

We Are Of Good Courage

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[0:00] Well, good morning, friends. Do please turn with me to 2 Corinthians, chapter 4. You might forgive me this morning if I'm a bit lackluster. Catherine said to me yesterday that I look 10 years older than I am.

Yeah, so it's mostly that I was hurt by that, that it's going to slow me down this morning. No, but I'm just feeling a bit sick. So if I start just dripping, you'll remember that I'm a jar of clay.

Thank you. One of those particularly disgusting jars this morning. Anyway. I'm going to keep doing that. Right.

So we're in 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verse 16. The Apostle Paul writes, So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen.

[1:11] For the things that are unseen are eternal. For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling. If indeed by putting it on, we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened.

Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body, we are away from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. Thank you. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

[2:28] This is the word of the Lord. So friends, as we dive back into 2 Corinthians this week, we return basically to the same question we've been considering for a while now, and that is, how does the gospel worker keep going?

How do we not lose heart in Christian ministry? Not at all meaning in professional Christian ministry particularly, right?

But in all Christian ministry, as we serve the Lord together, as brothers and sisters, we're seeking to proclaim His kingdom and build His church. Authentic Christian service is tough.

Paul says it is a matter of repeatedly dying so that others might live, giving ourselves up in humble sacrificial service so that others might be saved.

The suffering servant, our Lord Jesus, completely atoned for our sins by dying on the cross for us, but that wasn't the end of His ministry. And now, or in a sense, His sufferings, right?

[3:32] Now, by His Spirit, He equips His suffering servants to continue His work by proclaiming His gospel to the ends of the earth. So Paul has described himself as a jar of clay filled with treasure.

You remember that vivid image in chapter 4 verse 1. He sees himself as a brittle, weak, frail, disposable, inexpensive vessel, filled with the precious and powerful knowledge of God that has filled his heart through the gospel.

Well, back in the chapter 2, there was that other image of the triumphant procession. Paul sees himself as a captive, a slave of God, being dragged around the world, God simultaneously displaying His own weakness and God's power.

But in all this, it begs the question, if God's people are so weak, if we're just brittle pots, and we're under so much pressure, afflicted in every way, perplexed, persecuted, struck down, if God's people are so weak, and under so much pressure, how do they keep going?

What enabled Paul and his team of co-workers, and what will enable us, like the Corinthians, to keep going in Christian ministry? So this week, as we come to the end of chapter 4 then, and into chapter 5, we see that a huge part of it has to do with timing.

[5:07] And it's just helpful to get a bit of background on this. So you might know that, or you might not know, that in the Bible, the Bible speaks of two ages, two epochs of history, two great epochs of history.

Here's the diagram on the screen, just in case you're not familiar with this. But basically, the two great ages, you might call the old age and the new age, or the age of this world, and the age to come, or the present evil age, and the age of the spirit.

In the present evil age, we saw this a few weeks ago, Satan is the ruler. Satan is the god of this world, you remember back in chapter 4, verse 4.

Or the ESV describes him as the god of this world. The word world there is literally eon, or age again. Satan is the god of this age, or the world in its present form, as it is now.

Which is why, of course, this age is characterized by lies, and injustice, and death, and darkness, and so on. Whereas in the new age, in the age to come, the Lord Jesus will be the ruler.

[6:12] And so the new age will be characterized by truth, and righteousness, by life, and light, and joy, and thanksgiving, etc. Now, basically, the thing that separates one age from the next is the judgment day.

The judgment day is when Jesus is going to decisively overthrow Satan, the rule of Satan, and all those who are with him, and establish his own rule on earth.

This is when the great reversal will happen. The first will be last, and the last will be first. Because, generally speaking, those who have flourished under Satan's kingdom will not be welcomed into Jesus' kingdom.

And those who have suffered under Satan's evil regime, for righteousness' sake, will be welcomed and comforted by the arrival of a righteous king, finally. Satan and all his children will be thrown down on the judgment day and punished forever and ever.

While Jesus and all his saints will reign over the earth in righteousness forever and ever. Now, this is all well and good so far as it goes. The only complication is that this simplistic portrayal of one age following the other consecutively is not quite accurate.

[7:22] Because, I think, because if it were, then none of us would actually make it from one age into the next. We wouldn't make it out of Satan's realm and into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus.

We would all stand condemned on the judgment day and die in our sins. So, instead, what Jesus achieved by entering into our world and dying and rising again and then taking his seat on the throne of heaven and then pouring out his spirit, what that all means is that the new age has already begun even though the old age has not yet finished.

And so, theologians talk about the now but not yet or the overlap of the ages. In the end, the schema is something much more like this. Where Jesus has already begun to reign, you see, and that's what the gospel is.

The news is that Jesus Christ, Lord, and the spirit has already begun to reign in our hearts and so on. We're in the age of the spirit. Remember back in chapter 4, verse 6, the new creation has begun in our hearts for God who said, let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

In other words, you see how it's not just that Christians need to keep our eyes on the future in order to keep going. Although that's true and it's very practical.

[8:49] But Paul is saying more than that. He's not just talking about something that's in our heads or a psychological thing that will help us, you know, the way hope kind of motivates us. He's not just saying that. He's actually saying that as we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, as the gospel of Christ is preached, what is happening is that we are participating in the new age.

The new age is filling our hearts. The gospel brings the new age into our lives. When a person becomes a Christian, the power of Satan over their lives is broken and they are set free by the Holy Spirit to live under the rule of Jesus.

They're no longer living under the rule of Satan and his lies, but under the rule of Jesus and the truth. They no longer live in darkness, but in the light. They no longer walk in wickedness, but in righteousness, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

So, Paul says in verse 16, so, we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

Now you see how he has a dualism in mind here. There is eschatological dualism and anthropological dualism.

[10:10] Right? Now I'm just trying to impress you with the fancy words that I know. Not quite. I can probably put that a lot more simply. What Paul means is just that there are two ages.

Eschatology refers to the last things. It's a timing thing. There are two ages and there are also two aspects to the human person. Right? There's the inner self and the outer self.

And the outer self is wasting away because it's still subject to the old age. I am a prime example this morning. Our bodies are decaying year after year after year, aren't they?

Some of us are going downhill faster than others. My wife looks ten years younger. But, I, ten years older. But, our bodies are jars of clay cracked and crumbling.

Increasingly dilapidated. and degenerating. Constantly in need of maintenance especially as you get older, right? You know, your list of friends starts to shrink and your list of specialists starts to grow.

[11:15] And your doctors become your friends. But, of course, no amount of nipping and tucking and dentistry and ophthalmology and diet and exercise and pills that you take every morning and evening in those special boxes with the, you know, name of the days on them can ultimately stave off the deterioration of our bodies.

Our bodies are in the old age. Meanwhile, the inner self is participating in the new age. Right? So, the inner self is being renewed day by day.

Becoming, as it were, more and more alive as Christ and his gospel and the knowledge of God which is true life starts to renovate us and free us from the old lies that we used to believe.

And the sin and the wickedness that we were stuck in. Friends, we all know people like this, don't we? I don't want to embarrass any of them this morning but there are people in our midst who come to my mind when I think about what Paul is saying here.

There is nothing more beautiful than the joyful smile or the twinkle in the eye of a saint whose body is wasting away but whose inner self is being renewed day by day by day.

[12:32] So Paul goes on, we don't lose heart though our outer self is wasting away. Our inner self is being renewed day by day for this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen.

For the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal. Now the word preparing here in verse 17 I think is just a bit weak. It's used elsewhere in the book of 2 Corinthians and in the scriptures and it's translated producing.

It has to do with accomplishing something or producing something by labour by toil. So Paul is saying that our afflictions are actually producing something.

That's why he doesn't lose heart because his afflictions are not without purpose. his suffering has a goal of making something. They're achieving something they're producing something and what they're producing is the glory to come.

Now I think sometimes we Protestants get a bit nervous about this kind of language and I suspect that's why our translators have softened it slightly because we worry that maybe that starts to sound like salvation by works.

[13:55] But of course that's not what Paul is saying. He's just saying much the same thing as he says elsewhere that God's gracious plan to glorify us involves taking us through suffering.

Just as Christ died before he was raised up to glory so we too have to share in Christ's death if we are to share in his glory.

The troubles and the trials that we face in this life are not kind of moral virtues as it were that are earning us salvation.

We're not going to merit our salvation but the troubles and trials that we face in this life are all part of the refiner's fire as he mercifully rescues us from the dross and impurities in our lives.

God uses our suffering to melt away these things. They're not incidental or accidental to the process of salvation but part of it through sufferings we will be ready to stand before Jesus pure and spotless on the last day.

[15:01] And again I think for those of us who have been walking with Christ for a while isn't this true to your experience? This isn't hard to wrap your head around that it is precisely through the hard times through affliction that God draws us closer to himself.

That he weans us off our own self-reliance so that we will throw ourselves on him. We learn more and more of his strength as we suffer in weakness.

He weans us off our focus on this world so that we look more and more to the unseen things. And notice how Paul describes our afflictions light and momentary as opposed to the glory to come which is weighty and eternal.

I once fell out of a tree and landed on a fence. It was an old rusted Victorian fence inside a hedge. And one of the spikes went straight through my shoe and deep into my foot.

It was incredibly painful. But now I look at the underside of my foot and I can't even see a scar there. I can barely remember which foot it was.

[16:13] And in much the same way Paul is saying that the afflictions we face in this life often seem unbearable and excruciating and they can overwhelm our horizons.

And of course Paul was no stranger to terrible suffering. Right? He's not trying to belittle for one moment the horrors and atrocities and griefs that people have to live through. But with the eyes of faith we can see them for what they are light and momentary compared to the eternal weight of glory.

Sharp but short. And on the scale of infinity even the most severe traumas and scars become lighter than dust when we set them against eternity.

But of course it does take the eyes of faith to see the truth of this now doesn't it? What Paul says in verse 18 is so counterintuitive. What a strange idea that we must keep looking at the things we can't see.

Keep looking at the things we can't see. Right? The problem in Australia is that too many people are looking at the things they can see. They're living as materialists.

[17:34] They're living as secularists. They've got the blinkers of unbelief on. So they can't see what really matters and what is going to last.

So the things in this world in this age are like clouds. You know they look substantial. Sometimes they look very significant and you know massive but they're just vapor.

They're passing away. You can't grab them in your hand because they'll vanish in a moment. The things of this world like money and career power and status houses and cars and technology these things are all going to fade away.

And it's only the things that we cannot see that will last. The things that in a sense seem so ethereal now like oh that's just that's that's about faith.

You know it's sort of vague and mysterious and up there. But that's really what's substantial. The things that we can't see. The things to do with the new age the Lord Jesus Christ seated on his throne.

[18:42] The glorious gathering in heaven all the saints around him. Our new resurrection bodies which is where Paul goes next. He's not saying that these things are intrinsically invisible.

It's just that we can't see them now. They're over the horizon. They're around the corner. But one day we will see them and we'll only see them forever and ever and ever.

And the things that seem so substantial now will fade into the distant memories after billions and billions and trillions of years. So in chapter 5 Paul fleshes this out further by focusing on our bodies. For we know he says that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed we have a building from God a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

See we have two bodies as it were one for this age and one for the next. Our earthly home Paul says it's like a tent because we're only going to dwell in it temporarily.

[19:47] And if the Lord continues to be patient and doesn't return in our lifetimes then eventually our earthly bodies will wear out. But then God will give us another body which this time will be a really substantial building reinforced concrete steel beams stone columns or whatever the image is that works for you.

An indestructible home to dwell in forever and ever. And in verse 2 Paul says for in this tent we groan longing to put on our heavenly dwelling if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent we groan being burdened not that we would be unclothed but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. It helps to remember here that the Greeks were very negative about being embodied.

A bit like the Buddhists of our own day. The body is basically a bad thing. It's basically a pain. And Paul is saying it is weak. It's constantly requiring upkeep.

One of my favourites is Jerry Seinfeld talks about how if the body were a car we'd send it back. It requires too much upkeep, too much maintenance.

[21:05] It's basically gross. Mucus, sex, pooing, farting, bleeding, sweating. These are all disgusting things.

So the Greeks were very much looking forward to being rid of their bodies and inhabiting a much more sophisticated plane of spiritual mind and so on.

what Paul is saying is that that is not at all what he has in mind. Now he's not looking forward to being undressed, free from the body, but being further dressed.

He wants to double down on bodily existence. The Christian hope is having a body that's permanent, that never wears out.

So the tent may be rubbish, but we want something, a dwelling that's even more spectacular. going back to verse 14.

[22:05] So just before our passage today, Paul has already flagged this. The grounds of the Christian hope is the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus. What keeps us going is the knowledge that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

Right? So Paul is anticipating a resurrection of his body just like the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Which again just clarifies something for us I think in case this was confusing.

It's not that our bodies are going to be replaced by immortal bodies exactly, but that our bodies are going to become immortal bodies. See the difference?

So the resurrected Jesus who appeared to his disciples, he still had marks in his hands and a hole in his side because it really was that body that had hung on the cross.

Just now flowing with immortality, swallowed up by life and so it will be with our bodies. I'm not even sure if we ourselves might have scars or not. You know, you might imagine a martyr or something wanting to keep their scars as a badge of honour.

[23:17] Maybe that's not what our bodies will be like. I don't know, maybe they'll fade over time. I'm really speculating. But the point is that we will really be living in our own bodies forever and ever, just redeemed and renewed by Jesus and his sacrifice in the body.

And he died in the body to purchase bodies. And so finally under point two, Paul says, we really can be sure of this because he who has prepared us for this very thing is God who has given us the spirit as a guarantee.

Right? So the point here is we really can be sure of this for two reasons. The first is that the person who has prepared or is preparing us for this glorious future, and again this word prepared is really fashioning or producing something by labour.

Paul's point is that at the end of this perseverance, our perseverance to glory, it doesn't rest on our own shoulders but on God who is preparing us or producing in us and through us this glory.

Again, in Philippians 2, Paul talks about much the same thing and he uses the same word. So I thought it might just be helpful to go there as a cross reference. Paul says in Philippians 2, therefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation.

[24:54] Or again, it's the same word. It means to accomplish something, to attain something by striving for it. Accomplish your salvation. Strive for it. Strive to attain it with fear and trembling but then of course not because you're on your own and you'll never make it if you don't try hard or something like that or even worse.

You know, some people suggest that God allows us into the Christian life by grace but then we have to keep going under our own steam by our own efforts. That's rubbish. Paul goes on, work to obtain your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Do you see that again theologians call this compatibilism. Right? If you're just trying to write down all the big words I'm trying to scatter throughout this talk theologians call this one compatibilism. Or just we might talk about cooperation. God works and you work. And in fact you can only work because God works in you and through you for his good pleasure.

And of course as Paul says earlier in Philippians in chapter one he tells the Philippians and I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

[26 : 16] That was one of those promises we were just singing about. So God's elect will never stop striving to reach salvation because God will always be working in them until they reach the finish line.

God's chosen people. We don't just sit back and then cruise to the finish line. That's not how the Christian life works or looks or feels does it?

It's exhausting. You keep trying to reach salvation and you can keep doing that confident that you'll make it because God is the one who keeps working in and through you.

So that's what Paul is saying here. We know that we will reach the glorious resurrection because number one it is God who is producing for us this very thing or fashioning us into this very thing. And number two because God has given us the spirit as a guarantee or a down payment of the future. You know the idea of a down payment it means the rest is coming. When I look up my Greek dictionary it tells me this word refers to a payment that obligates the contracting party to make further payments.

[27 : 32] You know this is after pay or pay in for or whatever people are doing. I don't know if any of you are doing it. I never do that stuff but anyway but it's this idea. So the spirit in our hearts renewing the inner self is just a foretaste of the fullness of the spirit's work which will one day fill our whole bodies and renew and restore us completely.

You don't think that God would give us the first down payment if he wasn't going to follow through with the rest. This is why brothers and sisters the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints goes to the very heart of the gospel because it's really a statement about the faithfulness of God.

The God who finishes what he starts. some will say that Christians cannot have assurance of our future resurrection glory that it's arrogant to suggest such a thing.

It's just the opposite. We have assurance because we know that we humbly depend on a God we can trust who finishes what he starts, who completes the payments that he is contractually obliged to make.

Which finally brings us to point three this morning in verse six Paul says, so we are always of good courage. And in verse eight notice he says it again, yes we are of good courage.

[29 : 08] So in this last section Paul shifts from denial to affirmation, right? he has been saying things in the negative, we do not lose heart, but now he shifts to the positive, we are of good courage.

And I think he does that because he's trying to show us that in the face of death, it's not just that we don't need to be afraid of death, but more than that, death is gain. We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Verse eight, we're not afraid of death, in fact we're bold, we're confident in the face of death, because we know that it will mean stepping into the presence of the Lord Jesus, which is where we'd rather be.

So Paul is saying that his whole life is dominated by this perspective that only faith and the eyes of faith can enable us to see. Again, in that song we were just singing, we're picking up on the book of Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 11, which in turn is picking up on the book of Genesis.

This is a really significant theme. from the beginning of the scriptures that the people of God are always faith people, not sight people. We use our ears, not our eyes.

[30 : 19] We are to be good listeners, good hearers of the word. Faith comes by hearing. And we are to trust in and act on what we hear, often in direct contradiction to what we see.

Listen to how the book of Hebrews describes Noah, for instance. I could have picked any number of these characters, but Noah's case is put succinctly. By faith, Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household, by this he condemned the world and became an heir of righteousness, or of the righteousness that comes by faith.

And so faith, which comes by hearing, enables us in a sense to see the unseen. Because we trust God's promises. We can see what's around the corner because God has told us what's around the corner.

We can see what's over the horizon because God has told us what is there. And the more we believe him, the more vivid, as it were, these things become to our senses and our imagination. So at the moment, of course, we can't see what happens to a person on the other side of death. We can't see the difference that following Jesus makes the people's eternal destinies.

[31 : 43] But if we trust God, we can see it. And the more we trust God's word, the more clearly we're able to see the unseen and live our lives in the light of it. So Paul says, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. Now again, you might imagine this verse has caused some confusion for commentators and theologians down the centuries.

Or rather, it's not the verse that has caused the confusion, but the confusion in our own minds, the scholars who don't understand it. But what we're all wondering about is, how does what Paul says here square with what he says elsewhere about justification by faith?

Justification is law court language. So it's judgment day kind of language. At the end of a trial, a judge might declare the defendant either guilty or innocent.

Justification refers to being declared right with God, innocent, pleasing, and acceptable in his sight. So how can Paul say in one breath that we're all justified by faith alone, or faith apart from works, as he puts it in Romans 3, and then in another breath, on the last day, we'll all be judged by our works.

[33 : 12] Is that a contradiction in terms? And various theologians and movements have fallen off one way or the other on this, some over emphasizing justification by faith, in a sense, saying that all you have to do is believe one time, you know that Jesus is Lord, and then you'll be safe forever.

Once saved, always saved, it doesn't matter how you live, and any other suggestion, any suggestion otherwise, is viewed with suspicion as if it's sneaking in salvation by works.

On the other hand, some of course overemphasize the judgment by works, claiming for instance, that although initially we may be justified by faith, if we don't stay the course by being obedient to Christ, then on the last day we could forfeit our salvation by a lack of works.

So in the end, the down payment wasn't very good after all. So we really need to get this right, don't we? And I think Peter O'Brien sums it up well, so I'm just going to let him do the heavy lifting, and he in turn is passing the buck to another Dutch Reformed theologian called Herman Ritterbos.

But here's what he says, right? Herman Ritterbos points out that justification by faith and judgment according to works are two poles of the same matter.

[34 : 45] The first expresses as pregnantly as possible that the ground or cause of divine justification does not lie in human work as merit, but only in the grace of God.

And in the second, all the emphasis is placed on the work of faith in the sense of its indispensable fruit. But this does not signify that justification by faith is the initial judicial act of God in the present, which is later followed by a further justification on the grounds, on the ground of works at the judgment.

That's not what this is saying. The ground of justification lies not in works, nor actually in faith, but in the revelation of God's grace in Christ, embraced by faith.

Or I might say in the righteousness of Christ that is enjoyed by faith. Works are indispensable for they demonstrate the presence of true faith and evidence of one's being united with Christ in his death and resurrection.

Yet, even these works are acceptable to God only as they are wrought in Christ and on account of his death and resurrection. Okay, so again, if I can put that in my own way, maybe.

[36 : 13] I think where Peter O'Brien helps us with this passage in front of us is that on the last day, when we are judged according to our works, and declared righteous in God's sight on the basis of our works, which is how, say, James puts it, for instance.

And even as Paul says, we are going to be rewarded for our good works on the last day. We will receive the just reward or the due recompense for the good things that we have done.

Even then, we will all gladly acknowledge, won't we, yet not I, but through Christ in me. Right? The grounds of my justification is never ultimately in my works or in my faith.

No, the grounds of my justification is the righteousness of Christ. And the fact that I am in him. And what the Bible teaches consistently is that we can never get right with God by our own efforts or works or faith apart from Christ.

We are all born in Adam, dead in our sins. But by God's grace, when a person hears the gospel and believes it, when that light shines in their heart, they are united to Christ by faith.

[37 : 30] And so Christ's righteousness becomes their own. And even the good works they do, which they are now granted and prepared for to do, even the good works that they do in and through Christ become acceptable to God.

And they'll receive a reward for them. Which is why Paul is saying here that he lives to please Christ. And he's saying he's not afraid or discouraged by the judgment day to come.

Rather, he is very bold and encouraged in light of it. He's looking forward to meeting the Lord and showing him his good works, the fruit of all the grace in his life.

Because he's looking forward to that commendation from the Lord, well done, good and faithful servant. All right, so time to wrap up. How do we keep going? Let me just try and sum up what we've seen and then pray.

In the difficulties of Christian service, there are three things to remember. Number one, we have future glory that outweighs our present troubles. Number two, we have guaranteed resurrection bodies that will swallow up these mortal bodies.

[38 : 41] Number three, we have a meeting with the Lord that ought to fill us with courage and excitement. Notice how all three of these things have to do with timing. Living for the future.

Living by faith, not by sight. Brothers and sisters, can you see over the horizon? Can you see around the corner?

With the eyes of faith, the future glory that will far outweigh your troubles. So keep going. Can you see the resurrection bodies that will swallow up these mortal bodies?

Guaranteed by the spirit that's living within us now? And keep going. Can you see the smiling face of Jesus, our Lord and judge?

Not scolding us on the last day for all of our failings and the pathetic maybe number of our good works or something like that. All the ways that I suppose still, they're tainted by our bad motivations, our confusion and whatever it might be.

[39 : 48] No, but he's not going to meet us with a scolding, stern look on his face. But accepting us, clothed in his righteousness and even our works as they come grounded in his grace and righteousness and he worked them through us.

Let's pray. Loving Father, fill us with all joy and peace in believing as we trust your promises.

Help us as we struggle through the difficulties of Christian service. Trying to make the most of every opportunity to proclaim Christ, to live righteously even when the world wants us to join in with Satan and his lies.

We pray, Father, that you'd help us to keep going. Encourage us and that your spirit at work within us would keep our eyes fixed on this glorious future and keep fashioning us towards it.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.