The Demands of Faithful Ministry

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[0:00] It's been a couple of months since I've gotten to preach on 1 Thessalonians, so I just want to take a brief minute to get us caught up on where we've been and where we are at now.

The church at Thessalonica was part of Paul's second missionary journey. This was the second city that he stopped at directly after Philippi, where he was, again, persecuted and forced to leave.
Paul had a relatively short stay in Thessalonica. Three Sabbath days is the account that Acts tells us. And in that short stay, a lot happened at Thessalonica.
It says, many of the leading women and devout Greeks came to Christ. Now, anytime a huge revival like this takes place, it always draws the attention of those that are around looking, particularly in this instance, the Jewish leaders.
As a matter of fact, in verse 5, I believe it was Acts 17, it says, But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowds.
[1:28] So because Paul had this obedience to the gospel, he is suffering greatly at the hands of these jealous Jewish leaders. It takes me back to Paul's conversion when he was still being called Saul.

God called Ananias to go to Saul to restore his sight. And God said, I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.
Paul also takes on the likeness of Christ in a way that many people won't experience. As we look at Jesus' life and ministry, he also brought the jealousy of the Jewish leaders of that time.
Many times this is where Paul found himself.
So Paul, in this way, is bearing the image of Christ in a very extreme way. Now from there, Paul and Silas, after Thessalonica, they flee to Berea.
[2:31] And it is believed that Paul wrote this letter to the Thessalonians from his stay at Corinth. This letter is a letter of encouragement. Paul is celebrating their faith.

He is celebrating their endurance. He is encouraging them that despite the fact that they are suffering in such a great way for the faith, to keep on with what they're doing. To not lose the faith. To cling to Christ in this hard time. So this is a letter of encouragement. Of gratitude. And also, as we're going to see today, a letter of affection for his church.
That brings us to where we are today. So if you would, let's stand together. So we read a text this morning. 1 Thessalonians 2, 17 through 20. But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person, not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face.
Because we wanted to come to you, I, Paul, again and again. But Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?
[3:43] Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. You all may have a seat. This is the word of the Lord. Main idea of our text that we're going to be looking at today is that faithful ministry needs to be seen from an eternal perspective.

I love the series that we've been going through in 1 Timothy on Sunday mornings with Pastor Mike. Pastor Mike's been talking a lot about faithful ministry. Faithful ministers of the gospel as well.
And this is not something that just applies to vocational pastors. It doesn't just apply to lay elders. This applies to any believer, any born-again believer, that is seeking to have a kingdom impact on the world that's around them.
So everything that we've been talking about, if you are a born-again believer, this applies to you too. The Christians that Paul is writing to, they had such a tremendous impact on the world that was around them.

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These were not trained vocational pastors. I don't know how long Paul exactly spent there, if it was three Sabbath days in a row, or three Sabbath days that were kind of spread out when he was preaching the gospel.
[4:57] But these believers were just everyday believers that had had such a tremendous impact on the world around them, as Paul had said earlier in this epistle. They were Christians seeking to glorify Christ, seeking to worship anywhere they could find.

And for Christians to stay in the right frame of mind, especially these Christians that we're going through so much, especially Christians like Paul, in order to stay in the right frame of mind, you need to operate from the proper perspective.
A perspective that goes outside your specific circumstances. So I was thinking about this. One of my favorite times in history to study and to learn about is World War II.
As you read about what was going on in World War II, it was probably humanity's greatest struggle between good and evil. Now my grandfather, who is 100 years old, he will be 100 years old in October, and is still sharp as a tack, can vividly recount everything that he did in the war.
He enlisted when he was 17 years old. Had not been drafted yet, he willingly enlisted. And somebody had asked him one time, if you had not been asked to fight, why would you willingly sign up to go fight in a war that you knew you probably wouldn't come back from, as one of his brothers did not come back from that war.
[6:23] And he just simply said, back then, the question was, why wouldn't you fight? Because, he was operating from a perspective that was greater than his circumstances, his specific circumstances.

He knew that evil was on the rise, and that they needed good men to fight and to meet that evil in the field. So this perspective that he was living from allowed him to fight, allowed him to continue on in this struggle.
And in our struggle with Satan, as we're going to be looking at today, there is a spiritual war. There is a greater perspective that we need to be looking at, other than just our temporary afflictions. There is an eternal perspective that we need to be keeping in mind. There is a war that God is calling faithful Christians to, that Paul knew he had been called to, and that he very vividly sees the effects of in his ministry, in his everyday life.
And all through Paul's letters, we see his heart come through in all this. From our text today, I want to line out three demands that faithful ministry from an eternal perspective are going to make of us.
[7:35] They're going to ask of Christians. And the first demand is this. Faithful ministry from an eternal perspective demands a steadfast heart.

Faithful ministry demands a steadfast heart. Paul's steadfast heart in his ministry, it can just be seen in the unwavering affection.
That he has for these Thessalonian believers, and to many other churches and believers that he had impacted in his ministry. If there's one thing that we can see from Paul's writings, it's that he is not shy about showing his affection towards the churches that he has started, and the believers that he has impacted.
You can just look back at verse 17, where he talks about the affection and the longing that he has to be with them. Or in 1 Thessalonians 2 verse 8, it says, so being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.
This is not something that was unique to the Thessalonican church either. Paul had a deep personal investment to many people that he had invested in. If we look at other letters, like Philippians chapter 1 verse 8, says, for God is my witness how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
[9:03] Or Galatians 4.19, says, my children with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you. See, Paul very much viewed this discipleship relationship as almost a parent-child relationship.

As a matter of fact, that's how he viewed it exactly. As you go through the epistle of 1 Timothy that we're going through on Sunday mornings, he calls Timothy his child in the faith. And in the language that this was written in, which was Greek, when Paul said, torn away, the actual Greek word for this and wish me luck as I try to pronounce this, or pafanizo, nizo is the word.
And I'm going to do my best to explain that because I know I've totally butchered the translation of it or the pronunciation of it. But it's two words. Apo, which means to leave.

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Orfanizo, which means like an orphan. So to leave like an orphan is what Paul was describing this departure as. Paul was feeling a sense of bereavement and separation that he was experiencing because for him, this was like being bereaved of his child in the faith.
That's what he's trying to express to them. There's a very deep affection and longing to be with his children in the faith. Paul longed for those that he invested in to grow in their faith, to see their love for Christ grow.
[10:32] And even more than that, he wanted to be there with them to experience that. This was something that consumed his thoughts and his prayers. And he took their pains.

He took their struggles and he took their failures very personally. He was not one to mince words whenever he saw his churches struggling with sin or being led astray.
You see this in Galatians 3 verse 1 when he says, you foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Or in 2 Corinthians, Paul refers to the grief that he's inflicted on the church to bring them to a point of repentance.
I want to read this passage to you in 2 Corinthians 7, verses 8 through 10. It says, even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it.
Though I did regret it, I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while. Yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance.
[11:33] For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.

But worldly sorrow brings death. So in Paul, we see the full range of parental affection with his disciples.
We see the compassion as he sympathizes with the church and their afflictions. We see the exhortation as he encourages them to continue in the faith through their difficult circumstances.
We see his protection against wolves and false doctrines like we're seeing in 1 Timothy. Correction is also a very healthy part of affection as well. If we see someone we love going astray as a brother and sister in Christ, we are called to go to that person and bring them to repentance, to convict them of what they are doing wrong.
Paul wants to be reunited with his disciples in such a desperate way to be able to show all these things to him in person, not just through letter. I want to read this again.
[12:41] Verse 17, but since we were torn away from you brothers for a short time in person, not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face because we wanted to come to you.

Now if we look at Paul's track record, he was not one to intentionally have short stays at churches that he planted. Now obviously just through circumstances this would happen from time to time when he would be forced to flee from a city or a town, but when Paul planted a church, he wanted to stay for a while.
He wanted to see that church grow, to have healthy leadership, to make sure there was sound believing, and if there were times when he would have to flee, as we're going to see in our text next week when I get to preach, he would send people back to reassure them, to keep the training going, to make sure they were staying the course.
Paul's heart longed for the fellowship of those that he considered brethren in the faith, and Paul gives us an amazing example of what the discipleship process and what the brotherhood of faith should look like.
for you who want to be a disciple maker, who feel that longing and that urge to help people grow in their faith, to bring them to faith and to become more like Christ, my encouragement to you is this, to be prepared for the long game.
[14:08] Prepare yourself for a long, drawn-out process. It's a blessed process because you get to see people hit milestones in their faith. You get to see them grow in their love for the Lord. It's an exciting thing to watch.

It's a long process. It can be a messy process because you're also going to have to confront them on sin. You're going to have to let them in your life. But it is the life that God has called us to as his followers, as people that long to fulfill the great commission.
So I want to ask you this. Is this the kind of love that you have for your brothers and sisters in the faith? As someone who is part of the household of faith, we are not called to just casual interactions with each other.

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We are called into a close fellowship. One that is bound together by the spirit of Christ himself. Ephesians 4, 1 through 6, Paul was writing to this church describing the unity that they have as believers.
He says, I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called. With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace, there is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.
[15:40] Our life together is one of discipleship, pushing one another to grow in the faith, bearing with each other's weaknesses and forgiving sins that have been committed against us.

Forgiveness is a crucial part of being part of the body of believers and this is all done in a spirit of godly love, the spirit that if you are born again in Christ, it is the same spirit that we all share together.
Jesus himself said that all will know that you are his disciples by your love for one another. We aren't going to be known because of the fact that we all meet in the same building or we all have the same t-shirts on.
That's not how people are going to know us. We will be known by our love for one another. There's no better example of the love that Christ calls us to than the example that Paul is laying out for us in his letters.
That's really what Paul was doing here. His heart for other believers was only possible because of the new nature that he had in Christ. So from scripture, there's going to be a clear connection between someone who is maturing in their faith and someone who is loving the family of God.
[16:51] 1 John 4.12 says, No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. So you cannot be a growing follower of Christ and harbor hatred for the body of Christ, for his bride.

So this is a point of reflection moving on here. look at the relationships that you have with those in the local church. Is there affection? Is there unity?
Is there a desire to be around those who share the same faith as you? Is there also encouragement to grow in your faith when you are around the body of believers?
believers. This is a quick point of application here. I just, I've got to say to treasure the fellowship that comes through faithful ministry. The people that I have grown closest to in the church are the ones that I have served alongside, whether on staff or it's just volunteers that are constantly up here every time the doors are open.
These are the people that I grow the closest to, the ones that I serve alongside in faithful ministry. Paul shows us this desire and this affection for the churches that he started and it was a defining trait of his ministry.
[18:10] So I ask you, is it a defining trait of your ministry at Highland Park? Or if you're visiting from out of town, is it a defining trait of your ministry at whatever church you might be visiting from?

That's why Jesus said in John 13, 34, we discussed this on Maundy Thursday, that a new commandment I give to you to love one another just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.
And because of this, because of this command that we are supposed to follow from our Lord, we can also guarantee you that it's going to be the objective of our enemy, Satan, to disrupt that command.
And this leads us into the next demand that faithful ministry brings of us. Faithful ministry demands steadfast determination. Faithful ministry demands a steadfast determination.
Paul said in verse 18 that he desired again and again to be with the church, but Satan hindered him. This is the kind of language that you would use in military jargon as your enemy is thwarting your advance.
[19:23] Paul recognized that there was a spiritual warfare that was going on. He knew that the war for the souls of man was a war that was not waged in the flesh, but in the spiritual realm between the forces of darkness and the forces of light.

We see the ramifications of spiritual warfare in our lives as well. We see it in the struggle with sin. We see it with attacks on the church.

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We see it with the everyday decisions of our world leaders. We see it in the conflict within our very souls to choose obedience to the Lord and his commands or submission to our sinful nature.
So there's a very real spiritual war that is being waged. Paul clearly sees this as a hindrance from Satan as his path has been blocked to go to these disciples that he loved.
And Satan is not an enemy to be taken lightly. His attacks are precise. They are well aimed. Listen, temptation and sin, this is something that he has been doing since the beginning.
[20:33] He is very good at it. That's why Peter gave this command to another church that was suffering for their faith. In 1 Peter 5, 8-9, he commands us to be sober-minded, to be watchful.

Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. Resist him firm in your faith knowing that the same kinds of sufferings are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.
So we see the sober-mindedness in Paul, clearly seeing the attacks of the enemy but not allowing this to deter him from his mission. Now what these exact hindrances are, it's unknown.
There's a number of things that it could have been. When Paul was forced to flee Thessalonica, the person that was hosting him, Jason, he was forced to pay a fine and make a promise that these disturbances wouldn't happen again, this probably could have included that Paul wasn't allowed to come back to Thessalonica.
Every time that he would go to a new city and flee, he would have enemies that would follow him. And no doubt, whenever these enemies would be made at these cities, these would be people that would have recognized him at his return.
[21:44] So Paul was being forced to flee further and further and further away from these Christians that he loved so much. So from city to city, Paul is facing these oppositions.

But also, as Paul is going to these new cities, as he is fleeing with what seems to be an attack from Satan, which it was, this is also being used to hurry Paul's journey to start new churches.
So even though, yes, he is suffering physically, he is still spreading the gospel. This is just a reminder that Satan's attacks, yes, they can cause pain in this life. They can cause physical and temporal strife, but God can still use these things to bring him glory.
The point behind all this is that Satan is going to launch attacks against believers. And just like Paul, these attacks are designed to do one thing if you are a believer, and that is to ruin any kingdom impact that you might have in this life.
Now, Satan, he cannot attack our eternal hope, but he can impact your temporal ability in this life to spread that eternal hope.
[22:58] So how does Paul fight the good fight in the midst of these attacks? Through faithful obedience, wherever he went. By never losing sight of the task at hand and the future hope that awaited him.

Now, in our lives, Satan is going to wage the same war against us. If you are somebody that is desiring to live in obedience, that is desiring to grow God's kingdom, I promise you, Satan is going to attack.
So, where do we stage our resistance? How do we remain faithful in the midst of these attacks? I want to line out three truths from God's word that talk about thwarting the attacks of Satan.
And the first one is this. We submit to God. James 4, 7 says, submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.
Satan wants to make obedience painful. He wants us to see giving in to his demands as some sort of relief.
[24:10] Church, sometimes giving in would be the easy way out. Around the world, there are Christians that are suffering and dying for their faith every day. And I can guarantee you, Satan would love nothing more than to see them recant their faith, to give in to their demands for an easier life.

And this is the thing that is so humbling. When we talked about this a while ago in one of my sermons and also in our prayer time for the persecuted church, their greatest desire from us is prayer.
Prayer that they would have the strength and the conviction to continue on in their faith in the midst of persecution. They don't want supplies. They don't want military intervention. They want our prayers.

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They want strength to continue the good fight and to continue to be effective for God's kingdom in the midst of these trials. So I want to ask you, what is Satan tempting you with?
What trials are you going through that he is tempting you to give in to something? And going back to James 4-7, this is how we respond to it.
[25:22] And that's Satan's defiance against God is no match for our submission to God. So remain steadfast in your determination to be obedient to his word and the mission that he has set us on.

Now, the second way that we resist the devil's attacks is this, we cling to the truth. John 8-44, when he lies, he speaks out of his own character for he is a liar and the father of lies.
This was Jesus talking about Satan. His greatest attack that he will wage on us is lies. Undergoing trials is when we can become the most susceptible to believing a lie.
We may be tempted to think, well, maybe God doesn't care. Well, maybe God isn't all good when we see the trials that we're going through. Or maybe we might be tempted to think, maybe I've done something to deserve this trial.
or in temptation. We're going to have the lie thrust on us that maybe God's ways aren't best. This is one that we see many Christians struggling with when they're dealing with temptation.
[26:35] We'll be tempted to believe the lie that maybe God's ways are outdated or for a certain culture and point in time. This is where we cling to the truth. Psalm 119, verse 160 says, the sum of your word is truth and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

Endures forever. Not endures for a certain amount of time. Not applies to certain areas in your life. Your rules, your righteous rules endure forever. God's truth is timeless.
It is eternal and it is beneficial for any attack that Satan might wage against you. That is why Jesus prayed this over his disciples. in John 17, 17, sanctify them in the truth.
Your word is truth. The lies that Satan would use to destroy us fall apart when faced with the truth that God uses to sanctify us.
So cling to the truth in every circumstance. God has given us everything that we need in his word for righteous living. To stand fast in the face of temptation and the attacks of Satan.
[27:49] Now the last way that we resist the devil's attacks is we rely on the grace of God. Through trials, Satan can tempt us to abandon the grace of our Lord.

We can be tempted to trust in our own efforts, in our own strengths. Paul understood this struggle really well. In 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verses 7 through 9, he said this, so to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelation, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited.
Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. So again, we see this war that is being waged within Paul in the spiritual realm and it's having ramifications in his earthly realm in his life.
Paul has an ongoing trial that constantly affects him and maybe many of you are tempted to believe that an ongoing trial is keeping you from being effective for God's kingdom. Maybe you feel that God is not hearing your request and that all you can do now is to simply rest in the bitterness that your trials have brought on you.
Well, Paul received this reply from the Lord in verse 9, but he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness.
[29:16] Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. So trials in this life that Satan would use to hinder your kingdom work can serve as a powerful agent of sanctification.

Because when endured in the light of faith, it will lead you to rest on the grace of Christ and be submissive to him all the more. And Jesus will shine all the brighter through your trials.
Just like they were in Paul's trials. Just like they were every time he had to flee a city. And what Satan would have used as an attack to keep God's kingdom from growing, God used all the more to bring glory to himself.
hope. And this is only going to be possible if you have your hope in the right place. We talked about faithful ministry resting in a steadfast eternal hope.
And this is the third demand that ministry has of us. Faithful ministry demands a steadfast hope. There is a divine hope that transcends Paul's earthly circumstances.

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[30:32] That is keeping this apostle going in his ministry to his churches. And Paul has referenced this divine hope in verses 19 through 20. It says, For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?

Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. And in Paul's letters to the church at Thessalonica, I mentioned earlier that there is this eschatological theme that comes up in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. In verse 19, Paul asks this question. We see this theme come up again. What all of this is going to amount to when Jesus comes back? Paul is saying, what am I going to have to show for all my efforts?
What is Christ going to see as evidence of my love and obedience for him when he returns? Because this is something that Paul clings to. This is something that all Christians should cling to. That one day our Savior is returning.
Jesus is coming back. Paul knows that and he wants to be able to show his master that he has been a good and faithful servant. And what is the crown, his hope and joy of boasting?
[31:53] He says, it's this church. It's these believers that he has invested in the kingdom impact that he has had in this life despite all of his trials and afflictions. Paul's also said that the sufferings of this life, the temporary trials, they don't compare to the hope that Jesus is going to come back one day and make all things right again.

This was always the backdrop that Paul operated from. This is always where his hope was founded. Paul is not looking at any earthly metric to keep his hope alive. If Paul hinged all of his hope on what was going on in his physical life, he would have quit ministry and gone back to tent making full time a long time ago, probably after the first time he got stoned.
No, Paul is looking forward to a greater prize. He knows that despite the separation that has caused him so much pain, despite the trials and the persecution he will face, that these believers will one day be with him in eternity.
That God will see his efforts and all that he has done and suffered through and know that it will not be in vain one day. as we continue through this epistle just in the coming months where we're going to see Paul bring up this theme of eternal hope and reunification several times.
But right now in our text, we just see that Paul is looking forward to this prize. Paul is putting stock in the things that have eternal value. Eternal value is something that's lost on a world that does not love Christ.
[33:41] Eternity, a lost world just doesn't have any context for eternity. For someone without Christ, this life is all that there is. And someone like Paul who is willing to suffer so much for something like eternity, this probably sounds crazy to somebody that doesn't believe.

But Paul is simply adopting the mindset of Christ that he commanded. in Matthew chapter 6, verses 19 through 21, Jesus said, do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Paul's passion for these believers was a reflection of where his treasure was.
Paul was also at the same time, even though he valued his earthly ministry, he was a man that longed to be in eternity with his Savior. In Philippians 1, 22 through 24, he said, if I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me.
Yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. And keep in mind, as Paul is writing this, he is in prison. He doesn't know what the outcome is going to be.
[35:11] He doesn't know if he's about to meet his earthly end and go into eternity or if he's going to be released. So just understand the weight of that when he is saying this. He doesn't know which path to choose.

He says, my desire is to depart and be with Christ. For that is far better, but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. So ultimately, what we draw our strength from is where our hope rests.
If our hope is grounded in something that is perishable, then our strength will be perishable. It will run out. If your hope is in the eternal, like Paul's, if it is kept in heaven for you, then there is nothing in this life that can touch it.
One of my favorite passages to read at funerals is 1 Peter 1 verses 3 through 5. It talks about this living hope.

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It says, he caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
[36:37] So did you catch all that that Paul was using to describe this hope? He said it's imperishable. It's undefiled. It's unfading. It's not guarded by anything in this life.

It's guarded by God's power. What in this life can we apply this description to? Nothing. So my question for you is what is your hope grounded in today?
Where does all of your assurance rest? As you're fulfilling your earthly ministries, as you're doing kingdom work, what is it that you're looking forward to?
Is your hope grounded in the eternal? Or is it grounded in things that are perishable? The main application that we have for today is to live your life in light of an eternal hope.
To live your life in light of an eternal hope. The believer, if you are in Christ, you need to look at everything that you do as a preamble of what is to come in glory.
[37:50] Are you a parent? All your efforts should be motivated by the eternal truth that your children are not your own. They belong to God and he has entrusted them to you with the responsibility to prepare them for eternity.

Are you a spouse? Your marriage is meant to be a picture of Christ in the church, which will one day be fulfilled as a consummation of all things.
Are you a committed church member? What better picture is there of the life that is to come than God's people all gathering to praise their father and their savior and to serve together in the great commission to bring all nations, tribes and tongues to the throne of God.
Even in your day job, eternity has an effect there as well. Colossians 3, 23 through 24 says that we're to do all things as unto the Lord.
Eternity impacts every facet of the Christian life, especially how we do ministry and how we live life with the brothers and sisters of the faith. Now, if you are someone that is here that is lost, someone that does not know Christ or have a relationship with him.
[39:12] The eternity that is promised in scripture. For those that are without Christ. It doesn't bring hope. It doesn't bring this hope that we've been talking about.

If you are without Christ. Then the eternal consequences of your sin are still on you. The Bible says that you are still children under wrath.
So my earnest plea for you. Is that without hope in Christ, the only eternity that is promised is wrath. So come today, receive forgiveness. Know the love of a merciful.
Gracious God. Be forgiven of your sin. And know the living hope that we read about in first Peter. Know that living hope that only Christ can provide that can sustain you and save you from the war that Satan is waging for your soul. Even this day. We're going to pray.
[40:15] And as as I pray, the altar is open. If you have questions about this eternal hope. I want you to come forward today and ask those questions.

If you feel that the Holy Spirit is drawing you. Then today is the day of salvation. So I want to pray. And then we'll open up this time of response.
Father, we are grateful for the hope that you have given us in Christ. Lord, we thank you that through Christ, we can have this living hope that sustains us.
not just in this life, but in the life that is to come. And Lord, I pray that this hope would be the driving force behind every believer that is here.
Lord, that it would lead them to kingdom work, to kingdom effectiveness. Lord, that it would lead them to cherish the relationship that they have with fellow believers. I pray that this eternal hope would be the driving force behind everything that they do.
[41:20] Lord, I pray for those that are here that do not have that eternal hope, that have never been made new in Christ, that have never had a relationship with you through Jesus. Lord, I pray that today would be their day of salvation.

I pray that you would call them out of darkness, that you would forgive their sins, that you would save their souls. And Lord, that today we would see your kingdom grow in a great and powerful way. Lord, I pray for all these things in Jesus name.
Amen. Thank you.

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