coworkers, people who seem to be advancing more quickly than you, or you have all this instability in your job, and they have this rock-solid career, or you don't have a family, and they have the family that you want, or they're off having these fun adventures while you're raising these young kids, or whatever it may be, you start comparing yourself to their life.

And they seem to have more of the things that you want. And then you allow yourself to be lured and enticed into jealousy and envy. And before you know it, your mind is looping on these things, and before you know it, you're ensnared by jealousy and envy.

[23 : 17] And what you begin to notice is at that point, the joy and the gratitude are slowly strangled out of your life. The slipknot of envy strangles all of the gratitude out of your life.

You no longer focus on what you have, on the ways that you've been blessed or provided for. You're only focusing on what you lack, on what you don't have. And then over time, joy and gratitude are replaced slowly by bitterness and resentment.

And sometimes you may even get to the point where you're mentally tearing down or invalidating the good things in somebody else's life to make them seem smaller, to make yourself feel bigger. See, there are countless examples that we could give when it comes to lust or anger or bitterness or envy or all of the things that we struggle with.

But here's the warning. He pulls it together in verse 12. Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. In other words, do not underestimate the danger of temptation in the wilderness and do not overestimate your ability to resist it.

Do not underestimate the danger of it and do not overestimate your ability to resist it. The good news is Paul is not about to leave us high and dry. That's not the end of the passage. There is tremendous comfort to be found in this passage as well.

[24 : 38] So we have perspective. We have a warning. Now the Apostle Paul leaves us with some tremendous comfort. We have three great resources to help us live lives of faithfulness in the wilderness so that we don't end up like Israel.

The first is we have the Scriptures. The Apostle Paul says in verse 11, now these things happen to them as an example but they were written down for our instruction.

He says, thank God we have all of this written down and we can go back to it and learn from it. The point is this, the more that we read and understand and apply Scripture to our lives, one of the things that happens is the more we do that, the more you begin to understand your own nature. You begin to understand your own vulnerabilities. You begin to understand and see more clearly your own weaknesses. As we are reading Scripture, we should always be asking the question, is God saying this to me?

Is God talking about me? Is God wanting me to hear this for any particular reason? There should always be a question, how is God speaking to me? What is God trying to tell me through this?

[25 : 50] The more we do that, the more we understand ourselves, the more prepared we're going to be for life in the wilderness. You know, the great Harvard psychiatrist, Robert Coles, he spent his entire career studying human behavior.

Entire career at one of the greatest universities in the world and here's what he says. Nothing I have discovered about the makeup of human beings contradicts in any way what I've learned from Scripture.

Anything that I can say as a result of my research into human behavior is a mere footnote to those lives in the Old and New Testament. I mean, that's amazing, right?

We have in the Scripture the best diagnosis, the best understanding of the human condition available. And the more we internalize it, the more prepared we're going to be.

So we have the Scriptures. Number two, we have community. We have community. Verse 13 is tremendously comforting. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

[26 : 51] That's an amazing thing to say. You're not going to face anything that the people around you have not faced. God's not going to single you out and say, I'm going to pour some temptation on this person.

I'm going to make it extra hard for them. He says, everything that you experience, everything that you go through, it's all common to the people around you. There are people who know what it's like. Now, on the surface, our lives may look different, but underneath, we all struggle with the same temptations.

And these are the same struggles that human beings have faced throughout history, which means, and here's the good news, we can help. We should help one another. It means this, whatever you're going through right now, whatever you're wrestling with, whatever's bubbling in your mind as you're sitting here right now listening to this, chances are there are people in this room who either have gone through that, are going through it right now at the same time you are, or will go through it.

We have no hope of overcoming temptation if we try to go it alone. So you need at least a few people in your life who know you well enough to be able to step in when you need help, who know you well enough to know when they might need to step in even when you're not asking for help. People you're close enough with that they know they have permission to speak into your life. They don't have to dance around and say, hey, I gotta bring something up, it's gonna be hard, are you

gonna be okay, is it gonna jeopardize our friendship, and I don't wanna offend you, that you don't have to do any of that dancing around.

[28 : 22] You can say, we need to talk, I got something I wanna bring up. Take it or leave it, pray about it, but I'm concerned. And you say, okay, that's what friends do. You know, there's that great story from Homer's Odyssey where Odysseus is warned about the power of the siren song.

He's warned that if he gets too close and he hears the song, he's gonna go mad with desire and he's gonna run his ship into the rocks and like so many other unfortunate sailors, they will all die at sea.

So he tells his men, before we get too close to the sirens, I want you to plug your ears with beeswax, but I wanna hear the siren song, but in order to keep us safe, I want you to lash me to the mast so that when I hear the song of the sirens, no matter what I say, no matter how much I threaten you, do not let me go until we're clear of their song.

And the men are good men and they do exactly what he says and sure enough, he's lashed to the mast and they get close and he begins to hear the song and he immediately loses his mind and he starts begging them to release them and he's begging them and pleading with them to go to the sirens, to go to the rocks, but his men are good men and they don't listen to him and instead, they tie him even tighter to the mast until they're free of the song and then he regains his mind.

And of course, the reason he tells them to do that is because he knows that there's probably gonna come a point where he loses his mind, he's not in his right mind and at that point, he needs them to step in. The point is, we need people like that in our lives who can tie us to the mast when necessary.

[29 : 54] You know, when you're not when you've just had a massive just guts out on the floor fight and you're like, I am done, I am out of here, I'm through this marriage, I'm never going back, I can't do it another day, I'm out of here.

You need somebody to tie you to the mast. Or when you're in an incredibly abusive, harmful relationship and you're like, I can change this person, I can save this relationship, I can hang in there for one more day, I can endure it, it's not that bad.

Maybe you need to get out of the relationship and you need somebody to tie you to the mast and say, no, it's time for you to leave. When you're ready to throw your life away for some stupid obsession that doesn't seem stupid at the time because you've lost your mind, you need somebody to tie you to the mast, right?

There are times when you need somebody to step in your life and say, no, I'm gonna tie this down tighter until you come back to your senses. We need people like that in our lives.

So the next time you're going on a work trip and you know that you tend to struggle with lust and there's a chance that you might wanna go out and meet somebody because you're in a place where nobody knows you and there's no accountability, line up a couple of people to talk to on the phone while you're on that trip.

[31 : 16] You know, if you tend towards self-pity and adopting a victim posture, deputize a couple of people to help you notice when you're going down that road of self-pity so they can say, hey, is there anything that you should take responsibility for here or is everything somebody else's fault?

Maybe, and we all have different tendencies. You need people who know those tendencies so they can step in when they need to step in and we do this precisely because we know that sometimes we're not gonna be in our right mind. So these are the resources we have.

We have scripture, we have community. Lastly, we have God's amazing promise in this passage.

Verse 13, God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

This means we can never say, you know, I would have resisted but God just poured it on too heavy. That in fact, God says, you're never gonna be in a place where there is not some way out if you choose it.

I'm never gonna put you in a situation where there is not some way out if you're willing to choose it. He always gives us a way out. So God always gives us a way to persevere in that situation without having to resort to sin.

[32 : 34] He never puts us in a position where we have to sin, where there's no other way. In other words, victory over temptation is possible in this life. And I think this is an extremely important note to end on because up until now, I think it's been a lot of hard stuff to hear.

But it ends with this promise that actually victory over temptation is possible. We should expect to have victory in this life. And this is something that we always need to hear. But the reason that victory is possible is ultimately because God is faithful.

It's because God is faithful. God is not a spectator waiting to see if we're gonna screw up again. God is our greatest ally in the fight. God is for us.

He's not sitting there just saying, ah, there's no way they're gonna make it. He's with us. He's for us. He wants us to succeed. And it means we can always count on his help.

All we need to do is ask. That's why when people are recovering from addiction, one of the first things they learn is they're powerless. The first steps are about admitting that you're completely powerless. You can't do it on your own and you need God in order to be able to do anything.

[33 : 43] Right? The first thing you need to do is to learn how to cry out to God for help. You just have to ask. And the reason that we know that God is faithful is because we see this embodied in Jesus Christ.

Right? we need only look to Jesus who was tempted in every way as we are. We see Jesus going into the wilderness enduring and facing all manner of temptation. And you know the temptation didn't end after 40 days.

It continued all the way through the Garden of Gethsemane and the desire to not drink that cup all the way through the cross. At any moment he could have gotten down but he chose to remain. The author of Hebrews says Jesus was tempted in every way as we are and yet was without sin.

And through his death on the cross Jesus defeated sin and death as we said earlier so that one day we will be free from temptation and sin. We won't have to contend with this anymore. This is just a light momentary affliction compared to that life.

But because of the cross even when we do fail even when we do find ourselves ensnared by sin we know that God will always forgive us. That God will always restore us.

[34 : 55] In the words of Psalm 103 and for wilderness people who are going to fail as often as we succeed we need words like this again and again and again. God is the one who forgives all your iniquity.

Who heals all your diseases. Who redeems your life from the pit. Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy. Who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagles.

Let's pray. Lord what a great comfort it is to know that you are a God who desires our freedom.

Who has given us that freedom. Who protects us and seeks to help safeguard that freedom. And who will one day fulfill your promise to fulfill and restore us and make all things new.

and we pray Lord that in the strength of your Holy Spirit Lord and through the finished work of your son Jesus Christ that you would give us the strength to live faithfully here and now.

[36 : 02] Lord between between the cross and the new creation. We pray that you would give us the strength especially Lord that we now lift up those who are particularly struggling right now.

Lord either because of stress and anxiety or grief related to their to their work to their job to their finances. Lord people who are overwhelmed by despair or hopelessness.

People who are caught in the trap of addiction. Lord people who are on the edge of hopelessness.

People who are struggling in their vocation of singleness. Struggling in their vocation of marriage.

Struggling in their vocation of parenting. Struggling in their desire to be parents. Lord struggling in whatever way we are struggling now Lord we lift we lift these struggles up to you.

We cry out just as we said and we ask that you would you would give us the comfort of your presence. Remind us of your faithfulness. Lord empower us and strengthen us with your Holy Spirit to stand.

[37 : 01] Lord if there are people here who need others in their life who need that kind of community that we are talking about Lord I pray that you would bring those people to mind now. I pray that you would open people's hearts to one another.

That we would be willing to share our struggles and burdens and bear them together. Lord we lift all of this up to you and ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.