

Community

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Preacher: Andrew Wingfield

[0:00] Well, good morning, everybody. A very warm welcome to Union Baptist Church. It's great to see you all this morning. For those that don't know me, my name's Andrew. I'm Associate Pastor here at the church. I'd like to welcome you especially if it's your first time with us this morning or if you're visiting us. You're very welcome and I hope you're blessed by spending this time with us this morning. It's great to be gathered together. Let's prepare ourselves now to meet with God this morning. Let's just have a moment of quiet and then I'll pray for us.

Father God, we thank you that we can come together this morning in this place. Thank you that we can celebrate who you are and your goodness. Thank you that we can come to receive from you, to receive your restoration, to be restored in our hearts and minds and in our spirit, to be restored to you, our loving Heavenly Father. Thank you that we can come to be supported by others and to support each other. Thank you that we can come here to this place to send each other out into the places that you've called us to, to experience and to demonstrate your love, to remind each other of who you are.

Thank you that we can be here today to be awed by your majesty. We're so thankful for who you are and what you've done for us. We want to praise you now. I pray that you would open our lips and our hearts to praise you and that the sound of our voices will be pleasing to you this morning. We pray that in Jesus' name. Amen. Do please stand and we're going to spend time worshipping God with our voices. We're going to sing the splendour of the King. Let's praise God together. to celebrate unto them. We're going to sing the splendour By the final hymn and behold God tro

processors, back in 2020. Lord have everyPeter. May Rama the splendour of the King the splendour of the King King Goes in majesty Let all the earth Joys All the earth rejoice Wraps Himself In light Darkness Stripes to hide And trembles at His voice And trembles at His voice How great Is our God Sing with me

How great Is our God And always see how great How great Is our God And age to age He stands And time Is in His hands Beginning Beginning At the end Beginning At the end And God And three In one Father, Spirit, Son The Lion and the Lamb The Lion and the Lamb And the Lamb The great Is our God The great Is our God Sing with me How great Is our God And always see How great How great Is our God plays

[4:04] We overdone A the How great is our God Yes Lord we do praise you for how great you are, how majestic you are.

There's nothing that can compare to you. And we're so sorry that sometimes we've turned our eyes away from you and we've worshipped other things. But Lord you are the one that is worthy of our praise.

You are worthy of all our praise. And there's nothing that we could ever give you that could be truly deserving of your praise to make it enough for you Lord. But we thank you that you accept our praise and you've done everything for us Lord.

You have reached down to save us Lord and call us into relationship with you. And you call us to be part of your church and to fulfil your purposes through us. And we're so thankful for that wonderful privilege of being part of you, being part of your body and part of your work.

And we continue to praise you now. Amen. Let's continue to worship. I'm sat■ical andiosis. Oh Oh

Oh

[7:22] Oh Oh Oh

Oh Build your kingdom here Let the darkness fear Show your mighty hand Hear our streets and land Send your church on fire With this nation by Chase the atmosphere Build our kingdom here Let the darkness fear Amen. Do please sit down.

I'd like to just take this opportunity to let you know of a few things coming up and other opportunities to meet together in our worship of God. This evening we have a communion service, 6.30.

This evening. So we do welcome you to come along and continue worshipping God and sharing around the table as we take communion together. That's at 6.30pm this evening. Coming up in a couple of weeks time on the 12th of March.

Less than a couple of weeks time. Next Sunday in fact. Sunday afternoon we have a bereavement service. We've done this every year for the last few years. It's a wonderful opportunity for anyone who's been recently bereaved to come along yourself.

[10:17] Bring along friends and family members. It's just a reflective service time to just reflect on your loved one and give thanks for them and be encouraged as we share in that journey of bereavement together.

So do encourage you. There's a bunch of these flyers around at the front and at the back. Do please take one. Invite someone along who you think could benefit from coming to that service. It's next Sunday afternoon 12th of March at 3pm.

Coming up the following week in the evening we have a youth led service. That's Sunday the 19th of March 6.30pm. Our youth will be involved in leading that service. Our youth band have been busy practicing over the last few weeks for leading us in worship.

So do really encourage you to come along to encourage them. That would be really great to share that time together. And the other notice is that coming up in the Easter holidays 12th to 14th.

Oh no before that church meeting. Thank you Gary. 21st of March for church members. We have a very important annual church meeting. That's at 7.30pm. We'll be sharing various updates about what's been happening.

[11:20] Especially about the Living Stones project. It's really important that you come along to that if you're a church member. So please save that date. And finally yes Easter holiday club for any primary age children.

The booking for this is now open. It's the 12th to the 14th of April and the 16th as well for a Sunday celebration. Do please take one of these flyers. Book your own kids in if you have them.

Otherwise share that with a friend or family or neighbour or colleague who's got primary age children. They can come along. It's just £10 for the whole week.

It's a bargain as well. So do please encourage others to come along to that. It's a great opportunity. We're now going to watch a brief video from LICC. Our friends there. That explore some of the reasons that it's important for us to gather together as church.

As we're doing here today. Gathered. Gathered. Welcomed. Celebrated. Restored. Gathered. Gathered. Gathered. Gathered.

[12:19] Gathered. Gathered. Gathered. Gathered. Gathered. Gathered. gathered, welcomed, celebrated, restored, gathered together, encouraged, supported, loved, reminded who God is, hearts awed by his majesty, eyes seen fresh, the wonder of grace, thankful, for his awesome, unwavering love, reminded who I am, and all I have received, challenged, equipped, renewed, commissioned, ready, sent.

Welcome, morning everybody, I'm Sheena Dykes and I'm the Deacon for Community. We've been thinking about how we can find confidence on our front lines.

Most of us spend most of our time not in church. And outside church is where we're called to be disciples. As we saw in the video, our time gathered together in church is a time when we can be encouraged, supported, renewed, and equipped for what happens during the week on our front lines.

God has placed us where we are on our front lines so that he can work his purposes out for our world. And it's a real encouragement for us to be able to find out more about how God is alive, active, and at work in our weekday lives, and to be able to support each other in prayer as we serve on our particular front lines.

So today I'm going to be asking Calvin what he'll be doing this time tomorrow and finding out more about his work context. So first, Calvin, where will you be this time tomorrow?

[15:03] Hi everyone. So most of you know, I'm Calvin Prentice. So I'm a scientist by training. I run a little scientific company in Sands Industrial Estate.

As well as running the business, I sort of mostly run the research and development team there, looking into sort of materials that are designed to go into hot places like aircraft engines and power stations.

Good. So what will you actually be doing there? So most of my job is actually dealing with new customers, trying to get in projects, trying to work out what we're going to do for them, and then sort of working with the team to try and work out how we're actually going to fulfill those people's needs. But running a small business, you end up, if anybody here is in a small business, you end up doing lots of different things, sort of from working with staff to sort of unloading the dishwasher, to sort of lots of different small bits and pieces, checking invoices, doing that kind of thing too.

But you're also telling me that you work with things like green energy. Yes. So one of the really exciting things at the minute about what we do is that a lot of the projects that we've got are looking at various forms of green energy, whether it being trying to make aircraft engines more efficient, or working with sort of the green hydrogen movement, trying to make some pieces of electrolyzers which produce hydrogen in a more environmentally friendly way.

[16:41] And in particular, nuclear fusion. If you've seen that on the news lately, we're trying to make some of the materials that go into those new, rather unusual power stations.

So cutting edge stuff then. Yes, some of it is, yes. So who will you be meeting tomorrow? Normally, I just work with my team of sort of five scientists, sort of working with them, trying to work out how the projects are going to go, trying to get them progressed.

But tomorrow morning, I've got a meeting amongst the management team of the group, including David, actually. So it's nice to be able to work. In fact, rarely in my life have I worked with other Christians, so it's nice to have one other Christian amongst my team.

Good. So what are the joys and challenges? Some of them. Some of them. So technically, it's lovely to be working in those kind of fields. You really feel you can make a difference to what's going on in the world at the moment.

So that's kind of a technical side of things. Also, one thing that happened recently, that we had a sort of a team meeting to try and work out our sort of mission and values.

[17:52] And one of the values that the team came up with individually, without me really saying anything, was integrity. And that really meant a lot to me, for the team that I'm working with, to be able to say that.

That's something that I kind of feel I've tried to instill into people, to be honest in their doings, whether you've made mistakes or not. And that was a good thing to have brought into the place. Great. So how can we pray for you? I think, I mean, from a job perspective, I would say, it seems that we can make a difference in sort of technical things to help with the world's energy problems, even if it is a tiny scale.

Treating staff well, I think, is one of my priorities. So to do things well on that, especially if we've got some new staff coming in. And I think perhaps, although they know I come here, and they know that I do a bit of work with sort of plug-in, the homeless stuff, with Homeless Connection, perhaps to be a bit more personal about faith in the workplace.

You also mentioned you wanted to do that plug-in as well. Sorry? You also mentioned you wanted to do that plug-in as well, didn't you? Yeah. I was talking to one of the guys. I was in America with him for a week, and he was quite intrigued by what happens with plug-in and stuff.

[19:10] And he was kind of thinking about getting involved where he lives. So that's quite an encouragement. Good. Well, I'll pray for you then. Let's pray. Father God, we thank you for the exciting and challenging front line that Calvin is managing.

We thank you for the way that you're using him as he works at the cutting edge of developing some of the vital technology that we need if we're going to solve the energy issues of the future. We pray that you'll give him inspiration to find technical solutions to help to make that happen.

We also pray for him with all the challenges of managing a small business, that he'll be able to juggle all the myriad demands on him. We pray for him to have those deeper relationships with staff

at work and for the courage to be more personal about his faith with them and with other volunteers when he volunteers with the plug-in at the hub.

Lord, be with him today as he faces his front line once again. And may he leave here today encouraged, equipped, and empowered by your spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Thank you, Calvin. Thank you. Well, thank you so much, Sheena, and to Calvin.

[20:19] And thank you, Calvin. It's great to hear about what you'll be doing this time tomorrow. Later in the service, we'll have a chance to hear from each other about what we'll be doing this time tomorrow. But for now, we were encouraged at our church weekend at home recently that the Bible tells us to shine like stars in the places where God has called us.

And one of our prayers as we think about where we're going to be this time tomorrow for Calvin and for each of us is that we'll be able to shine the light of Christ in the places where we are. We're going to sing a song about that now.

It's a song that's got actions. The actions are quite quick. I'm going to try the actions. I won't do them very well. Bethany's going to help me. If anyone else wants to come and help me, please do.

We're going to stand and we're going to sing together Shine from the Inside Out.

Shine from the Inside Out That the world will see you live in me Shine from the inside out That the world will see you live in me Shine from the inside out That the world will see you live in me Shine from the inside out That the world will see you live in me You know me That you love me Thank you.

Thank you.

[22:51] Praise God that he's given us bodies that we can use to worship him as well as our voices. Now in a moment the children and young people are going to go out to their groups.

I'm going to say a prayer for them and then I'll explain what we're going to do next. So let's pray for our children and young people. Father God I thank you so much for our children and young people and I thank you for those that are going to be leading them this morning.

I pray that you would help them to hear the good news about Jesus. To learn from your word about what you've done for us and how we can live your ways. To know you as a personal saviour and Lord and to be equipped to tell other people about you.

We pray that you'll bless them all this morning. Amen. Now in a moment when the children go out I'm going to ask everyone else who's going to stay here to go and find someone. Ideally someone you've not already greeted this morning.

Ask them their name and ask them what they're going to be doing this time tomorrow. Or it could be this time Tuesday or Wednesday. What they're going to be doing this week. Just share that amongst yourselves. So children and young people you can go.

[23:59] Everyone else. Find someone you haven't greeted already. And ask them what they're going to be doing this time tomorrow. Or this time this week. David.

David. Have you met John? I know it's a long way to go. I'd love you to have a chat with him. Well done. Shaheen. Shaheen. Hi. You all right?

Yeah. How are you doing? I'm doing. Yes. Have things changed in your work? Have you? Yeah. I'm not quite good. So I was made redundant. So I'm going to go for something like that.

Yeah. So I'm looking for people. So he's going to go. Because I'm going to spend some time with the children. I'm going to go for time now. Yeah. I'm just spending too much time with him. Oh. Well that's lovely. That's a blessing. Yeah. Do you know what's next?

Are you going to just... Okay. Yeah. I'm going to go away at the end of the month. And then faithful. I'll stop you. Yeah. That's my name. Yeah. Yeah. I'm just saying, just say a couple of little sad.

[25:14] And enjoy the time. Okay. Oh well I'll pray that that'll be a blessing. And it's really lovely to have that. To have that time. Yeah. And I'll pray you have peace about what's next as well. Yeah. It can be a bit...

Fantastic. Yeah. Yeah. Good thank you. Yes. Yeah. I'm doing a funeral this week. So I appreciate your prayers for that. Karen Bates who's run by Deacons. Her mum died. So that's on Thursday.

So. Yeah. It's going to be just at the crematorium. Yeah. Yeah. So I appreciate your prayers for that. It's... Yeah. And I'm on a course that's like every month. So that's Friday, Saturday this week as well. So I'm looking forward to that.

It's called Catalyst. Thank you. Thank you.

I'm going to ask you to find your seats again now. Thank you so much. If you can find your seats again now, we'll have an opportunity to continue these conversations over coffee.

[26:44] But it's lovely that you've been able to find out about each other's front lines and what we'll be doing this week. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. I always find it difficult to interrupt when people are really enjoying the conversation. That's lovely to see. But what I'd like to do is just pray for each other, for each other on our front lines.

We prayed for Calvin. Let's pray for each other now. And as I say this prayer, just bear in mind the personal people that you've just been speaking to. And let's uphold them in prayer as we pray for the week ahead.

Father God, I thank you that you call us to be in different places. And I pray for each one of us on our front lines this week that you would use us, that you would equip us for the people that we're going to meet, for the conversations that we might have, for the work that we're going to do.

Help us to be people whose work or our vocation reflects your character, Lord. And I pray that you'll help us to show integrity, as Calvin mentioned, other characteristics of you as we meet and interact with people in this week.

[27:51] And for the stuff that we're going to find difficult this week, I pray that you'll give us the confidence and you'll give us the strength to enter those situations, knowing that you're with us. In Jesus' name, amen. I'd like to invite Aubrey, who's going to lead us in our intercessions now.

Thanks, Aubrey. Let's continue in prayer.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you that you have given us the great privilege of prayer. And we thank you that your word teaches us that when we pray, when we pray for other people, when we intercede for this world, that our prayers are like a sweet smell rising in heaven that pleases you. Father, so often we want to pray for things because we're worried about them, we're concerned about them. But we don't stop to think that you're concerned about them too.

And you adore it when we, when we join in prayer together. And so as we come and lift our intercessions to you this morning, we want to pray, first of all, for our world.

[29:17] Lord, we want to continue to pray for the areas of the world where there is no peace. Lord, we have prayed so much in recent times for the situation in Ukraine and we continue to do that.

We continue to pray that somehow your love, your peace will break through into that situation.

Oh Lord, it's easy for us to look at the leaders. Father, we know that there are men, women, children on both sides of the conflict who perhaps don't want to be caught up in it.

But they are. Father, as we see this week the pictures of that town, which had tens of thousands of people and now is just down to 4,000 people, completely battered and destroyed.

Our hearts go out to those who still live there. Lord, we don't know quite what to pray. But we lift them to you. And Lord, there's so many other areas of the world.

[30:30] We think of the continuing war in Yemen and in so many other areas of the world where there is no peace, where there is conflict, particularly in parts of Africa and in the Far East.

And Lord, there's those areas of the world that have been affected not by war but by natural disaster. Lord, the situation in Turkey has disappeared off of our TV screens.

But we know that miraculously all those buildings have not been rebuilt. There are still thousands of people who are mourning the loss of loved ones, who are living in temporary shelter.

Father, also in the world, there's many places that have been affected by flood, by famine. Lord, perhaps they're not situations not known to us, but they're known to you.

And we lift them to your throne of grace. And Father, we want to pray for our nation. We want to pray for our leaders.

[31:46] Especially we want to pray for our politicians, those that you have placed in authority over us. And Lord, as we see the continuing war of words that goes on over actions that were taken or actions that shouldn't have been taken, over trust that's been broken.

Oh Lord, it just seems to us that we live in such a broken world. Father, we know that your word teaches us to pray for our leaders, and so we do that.

We pray for our royal family and for the divisions that are still so apparent, even within that family. Oh Father, we know there are many families that are broken in this country, but their disputes and quarrels are not on the front page of every newspaper.

But Father, we lift those that you have placed in authority over us. We lift them to you. And for coming closer to home, we pray for our town.

We pray for those that you have appointed to lead this town. For the work of the council. And as they seek to struggle with many of the issues that there are in this town at this time.

[33:06] The issues that come from people who are taking drugs, from people who are homeless, from people who have antisocial behaviour. For whatever reason, these things happen, Father.

Help those who have the authority, those who have the heart to help those. Father, we especially pray once again for the work of homeless connection.

And for the work of plug-in that we've been reminded of this morning. Father, we lift that work to you. And pray that through that, people will find not only accommodation, but will find the love and security that comes.

Father, we pray for those that are sitting around us.

Lord, we pray for those that are sitting around us. As we've just talked to one another about what we'll be doing tomorrow. Lord, you know that we leave this place and go off to a variety of different things.

[34:14] And that we'll be in this town or around this town or maybe in London tomorrow. Lord, we just pray that you will help us to be your salt and your light wherever we go.

Lord, we pray for those that are prepared and ready to serve you for whatever you call us to do. Father, we, especially this morning, I want to pray for those within our own fellowship who are struggling with depression at this time.

Those who perhaps have relatives who are struggling with depression. There seems to be so many people after COVID. Lord, we pray for those that we personally know.

And for all those that we know that need a special touch of you at this moment. In the quietness, let's just lift those that we want to pray for to our Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank you that we come. We have the privilege of interceding. And we know that you hear our prayers.

[35:33] And because we have prayed, there will be a difference. We believe that even though we may not see it, your power will work throughout this world, throughout our land, throughout our community, and through this church.

We lift all these things to you in Jesus' precious name. Amen. Amen. Thank you so much, Albury, for leading us in those prayers.

In a moment, we're going to have our Bible reading, which Kate is going to bring to us. As we prepare to hear from God's word, we're going to worship God again and remind ourselves of the truth, the solid truth on which our faith is built.

My hope is built on nothing less. Let's stand and worship God together. Amen. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but only trust in Jesus' name.

[37:10] My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but only trust in Jesus' name.

Christ the Lord, on earth stone, we make strong in Saviour's love.

Through the storm, He is born, Lord of all. When darkness seems to hide His place, I rest on His unchanging grace.

In every light a storm began, I am the hope of the Lord. I am the hope of the Lamb. I am the hope of the Lamb.

Christ the Lord, Christ the Lord, Lord of all. We make strong in Saviour's love.

[38:40] Through the storm, He is born, He is born, Lord of all. Christ the Lord, called us storm, we make strong in Saviour's love.

Through the storm, He is born, Lord of all. Christ the Lord, with war.

For we are at pup indem sang, now for usizon' name is Lord. For the strength of the Lord Christ the Lord, call us Lord We make strong in the Saviour's love Through the scroll, He is Lord, Lord of all Christ the Lord, call us Lord We make strong in the Saviour's love Through the scroll, He is Lord, Lord of all Good morning, this morning's reading is taken from 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verses 1 to 18 which can be found on page 1188 of the Pew Bibles

The day of the Lord Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night While people are saying, peace and safety destruction will come on them suddenly as labour pains on a pregnant woman and they will not escape But you, brothers and sisters are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief You are all children of the light and children of the day We do not belong to the night or to the darkness So then, let us not be like others who are asleep but let us be awake and sober For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk, get drunk at night But since we belong to the day let us be sober putting on faith and love as a breastplate and the hope of salvation as a helmet For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ He died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up just as in fact you are doing Now we ask you, brothers and sisters to acknowledge those who work hard among you who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work Live in peace with each other and we urge you, brothers and sisters warn those who are idle and disruptive Encourage the disheartened Help the weak

[42:47] Be patient with everyone Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else Rejoice always Pray continually Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus Amen Thank you so much, Kate Let's pray as we come to God's word together Father God, we thank you for the gift of your word and I pray that you would speak to us through these words now you'd just open our minds to understand what this means for us and I pray that you'll yeah, you'll give us the courage to change what we need to in our lives as a result of hearing your word today

We pray that in the power of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name Amen So we're continuing our series this morning on confidence on the front line Last week Malcolm explained how being convinced of gospel truth greatly increases our confidence and this week we're focusing on the theme of community as we reminded in the video earlier as a church we exist primarily not at this address in Eastern Street in High Wycombe but in the places where we live and work and play throughout the week, Monday to Saturday we come together on Sunday like the few little red dots in the corner of that first diagram but the work of the church takes place when we're scattered you see those scattered dots on our front lines and it's wonderful at the weekend at home that we had some of the people doing the craft workshop produced this wonderful board with the different intersecting lines showing how our different front lines cross each other and they've written different places where different members of our church have their front lines in a coffee shop maybe in the office in the community in the sauna I think was on there somewhere we know who that one is in the park different places where we meet people where we interact with people where God has called us to live differently as a result of being a Christian but it's not always easy when we're in those places to have conversations about our faith or to behave like a Christian in a society where Christian behaviour comes across as very abnormal and one of the barriers to us doing that is a lack of confidence so how can we grow in confidence?

Anyone know who this man is? Tim Peake I heard someone say it yes Tim Peake who was a British astronaut who spent a few months on the International Space Station now I recently read Tim Peake's autobiography which is a great read I loved reading the bit about how he trained for doing

space walks where we had to go outside in a spacesuit outside of the International Space Station to perform some very complicated procedures and it's the kind of thing if you get it wrong it really is disastrous now one of the keys to how he gained confidence was visualisation he would rehearse everything he had to do in space in his mind and go over it again and again in order to be confident that he would do it right when it came to the real thing so visualisation can be a really helpful thing to gain confidence there are lots of self-help books out there describing things like visualisation and things like positive thinking breathing techniques these all have their place but as the name suggests self-help it's all about self it's self-centred and they miss a vital ingredient of gaining confidence that is being part of a community and in our society today we often miss that because our society is so individualistic but the Bible teaches us that as humans and especially as Christians we're designed for community it's right there in Genesis

God said it's not good for man to be alone we see that right through the Bible in the mandate for the church we're called to be a body different parts even last week in the baptism I was just reflecting it was great to have the baptism of Andy and Catherine most of you won't have seen the baptism of this lady this is Miheila who was baptised last Sunday afternoon with her husband Florin members of the Romanian congregation who had a wonderful service and they were both baptised and I was reflecting on baptism as a symbol of an illustration of the fact that we need to be in community because we can't baptise ourselves we can't just kind of dunk ourselves underwater and come back up it doesn't work like that we need someone else to do or ideally two people and we put ourselves in the hands of the people who do the baptising and we have to just relax completely and let them do the baptising as you'll know if you've been baptised by full immersion as we do here we need to be part of a community the reading that we had was part of Paul's letter to the Thessalonian church now this church was going through a tough time and they had a number of tough questions but Paul reminded this church of the importance of being a community and that they needed to encourage one another with the truth of the gospel now in the passage that we read before this point he's been writing about what happens when we die what happens when Jesus comes back and what happens in between in verse 5 he describes the difference between

Christians and non-Christians as being like the difference between day and night it's an illustration he also uses in Ephesians we're people of the light and of the day who don't belong in the darkness and in the night but the reality of life and the world we live in is that there is a lot of darkness around we experience that every day on our front lines so Paul says we need to be alert that's what he means when he says sober in verse 7 we need to be on guard in verse 8 he says we need to put on armour like a sentry standing guard outside a city where a breastplate of faith and love and the hope of salvation as a helmet we need the helmet that's really important because sometimes we crash if you think about how important it is for a motorcyclist to wear a helmet and if you've ever seen a motorcyclist travelling quickly without a helmet it's quite a worrying thing it's quite a scary thing because if that person falls off they're going to be seriously injured and sometimes we do fall down on our front lines we do get it wrong so we need to have that helmet of salvation to remind ourselves of the truth of God's promises to us and that he has saved us we need to have that firmly in our heads now we need to do all this wear this armour because of who we are we're children of the light as it says in verse 5 and because of who we are we need to be on guard because it says in verse 9 as we move on because of what God has done for us verse 9 for God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord

[49:59] Jesus Christ he died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him we as humans are deserving of God's wrath because we do things which are against his ways and against his character of goodness so for God to be good he must have wrath against that which is against his goodness and that wrath is what we deserve because none of us match up to his goodness but he's given us what we don't deserve he's given us salvation through Jesus through Jesus' death so that we can be saved from God's wrath and so that we can enjoy a relationship with God now we can know him now and we can look forward to an eternal future living with him now this amazing truth as Paul writes this has a sense of kind of building up to something building up to something even more spectacular so we reach the therefore of verse 11 awaiting this big crescendo this punchline and actually it's very down to earth it says therefore encourage one another and build each other up

just as in fact you are doing it's deliberately down to earth because these are the practical implications of the gospel good news message that Paul has explained we are different to the world around us we have a relationship with Jesus and in stark contrast to most people around us we know what our destination is beyond death therefore what we need to do encourage each other build each other up because while it's amazing to be who we are children of God to live differently the reality of that is that it's hard every day it's hard because it means going against the grain of our society and culture so we need to encourage each other in that so having got the theological anchors that God has saved us through Jesus sacrifice because he loves us and knowing that we're united with Jesus we live together with Jesus we must encourage each other as believers now for a time many years ago

I worked as an outdoor pursuits instructor at an outdoor centre in Snowdonia in North Wales I would often take groups of children and sometimes adults abseiling where you descend down a rope over a cliff and the cliff we had was about 80 foot high and so if you imagine if this is the cliff I'd have one of my guests stood here and there'd be a rope here and they'd have to stand with their back against the cliff and ready to walk over the back of the cliff like this holding the rope and I'd be stood here as the instructor with the safety rope so even if they let go of their rope I've got them on the safety rope and I'd be talking to them here but I found understandably enough that a lot of the people when they stood here they started to look very nervous which is not surprising really because there's a big drop there and it's not a natural thing to do just to stand here and then just kind of let yourself over that drop so I discovered some things which was very helpful to build confidence for those people and one of the things was that when I had them stood there I would point out to them how the rope is anchored because we had really solid anchors for the ropes they were like iron stakes that were concreted in at the top of the cliff and we'd always have two or more anchors for each rope and they could see just how strong they were they could see that nothing is going to budge there so that would give them confidence it's because they know the foundations and this is like being convicted of our Christian foundations as Malcolm was reminding us last week we need to be sure of those foundations of what's in the

Bible God's promises to us that he has saved us we are safe in him the second thing that would sometimes be helpful is that as the person was going over sometimes if they were really nervous sometimes I found they'd get here and they would kind of start going over they wouldn't take that step just to step over and sometimes no matter how much I would encourage them they wouldn't quite want to take that step over so I found I could position myself differently I could attach a different safety rope to myself so that I could actually stand alongside them so I had the person here and I was alongside them like this and then they felt my presence next to them and I could talk them through it and we could actually go down together the first part of the way and that really helps to know who you're with and for us as Christians we need to know that we're in Christ that nothing can separate us from his love and that whatever we do on our front lines however scary it may be Jesus is with us and the third thing I would do to help these guests to have confidence as they as they stepped over the edge and abseiled down that cliff is I would call down to the rest of their group who were at the bottom waiting for them and I'd ask them to call up encouragements and cheer them on so they would shout to them yeah come on you can do it yeah you got this yeah you're doing really well and they'd hear these voices of their friends coming up and that would really encourage them to take those steps and abseil down the cliff and it's the same for us as Christians on our front lines we need the voices of other Christians around us cheering us on saying yes you're doing well you've got this we're with you we're rooting for you so I wonder for us you know on our front lines what is it for us that's like taking that step over the cliff that's kind of that's quite scary it might be talking to someone about in the conversation about what did you do at the weekend and actually being truthful or sharing the whole truth that yeah actually I went to church yesterday and met with other Christians and it was great it might be that the scary step for you is inviting someone along to an event at church or maybe an alpha course or something that we've got going on here to introduce people to Jesus it might be that the scary step for you is actually offering to pray for one of your friends who doesn't know Jesus and just putting that out there and saying that you'd love to pray for them when they share something difficult that they're going through we can remember all

these things to give us confidence when we face those scary steps so we're called to encourage each other like that crowd calling up to the person abseiling down the cliff who does the encouraging well what does

Paul say he says encourage one another it's the role of every single member of the church to encourage others but you might be sat there thinking well who am I supposed to encourage well start with the person sat next to you sat behind you sat in front of you the person that you that you spoke to earlier and Paul says as you are doing he acknowledges that in many ways the church in Thessalonica that he was writing to was already encouraging each other and I'm thankful that in so many ways we are already encouraging each other in this church and there's many examples of this just in the last week or so I thank God that many people have been sending in this church have been sending each other messages over whatsapp just saying I'm praying for you or phone calls checking in on each other I thank God every time I look around at the end of the service when we're having coffee on a Sunday and I see people praying for each other that's happening more and more and that's a really good thing ladies are meeting through the week to pray for each other on zoom and other groups are meeting as well church members in the last week have delivered home cooked meals to people who are sick or others who are parents of new babies prayer requests have been shared on our email prayer chain if you want to be part of that please contact the church office we can get you connected to that last week a church member shared a word of encouragement they'd received in a dream for one of the leaders that was received as a real encouragement people from inside and outside the church have come along to our warm welcome on a

Thursday afternoon to share a place of encouragement together in a safe and warm space these are just some of the many ways that we've been encouraging each other here we need to meet regularly with other Christians so that we can be encouraged and equipped for being on our front lines Proverbs 27 verse 17 says as iron sharpens iron so one person sharpens another we need to be sharpened for our lives on the front line by having regular sharpening commitment contact with other Christians without that we become blunt if you've ever tried to cut vegetables with a blunt knife it's a nightmare it doesn't work professional chefs if you see them at work they take time to keep their knife sharp throughout the day from a few strokes on a sharpening steel every now and then throughout the day to using a whetstone every few weeks the chef can then be confident that the knife will be sharp enough for the task if we need to be confident if we're going to be confident on our front lines we need to keep each other sharp and aspects of this are hard sharpening is coming up against something which is a hard surface it's listening to people who can see your weakness and deficiencies not just surrounding yourself with people who never challenge you one of the best ways that we can achieve this growing sharpening kind of encouragement is by meeting regularly in a small group to study the Bible and to pray for each other as to how we can live that out many of you are already doing that in your home groups later this year we'll be relaunching our home groups as life groups which will have a more intentional emphasis on making disciples who are equipped to go on to make disciples on their front lines we've got a couple of groups spearheading this and there'll be opportunities to hear from them and to hear more about the vision of life groups well in the final section

[59:30] Paul describes some specifics of how we form a community that encourages and builds up each other he says in verse 12 we ask you brothers and sisters to acknowledge those who work hard among you who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work he says you should acknowledge those who care for you acknowledge those who serve you acknowledge those who correct you when you're wrong that's not easy to do we don't like to be told that we're wrong he goes on in verse 13 live in peace with each other we're called to fight but we're called to fight a battle against the powers of darkness on our front lines we're not called to infighting that hinders and distracts away from the battles that we've been called to fight in verse 14 Paul gives four different instructions for four different groups of people different categories of people the first one is people who are idle and disruptive verse 14 and we urge you brothers and sisters warn those who are idle and disruptive now the greek word that's translated idle is the same as the word that means truant so it's

literally it's people who aren't showing up it's our role as all of us it doesn't say the leaders of the church it's all of us it's our role to warn those who aren't coming to contact those people whose faces we've not seen in a while now it's interesting that the idle here is also described as disruptive and it's worth asking ourselves when someone makes life difficult for others in the church when people are overly critical is this person showing up to serve and encourage the church family or is this person just showing up to cause trouble secondly he says encourage the disheartened he's already said encourage one another and build them up that's in the general sense but here in the more specific sense we need to encourage those who are feeling disheartened anyone ever felt disheartened hands up

I know I have I'm sure most of us have how do we encourage the disheartened well there's some very simple things that we can do it's not rocket science smile as a start when you see people in church smile greet them hug them if you're a hugger if not handshakes available high fives are good spend time listening to people getting beyond the hi how are you fine sometimes we need to be intentional about speaking less so that we can listen more and so we can really understand the person sometimes we may need to cry with people who are going through a difficult time these are all good ways that we can encourage the disheartened perhaps the best way that we can encourage one another especially when we're disheartened is with words from the bible god has given us this book as a message of encouragement not for us primarily but to share with each other to share with others who need encouragement in chapter 4 verse 18 of 1 Thessalonians paul says encourage one another with these words so when you read the bible think is this something that i can use to encourage somebody give them a call send them a message i'd like to challenge each other to do that this week when we read something in the bible just think is that something i can encourage someone else with send them a message give them a call thirdly help the weak people may be weak physically in which case we might be able to help them in a practical way doing jobs or giving lifts they may be weak emotionally in which case we may need to get alongside them spend time with them listen to them they may be weak spiritually in which case we need to spend time with them praying with them maybe studying the bible together with them reminding them of god's promises fourthly it says be patient with everyone this is one that covers all the groups it's interesting where this comes when do we need patience who gets you most wound up the chances are it's somebody who is idle or disruptive disheartened or weak they can be demanding disappointing often argumentative difficult people often there's a reason they're like that like all of us they're damaged in some way and they carry baggage of that to a greater or lesser extent so we need patience to deal with difficult people especially in the church now I don't want anyone going away today saying well that was a good message what I've learnt is

I've got to be more patient that's not going to help you may be able to make a concerted effort and be a bit more patient for a day or two but it's going to run out let's be honest patience is a fruit of the spirit along with love joy peace perseverance all of which Paul mentions in this passage it comes from having the anchor trusting in God's promises and he promises to give his spirit to those who ask him so we need to ask him daily Paul finishes verse 16 rejoice always pray continually give thanks in all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus these three things rejoice always pray continually being thankful whatever the circumstances these set the posture from which we can be an encouragement to others to build others up to strengthen them to sharpen them and this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus that's what he says now I've had many conversations with people that go along the lines of

I just need to know what God's will is for my life we can often spend a lot of time going round in circles with that question what is God's will for my life if only he'd tell me friends he has told you it's right here be an encourager rejoice in who God is keep praying be thankful no matter what do this and you'll be ready for any more specific instructions that God may have for you I'd like us to take a moment to respond to God's word if I can invite the musicians to come up as they prepare to lead us in a moment can I invite you all to stand please a moment of quiet to reflect on what God has been saying to us and then I'll pray Father God we thank you so much for what you've done for us thank you that you have forgiven us that we have been saved from your wrath we've been saved from what we deserve punishment for our sin we thank you that you have called us welcomed us as

your children welcomed us into relationship with you given us a solid hope for the future we thank you so much for that we thank you that you've called us to live as your people to shine your light in the places where we are on our front lines during our week but Lord it's hard to live as Christians in those places and we're sorry that sometimes we've tried to do that alone without the encouragement and the sharpening that we need from others we recognise Lord from what you've said today in your word the need to meet with others to be sharpened by them to be encouraged by them often Lord when we reflect on our own lives we've failed to offer encouragement to others we've seen church as something about what we can get out of it Lord but we've not thought of it in terms of something where we can go and be an encouragement to others where we can be a blessing to others sometimes we've stayed in a Christian huddle and we haven't engaged in our front lines help us Lord to encourage one another as you command us help us to be an encouraging church so that we can spur each other on for the work you've called us to on the front line we ask this in Jesus name amen well we're going to sing a hymn now which is a call to each other to send each other out into the world as God's people onto our front lines thankful for what he's done for us and sharing the good news of what he's done with those on our front line let's sing together

[68:01] O Church Arise O Church Arise and put your armor on Hear the call of Christ our captain For now the weak can say that they are strong in the strength that God has given with shield of faith and belt of truth we'll stand against the devil's lies and all behold the battle cries love reaching out to those in darkness tears I'll call to all to love the captive soul but to rage against the captive and with the sword that makes the wounded whole we will fight with faith and valor love when faced with trials on every side we'll know the outcome is secure and

Christ will have the price for which he died an inheritance of nations come see the cross where love and mercy meet as the son of god is triggered then see his rose like crushed beneath his feet for the conqueror has bitten and as the stone is run away and Christ emerges from the grave this victory march continues till the day every eye and heart shall see him so spirit come you'll strengthen every strife give grace for every hurdle that we may run with faith to win the prize of a servant good and faithful as faith of all still line the way pretending triumphs of his grace we we hear the calls and hunger for the day when

Christ we stand with glory as saints of old still line the way we're telling triumphs of his praise we hear the calls and hunger for the day when Christ we stand in glory amen please remain standing for a final prayer of blessing from 2 corinthians 13 verse 11 finally brothers and sisters rejoice strive for full restoration encourage one another be of one mind live in peace peace and the God of love and peace will be with you amen do please sit down thank you so much for joining us that's the end of the formal part of our gathered time together would love to encourage you to stay for tea and coffee up in the main hall you may notice as you go through the information room there's no bits of organ we're very very thankful that's gone and very thankful to

Colin and many others who've helped with the removal of the organ so do please thank them if you see them do please stay for tea and coffee and please pray for each other and if you'd like to find someone who could pray for you many people are wearing praying hands badges they'd love to have a chat with you and to say a prayer for you God bless you see you soon