

Steady Souls

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[0 : 0 0] Hey, church. Good morning. Pastor Matthew here. We're back in the old times because I'm joining you from my home office in my house. We're, of course, if you're in Shine Meadows or you're in Broadmoor Bluffs, you know how bad the roads are right now. And so we're trying to protect folks and stay inside and stay off of them. Of course, great thanks to Tom Gearing, who is out this morning clearing our parking lot so that just the sun can do its work. So our parking lot's good, but the roads outside the church are very, very bad. As we come together, we're separated at a distance, so I encourage you to welcome one another on the comments section of the Facebook page. It's at your bottom right, and that just gives us a sense that we're together even as we're separated.

And you can just say something as simple as good morning. You can tell folks who you're watching with or where you're watching from, but that helps us to know who was with us. It also helps me. I can see a little bit as I try to talk. I'm looking at my phone right now, but it helps me know that I'm not just alone in a room in my house. So as we gather together, if you're visiting with us, of course, we're glad that you're here and we encourage you to connect with us. The only option right now is digital, and if you go to our website, which is cmpca.net, immediately there will be a pop-up where you can fill out our online visitor card, and that will give us a chance to connect with you and to connect you with our community. So we're going to just jump right in this morning. We're going to continue our series in 2 Peter, and you'll remember that 2 Peter is a letter written by a man named Peter, and he writes it to a church somewhere in the Roman Empire in the 60s AD. And Peter writes this letter with one desire. He wants these people, he wants this church to grow, and he wants them to grow in two ways. He wants them to grow in knowledge, and he also wants them to grow in grace. We're still in chapter 2. We're in chapter 2 starting at verse 10, and chapter 2 is a chapter that deals with false teachers. And so we started at the very beginning. We've had three sermons in chapter 2 right now.

We started looking at the false teachers in verses 1 through 4, and then we spent a couple weeks in verses 4 through 10. And now we're coming to verses 10 through 16. So I invite you to turn there with me, whether it's in your Bible or on your phone or on your computer. And this passage before us is a tough and challenging one. So we need to have a strong, clear game plan going into it.

And it's a tough and it's a strange one because as one man has said, the Bible is written for us, but it's not always written to us. In other words, this letter was written to this church in the 60s AD to people who spoke Greek. And so there are certain things that are going to be difficult to us because we don't live in the 60s AD. We live in Colorado Springs. We don't speak Greek.

We are not the immediate audience of this letter. So we're going to see some interesting things about angels, for example, in this passage. And that would have been easy for the original audience for this letter. It's going to be a little bit more challenging for us.

[3 : 12] So my game plan for this passage is this. We are going to cover what is new. We are not going to focus on what's a review. So a lot of what's going to be in this passage is a review of things that we've seen previously in the book of 2 Peter. I'll give you an example. At the end of this passage, we're going to hear about Balaam. And that's a story from Numbers chapter 22 through 24. I'm not going to focus on the story about Balaam because it's a review of what we've already seen about the false teachers. The point of the story about Balaam is to remind us again that like Balaam, these false teachers are interested in money. They're interested in profit and they encourage sexual sin. Balaam did the same thing. So we're not going to stay on that because that is review of what we've seen before. Also, there's a lot of talk in this passage about the fact that the false teachers are going to face judgment. We've already talked about that extensively. So we're not going to dive deep into the fact that the false teachers are going to face judgment. Instead, our focus this morning is going to be on the new material, the things that we have not seen previously in this letter. And so with that introduction, I'm going to jump right in here. We're going to see two things in this passage. We're going to see the dangers of false teaching and we're going to see our protection from false teaching. We're going to see the dangers of false teaching and we're going to see what protects us from false teaching. And so with that, I'm just going to jump right in. Remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. In other words, God has not left us to stumble alone in the dark, but instead he's given us his word to show us the way to go. And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 10. And especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones. Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be called and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed, accursed children. Verse 15, forsaking the right way, they have gone astray.

They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Baor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression. A speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you speak to us and your word is not stopped by snow or by weather, but that it's powerful. And we ask for that this morning, that even as we're separated, even as we have the difficulties of technology, the distractions that come from looking at a screen rather than sitting side by side with other people, that you would help us. You'd help us to focus. Father, you'd help us to see and believe that we'd see your grace in this passage and that it would encourage us and it would challenge us.

We thank you that you promise to do these things, not based on anything that we've done, but because we ask them in Jesus' name. Amen. If you're just joining us, I mentioned just a few minutes ago that we have a lot of things going on in this passage. My plan is not to cover everything, but for us to focus not on what's a review of what's come before in the letter of 2 Peter, but what's new. And again, we're going to see the dangers of false teaching and also the protection from false teaching. Now, we don't have to look far to find out here one of our new dangers. Now, we've seen verse 10 tells us those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion. We've already talked about that. So, that's a review of what's come before, but here we see something new. These false teachers despise authority. That's at the end of verse 10. Now, there's a variety of ways that this despising of authority can take place. We'll discuss just a few of them. One of them, unfortunately, we got to see on our national news, international news, this week. We had a group of folks who sieged the U.S. Capitol. Now, I usually don't talk about politics, but I bring that up for this reason. At least one person who made it inside the Capitol was carrying a Christian flag. And there was a variety of folks outside the Capitol who were holding up signs that said, Jesus saves. And yet, they're doing the very opposite of what Jesus commands.

They are actually, instead of, remember, Jesus says, blessed are the peacemakers. These are people who are embracing violence. Jesus tells us to submit to the authorities. These are people who are despising authority. And why I bring this up is because this mixture of despising authority and Christianity captures what's going on with these false teachers here. These false teachers, at some level, hate authority, and that's part of what they're teaching. And so, they claim the name of Jesus, on the one hand. They also hate authority, on the other hand. And so, this is one of the dangers of false teachers. They're going to teach us the exact opposite of what Jesus commands when it comes to submitting to the authorities God's given us. And we can see that just like there were false teachers teaching those things, the people in 2 Peter, those false teachers are still present today. There are still people who are mixing the teachings of Jesus with their own teachings about rebellion. They're teaching that Jesus is okay with these things. Of course, coming up against the government in that way is actually the exact opposite of what we see in the Bible. Matthew chapter 5, Jesus says, blessed are the peacemakers. Romans chapter 13, Paul tells the church to honor the authorities, to submit to them.

[9 : 45] And of course, if you were with us in the book of 1 Peter, you know that one of Peter's main themes in that letter was being model citizens. He tells the people in 1 Peter that they should be model citizens to make Jesus look good. It is a way that we give Jesus a good name in the world.

And so, that's one way that we see the poisonous false doctrine, this false teaching of despising authority. Even in our world today. We also see it in other areas. We see it, for example, in disrespect for the church and its authority. You have folks who know a lot about the Bible. Remember, we've talked before about the danger of knowledge. And while they may know a lot about the Bible, they refuse to submit to the leaders of the church. They are a law unto themselves. They love to talk about the Bible, except when it comes to parts about submission. Except when it comes to parts that talk about our membership in the church, that we're supposed to honor and submit to the authorities that God's given us. Someone in the church says something they disagree with, that person's out. They love to talk about how important it is to be faithful to the Bible, and yet they can never find a church that's good enough for them. Finally, I'll point out that this is a specific characteristic of false teachers. False teachers, because they despise authority, hate accountability. If you move away from Colorado Springs, if you're looking for a new church, if you're trying to diagnose and discern whether a church is correct, this is one thing you need to look for. If this person is a true teacher, this pastor is to be trusted, they should be someone not who despises authority, but loves authority.

And so we have to ask questions like this. Are they accountable to anyone? Is there transparency within that organization? If you're at a church, does anyone know how the money's being spent?

Is there openness about these things? What's going to happen if this teacher starts teaching something that's false? Who is going to check him? If the answer is, I don't know or no one, the odds are, no matter how powerful of a speaker and a teacher this person is, he is a false teacher. Because false teachers hate and despise authority. They hate and despise accountability. But godly people, godly teachers know that they are fallen and finite and prone to mistakes, and so they love and embrace accountability.

And so when you look for a spiritual community, when you look at a church, you want to look at leaders who love authority. And that's one way you know that you're not dealing with a false teacher.

[12 : 37] Now I told you we're going to talk about the dangers of false teaching and the protection from false teaching. Our first danger, of course, was this, that they despise authority. We also see in this passage our protection from false teaching. Because there's a certain type of person, we're told here, who's susceptible to false teaching. Look with me here at verse 14. These false teachers entice unsteady souls.

Who's going to give in to this false teaching? Who's going to believe that we can mix violence with Christianity? Who's going to give in to the idea that somehow there's no one who has authority over us and we're a law to ourselves? Well, it's going to be people who are unsteady souls. And you might be wondering what this means. We've actually seen the opposite of this word unsteady previously in the letter. In chapter 1, verse 12, Peter talks about being established in the truth that you have.

This word established is related at a word level to this word unsteady. So the opposite of being unsteady is being established in the truth. People who are established in the truth, this gets at where knowledge is so important, are going to be less susceptible to this false teaching. If you were with us at the beginning of 2 Peter, you might have wondered whether I had a problem with knowledge, as I talked about its dangers. But of course, knowledge is essential. It just needs to be used in the right way. And here, knowledge protects us from false teaching. These unsteady souls are not firmly established in the truth. And so they're easily swayed. They're easily pulled in by someone who has no accountability, but what they say sounds good. They're easily pulled in by someone who pulls them into, who attracts them to a cause that is the opposite of what Jesus teaches us and tells us.

And so we need to be people who are established in the truth. And we've already seen in chapter 1 how this happens. I believe it's in verse 13. We're told that it's by way of reminder. Remember, Peter wants to stir them up by way of reminder. He's telling them the truth they already know. We're commanded to grow in knowledge. And so we want to be people who know God's word. And we know it so that we're protected from the danger of false teaching. We know that Jesus is our King and our Lord, which is over against the lie that our hope is in political parties and politicians. Jesus calls for obedience and submission to others. We need to be established in that truth over against the false teaching of independence and individualism. The Bible teaches us that Christianity is about dying to self over against the lie that Christianity is about our privileges. And how do we become established in this truth? Well, it's something that happens not in a moment, but it's week after week after week as we join together with God's people in worship, looking at his word together. That is the means that God has established. Becoming firmly established in the truth doesn't happen by one time of reading the Bible.

It doesn't happen from listening to one podcast or reading one article. It comes from knowing God's word, being exposed to it over and over again. That is why Peter emphasizes this stirring up, this reminder in this book that it's important to come back again and again and again to the truth. Of course, that's part of the reason that we preach through books of the Bible so that we don't skip things.

[16 : 13] It'd be very tempting, right, to skip this passage. It includes some strange things. There's blaspheming of angels, which we'll talk about in a minute. There's a reference to Balaam. And yet we want to be people who are firmly established. And so we come to God's word, whether it's convenient or not, over and over again. We're reminded of these things, right? In the Lord's prayer, we're reminded that we come to God to see his kingdom come. We pray to him. It's not our job to establish some kingdom on earth. We, in our call to worship, confess over and over that Jesus is King and Lord. And so it's in these often mundane, repetitive things over and over that we become stable and steadfast. Many of you know, some of you know, that 2020 for me was a year where I started seriously weightlifting. And weightlifting is an exercise where if you want to become strong and firm and stable, it doesn't happen overnight. It doesn't happen in one workout or two workouts or three workouts. It happens as you're disciplined week after week after week. Sometimes you do the same workout over and over and over. Sometimes it's boring. And yet you know that is the way you become firm and strong. For example, I've been trying for multiple months now, honestly, I believe since August, to up my one rep max on the bench press by five pounds. I'm trying to go from 160 to 165. I just got 165 yesterday after months of work.

Becoming stable and firm and steadfast, just like becoming strong, is something that doesn't happen in a day. It happens as we commit to the process of becoming established in the truth. We do not rise to the occasion when false teaching comes. And so we fall to the level of our training. We fall to the level of our knowledge. And so we want to be firmly established in the truth so that we can stand against false teaching. Now the false teaching here, the new material that we find in this passage is not just that the false teachers despise authority in general, but we also find that they, and this is actually overlaps a little bit, in their despising of authority, they don't take spiritual forces seriously enough. And that's what we see in these verses about blaspheming angels.

This is at the end of verse 10. We're told, bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones. Now this glorious ones is a reference to angels. And many people believe it's evil angels. Now whether it's evil angels or not doesn't really affect our ultimate conclusion from this.

In my opinion. But most likely there's evil angels that they're trying to blaspheme, which is another way of saying they're judging these angels. They're speaking against them. But instead of speaking against them, there should actually be some fear here. As many people have pointed out, the response to angels in the Bible is one of fear. And yet these people have no fear of angels. They believe they can go up on their own and fight them. Now I know for us, this sounds strange. We don't talk about angels very often.

It's not something we think about a lot as American Christians. The recipients of this letter, angels would have been something that was more familiar for them. And so that's why Peter uses this example. And so just to follow the logic here, verse 10, they don't tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones. They're judging angels. They don't even tremble. It's an example of them being what's said here, bold and willful. And then we're told even more in verse 11, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. In other words, even angels don't judge angels. Angels are more powerful than you, and they don't even try that. It would be like this. A parent says to his child, look, I am multiple feet taller than you, and even I don't cross the street without looking left and right.

[20 : 21] Even I, who am so much greater, don't do something like that. Even angels don't attempt these things. Now, there's lots of conjecture about what's going on here with the angels. Ultimately, I believe we don't know for sure. The recipients of this letter most likely knew exactly what was going on. We sort of know generally what's going on with these angels. What we can say for sure is this. There is some level of a lack of respect for spiritual forces. These false teachers don't take spiritual forces seriously enough, and they believe they can fight them on their own. In fact, we have a parallel passage in the book of Jude where we're told even more, and we're told about a story about the archangel Michael coming against Satan. And it tells us that the archangel Michael did not blaspheme Satan, but instead said the Lord was going to have to rebuke him. So Michael knew he wasn't the one to go up against an evil angel. And so at this point, you may be wondering, what in the world does blaspheming evil angels have to do with me? I don't blaspheme angels. I don't talk about them. I don't talk to them.

We seem to be in a very weird section of the Bible here. And I'd say for us, the point is this. There is a general principle here that these false teachers are fighting battles that are gods to fight. They are fighting battles that are gods to fight, not their battles to fight. They do not take the spiritual world seriously enough. And of course, we probably can already figure that out from the fact that one of the things they've been doing, as we've seen in previous passages, is speaking against Jesus' second coming. They don't believe Jesus is coming again. And so it shouldn't surprise us that they also don't take angels seriously enough. Now, our problem as people in America in 2021 is probably not that we try to blaspheme angels. However, as we look at spiritual forces in this world, our problem in the West is this. We also don't take them seriously enough because we've given into the idea of materialism. Now, when I talk about materialism, I don't mean a love for objects and things. I don't mean someone that's constantly buying things off of Amazon. What I mean is this. It's the belief that only what we see exists. Materialists only believe in the physical world. They downplay the fact or ignore or reject the fact that there's a spiritual reality. In fact, C.S. Lewis talks about this in his preface to the screw tape letters, and he says this, there are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. That would be the materialists. The other is to believe and to fill an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.

They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight. In other words, we make a mistake when we do not understand and take seriously the spiritual forces that are at work in this world. And so remember our interpretive principle from the beginning of chapter two. If we see a negative, we embrace the positive. The positive here is that we know and recognize that we as Christians are in a spiritual battle, and we're in a spiritual battle with the forces of darkness. And we recognize that those forces are things that we don't take on on our own.

You'll remember from 1 Peter chapter 5, Peter warns the people about this. He says, Be sober-minded. Be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him. Firm in the faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. The false teachers did not take spiritual forces seriously enough. We as Christians heed Peter's warning in 1 Peter chapter 5. We know that our adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion. We know there are real dark spiritual forces in this world. Now of course when we start talking about spiritual warfare and spiritual forces, it can go in a very strange direction, very quickly. And yet the way the Bible talks about it is often very different than the way certain teachers talk about it. And so I'll just give you a few examples of what it looks like to take spiritual forces seriously. To take seriously the fact that the devil is prowling around looking for someone to devour. And in doing this, I'm drawing heavily on this book called Safe and Sound. And look at the title Standing Firm in Spiritual Battles. Interesting it's firm, right? Because we're talking about those who are unsteady, those who are firmly established. And it's a man by David Pallison, and he talks about what the

Bible says about spiritual warfare. Here are some examples. Ephesians chapter 4. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil. What does it look like to give the devil opportunity? Being angry.

- [25 : 51] Refusing to forgive others in our lives. That is part of spiritual warfare. When we choose anger over forgiveness, the devil is able to move forward. Here's another example, James chapter 3. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. You want to know what demonic looks like? James tells us it's bitterness.

And so we see that these battles, these spiritual battles that are at work in the world are the everyday sort of things that we face in our lives. Bitterness. Anger. Paulson goes on to talk in his book about things like addiction and fear and anxiety. When we give in to fear and anxiety, we're believing lies. Well, who's the father of lies? It's the devil. And so we don't have to go far to find how serious our battle against spiritual forces is. We don't have to watch strange movies or believe strange things. We just have to look in the Bible for what God tells us our spiritual battles are. James chapter 4 gives us the answer. It tells us how we fight these things.

Remember, we don't want to be like the false teachers. We want to take these things seriously. And so we look at how God instructs us to wage spiritual warfare. And we're told in James chapter 4, But he gives more grace. Therefore, it says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

- [27 : 37] Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you. How is it that we fight spiritual wars?

Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Goes on to explain repentance and humility. The false teachers are proud. That's what we saw in verse 10.

And they are bold and willful. That's part of the reason they don't take these things seriously. Christians are humble. And so the way we fight these battles is doing what James tells us in chapter 4.

We, unlike the false teachers, draw near to God. We know that these battles are too great for us. Battles against bitterness.

Battles against anger. Battles against anxiety and fear. These are spiritual battles. They're battles that we need God's help with. And so we draw near to him.

- [28 : 43] One of the ways, of course, that we draw near to him is in prayer. Prayer is the opposite of being bold and willful. And it's by definition something that should be humble because we're recognizing that we need help.

We don't have the power that we need to fight these forces on our own. Another way that we fight these things is in community with other people.

Of course, you've heard me say this over and over. If you've been with us for any time, we don't go it alone. If we're fighting the lies of the enemy, if Satan is the father of lies, as Jesus tells us that he is, we need other people around us to tell us the truth.

If we are praying and recognizing our need for God's help, we need other people fighting that battle with us. We need them praying with us and for us.

That is how we're the opposite of the false teachers. Instead of judging angels on our own, we are coming to God for help in all of the battles that are in front of us.

[29 : 47] Some strongholds are too great for us to fight alone. And so that's where arrogance and individualism go together. God has given us the church that we would fight and walk with one another.

If you live an isolated life, you have underestimated the power of spiritual forces. If you live an isolated life, you have underestimated the power of spiritual forces.

You are like the false teachers who are flippant when they should be afraid. And so we embrace the positive of the negative that's presented here.

We do it in prayer, knowing that God is the one we need to fight the battles. That's what the archangel Michael did. He said, God's the one who's going to have to deal with this. That's what we do in prayer. We say, God, we need your help.

We need you to be the one to deal with this. There's a famous, and of course, we're with one another in community as well. When it comes to being community, we help one another fight these battles.

[30 : 56] There's a famous video from David Attenborough, one of his shows, where you see a lion. And this solo lion is attacked by hyenas. And as hyenas are attacking him, you realize that even though he's a lion, he can't stand against them alone.

He doesn't have enough strength by himself. And just as it seems like the battle is turning and the lion is going to lose, his lion friend joins them.

And so suddenly there's two lions. They're fighting together. And this line comes from David Attenborough near the end. And even for 20 hyenas, a pair of male lions is too much to take on.

Brothers and sisters, the same is true for us. If we are going to take spiritual battles seriously, we take them on together. We take them on together as we remind each other of the truth from God's word.

We take them on together as we pray for and with each other. Prayer is a recognition of our powerlessness and our need. And community is also a recognition of our weakness, our powerlessness, and our need.

[32 : 05] That is how we remain stable. That's how we're protected from being enticed as unsteady souls. In verse 14. Of course, we do all of this recognizing that we can't do it alone.

If we're drawing near to God in the way that James 4 tells us to, we can only draw near to God for one reason. And that reason is that we draw near to him in Jesus' name. We know that the story of the gospel is that we're separated and alienated from God by our sin.

And the only way we can bridge that gap is coming in Jesus through his righteousness. Jesus is the one who, by dying on the cross, took the punishment that we deserve and lived the perfect life that we should have lived.

And in doing that, he allows us to access God our Father. He allows us to have that protection. That's why every time we pray, we pray in Jesus' names.

He is the one who protects us from false teaching. And of course, what's even more encouraging than that is not just that we're able to pray to God because of Jesus in his name, but Jesus himself also prays for us.

[33 : 14] We've talked about this before in 1 Peter, the fact that Jesus tells Peter that he prays for him. And so we see this in Luke chapter 22. Simon, Simon, and Simon's another name for Peter.

Behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

We can face our adversary because we have an advocate. We have an advocate who represents our prayers to our Father God.

And we have an advocate in Jesus who prays for us. And so we're able to stand firm, not because we're strong people, but because we have a strong Savior.

And so for those who do not have faith in Jesus Christ, the call is for you to also draw near to God in repentance, knowing that trusting in Jesus' name is the only protection from spiritual battles.

[34 : 16] That without him, we are lost and orphans alone in a merciless universe. And so we have to come to Jesus. There are many false teachers out there who will tell us we can conquer these things simply by changing our thought patterns, simply by changing our habits.

And even as those things are helpful in certain places in certain ways, the ultimate battle that we face is too great for us alone. We need a great and greater Savior.

And so we see here our threat, the danger of false teaching. It's dangerous as false teachers entice us to despise authority. And it's dangerous as false teachers tempt us to underestimate the power and reality of spiritual forces in this world.

And we also see that Jesus provides us with a solution to these temptations. He establishes us and makes us firm and strong. He does it through his church.

And he does it as he invites us to join him, drawing near to him in prayer. In her book, *Educated*, Tara Westover tells the story of growing up in a Mormon survivalist family.

[35 : 28] She grew up without any formal education, but then was able to make her way to college and then ultimately over to King's College in London. And she tells the story of when she was at King's College.

They were invited shortly after she showed up there to take a tour of the chapel. And there was a spiral staircase that took them all the way up to the top of the chapel. And as they got there, there was this incredible wind that was whipping them.

And as this wind was whipping them, the professor made this comment to Tara. He said, you're not afraid of falling. Of course, he said this as a statement, but it was sort of a surprise because it was different than what everyone else was experiencing in that moment.

And the professor says this, I meant it as an observation, he said, when we'd made it down. Here you stand upright, hands in your pockets. He gestured towards the other students.

See how they hunch, how they cling to the wall. He was right. Tara's answer to this, why she was able to stand firm in the wind was this.

[36 : 52] I've roofed my share of hay sheds. She was able to stand firm in the wind because of everything she'd done to prepare.

She had practiced at a small height. And so she was able to stand at a great height. Brothers and sisters, the same is true of us.

We want to be firmly rooted and established in God's word as we're reminded over and over again. We don't rise to the occasion, but we fall to the level of our training.

And of course, Tara did that in that moment. She was able to stand in the wind because of years and years of practice. And of course, it's not just that we know the truth from reminders, from coming and repeating it together again and again in worship, but also because God protects those who draw near to him.

And so when the wind blows, the winds of false teaching, we stand strong and firm. We stand strong and firm as we worship and learn together and as we pray and fight together.

[38 : 00] And we do it ultimately because we don't do it alone, but we do it with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He is the one who teaches us and reminds us, and he's the one who prays with us and for us.

And so we're able to stand firm, not being those who are unsteady souls, but instead those who are firmly established in the truth.

Please pray with me. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your word that establishes us and protects us. It keeps us far away from the siren call of false teachers who would call us towards violence and rebellion, and those who would call us to be flippant rather than humble.

We ask that you would continue to establish us, that you'd draw us together as people in one church. You remind us of the truth, and you draw us to you in prayer together.

We thank you as we pray these things, that we don't have to earn them or deserve them, but we pray them in Jesus' name. Amen. As we end our time together, we'll end our time together with a benediction, even as we're separated.

[39 : 13] And remember that a benediction is a good word from God. It is a word that's true in a world filled with words that are not true. I'll invite you as we're separated to lift out your hands over the screen.

Remember that it's tradition for the minister to hold up his hand, to send out God's blessing on God's people, and for God's people to hold out their hands to receive God's blessing. And so hear now God's good word over you from Numbers chapter 6.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace, now and forever.

So go now in the grace and peace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Thanks all. We hope to see you again soon. And until then, Godspeed to all of you.

Thank you so much. Bye-bye.