

# 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let me invite you to turn there with me as we look into God's Word together this morning. That's page 988 in the Pew Bible. 1 Thessalonians 5, 23 through 28.

We've come to the end of 1 Thessalonians, and this is how Paul ends his letter. He says, Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Brothers, pray for us. And greet all the brothers with a holy kiss.

I put you under oath before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Let's pray together.

Oh, Lord, we've been singing about your faithfulness and how great it is. And, Lord, we acknowledge that this morning you are indeed still faithful.

[ 1 : 08 ] And we pray that you would exercise your faithfulness today in our hearts as we look again into your Word. Lord, that you would draw us nearer to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Lord, as the summer begins, would we see a fresh season before us to experience and to enjoy the great grace that you have extended to us in your Son.

Lord, may this be the case in Christ's name. Amen. Well, we've been thinking together all spring about our vision as a church, about our vision of being a gospel-centered community, about being a gospel-centered church.

And not just that, but being a church that fosters a gospel movement of renewal in our city and in our world to the glory of God. We've been looking at 1 Thessalonians and trying to unpack through this one New Testament letter what it might look like to be such a gospel-centered church.

The gospel, you know, is that good news that in Jesus Christ, God has come to reconcile sinners back to himself by his grace and to begin renewing the whole of creation for his glory.

[ 2 : 36 ] There's nothing less than this that we want to be centered upon. And what it means to be centered on that gospel is to be a church that is gathered and transformed and sent forth to love and to serve and to work and to proclaim, not by anything else, not by anything less than this very message of God's grace and God's glory in Jesus Christ.

That we want nothing else to hold the center of who we are as people, as individuals, and as a body. And not only do we want it to be about us, but we want to be fostering a movement.

We want to be a part of God's global work of renewal. And that means we're not just focused on our own needs, but our sights are set on seeing our whole city and seeing our whole world even brought to life through the message of Jesus Christ.

You know, we saw in chapter 1 of 1 Thessalonians, if you were with us, way back in January, that a person or a community in touch with the grace of Jesus is like a resounding bell.

And we just reverberate with this life-giving message. And it goes out and it grows and it spreads and it starts to resonate. In hearts and in cultures like nothing else.

[ 4 : 09 ] So this has been our vision and this has been what we've been trying to unpack and lay some of the groundwork for over the last five months. But you know, as we kind of draw this series to a close, of course not drawing our thinking about our vision and our mission to a close, but drawing this series to a close.

You know, I think if we're honest at times as we think about what God has called us to, I think it will be easy sometimes to want to give up.

Think of the Thessalonians living in the midst of a cultured crossroads city, experiencing opposition for their faith in Christ, trying to overcome all sorts of cultural barriers to the gospel, and struggling to overcome indwelling sin in their own lives and in their own community.

In other words, those Thessalonian Christians were just like us. Our city that we live in is a cultured and crossroads kind of place. We too face and try to overcome all sorts of cultural barriers to people hearing the gospel as good news.

And we too struggle with the remaining sin in our own lives. And in the midst of it all, you start to wonder, do I really have what it takes to persevere to the end?

[ 5 : 34 ] Will we make it? Or will we fail and fall away? And what will God think of us at the end of the day when it's all said and done and we've run this race?

And we start to wonder, am I really seeing change and growth in my life? Am I experiencing the new life and the growth that Christ promises?

Is this real? Will God do what he says he'll do? And as we think about these things, it's easy to start to think about giving up.

But you see, friends, Paul wants this message to be ringing in our ears as he draws his letter to a close.

That God doesn't give up. What he begins, he will continue. And what he continues, he will finish.

[ 6 : 32 ] Those he summons, he will sanctify. And those he calls, he will keep. And that means that even though hardships will come and disappointments will happen and the road will get rough for each one of us, because we know that God doesn't give up on us, we have what we need to not give up either.

You see, right in the middle of our passage today, Paul says this, God is faithful. That's the big idea. Verse 24, He who calls you is faithful.

He will surely do it. Do you see how unlike us God is? We are fickle and temperamental creatures, aren't we?

Always changing our minds. Always going back on our commitments. All too often, not keeping our promises and not following through. But God, Paul says, God, the God of the scriptures, is faithful. God does what he says he'll do and he doesn't give up and he doesn't change his mind. You know, it's striking as you read through the book of the Psalms, for instance. It's striking as you read through the Psalms how often God is praised for his faithfulness.

[ 7 : 52 ] This summer, we're actually going to do a series in the Psalms and we're going to see that theme over and over and over again. It was all over the Psalm that we read earlier in the service.

God is faithful. And of course, God's faithfulness is one of his attributes so it's right and good to praise him for who he is.

But you know, the Psalms are also a really honest book, aren't they? They look straight into our human condition and when you look at how far we fall in and how easily we give in and give up, when you start to see how unfaithful as human beings we can be, suddenly God's faithfulness starts to shine forth in all of its beauty and all of its brilliance like a star in the midst of a dark night. In another place in the Psalms, in Psalm 91, the psalmist says, God's faithfulness is a shield and a buckler. Now, I'm guessing that you're not up on your ancient implements of Warcraft.

So let me tell you what a buckler is. A buckler is actually a small shield that's used to deflect the incoming blows of an opponent. It's a stunning picture, isn't it, that the psalmist is painting for us here?

It's as if this psalmist is saying that our true refuge against the onslaught of our doubt and our uncertainty and our failure and our betrayal isn't our own striving or ability or anything that we can do in our own strength, but it's God's faithfulness.

[ 9 : 23 ] That's what takes the blow for us. That's what keeps us safe and secure. Not our strength, but the fact that God stays true to his word and to his promises and to his people.

And it's fitting that as Paul wants to remind us of God's faithfulness, he brings us back to God's call. The one who calls you is faithful. Now, why would Paul want to do that? Why is that such a great signal of God's faithfulness? Well, you have to see that when Paul talks about God's call, it's something very different from what you or I do when we call someone.

You see, when I call someone, when I sort of call out to them or summon them or beckon them, I can't guarantee the desired effect, right? No matter how hard I try. I have a two-year-old.

I tell my two-year-old, it's time to put on your shoes. We're going for a walk. Now, you would think that because I am such a loving and gracious father and because he is such a loving and careful son, that my call would immediately produce the desired effect in him, that he would come bounding down the hallway with joy and gladness in his heart to put on his shoes as quickly as he could so

we can go for our walk.

[10:47] I, of course, have learned quite otherwise. Off he runs in the opposite direction, giggling and chuckling, shoes nowhere in sight, right?

My call doesn't produce the desired effect. You know, if you've ever asked someone out on a date, you sort of know what I mean, right? You call them up. You make some nervous small talk.

You muster your courage. You ask the question. And then there is this infinite space of seconds where you wonder what he or she will say.

And you know that your own speaking of that call can't produce, doesn't guarantee the desired effect. But you see, friends, God's call is very different.

The language of call in the New Testament, more often than not, and especially in Paul, refers to the powerful, sovereign summons of God the Father in and through the gospel proclamation that awakens us to respond to faith in Christ.

[12:03] Of course, sometimes the word call in the Bible just means inviting someone or beckoning someone. But more often than not, it's this that is meant. God's call is this powerful, liberating summons that brings the reality of the gospel home in our hearts such that we respond in genuine faith in Christ.

You see, God's call, unlike my call or your call, does produce the desired effect. And you see, Paul wants us to remember that this is where our Christian life began, when the Father called us, when he summoned us.

You see, in Acts 15, when Paul shares the gospel with a woman named Lydia, and we're told that the Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. And that's what happens in every believer.

Perhaps for years, someone has known about the gospel or has heard it proclaimed, and it's been simply to no effect in their life. But then finally, the heart opens, and the defenses drop.

And this time, it's different. It's as if God himself is addressing us, as if the risen Lord himself is calling us and commanding us to come to him.

[13:26] And in fact, friends, that is exactly what is happening. Just like God sovereignly spoke in creation, and it produced the desired effect, right?

God speaks, and there's light, and there's water, and there's animals, and there's plants, and there's humans, and there's stars. Even so now, in and through the proclamation of Jesus Christ, God the Father is speaking to produce his desired effect.

New life, genuine repentance, saving faith. Just like God summoned all of his creation out of the nothingness of non-being, even now, God is summoning his new creation into being out of the nothingness of our sin and our death.

And all of this, you see, all of this, all of it, is evidence of God's faithfulness. You see, God promised way back at the beginning of his work of redemption that he would save a countless multitude of men and women from every tribe and tongue and nation, that he would build his church and redeem a measureless number from among fallen humanity.

Abraham, God said, go look at the stars. So shall your offspring be. In you shall all the nations be blessed. And lo and behold, what God promises is what he does.

[15:07] He's faithful. As he calls men and women into union with Christ and thus into union with the body of Christ, don't you see, God's fulfilling that ancient promise to Abraham.

That ancient promise to redeem a people and to build in the midst of the fallen world a beachhead for his new creation. In fact, the Greek word for church at its root has the same word as this word for calling.

The ecclesia, the church in the New Testament, is literally the called out ones. Our new life in Christ begins with God's call and that is a demonstration of God's faithfulness.

But you see, what Paul really wants to drive home for us in this passage is not just that the beginning of our life in Christ is secured by God's faithfulness, but more importantly, he wants us to see that the middle and the end are secured by his faithfulness as well.

He who calls you is faithful, he will surely do it, Paul says. And what's the it that God will surely do? Well, he's prayed. It's exactly what he's prayed for in verse 23.

[16:13] That God would sanctify us and that God would keep us. Paul is saying that these things, this growth in Christ's likeness and this preservation to the end, these things aren't optional or uncertain for those who've been united to Christ.

These things aren't hanging in the balance. No, because God is faithful. You can be sure that those he summons, he sanctifies, and those he calls, he keeps.

In other words, as we look at our present and as we look at our future, here's where our confidence and security lies. Here's our shield and our buckler, as the psalmist says. God is faithful.

If he's called you, if he's summoned you, he will surely do it. And don't we need both of those assurances? Don't we need the present and the future assurance of God's faithfulness?

We need to know that God will change us here and now, and we need to know that God will keep us there and then. Because after all, what good is an assurance of change now if there's no guarantee about the end?

[ 17 : 26 ] And how believable is a guarantee about the end if there's no change now? But God's faithfulness secures both, Paul says.

So briefly, let's look at both. First, because God is faithful, those he summons, he sanctifies. Paul begins this sort of prayer, make the God of peace himself sanctify you completely.

I think this verse particularly speaks to those of us who may be discouraged with our present growth in Christlikeness. After all, that's what we mean by sanctification, growth in holiness and godliness. In other words, becoming more and more like Christ. Perhaps you're still struggling with a particular sin that's plagued you for years. Or perhaps something has happened in your life recently that has shown you that you're not quite as good as you thought you were.

You're still losing it with the kids. You're still giving in to lust. You're still giving in to peer pressure. You're still procrastinating at your work.

[ 18 : 38 ] And you've been fighting. And you've been confessing it to God. And you've been repenting. And you've been seeking counsel and accountability. And you've been pushing hard into the grace of Christ and studying the word.

And still, you're still not seeing the change you want to see. And you're discouraged. And maybe you're ready to just give up.

Brothers and sisters, if that is you today, listen to what Paul is telling us here. The one who called you is faithful. He is and he will sanctify you.

In Galatians 6, Paul talks about sowing to the spirit. And that sort of farming metaphor is so helpful. Because as we know, growing something takes time.

Right? God's work of sanctification is gradual. It happens over time and not all at once. And often there are things going on underneath the surface of the soil long before the leaves come pushing through the dirt.

[ 19 : 46 ] you might not see the change. But, friends, it's happening. God is faithful. It's interesting that Paul calls God the God of peace in this context.

Now, peace in the Bible is more than just a lack of conflict. Right? The biblical concept of peace or shalom is that of an all-embracing harmony or order. It's like a symphony where every instrument is playing their own part perfectly and in tune and in sync with all the others.

And that's one way of thinking about our progressive sanctification. It is the God of peace, the God of this harmonious shalom gradually restoring to our lives the symphonic harmony that was lost through the fall.

The Church Father Augustine famously talked about Christian growth as essentially a reordering and a right ordering of our loves.

Of bringing it all into harmony. You see, sin in our lives brings cacophony and chaos. That symphony of God's created order degenerates into mere noise and clatter.

[ 21 : 06 ] And on the one hand, we know that sin brings an inner cacophony, an inner chaos results in us as a result of sin.

But you know, it also brings a communal cacophony. There's not just chaos in us, but there's chaos in between us as a result of sin. Now the point I want to draw out of this is that God's sanctifying work isn't just gradual, but it's pervasive.

God isn't out just to get rid of the obvious and annoying sins in our lives. He's out to rework the whole thing.

He wants our every faculty and every love and every relationship rightly ordered so that our symphony can be heard. So that peace can be restored.

Now perhaps you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, but you know what I'm talking about when I mention this inner chaos, this inner noise.

[ 22 : 16 ] And maybe you hide it well like the most of us do. And perhaps your friends, when they look at you, think you've got it all together, but you know that inside it's just noise and chaos.

And though you've tried and tried and tried, you can't seem to bring about any harmony. And though you've strived and you've tried, you can't seem to bring about any peace.

Friends, here's the good news of Christianity. The Bible tells us that in creation, God brings something out of nothing and then brings order to the chaos.

And in the same way, in redemption, through Christ, God brings something out of nothing and brings order to our chaos. The God who made us in his image to love and glorify him can remake us.

If we'll admit our sin and place our trust in Christ, God will forgive us and begin remaking us again. Have you considered that your lack of peace could be because you're separated from the God of peace and that you need to be reconciled to him?

[ 23 : 43 ] Now what our text is saying here is that this sanctifying work is a total work. Become a Christian and it will impact the whole of you.

That's what Paul's after when he says, may God sanctify you completely. The NIV puts it, may God sanctify you through and through. Now that's an important point to realize because in our discouragement, we often overlook the fact that God is doing a total work in our lives.

We often only hear and are concerned with the surface melody line when God is concerned to rewrite every single part so that our whole being sings like never before. You see, in your fight against sin, God is doing a deeper, more pervasive work than you realize.

God isn't out just to make you someone who doesn't lose it with your kids, but someone who is patient and humble in all your relationships. You see, God isn't out just to make you someone who doesn't give in to lust, but someone who is content and satisfied in every moment.

And God isn't out just to make you immune to peer pressure, but to make you into someone who lives in the daily awe of God above all else and someone who walks in wisdom all of your days.

[ 25 : 10 ] So don't be discouraged if you're not seeing the progress you want. Trust that God is faithful and that He is and He will sanctify you through and through.

So friends, keep on pressing on. Keep on sowing to the Spirit. Now needless to say, if God's sanctifying work is this gradual and all-pervasive work in our lives, then it has to be continual, right? It will keep on going until we die or until Christ returns. I think it's Spurgeon who once tells the same anecdote. Spurgeon's always great for funny stories.

He was a preacher in the 19th century. I think someone came up to him and said, preacher, you know, I think I'm totally sanctified. I think God's gotten rid of all the sin of my life. And I think Spurgeon said to him, you must be very proud of the fact that God is totally sanctified.

And he said, well, you know, actually, I think I am kind of proud about that. Yes, proud indeed. Of course we know that no one reaches perfection in this life, right? It's a continual work that will keep on going until the day we die or until the day Christ returns.

[ 26 : 17 ] There's never a moment in this life when we can say we've arrived spiritually. Now I wonder, do you see your life that way? As a work of God's continual sanctification?

How many of us are ready to give in or give up because we don't see that the events and moments in our lives, all of them are instruments that God is using to make us more and more like Christ?

Your teenager wrecks the car and what do you see? You see money draining out of your bank account and you see your insurance rates shooting through the roof and you see all the inconvenience of having to get it fixed and find a reputable repair person.

But do you also see God's faithfulness in and through that to bring about a redemptive opportunity in your life?

To create a deeper and more pervasive Christ-likeness in your life and in your son or your daughter's life. God's work of sanctification is continual.

[ 27 : 29 ] It's happening all the time. When you lose your job, when you get cut from the team, when your baby wakes you up for the sixth time in the middle of the night, even in these moments, God has not stopped being faithful.

The God of peace is creating a deeper, richer harmony in your life. He's digging deeper down into the soil of your heart so that his life might grow up in you more and more.

So don't be discouraged, Christian, if you're still in the battle with sin. And don't be discouraged if it's been a hard season of your life. We can be sure that if our calling depends on God, and it does,

then ultimately so does our sanctification.

That the one who calls us is faithful and he will surely do it. So the beginning of our Christian life, our call, comes down to God's faithfulness. And the continuing of our Christian life, our sanctification, is about his faithfulness as well.

But what about the end? Well, Paul assures us that that too is included. Because God is faithful, Paul says, those he calls, he keeps.

[ 28 : 46 ] May your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we stand before the Lord on that last day and our lives are brought out into the open and the one who created us casts his verdict over our lives, the one verdict that matters, the one verdict that you and I either explicitly or implicitly have been living our whole lives for, when that day comes, what will our confidence be?

Friends, it won't be our good works. In that moment, we will see how few they really were and how mixed our motives had been in doing them.

And in that moment, our confidence won't be how far we've progressed in our sanctification.

Because then, we'll see how far we still have had to go. And we'll see how our progress was all along God's doing anyway.

No, our confidence won't be any of those things. Our confidence on that day will only be the righteousness of Christ.

It will only be his work on our behalf that brings a favorable verdict from God. Christ's righteousness that becomes ours when we're united to Christ through faith, that will be our confidence.

[ 30 : 13 ] that in him, we are blameless because he is blameless. And what Paul is saying to us here is that God will keep us there.

The union that is forged between the believer and Christ, between the church and Christ, is simply unbreakable. Listen to what Jesus says in John 10, 29.

He says, My Father has given them to me and he is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hands.

Friends, God is faithful. He will preserve us. And in this unbreakable union that God keeps us in, you know, it's not just part of us, but it's all of us. Did you notice how Paul just piles up the terms for emphasis?

Your whole spirit and soul and body, he says. Now, some people have read this verse and thought that Paul is differentiating between sort of three aspects of the human person. But I think given what the New Testament teaches, I think it's more likely that Paul is simply being emphatic.

[ 31 : 27 ] Rather than giving us a technical definition of a human person, he's stressing that all of us, the whole of what makes us who we are, will be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He's speaking words of assurance after all, that there is no part of you that isn't vitally united to your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so there is no part of you that could possibly finally be put to shame on the last day. Even our bodies will be reckoned blameless in Christ.

friends, perhaps this week you woke up in the morning wondering and thinking to yourself, you know, I don't think I've got what it takes to make it today.

Or maybe you woke up thinking, man, you know, I really blew it. And perhaps you're beginning to doubt where you stand with God and what your future will hold.

[ 32 : 41 ] Listen to what the writer of Lamentations says. He says, the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases and His mercies never come to an end. They're new every morning.

Great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion, says my soul. Therefore, I will hope in Him. Now maybe you've seen those verses painted on a mug or stitched onto a pillow at your grandmother's house.

Great is your faithfulness, right? They can be kind of sentimental at first. At least until you realize that the rest of the book of Lamentations is the most unsentimental book in the entire Bible.

I thought about actually having that passage from Lamentations 3 read earlier in the service. But then, you know, when I looked at it again, I realized that the other 66 verses of that chapter are basically someone realizing and confessing and recounting how awfully the people of God had blown it and how deserved was their exile.

These aren't sentimental promises, friends. In the midst of our deepest and most despairing moment, in the midst of one of the most darkest days in God's church throughout the Old Testament and the New, here comes this prayer.

[ 34 : 04 ] Your mercies are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. You see, Christian, you probably don't have what it takes in yourself.

And on many occasions, you probably did blow it. But you see, that's not the whole story. The one who calls you is faithful. faithful. And he will do it.

His mercies never come to an end. And they're new every morning, even in the midst of your worst failure. You see, you are united to Christ, the one whose infinite merits flow down upon us like a mountain stream.

In him, you are kept blameless. And not just some of you or part of you, but all of you. And isn't that what all of us deep down are longing for?

Aren't we all longing for someone to see us and to see all of us and to find us blameless? Friends, that is how God looks at you, his beloved, if you are in Christ.

[ 35 : 20 ] And that is how God will keep his beloved until the end. And of course, this always raises a question. If God will keep me blameless to the end, doesn't that mean I can live however I want right now?

But don't you see, if you're truly united to Christ, deep down, you won't want to live in any other way than how he wants you to live.

Of course, you'll stumble and of course you'll fail and of course you'll grow weary and of course you'll still sin, but ultimately you'll know that that old self isn't you anymore.

That your body and your soul and your spirit and your mind and your heart and your life, that they belong to another. It's no longer I who live, Paul once said, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Friends, those he calls, he keeps.

[ 36 : 28 ] He's faithful. So as we bring things to a close, not just this morning, but for a whole series in 1 Thessalonians, do you see what Paul is tracing out for us here?

He's saying that our whole life as a Christian, our beginning and our middle and our end, our call and our sanctification and our blamelessness on the last day, are all secured by God's own faithfulness.

And that's what it means to be a gospel-centered church. It's to know and to trust and to live and to rejoice and to proclaim that God's faithfulness is what finally matters at the end of the day.

And that because God doesn't give up, we need never give up either. God will be a God to live and to live and to live and do nothing.

Well, we've been talking about this throughout our series, but you know, in the last few verses of the letter, Paul gives almost a snapshot of what it looks like to live in light of God's faithfulness. And what do we see there?

[ 37 : 41 ] Verse 25, pray. And verse 26, engage in deep fellowship. And verse 27, devote yourselves to his word.

Here are some of the most important things we can be doing to keep ourselves reminded of and rooted in the faithfulness of God. But did you also notice that each one of these three verses contains the word brothers, brothers and sisters.

It's as if Paul's driving home one last time the fact that living in light of God's faithfulness is a community project. It's inseparable from our brothers and sisters in Christ.

After all, we're called into a family and we're sanctified as a family and we're kept as a family. And so we pray for one another and we welcome and greet one another and we study scripture with one another.

And that's how we live in light of God's faithfulness. Together. together as brothers and sisters in Christ. By the way, that's what church membership is all about.

[ 38 : 49 ] It's saying, I'm a part of the family. And I want to pray and love and get in the word with this local manifestation of Christ's body.

And I want to grow along with them. So living in light of God's faithfulness means engaging in a family of believers in prayer and fellowship and studying the word.

But Paul ends his letter with perhaps the most important thing of all. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. And that perhaps is the last and best word we could have.

What's at the center of the church? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And what's at the center of God's own faithfulness? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After all, did you notice that when God calls us, when the Father calls us, he calls us into trust in Christ. And when he sanctifies us, he sanctifies us into the likeness of Christ.

[ 39 : 49 ] And when he keeps us, he keeps us for the coming of Christ. But even more than that, you see, it's in Christ that we find God's greatest display of faithfulness.

Psalms 91, you remember, spoke of God's faithfulness as a shield. And you know, a shield is more than just sort of mere protection. A shield is specifically designed to receive the blows of your enemy so that you don't have to.

And isn't that exactly what Christ has done? Our sins deserved death. And yet, Christ stands in our place and dies for our sins.

His faithfulness on the cross is our true shield. Taking the blow we deserve so that we don't have to.

And friends, if Christ has done that for us at such great cost, then surely Jesus, having risen from the dead, will sanctify us and will keep us.

[ 41 : 01 ] The one who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. Let's pray. Let's pray. Father, as we bring our study of this book of 1 Thessalonians to a close, we want to praise you and thank you for your faithfulness to us.

Lord, as we look into our own hearts, we realize how fickle and unstable we are. Lord, and that if our standing with you relied on our own constancy and our own faithfulness, we would surely be lost.

And yet, Lord, what great news it is. That is not our faithfulness, but yours that stands. Lord, it is your faithfulness to all that you've done and all that you've promised that assures us not only of our present growth and change, but also our keeping on the last day.

Lord, thank you for being faithful to us. God, may our lives live with the freedom and with the joy that come from knowing that we have a faithful God.

Lord, as we come to communion now, as we come to the Lord's table, God, as we see your faithfulness displayed before our very eyes, your body broken and your blood poured out, Lord, would you renew us?

[ 42 : 47 ] Would you assure us again that you are indeed faithful, that just as this bread is broken and this cup is poured out, so surely have our sins been forgiven by the body and blood of Christ.

And so surely will we be kept blameless by him and in him until he comes. Lord, we pray all this in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen.