

1 Corinthians 4:6-21

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[0 : 00] Father, we come now before you, before your word. Lord, we ask that you would speak to us this morning.

Lord, thank you that by your Holy Spirit you enable us to know spiritual truths, Lord, that are wonderful, precious, sweet.

Lord, we pray this morning that we would not have hard hearts, Lord, and that we would not resist your teaching, but Lord, that you would give us soft hearts to receive what you have to speak to us this morning.

God, I pray for your help, that I might proclaim your word faithfully, that Christ would be lifted up in our midst. Lord, be with us, we pray, in Jesus' name.

Amen. My son Eli had a doctor's appointment, actually a dentist appointment this week. He's seven and his teeth are coming in.

[1 : 10] His two lower front teeth are coming in, but his baby teeth haven't fallen out. As a matter of fact, until this week, they hadn't even been loose. And I, as a, doing this for the first time around, had no idea how serious this was or not.

So I called the dentist, made up an appointment. I was hoping they could just call me back and talk me through it, but they couldn't. They had to set up an appointment. So, so we set him up to take him in on Thursday.

And, you know, my poor little boy, he just hates being treated for things like cuts and bruises and, you know, band-aids.

He just, he hates it. And I thought, oh, Lord, if they have to take out four of his little teeth to make room for those big honking ones that are sticking up through his gums right now.

Oh, Lord, have mercy on him. I just wanted so much for him to not have to go through that. I wanted so much for him to not go through that pain and that trial.

[2 : 18] And I realized that it's just a little window into my heart. That's how I often think about him and Katie. As a parent, I want them to not have to go through trials and loss.

I hope that as they go to school, they don't have to face mockery and scorn from their peers at school. I pray as they grow that they won't have to face the sufferings of disappointment, of dashed hopes and broken hearts.

I'll be honest with you. I think, haven't they already seen enough? Haven't they lost enough? And you know, it's not a bad instinct for a parent to feel this way about their children.

Goodness, it's far better than neglecting them or not caring at all what happens to them. But as I examined my heart this week and as we looked at our, as I was studying this passage, I saw in it that there's a deeper longing in my heart.

I just want my life to be free from suffering and trial altogether. I want it to be successful. I want it to be triumphant.

[3 : 34] Even the trials, I want to be able to say, I've overcome them and look at all the good that they've produced in my life. I want it to be easy and carefree.

I think we live in a world where this is often the subtext that life is supposed to work. It's supposed to work out well.

Even the hard things produce good things. And if there's something wrong, there must be a problem and the problem has to be fixed or we sue somebody.

I think we spend in our culture a lot of time avoiding pain and suffering. And you know, I think we can even import this into the church and think that, well, isn't this what God wants for us?

God has saved us from sin. God has saved us from our foolishness. God has, in Christ, given us a new life. It gives us hope that God will be good to us.

[4 : 40] Not only in our eternal salvation, but in our everyday life. And again, this is not an untrue thing that God would be good to us in our everyday life. And yet, we expect God to preserve us from every pain and trial.

To preserve us and rescue us from every distress quickly. And when he doesn't, we blame. We reject him.

We withdraw from him. I think we often go through our life, rather than asking the question that I think the Bible wants us to ask, which is, how can we glorify God in whatever our situation? We ask ourselves and God the question, how can I avoid pain in this situation? Here's your test. Think about how you pray.

When you have an evaluation at work. As you think about your kid going off to junior high.

[5 : 51] As you go on a date. Or, nowadays, a dating online match moment. I don't even know what that is. When you go into your doctor's office for your routine evaluation.

Or, for something that you don't know quite what it is. When you launch out on a new business venture. Set off to a new place to live.

What do you pray for? Do you pray for anything other than God's help? That your endeavors would be successful.

That your problems would be fixed. I know that I often don't pray for much more than that.

Maybe you're like me. Thankfully, God has spoken to us in his word. And so, if you want to turn with me.

[7 : 00] Page 953. We're looking at 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Starting in verse 6. We're looking at verse 6 to the end of the chapter.

And as we turn there. I want to remind you. Because this is actually the end of a section. The first four chapters of the book of 1 Corinthians. Are kind of an opening salvo.

And then you will see a strong transition. Beginning of chapter 5. And in this, Paul has been addressing broadly. Their understanding of the Christian life.

Of what Christian leadership ought to look like. And specifically. Of what the gospel that they believe. Actually is and promises. And for much of this.

He has been uncovering. In their thinking. And in their hearts. That their understanding is far more Corinthian. Than it is Christian.

[7 : 56] Far more Corinthian. Than it is cruciform. Shaped by the cross. One commentator explained. That for the Corinthian church. It seemed that their values.

Were form above content. Prestige above humility. Stoicism above passion. An organizing philosophy of wisdom.

Above frank confession. Frank confession of ignorance. And the limitations of human knowledge. Rhetoric above truth. Money above people. And reputation above integrity.

The church had in many ways. Adopted the thinking of the culture. That they had lived in. And one of the effects of it. Was that they thought. That the kingdom had already come.

They took the successful. Get ahead culture. Of Corinth. And they imported it. Into their understanding of God's kingdom. And they thought.

[8 : 58] That the kingdom that was. That is future. Has now become theirs. In the present. That. They wanted to get ahead. For God to be sure.

But by the means. Of the Corinthian thought patterns. Paul has been unpacking this. And attacking it.

Over and over again. In the last three and a half chapters. And here. He ends with a very passionate. And very personal appeal. To the Corinthians. To consider. What God has actually called them to.

So let's read this passage together. First Corinthians chapter four. Starting in verse six. I have applied all these things to myself.

And Apollos. For your benefit brothers. That you may learn by us. Not to go beyond. What is written. That none of you may be puffed up.

[10 : 01] In favor of one another. One against another. For who sees anything different. In you. What do you have. That you did not receive. If then you received it.

Why do you boast. As if you did not receive it. Already you have all you want. Already you've become rich. Without us.

You have become kings. And would that you did reign. So that we might share the rule with you. For I think God has exhibited us apostles.

As last of all. Like men sentenced to death. Because we have become a spectacle to the world. To angels. And to men. We are fools for Christ's sake.

But you are wise in Christ. We are weak. But you are strong. You are held in honor. But we in disrepute. To the present hour.

[10:59] We hunger and thirst. We are poorly dressed. And buffeted. And homeless. And we labor. Working with our own hands. When reviled. We bless. When persecuted.

We endure. When slandered. We entreat. We have become. And are still. Like the scum. Of the world.

The refuse. Of all things. I do not write these things. To make you ashamed. But to admonish you. As my beloved children.

For though you have countless guides. In Christ. You do not have many fathers. For I became your father. And Christ Jesus. Through the gospel. I urge you then.

Be imitators of me. This is why I sent you Timothy. My beloved and faithful child. And the Lord. To remind you of my ways. In Christ. As I teach them everywhere.

[11:55] In every church. Some are arrogant. As though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you soon. If the Lord wills. And I will find out.

Not their talk. Not the talk of these arrogant people. But their power. For the kingdom of God. Does not consist in talk. But in power. What do you wish?

Shall I come to you with a rod. Or with love. In a spirit of gentleness. In this argument.

There is actually only two central commands. That he said. And one is an implication. That you might not be puffed up. The central command here.

Is what we see in verse. I took off my glasses. What is it? 16. Verse 16. Imitate me. Imitate me.

[12:51] This is the. This is Paul's passionate appeal. To the Corinthian church. Is to say. You have been thinking so much. About your own culture. You have been so influenced.

By the ways of thinking around you. And maybe even by leaders among you. As we see at the end of this chapter. But would you.

My beloved children. Imitate me. Follow my example. Not in boasting. Not in self-promotion.

Not in self-exaltation. Not in self-dependence. But in self-denial. And sacrifice.

Following. In the footsteps of the Savior. Imitate me. In following Christ.

[13:48] Paul unpacks this passage. There are two different things. I want to look at this morning. As we look at. What it is that Paul is saying. As he's doing this. I want to look first. At the relationship.

On which this appeal. Was grounded. And secondly. I want to look at the pattern. That he put forward. For us to imitate. So let's look first. At the relationship. That Paul had.

The relationship. That gave the grounds. For this imitation. First. What we see is that Paul loved. The Corinthian church. To them. To him.

They were like family. You see it in verse 6. My beloved. My brothers. I've done this to you.

Because you are my brothers. In Christ.

I don't lord it over you. I am not simply trying to come in. And fix you. As some authority. I am your brother. In this. And then as we saw.

[14:42] In 14 through 17. He says. Not only am I your brother. But I'm your father. Verse 15. When it says. I have become your father.

The word there. Is the same word. To birth a child. And it's interesting. The way Paul puts it. Isn't it? He didn't say. I have birthed you. He said.

I have become your father. Because the gospel. Has begotten you. As my child. Do you see how he says that? I became your father.

In Christ Jesus. Through the gospel. Paul isn't saying. I'm appealing to you. Because I have done all these great things in your life. Paul is saying. No.

The gospel has done great things. And I've had the privilege. Of being a vehicle. Through which the gospel has worked. In you. And I love you.

[15:36] And I love you enough. Not to back down. I love you enough. Not to say. Hey. I just given my opinion. Do your own thing. He loves them enough.

To say. I will come. It will either be with a rod. Or it will be with gentleness. It will either come with strength. Of rebuke. Or it will come.

With the gentleness. Of embrace. He loves them that much. And he does say.

I have become your father. So imitate me. This was a cultural pattern. That in our modern world. We have very little sense of. But in the ancient world.

And in fact. In most places in the world. In most times. Sons would follow. In the footsteps of their father. Think of how in the English language.

[16:30] We have some great last names. Baker. And Smith. Do you know why they have that last name? Because their dad was the baker. And then the son was the baker.

And the son after him. Was the baker. And so you just kept your name. Or in the Scandinavian countries. How many of you are named. Peterson. Or Svensson. Or Olson. Or Olofsson.

Or whatever. I'm the son of my father. And that's my identity. And I follow in his footsteps. And I bear his name. Think of even how the crowds responded to Jesus.

When he began his ministry. Isn't he the carpenter's son? Shouldn't he be in his woodshed? Workshop? Working? What is he doing?

Preaching? This isn't what he's done. So Paul is leaning on a cultural pattern of imitation. He's saying, I have become your father. Not a pedagogue.

[17:27] Not a... The word here for countless guides. Might be best translated a governess or a nanny. Someone who takes over the full-time care and moral development of a child for a period of time.

But not forever. And in the ancient Near East, there's a clear distinction between who is the father. And who was the caretaker on a day-to-day basis.

And Paul says, you have many who can come and teach you and take care of you. He's not trying to pick a fight with the other teachers. Apollos and Peter and others. Saying they're a blessing to you.

But you only have one father. Imitate me. Finally, I want you to see that in his relationship, his focus was not on himself. It's so easy for us, isn't it?

As people to try to sort of leverage our personal relationships to get someone else to do what we want to do. Hey, I did all this for you.

[18:32] Come on. Give me a little... Give me a little something in return. If we have authority over someone, we can wield that in a way to manipulate or to control.

Paul isn't doing any of that. So striking in verse 14. I don't write this that you would be ashamed. Don't be ashamed of who you are.

Don't be ashamed of what God has done in your life. Don't be ashamed of me. I don't want this to be a guilt trip for you. It is instead an invitation.

I want to draw out of you the best. I want to elicit you to find what is right and good and true.

And to pursue that. He intervenes for their good. The thought that Paul would be wielding his relationship with them for his own benefit flies in the whole face of the passage.

[19:41] Because that's not the pattern. I wonder if you've ever had a relationship like this in your life. I'm thankful to say that I've had many.

I sat down this week and I counted four turning point incidents in my life. Where I had whether mentors or friends. Men and women both.

Who spoke into my life. I can think of Bill who confronted me about my lack of responsibility in a dating relationship. outside of a dormitory at college.

I talked to him. I thought of a dear sister who sat me down when I was a young foolish and one of those really dangerous guys who was really nice. And didn't quite know what he was doing.

And said, you've got to learn how to have more self-control so you can love your sisters well. And not be confusing. I can think of a couple who called me on a decision that I was making.

[20:45] And they said, we think you're doing this for selfish ambition. And not for desire for the kingdom. I can think of a time here at Trinity when I was confronted by a brother about my lack of grace.

And you know, sometimes I saw the wisdom of their statements in the moment. Sometimes it took years for me to really understand it.

But each of them said, you're not living up to your profession to follow Christ. You're being foolish when you think you are wise. You're being proud instead of humble.

I'm thankful for them. I'm humbled by them. And I want to imitate them. I think Paul's example is one for us to consider as well.

How we might bring these dynamics into our relationships. Obviously this applies to a discipling relationship or to church leadership as we lead the church. That we might do this.

[21 : 51] Sense both the weightiness and the responsibility to have these kinds of relationships. For any of you who are parents, you recognize this is a part of what we do in parenting as well, isn't it?

But also in spiritual friendships. The examples I gave many were mentors. But one was just a friend, a sister, who sat me down and helped me see something that I couldn't see.

And I wonder if we have those kinds of relationships that are based in love. That are calling us to live out the profession that God has given us.

Willing to confront where we think wrongly. Willing to love, not to shame, but to encourage and exhort one another to follow Christ.

Do we value people doing this in our own lives? Do we value, do we seek to cultivate these kinds of relationships as we initiate them with others?

[22 : 59] But this is only setting up the content of the passage, the rest of the passage, isn't it? Because this is the basis upon which the appeal to imitate Paul is laid in this familial, loving relationship.

But then we see Paul saying, what is it that you're to imitate with me? And he sets up this contrast. He says, the pattern for you, that you are to imitate in me is one of boasting in nothing.

But in the cross of Jesus Christ and him crucified. And walking a path of life that is patterned by that crucified Messiah.

As you look, verses 7 through 13, you see this constant contrast. You, we, you, we, you, we. He's saying, there's a pattern that I see in your life that looks like this.

But the pattern that I have lived looks like this. And he says, imitate this. What is this? Well, let's look at it. Let's look at this contrast together. The Corinthian way.

[24 : 08] Start with me in verse 7. Who sees anything different? That is, who sees anything special in you? What do you have that you did not receive?

And if you received it, then why do you boast of it as if you didn't? The very core of the Corinthian problem was that of pride.

They had an inflated sense of self-worth. Like Tom Hanks in Castaway sitting on this beach saying, Look what I have created when he lights a bonfire.

But we think about everything in our life that way. And rather than seeing that every good and perfect gift comes from the Father above, we take these things and we make them ours.

And then we say, look what a great thing I am. And when we do this, we fall into all the patterns that we've been talking about for the last two and a half months.

[25 : 20] We compare to one another. Am I ahead of them or not? We compete. We lift ourselves up by putting other people down. Taking credit for the things that we have that other people don't so that we can feel more important.

We build our identities on things that separate us from others. And in doing so, we jockey for greatness. And that pride is expressed in a kind of arrogance.

It builds one another up. It's fascinating thinking about how to read this passage. Because if you've ever wondered whether sarcasm is okay, for those of us who are in New England, we love it.

Right? Paul got sarcastic here. Right? He got ironic here. In verse 8, he's saying something that is both true and untrue at the same time about them.

Already you have all that you want. Already you are rich. Already you have begun to reign, which is the best translation of that phrase. You have begun to reign with Christ.

[26 : 35] Christ. And look, if we went back, if you were here two weeks ago, when Greg preached on the end of chapter 3, you see this, right? All things are yours in Christ.

So in one level, this is true. And yet, because of the way they held it, because they took these things, and rather than seeing them as received from the Lord, they took credit for them, and they puffed themselves up with it.

In fact, they were empty rather than full of all that Christ had done for them. They're boasting empties themselves.

And like a souffle before it's pricked and collapses, like cotton candy that looks so good and yet disappears in your mouth as soon as you touch it, Paul says, this is what your lives are. In your pride, you have built a great facade, and there is no substance in it. You have a misperception of yourselves, and the fruit of it is destructive.

[27 : 47] You haven't even gotten what you truly want. For what you want is true wisdom, true spiritual life, true greatness. True power.

And in fact, you have none of those things, because you have sought to build them yourself, and take them from the world, and establish yourself in the worldly pattern, rather than receiving these things from Christ.

And Paul says, you are in grave danger, because if you follow in this pattern, you are robbing God of his glory. You are denying all of the things that he has done for you.

And you are refusing to see how he has done it, and embrace him as your pattern. And so Paul says, you have done all of these things, this has been your pattern, but we have done these things. We have followed a different pattern, the way of the cross. What is this characterized by? Strikingly, in verse 9, God has exhibited, God has appointed us.

[29 : 04] His starting point is not, look what we have done, but this is what God has done. God called us into this. God has called us into this path. We probably wouldn't have chosen it, in our own wisdom, but God has called us to this.

It is a part of his plan, and it is good. And what does it look like? Friends, are you ready for all these? We have become a spectacle.

Becoming a spectacle, usually is not a good thing. And here, Paul certainly means it that way. The world looks at you and thinks, are you kidding me?

Seriously? Really? Foolishness? Weakness? Dishonor? We've become like a freak show.

Whoever that is, I don't get it. I don't understand it. Paul goes on and he says, I've embraced the suffering.

[30 : 14] Physical suffering, hardship, hunger, and thirst. No clothing, no shelter. I've experienced the scorn and derision of other people.

I worked with my hands, like a slave. It's like President Obama, vacuuming his own office. And even we are way too democratic to get, that actually doesn't strike us as odd.

We'd be like the King of England, cleaning his toilet. That's the kind of shockiness of a spiritual teacher working with his hands to earn his own in the eyes of the Corinthians.

He worked with his hands. He was reviled. He was slandered. He was persecuted. And then, one of my most favorite, though most striking verses, we have become and still are, verse 13, the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

Have you ever left a coffee mug in a hot window with a little milk in the bottom of it for a couple weeks? Have you ever cleaned out the grease trap under your sink?

[31 : 41] Have you ever walked the streets of a third world country where you share the sidewalk or the road, there's no difference, with scooters and bikes and cars and trucks and cattle and sheep and donkeys and chickens?

Have you ever seen what you would scrape off the bottom of your shoe at the end of the day?

That's what the refuse of all things is. That's what the scum of the world is.

They are things that are not only ugly and distasteful, but they're actually offensive. And Paul says, this is what God has appointed for us.

This is the pattern that God has set for us to do it. And do you see there is no room for pride here? There's no room for boasting and self.

There is instead a refining work that empties us of all of our self-promotion and self-exaltation and self-dependence and, dare I say, it's self-esteem.

[32 : 57] It refines us and empties us of self and fills us instead with something else. It fills us with love. Do you see?

This is what the end of verse 12 and beginning of verse 13 say. In the midst of all of this suffering that I endure for the sake of the gospel when I am treated like the scum of the earth, when people look at me and think I'm a freak show, I seek to bless them.

I want their good. I entreat them. That is, I appeal to them to see the folly of their way and the wisdom of the cross. It fills us with love that enables us to endure because if our identity is in how great we are, then when people treat us like the stuff on the road, then we're shattered.

But if we know that this is what God has appointed to us and we know that in Christ we have something far better, far more, far richer than anything else, then we can be patient and enduring even in those trials.

I think of a man named Charles Simeon. If you ever want to know about him, John Hinkson did a master's thesis on him. It's a great story.

[34 : 38] Actually, John's thing is a good read too. But Charles Simeon was a pastor in England a couple of centuries ago. And he served in a, he was wonderfully converted during his time in college and afterwards he ended up staying and was surprisingly at a fairly young age able to take the pastoral position of a church, Trinity Church, right near Cambridge University.

But this is what his ministry life looked like. For the first ten years, the members of the congregation didn't want him.

Back then, you could reserve, purchase, own a pew in the church so they locked their pews. If you've ever been to the Old North Church in Boston, they have the locking pews still.

It would be like there's a door along the aisles and you couldn't get in without getting over these doors. And for the first ten years, the entire pews were empty and people came and sat on the floor to be preached to.

Not the members, but others. For ten years, he preached to a church that didn't want him. That finally changed some, yet he still thirty years into his ministry went through another season where everyone sought to cast him out of his position.

[36 : 11] When he turned forty-seven, he developed a physical disability that made him almost unable to speak. After he preached, he could only speak in a whisper. This went on for thirteen years.

He was so looked down upon in the university community, though he was a graduate, he was so looked down upon that he remarked once in his journal of the blessing of a colleague who walked with him for fifteen minutes around the courtyard of the college because it was the first time it had happened in years.

He was so despised and scorned in the university community that even his colleagues would not walk with him around the campus universe around the campus.

And then his biographer writes this in April 1831, Charles Simeon was 71 years old. He had been the pastor Trinity Church for 49 years. He was asked one afternoon by his friend how he had surmounted persecution and outlasted all the great prejudice against him in his 49-year ministry.

And he said to Gurney, my dear brother, we must not mind a little suffering for Christ's sake. When I am getting through a hedge, if my head and shoulders are safely through, I can bear the pricking of my legs, let us rejoice in the remembrance that our holy head has surmounted all his sufferings and triumphed over death.

[37 : 59] Let us follow him patiently. We shall soon be partakers of his victory. This is what Paul longed for the Corinthian church, that they would see that his example was one of suffering because he was following Jesus, the one who went first and foremost, who suffered in our place.

The echoes of Isaiah 53 ring in our ears that he was wounded for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities. Don't follow the path of boasting, but instead follow the example of Christ. So what might this look like for us? Friends, we need to do some heart work about who we are. Are you willing to walk around with a t-shirt that says, scum of the earth, spectacle before men and angels?

A t-shirt is cheap. It's not really our identity. But more importantly, how about those that you interact with in the world?

Whether it be your families, your colleagues, your potential employers, your classmates in the school room and in the hallways.

[39 : 34] friends, Jesus' call here is one that is striking because to follow him makes us aliens and strangers, in the words of the apostle Peter, aliens and strangers in our world.

It ought to feel weird to follow Christ in our world. Sometimes I fear that we have bought into a lie that somehow if we can do our Christianity just well enough and with enough wisdom and savvy that we'll be accepted and people will think well of us.

But that's probably not really the case. Jesus said if they persecuted me they will persecute you also. The gospel cuts across every culture we will find the places where the exclusivity of Christ or a faithfulness about teaching of how we live our lives sexually, how we interact with the world and

other religions, how we forgive our enemies.

things. All of these things will be striking and countercultural in various places in various ways. And if we think that by faithfulness we're going to be okay and there won't be a cost, we haven't heard Paul this morning.

We may become marginalized in our culture. Friends, we need to be ready for this as a church. church. I don't want to be doom and gloom. I don't want to try to fight the culture war.

[41 : 28] I want to follow Christ. But we need to recognize that following Christ may lead us outside the camp. It may lead us to places where all we have is the power of the gospel in our lives as we live humbly, brokenly, in weakness, and being seen as foolish in the world.

friends, this is what Paul did because he followed Jesus. And this is what Jesus did for us. Because as offensive as the cross and following the cross can be in our world, the deepest offense in the world is far more profound, isn't it?

The thing that most offends us and our friends and our world is not a particular stance on this or that issue. But it's that we are owning the fact that we are sinners.

And that sin is so offensive that it deserved not a pass, not a warning, but it earned for us the death of the Son of God himself.

when we admit that our sin cripples us, that our pride makes us empty and puffed up rather than substantive and real, when we recognize that our sin makes our wisdom foolishness and our strength weakness and our spirituality empty and exposes us as in fact offensive to God, and helpless.

[43 : 20] We then see how wonderful a Savior we have because he stepped into that. Jesus took the offense for us, didn't he? Jesus was scorned and mocked.

He was the Son of God and the creator of the world and yet we esteemed him not. not. He came to his own and his own received him not.

He was taken outside the city and crucified on a hill bearing the wrath of God against the offense of our sin. sin. And though our pride is pricked and our backs get up, we want desperately to find some other way, this alone is the only way that we can be saved.

And so we find in this salvation not only our greatest hope but our only pattern. There's no easier way than following Christ because there's no better way than following Christ.

I think about this now sometimes when I pray for my kids. Not often. But I pray not that their life would be easy but that they would know.

[44 : 52] They would know more of this Savior who loved them so. And that the hearts and the pains of their lives would drive them to him.

That they might know the fellowship of suffering and perhaps attain to the resurrection from the dead. Let me close with the words of 1 Peter chapter 2.

for this for this you have been called because Christ also suffered for you leaving you an example so that you might follow in his steps.

He committed no sin neither was deceit found in his mouth when he was reviled he did not revile in return. When he suffered he did not threaten but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.

By his wounds you have been healed for you were straying like sheep but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls.

[46 : 06] Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Holy Spirit I invite you to do your searching work in our hearts. Lord help us to see how much we still cling to a vision of a world where life will be easy where success is expected where triumph is known and banked on.

Lord help us to see how much we want to avoid suffering and trial in this life and how often we are derailed from the path of discipleship and following you because of that commitment in our heart.

And Jesus help us to see you the great shepherd and overseer of our souls. Lord help us to return to you and to see the path that you walked for us and to walk that path for your sake for the gospel's sake for your glory.

Lord may we not mind a little suffering in this life. We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.