

Be Excellent to Each Other

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[0:00] I can touch that. We're going to start with a word of prayer today.

We're going to start with a word of prayer today. Merciful God, as we take a look at this passage today, as we endeavor into your word, I pray that you would lead, guide, and direct.

In Christ's name, amen. I have to be honest with you. I have never in over 20 years of pastoring come upon a passage of scripture that was so applicable to this moment in time.

Never. You know that I tend to preach from one end of a book to another and then go to another book and preach one. And occasionally I'll throw some topical sermons out there, but I'm going to tell you something.

This passage today is perfect for this church today. And I'm geeked.

[1:11] But having said that, let's get started. For many years I taught public high school. And I had very, very, very few rules.

But my number one rule was, from Bill and Ted's excellent adventure, be excellent to each other. It's just a great way of living life.

You know? If somebody is around, be nice to people. You know? If somebody's not nice to you, be nice anyways. You know? If you're not handling, be excellent to each other.

You know? Loan a pencil. Loan a piece of paper. Don't share the answers, though, because I'll find out. But, you know, be excellent to one another. And that's really, as you open your Bible to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, what we're going to be looking at today is really a command to be excellent to one another.

And so that's why I named this message. Now, you understand there's a reason why we need a message that says, be excellent to one another.

[2:20] And let me just clarify. I know this is a big shock to everybody in here, but people are not perfect. I know, I know, I know.

It's really shocking to me because I'm married to Mrs. James, who is just wonderful on every level. But believe it or not, people are not perfect.

And there's more to that. Are you ready for this? This one's tough. People sometimes do things that they omit, and sometimes they do things that they commit.

So, like, if I forget your birthday, I've omitted doing kindness to you. Or maybe I slash your tires.

That's me committing an act, okay?

But people do things that they either omit or they commit. And within that, there is this. Sometimes people do things that are intentional, like slashing their tires or like telling lies or like, I don't know.

[3:29] I'm certain you can come up with examples of your, or things that are unintentional. I could, I'll tell a story on myself about once when I was a young man and I was in this church building, bawling, walking down that hallway and somebody called my name and I turned around and I clipped somebody with my Bible.

I just turned around and clipped them. He also being a teenage man, didn't take that very well, turned around and planted his foot right between my legs. I was on the ground crying for quite a while.

This is a perfect example of people not being perfect. And sometimes we do things unintentionally. I turned around and clipped him. And intentionally, he planted his foot right up my plums and I was gone.

That's the way people are. It doesn't matter if it's in the church or outside the church. People do things that are bad, sometimes on purpose, sometimes totally not on purpose.

This is true both outside and inside the church. But there is a huge difference between what happens outside and what happens inside.

[4:50] You see, conflict, problems with people, things that happen within the...

You guys know what the BOC is? Body of Christ. Whew! I was worried about that. I threw it up there, didn't I? Body of Christ. Another word of saying church. Conflict within the body of Christ is an opportunity for us to grow.

You see, if you're outside, it's just, it's life, you know? People can be jerks or people can be insensitive or people can be rude or people can be whatever.

But here, we're linked by our faith. And because of that, we're all members of the body together.

And so when things happen, which they're going to happen because we're people, it's not a chance, it's not an opportunity for everything just to blow up.

It's really an opportunity for us to grow. So, open your Bibles, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. Now, we started this section last week, this last little section here, saying that there were things that Paul asked, things that Paul urged, and things that Paul commanded.

[6:13] And last week, we were talking about Paul's asking. And Paul was asking them, in verse 12, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and to admonish you.

And that's, so I put up last week this job description. The pastor's job is to teach, train, equip you so that when the storm winds of life blow, you can stand firm in your faith.

And when the storms of life become a tempest, they're there to help guide you safely through, to walk the path of pain at your side, sheltering and comforting you as Christ's servant.

That's, when it says, respect those who labor among you, this is why, because this is what we're called to do. And then he goes from that into verse 14.

And we urge you, brothers, we're going to read verse 14 down through 18. And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

[7:18] See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.

Give thanks in all circumstances. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. That's what he's going to ask today, or urge, urge, urge, urge.

And so let's take a look at Paul's urgent call. As I said before, people, even believers, are not perfect.

And if you're looking in this passage of Scripture, you'll see he's identified three different types of people. The idle. You see that right there?

This is idle. And I want to make sure I get this. Faint-hearted. Faint-hearted is another way of saying timid. You know, those people that are reserved, shy.

[8:19] And the weak. You've got to understand we're talking in the context of faith. There are those people who are idle in their faith. You know, the ones that don't read their Bible, don't share the gospel, don't practice what the Bible asks them to do.

They're just bumps on a log. Then they're done that, you know. Well, those that are timid. Yeah, I come to church, but, you know, at my workplace, I don't like to make waves.

No, I believe that God is. I know the Bible. Or those that are weak. Those that get pushed around.

Those that don't, they're not rooted and grounded in God's Word.

They're not the sort of people that can stand firm and defend their faith. You know, it says be instant in season and out of season to be able to defend the reason of the hope that you have, right?

There's some people who, they're all going, yay, Jesus.

And then somebody asks them a question. They're like, I don't know. You know, they're like, well, I'm a Christian. No, I don't know why I believe what I believe. Okay? And Paul says, this is what we're going to find in the church.

[9:36] Notice what he says there. Look, we urge you, brothers. He's talking about people in the church. There are people in the body of Christ that are idle.

And I'm not talking about worshiping idols. I'm talking about not doing things. There's people that are faint-hearted, that are timid. Don't get me wrong. There's the other people, the other side of not being timid.

There's those people that you just can't stand to be around because they won't shut up. You know? They just keep banging the drum. You know? Go away. We're not talking. And then you've got those people that James 1 says that they're blown about by every wind and wave, and they're not set.

This is what we're going to find in the church. And if you read further, you understand that people like that, we are to gently help them.

Look at this. It says, verse 14. And we urge you, brothers, to admonish the idle, to encourage the faint-hearted, to help the weak.

[11:00] If you look at those words, those are not aggressive words. This is not where you grab somebody and you shake them.

Go do it. It's not what it's saying. Admonish them. It's where you come up next to somebody and say, hey. I think you do have the ability to get out there and share your faith.

You do have the ability to help around. You do have the ability to do more than what you're doing. Can I help you do that? Can I show you how I got started?

Admonish them. That's not to berate. That's not to belittle. That's not to abuse them. It's to show them the better way.

To remind them, it's okay to take a break every now and then. And everybody said, yeah, amen, praise the Lord. But it's also okay to get off the pew and get invested and involved.

[12:09] And everybody said, he's talking about you, not me, right?

Admonish. Then what does it say? Encourage the faint-hearted.

That's where you come alongside somebody and you say, I'll tell you what. I'll go with you. I'll stand up and I'll support you.

Encourage someone. You've got it right. You nailed that one. Let's go and do it. Give them encouragement so that they feel strong, so that they begin to build up that strength and get going. And then it says to abuse the weak person and throw them out because they're not worth anything. That's not what it says. It says to help the weak. Very, very gentle words, especially as they're written.

The idea is, look, the reality is people are people and people stink. And they've got all sorts of problems. And you know what? People in the church stink. And people in the church have all sorts of problems.

[13:18] And we, as the fellow believers, need to come along each side of each other and help one another out. To encourage, to lift up, to help.

Turn in your Bibles, if you will. We'll be back here, I believe. Yeah, we're going to be back here in 1 Thessalonians. But I want you to turn to Galatians 6, verse 1. Because this is the passage that comes to my mind when I think about this.

Galatians is before Ephesians. It's after Corinthians. There it is. Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression.

Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop, stop. The reality is we're people. And it's not if somebody's going to get caught in a transgression. It's what? When.

That's right. That's what's going to happen. People are going to make mistakes. But if it comes up, and it will. If anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.

[14:35] I can't tell you, this is not the sort of thing where you go out and you're like, spirit of gentleness.

I'm a more power kind of guy. More power. You guys remember Tim Tool Time? More power. If the pedal will go down, it will go all the way down. And if you look on the floorboard of my truck, there's a dent.

You know, because I like more power. That's not what it's talking about here. This is using as little power as needed.

Not too little. Sometimes you have to use a little bit of power. But this is in gentleness. You who are spiritual, restore such one in gentleness.

And then finish the verse. Considering yourselves, lest you also be tempted. Because guess what?

[15:42] We are people too. You know, we're always pointing at that person. Yeah. Don't forget, sometimes that's us. There are days when each and every one of us are the strong one in faith.

There are days when we are walking step by step with the Lord and things are awesome. And it is great. And the attacks of Satan are like BBs off a battle tank.

Because I am walking with the Lord. And there's other days when I don't have the strength to get out of a chair. There are other days when Satan just glances at you and you just wilt.

That's true for all of us. We're going to have good days and we're going to have bad days. So if someone is caught in a fault, restore one another gently, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted.

But I want to go back to Ephesians chapter 5. Not Ephesians, 1 Thessalonians. Because he starts off this section here, this section where he's urging the church to behave in this way.

[16:46] And he points out by saying, look, there's going to be problems in the church. That's the reality. You know, he says, brothers, we urge you, admonish the idle, encourage the faint hearted, help the weak, and be patient with them all.

You see that? It's going to happen. And so I'm urging you, get ready. But then he follows it up with this. Look at this. Look at this. Rejoice always.

How many of you find it a great time when you go out in the first thing in the morning and you realize you've got a flat tire? Is that when you rejoice in the Lord?

Praise Jesus! The tire is flat. Right? I don't think so. Not in my family. Or how about when you go to the, and you've already eaten and you whip out your debit card and you hand it to the waitress and she takes it and goes, it's declined.

Is that when you're smiling and saying, woo, go God. Right? And you realize you don't have any money. Or you get into an argument.

[18:03] Or you get into a disagreement. Yeah. Rejoice always. Step a little bit closer.

I'll show you how to rejoice. But that's what he's urging us to do. The world says when things go wrong, blow your top.

God says, rejoice. Remember how he started this out? When things go sideways, we're different than the world.

These are opportunities for us to grow in God. But he goes beyond just rejoicing. Look at what he says. Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.

Give thanks in all circumstances. It is not a problem for me to give thanks when I win the lotto. Yeah, baby.

[19:00] I have no problem with that. It is no problem for me to give thanks when everything is rolling up roses. Does anybody here have a problem when things are going well, being thankful?

Anybody? How about this? How difficult is it to remember to stay in prayer when everything is going smoothly?

When I'm walking and everything is going well and life is great and, you know, I'm feeling good.

Man, getting down on your knees all the time is a little bit less of a pressure point.

You know what else is a little bit harder? Remember, when somebody royally stabs you in the back, David talked about in the Psalms how he could take it if it was his enemy, but it was his brother who stabbed you.

Anybody else here get angry just thinking about that? Anybody else here feels that little bit of stomach acid? I trusted you and you treat me this way?

[20:17] It's a hard time to remember to pray. Oh, I mean, I can pray, dear God, throw a rock at him, but that's not what we're being called to do. Remember, he says, admonish, encourage, help.

Throwing big rocks at people isn't being really helpful. Just be honest with you. I haven't caught two or three of my own self. Pray without ceasing. Dear God, give me wisdom.

Give me strength. You say, be patient. Help me to be patient. Guide me through this situation. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you, Father, that we're having this opportunity for iron to sharpen iron. I'm not really enjoying it, God, but I appreciate the fact that you value me enough and you value us enough that you want us to be more of the people you've called us to be.

While challenging, believers are to face difficult times in faith.

[21:28] That's hard. To let go of anger and to turn to God. But that's what we're called to do. You know, this is just a one-off.

This is just one Bible passage. We can just say, okay, that was really nice and throw it to the side. Oh, no. This passage is echoed in Hebrews.

It's not just echoed. It is amplified. Check this out. Hebrews chapter 12. Go ahead and turn there. Hebrews chapter 12.

I went too far. It's over here. Titus, Philemon. Hebrews 12. We don't know who wrote Hebrews. A lot of people think it was the Apostle Paul. A lot of people think it was anybody but Paul. A lot of people don't know. And I'm one of those. I don't know who wrote it. I'm just going to go out on a limb here and say it. It doesn't say.

[22:41] But check out what it says in Hebrews chapter 12. Begin in verse 1. Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.

Now, you understand Hebrews chapter 11 is the hall of fame of faith. If you read Hebrews chapter 11, you see people who do amazing things for God, who stand firm in their faith even though everything in life falls apart.

You know? And so now he's talking to us. Therefore, since we are surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

You need to understand, first of all, he's talking to believers. He's talking to those people who have trusted Jesus Christ, who have come to that point in time where they've realized that they are sinners and the only hope they have is trusting in the one who died on the cross to forgive them and cleanse them from all sin.

And they're still going to have trouble. And look what it says. Therefore, since we, not you, we, we, are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin which clings so closely.

[24:12] My friends, the reality is this. Sin wants to cling even to believers. And if you're not paying attention, sin will grab a hold of you.

Have you ever been walking out and got hit with hitchhikers? You know what I'm talking about? Those little, those little barbed seeds that get caught in your socks.

And the further you walk, the deeper in they dig into your ankle. And you can never, you just take the sock off and throw it away. You know, because those things get in there. That's what sin does to us.

If we are not purposely getting rid of it, if we are not purposely taking care of it, it will cling. Because people are people.

I got news for you. Ain't none of us perfect. So let us get rid of that weight. But it goes on. It goes on. It goes beyond just saying that people are people and we need to deal with it.

[25:19] Look at this. And let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted in your struggle against sin.

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your own blood. My friends, let us keep our eyes on Jesus. We're going to face, in the church, there's going to be times where you're going to say, I want blue carpet and you're going to say, I want green carpet and I'm just going to go, I'm stepping out of this.

Right? We're going to have fights over things. There's going to be problems. Just like today, where in your own relationships, you have struggles.

Within your family. Oftentimes within our marriages. within our work community.

[26:48] We're going to have these battles. And I'm here to tell you, we need to get rid of the sin and keep our eye on Jesus.

Look what it says here. And I want to say this again because it's so important. It's verse two. Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross.

The cross was not a lot of fun. There's no joy in the cross. When he was suffering on the cross, it was so bad that even thinking about it, he was sweating drops of blood.

It was what came after the cross that brought him joy. He was willing to endure the cross for the joy that was to come. But look what it says. Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of God.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself. When we get into these situations, when even believers come to loggerheads, we need to look to Christ.

[28:15] It says in Romans, while we were enemies, he died for us. If we are looking to Christ and his example as we endure hardship today, know that he died on a cross giving up his very life for people who were his enemy.

That should be motivational. God, I can't take it anymore. Their attitude is garbage. I have had enough. Oh, really? Have you yet resisted to the point of shedding your own blood?

That's what Jesus did. That's when you turn to God and you say, thanks, didn't need that reminder. But that's what we've been called to do. Look to Jesus.

But there's more! Isn't that great? Your infomercial right here, right? Not only are people broken, not only does sin want to cling to us, not only are we called to keep our eyes on Jesus, but there's more!

Have you forgotten the exhortation? Verse 5, that addresses you as sons.

[29:33] My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.

It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Besides, we have this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them.

Shall we not much more be subject to the father of spirits and live?

For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them. But he disciplines us for our good that we may share his holiness.

Get this? Look, sometimes we're the problem. Let me rephrase. Sometimes I'm the problem.

[30:45] My wife and my children in the back going, but it's true for each and every one of us. Sometimes we are the problem. Not always.

Sometimes we are not the problem. Sometimes the problem is you. That's legitimate too. But whether it is we or you, there's a process of discipline and training, of shaping and sharpening. And as much as I want people who are wrong to get there, yeah, you need to learn how to not do that. What's my attitude when it's my turn to learn to not do that?

Am I as motivated? Tough, isn't it? God uses the events of this life to train us in godliness.

I'm coming back to Hebrews, but I just want to read this for you. It's in Romans chapter 8. Keep this in mind. People can be buggers, and people need to not be buggers, and we're going to work this out, right?

[31:59] God's going to train us to be good people, right? Romans 8, 28 through 30. We know that for those who love God, all things work together for good for those who are called according to His purpose.

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

And those whom He predestined, He also called. And those whom He called, He also justified. And those whom He justified, He also glorified. I like to think that, you know, God works all things to good.

I can't wait for the party at the end. You know, that means that when there's trouble in the church, or in our families, or in our life outside of the church, God is using that to form us into the people that

we need to become.

He's disciplining us. God can use any circumstance. It's an opportunity for us to shape how we respond.

[33:11] Is it always easy? No. Not in my life. But is it good? Oh, without a doubt.

As we humbly yield to God shaping in our lives. But, there's more.

Back to Hebrews chapter 12. Look at this. Verse 12. Hebrews 12, 12 and following.

Remember, He starts off by saying, hey, there's going to be some people that are, that, you know, we need to deal with sin. That's the way it's going to be. God's going to shape and deal and change us and form us. Therefore, lift up your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather healed.

Strive for peace with everyone. Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho, ho. And for holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

[34:24] Lord, see to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.

Look. Work at helping while being wary of a root of bitterness. My friends, we're all in this together. We're the body of Christ. We work together. The same thing is true with our families. And you know what's coming up?

The holiday season. You know what holidays are? Let me describe holidays. In our mind, they are this glorious gathering of family together to celebrate and to enjoy and to eat good food.

While in reality, it's a fiasco. You know, we get our hopes all the way up here, and reality is Tommy's still trying to shove potatoes up Timmy's nose, and Sarah's pulling Julie's hair, and everybody's getting kicked under the table.

[35:49] Or is that just my family? You know that's the way it goes too often. It's so rare that everything goes the way it should. We need to work at being helping, to admonish, to encourage, to lift up, while being very careful of the root of bitterness.

If we allow the root of bitterness to get a hold, it's even worse than the sin which clings. Because the sin that clings just hangs on the outside.

It's clinging to you. A root of bitterness? Well, we know what roots do. They grow in. They spread. Brutal.

All right. Okay. Okay. I want to go back to the story of Peter. All right.

You guys know who Peter is, right? And did you know that every gospel, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, all four of them record the story of Peter denying Christ three times?

[37:05] You know, it's an important thing when it happens more than once. Every gospel account records Peter denying Christ. Can I ask you to go ahead and...

I did not write it down on this. Oh, yeah. Take a look at... No, I didn't. It's in Luke. Pretty certain it's Luke. Turn to Luke 20.

Luke 20. Yeah, Luke 22. Luke 22.

Pick it up in verse 54. This is brutal. They had seized Jesus and they drug Him away.

And verse 56, a servant girl seeing Him as He sat in the light looked at Him and said, this man was also with Him. And he denied it, saying, woman, I don't know Him. 58. A little later, someone said to Him, you are one of them.

[38:09] But Peter said, man, I do not. And after an interval of about an hour, another one insisted, saying, certainly this man was also with Him, for he too was a Galilean. But Peter said, man, I do not know what you're talking about.

And immediately, while he was still speaking... Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop. Luke doesn't record this. You have to read some of the other accounts. It says, while he was still speaking, what Peter said at this point in time is not church appropriate.

If you read it, he called out curses. Remember, what was Peter's job?

He was a fisherman. He was a sailor. There's this phrase that goes around, swear like a sailor. Ever heard that? Peter was a man who could speak his mind in very artistic ways, let us say.

And he's out there making these statements. And he's saying, I don't know Christ. I don't have anything to do with Him.

[39:26] Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter.

And Peter remembered. I want to put this in perspective for you.

Jesus Christ was God incarnate. God who existed eternity past. God who will continue to exist for eternity forward.

God who left the absolute glory of all creation. The most wonderful. He left the sight and took upon Himself humanity to live a sinless life.

This man who grew from a child in a sinful world but was without sin. This man who came from the Father and was getting ready to sacrifice His life on a cross.

[40:36] Who was at the darkest moment of human in any history. Turns to His closest friend in the darkest hour.

And it sees His friend cursing and denying and rejecting Him. Be that friend for a moment in your mind.

How would you feel looking to see Christ? You're in the midst of this offensive, foul, and you see Him in your leg. How heartbroken would you be?

How destroyed would you be? And He takes off. In fact, I want you to turn to John chapter 21.

While you're turning to John chapter 21, let me remind you. People are broken. People have issues. Even people inside the church. Even people in your immediate family.

[41:49] They're weak. They're timid. They're lazy. They got issues. And we, as the body of Christ, are called to lift one another up.

We are called to endure with them patiently. Even though by now they should know better. We are called to lay ourselves out to lift up the body of Christ.

Gospel of John chapter 21. Oh, this is incredible. Having last seen our Savior in the midst of the worst moment of His life and being called out by Him.

Peter goes fishing with the disciples. He sees Jesus, right? I think they met in the upper room or something. But he really hasn't had time to be with the Lord. The relationship has not been healed. There's been encounters, but there hasn't been healing. Peter hasn't been able to sit down with the Lord and work things out yet. Have you ever been in that circumstance?

[43:04] Where you and your best buddy are... And you see him, but you really haven't worked it out yet? How comfortable is that?

I don't enjoy it. I doubt you do. Watch what happens here. So, in chapter 21, Peter's fishing.

Jesus shows up. Peter just takes off. He gets it, right? And all the disciples are there and they eat. Pick it up in verse 15.

When they'd finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?

You need to remember, before he denied him, Peter was like, everybody else will abandon you, but I'll follow you all the way to death. That was Peter, right? And so Jesus now, the moment of conflict has come and gone.

[44:08] Peter's denied him, totally just blown up. And pulls him aside and he says, hey, do you love me more than these? Can you be Peter for a second?

Peter says, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, feed my lambs. He said to him a second time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

He said, yes, Lord, you know that I love you. He said to him, tend my sheep. He said to him the third time, Simon, son of John, do you love me?

And Peter was grieved because he'd said to him the third time, do you love me? Yeah, I only denied you three times, Lord. You don't have to rub it in. He said, Lord, you know everything.

You know I love you. Jesus said, feed my sheep. How gentle. How loving.

[45:26] How merciful. On the worst day of his life, his best friend dishonored him.

But Jesus, whom we're supposed to look to, set us an example. And in love, and mercy, and grace, and tenderness.

He didn't deny that it happened. Oh, he highlighted it. Do you love me? Do you love me? Do you love me? Three times. And what happens?

If you read the rest of the account in the book of Acts, you will find this one inarguable truth, that all of church history was impacted by Peter's life after Jesus restored him.

Peter goes on to become a pillar in the church of Jerusalem. Peter goes on to lead thousands to the Lord. Peter goes on to be a man that even today the Roman Catholic church looks to Peter because Christ restored him.

[46:50] And so here's my challenge to you today. This is what I have for the church today. At times, each of us is the grain of sand.

You know what I'm saying? In the oyster, stick a grain of sand in there. Sometimes we're the oyster. Other times, we're the grain of sand. Only together can we grow a pearl of great price.

My friends, if Jesus hadn't restored Peter, Peter would have never done what he did. My friends, we are going to have bad days.

We're going to have them within the church. We're going to have them in our community. We're going to have them in our family because we're people. Saved by grace, children of God, members of the body of Christ, looking eternally towards glory with our hope to be in the presence of our Lord and Savior.

All of that is true, but we're still here. And we've still got problems. And there's going to be conflict. conflict. But if we will look to Christ, if we will be willing to suffer, to lift the other person up, what a beautiful thing, what a great story it will be.

[48:21] we will then be useful to God in ways beyond anything we could imagine otherwise. So my challenge to you today, it doesn't matter if you're the grain of sand or if you're the oyster.

It doesn't matter if you are the one that is encouraging or the one being encouraged. Let us keep our eyes on our Lord and Savior and become the men and women that He has called us to be. Amen. Father,