

Faith, Love, Hope

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[0:00] Take your Bibles, would you, and turn to 1 Thessalonians and just start there at verse 1 of chapter 1.

And I'll read it here in just a moment, but I feel the need to maybe, in a sense, apologize. Some of you are wondering, are we ever going to get back to 1 Peter? And we will.

You know, unless Jesus comes first, and He didn't come yesterday, so He may come before I get back to 1 Peter, I don't know.

But I'm going to preach a series of sermons out of 1 Thessalonians. It's not going to be a word-by-word, verse-by-verse exposition of the entire letter.

But it will involve six messages. And all of them under the theme, which I believe is the theme of, the overarching theme of 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

[1:16] Under this theme, the church and the second coming. The church and the second coming. And I'll say again, I do believe that Paul's theme, overarching theme, because he does also have some other secondary themes that you'll find in both of these letters.

Very practical instructions and such, and encouragements and so forth. And you'll find all those in here. And I say that they are secondary because they all fall under the main theme, the overarching theme, to which all of what Paul has to say in these letters comes under and applies.

Or we might even say the instructions that you'll find in these two letters are implications of the second coming of Christ.

And you'll see the theme throughout. In fact, I would just point them out to you very quickly. If you would look at chapter 1, verse 10, where the Bible says, to wait for his Son from heaven.

Now, if that's not a reference to the second coming, I don't know what it would be. Whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. Now, I'm not going to comment on that verse yet, because I will before we're done this morning.

[2:46] But just skip on over there to chapter 2 and verse 19. In fact, it's interesting how the chapter divisions end with... Nearly every chapter ends with a reference to the second coming.

Now, I might remind you that the Bible, when it was originally written, did not have chapter divisions. That is, in the formal sense, with 1, 2, 3, 4, and so forth.

And didn't even have verse, verses, verse divisions in it. But it's interesting, I guess, those who put that together for us, organized it in that way, certainly recognized these statements that kind of cap off each main division of the chapter.

But in chapter 2, verse 19, for what is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

And so there it is again in reference to the second coming. Skip over there to chapter 3, verse 13.

So that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our God and Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all his saints.

[4:07] And we'll get to that verse later on, a couple of Sundays. Verse 13 of chapter 4. But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. And then we could go on and read to the end of that chapter.

And clearly, the theme is end times. The time of Jesus' coming and the events that are going to transpire then. If you look at chapter 5, right there, the very first verse.

But concerning the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. What times and seasons is he referring to? But the coming of Christ.

And then over there in chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians. Oh, excuse me. Verse 6 of chapter 2, verse 1.

[5:11] Wait a minute. Over there in 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1 and verse 6. Was that not plain? Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you. And now you don't see the word second coming there or coming, but that's a reference to an event that will take place at the end of time.

Chapter 2 and verse 1. Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then he goes on to describe that for us.

In chapter 2 and verse 14. To which he called you by our gospel. For the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And he goes on from there. And it's still the implication here. The reference here is to the second coming. And believe me, there are many other references to.

[6:17] Some in just passing. Some references that are just in passing. Some implicated. Some inferences in the chapter to the second coming.

And some outright, clear, explicit instructions concerning the second coming. Appearing throughout both of these letters. Alright, now, so, having said that.

Then the question that really needs to be answered is why? Why are we taking this time to consider the second coming?

Well, I think it seems to be on a lot of people's minds these days. And that's not necessarily a new thing among Christians and even non-believers.

Since the time of Christ. For the two, now two millennia. There has been a focus and concern about and questions about and fear about.

[7:19] And other types of emotions related to the second coming. But in our time, there seems to be a kind of a culmination or an intensification.

Of events that are causing us to think about the coming of Jesus. And some of the events that surround it.

Like the rapture of the church. What the Bible says about the great tribulation. More specifically, what people should be looking for. Other signs and such.

And what needs to happen, you know. In world events. And geography. And all kinds of things. What needs to happen before the second coming. And should we be concerned about those things. And looking at those things. And so forth. A lot of things are happening in our world today. And have been for the last, really, intensification in the last year or so.

[8:18] Just think of the many wars. They are wars. Albeit many of them civil wars. They're taking place in countries in the Middle East primarily.

And then our connection. Just our normal kind of innate connection. That we make in our minds between wars and the second coming.

And specifically, wars as they are related to that part of the world. That significant part of the world. The Middle East. And the wars taking place there.

The unrest taking place there. The rise of radical Islam in that part of the country. And the fears associated with that.

And so, we consider world events in regard to wars. And political turmoil. Not only in those places in this world.

[9:23] The Middle East. But even in our own country. And the concern about the political landscape.

And the political debate that's going on. And it's quite ugly, isn't it? And so, we think about our own country. And some of those things that are taking place here.

And the people who are up in arms against one another. And face to face. And some of it even violent. And we wonder, is this a sign?

That we're coming to the end. And maybe Jesus is coming at any moment. And not just these two things.

But also, though you may not be aware of this. But our country, for a number of years now. Israel has been experiencing a decline of the church in this country.

[10:22] Well, I might say, not the decline of the church. But decline happening in churches. I tell you, even Southern Baptists. Struggling.

And we are seeing, potentially, a number of churches within our denomination. That will be closing their doors.

And some are just right at that edge. Where they're going to fold and close their doors. And we're not seeing the church itself growing like we normally do.

And we could get into a lot of discussion about the whys and the wherefores of all of that. And what is significant and what is not. And what we ought to be concerned about. What we ought not to be concerned about.

And we don't have time to do that. But just the reality of that taking place in our country. Combined with other things. Causes us to begin to wonder.

[11:25] Are we getting close? Is Jesus coming at any moment? And we're going to add to that a number of other things. And I've just jotted down quite a few just off the top of my head. I've already mentioned the advance and inroads of radical Islam in our nation.

And not only that. We could add to that the advance of a number of other false religions. I tell you, there are dozens of them coming on the scene almost every year.

New cults and new false religions. And some of the main ones are experiencing growth among their followers. Their adherents.

And we look at that and we wonder, is this a sign that we ought to be concerned about? Or how about economic troubles in our own nation? And really worldwide.

Worldwide. Worldwide. Financially speaking. Economically speaking. This world is suffering. And we in our own country have suffered economic downturns like most of us have never seen in our lifetime.

[12:40] And you add to that the worry about it. The concern. The outlook that many in our own country have about the future.

You know, and you hear it all the time on the news about parents who are concerned that their kids are going to, not going to experience a greater level of prosperity than they experienced in their lifetime.

And it seems to be, at least this is what they say, that every generation has had the hopes, if nothing else, that the next generation is going to live better and prosper more.

And that has been, by and large, the history of our country. And yet, that feeling does not exist among most people in our nation today.

Does that matter? Well, it matters in its connection to this overall wondering and concern about end times and the coming of Jesus.

[13:50] So economic troubles, earthquakes. I mean, every time we have a major earthquake or maybe a series of them, there are many within the Christian community, per se, who jump on the bandwagon and say, this is a sign.

And Jesus is coming real soon. Well, he is coming real soon. Just how soon, we don't know. But we look at earthquakes and we think about what happened in Japan and to that country.

And they're still reeling from that tremendous catastrophe. And we read about and hear about earthquakes in other parts of the world and killer tornadoes in our own country.

We have a period of time where we experienced a record number of tornadoes. And a record number of people dying.

And we see extremes in weather. You know, how about 32 inches of snow in the space of two weeks? I don't know if that caused you to think about Jesus coming at any moment.

[14:58] But it's the combination of all of these things. And then we look at our country. And for years, we've been concerned about the flagrant immorality in our culture.

And just when we think it cannot get worse, that Jesus may be coming at any moment, it gets worse. And then we think, well, Jesus may be coming at any moment, and then it gets worse.

And we can't imagine it getting worse. Can we? I can't. And how about troubling predictions concerning the second coming or the end of time or the judgment day as Harold Camping recently predicted?

Actually, by the way, I don't know if you know it, but Harold Camping predicted this happening back in 1994. Did you know that? Didn't happen, and of course, the problem was mathematical error.

But he said, but this time for sure. Well, May 21st came and went. And we did not see judgment day unless somehow we missed it.

[16:14] The rapture didn't take place unless somehow we missed that. But we have these kind of predictions that come out. And many, far too many, believe them, follow these kind of false prophets.

And we've had them over the years. But this one has been somehow a big one. Now, maybe it's been made bigger in our minds because of the way the media has handled it. But still. I say, you put all of these things together. And people today are concerned and wondering about the coming of Christ.

Is it soon? Well, in a true sense of the word soon, yes. It's been soon since the writers of the New Testament recorded what the Holy Spirit gave them to record.

John spoke of the soon coming. Or he certainly asked that the Lord please come quickly.

[17 : 25] So it's certainly soon in an eschatological sense. It's soon. May be at any moment. But is it soon because of all these things happening? Not necessarily so.

As God marks soon. And by the way, the Lord is going to come. And he's going to come just on schedule. And so I'm not going to make the mistake of saying if the Lord tarries.

Because he's not going to tarry. He's going to come just on schedule. And when that's going to be, I have no idea. But what should we be doing now in light of the coming of Christ?

How should the church be conducting herself? What should we be involved in? Not just the church as a collective body, but each of us individually as born-again believers.

How should we be conducting ourselves in light of the, quote, soon coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? How about we call it the sure coming?

[18 : 34] He is going to come. How should we behave? And this is Paul's subject in these chapters, in these two letters. And I think it's clear that we can understand that the Thessalonians had some questions about this.

Otherwise, Paul would not have addressed them. He may have had some misconceptions and some misunderstanding of theology that Paul addressed.

And I believe we do have that here. There are other things that he says. For example, most of what I'm going to share with you this morning from chapter 1 that you may not think is connected to the second coming.

In fact, for most of the sermon this morning, you're going to be thinking, Pastor, I thought you were going to be talking on the second coming. I am. And all that we're going to consider this morning out of chapter 1 is connected with the coming of Christ.

So, how about we look at it? Chapter 1, verse 1. I want to read the entire chapter. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[19 : 53] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all. Now, we know Paul was a southerner.

For you all making mention to you, of you in our prayers. Remembering. And here's the key verse. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope.

Hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father. Knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.

And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit. So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.

[21 : 17] For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus our, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Alright, so there it is. Now I would call your attention to verse 3, first and foremost. Verse 3, it's interesting, but verse 3 contains Paul's outline for the rest of the chapter.

Because everything he says after verse 3 connects to the three main statements he makes here in that verse.

For example, or just to give you a heads up, the work of faith is connected to verses 4 through 7. And so there's point number one in this chapter for Paul as he's preaching this to the Thessalonians.

Here's point number one. I remember your work of faith. And then he fleshes that out in verses 4 through 7. And we'll get to that here in just a moment.

[22 : 34] Then the third, or the second point in his sermon, or the construction of his letter anyway, the labor of love. The labor of love. And the labor of love is spelled out for us in verses 8 through 9.

8 and 9. And then the final point of his sermon is the patience of hope. Patience of hope. And that connects directly to verse 10.

So here you have his outline. Kind of his outline for his sermon on the front end. Sometimes preachers do that. We say, this is what I'm going to say to you. 1, 2, 3. Hopefully you're thinking not 4, 5, 6.

But 1, 2, 3. Here it is. And then when you get into the body of the message, then from Scripture, from the text, each point is explained. That's just preaching 101.

And that's what Paul, I think, in a sense is doing here. So let's begin with the first one. The work of faith. And let's understand that the work of faith, based upon what he says about it here, the work of faith looks back to the crucified Savior.

[23:48] That's it. That's number one. The work of faith looks back. It looks back to the crucified Savior. Now, the meaning here of this phrase, work of faith, The meaning here is not so much, or not first and foremost, a work as a result of faith.

Now, there certainly is that, isn't there? And that's part of it. But Paul's primary point here is not the work of faith or work as a result of faith.

That is, faith in the sense of your salvation. So you're saved, and now you work from that salvation, and you do this and this and such and such as God leads you, and God instructs you in his word. Now, that's true, isn't it, of a believer? We don't work for salvation. We work from salvation because of salvation. But the meaning here primarily is not the work as a result of faith, but rather the work belonging to faith.

Belonging to faith. And in the Greek language and in Greek grammar, it would be rendered in English exactly the same way. But you have to look at the context to understand.

[25:06] So in a sense, he is personifying faith in some sense. This is faith's work. Faith's work. Not your work as a result of faith.

Actually, he's going to get more into that with the hope that, or excuse me, the labor of love. But this is faith's work.

All right? Let's understand that on the front end. And so what is faith's work? Well, I might define it this way. Faith's work is the assurance of salvation.

The assurance of salvation. That's faith's work. See, for by grace you have been saved through what? Faith.

And that not of yourselves. What's not of yourself? The grace and the faith. But it is the gift of God. Both the grace and the faith.

[26:06] And so faith is a dynamic that God grants you, not only so that through your faith you can be saved, but so that that faith can do an ongoing work in your heart and in your life.

And that ongoing work, among some other things, but primarily is your assurance of faith. Your assurance of it. He says in verse 4, Knowing your election by God.

Knowing it. Now he's referring to their knowledge of their election, but it's the same idea. They know. I tell you, I just know.

It's the assurance. That's faith's work. In verse 5 he says, Much assurance. Assurance. And so, see, first and foremost, we just need to come away from this understanding that the church of Thessalonica was a true church.

I mean, they were the assembly of true baptized believers. They were the true body of Christ. A saved church. The chosen of God. And then Paul describes this work of faith, and he describes it in three ways.

[27:20] And they're very progressive. And he starts there in verse 5. In fact, all of these are found right there in verse 5. In the first place, we understand that works faith, if we're going to understand works faith, or faith's work, excuse me, not works faith, faith's work, then we need to understand that God, the God who has elected, God who chose, has spoken.

What did he say there in verse 5? For our gospel did not come to you in word only. Now, before you go on from word only, to see what he has to say next, you need to understand that the clear implication is that it did come in word.

Whose word? God's word. This is faith's work. God has spoken. And aren't you glad he has?

I tell you, I wouldn't have anything to preach if he hadn't spoken. The very foundation for preaching is this true, divine truth. God has spoken. And then, it has been written.

Aren't you glad it was written down, what God spoke? And therefore, I go by the mandate, preach the word. Preach the word. But it's not just simply for preachers. That's for all of us.

[28:38] We have nothing, first of all, nothing to believe in. But, as far as applying it to our lives, we have nothing to say about God, who God is, what God has done, what God wants, what God's desire.

We have no gospel to proclaim apart from the word. That is, that God has spoken. That's the beginning of faith's work. God has spoken.

Hebrews 1.1 says, God spoke various times, many different ways, to the prophets, and so forth, and so forth. And in these last times, in these days, that's the days we're living in, He has spoken to us by His Son, through His Son.

I'm so glad God has spoken. We have the word. We have His word. I had an interesting conversation with the Jehovah's Witness yesterday morning.

Someone I had talked to before, and he'd come back by the house, and we got on to some subjects, as we always do, when we talk to Jehovah's Witnesses. And it seems that one thing led to this thing, and that's kind of the tactic.

[29:48] You know, you begin to point out a certain point of Scripture, and they've been taught to divert to another point, and to divert to another, and never really help answer any of the main issues.

And so, somehow the discussion led to hell. Of course, they don't believe in hell, a literal hell. And so, his argument to me was, well, the Bible tells us that God is a loving God.

Isn't that right? Yes, He is. And doesn't the Bible say that God is a merciful God? Yes. And then I said, but we also are told in Scripture that God is a God of His Word.

And what has God said in His Word about the ultimate, final judgment? The eternal judgment?

You see, we have God's Word. And this is part of faith's work. God, who has chosen, has spoken.

And then secondly, what God has spoken, is more than mere words.

[31:05] Right? So, we don't have God's Word, a copy of God's Word, and we can set right next to it, let's just say the Jehovah's Witnesses copy, their own translation, rendition of it, the New World Translation, or we can put next to that, the Koran, or some other, the Book of Mormon.

So, we don't just put them side by side, and we have, you have your words, and I have my words, and they have their words. And so, this book is unique. It's not just simply the words of God.

This book contains the power of God's Word to affect transformation in your life, in my life, as well as a number of other things.

So, it's not just mere words, and this is what Paul says here. He says there in verse 5, but also in power. So, not word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit. See, God's Word has power. And it's the Word of the Holy Spirit that applies that Word to our hearts. And it has the power to convince us of things.

[32:19] To convince us of the truth. To convince us of our own sinfulness. It has the power not only to convince us, because we need more than convincing, it has the power to convict.

To convict us of our unrighteousness before a holy God. To convict us of our offense against a holy God because of our sin.

To convince us of our doom apart from Christ. All that God's Word does.

The power of God's Word. Not just mere words. It has the power to convince us, and to convict us, and to convert us. And so, faith's work.

The God who is chosen has spoken. But they're not just mere words. They're words with power.

And with the Holy Spirit. And third, faith's work, his ongoing work, is, as I've said, assurance.

[33:29] This is faith's work. Assurance. Verse 5, And in much assurance.

Assurance. Paul wrote to Timothy, said, those famous, or wrote those famous words in 2 Timothy 1.12, I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day all the way through to when Jesus comes again.

That's assurance. And that's faith's work in your heart. And Paul is noting that about faith's work in the hearts and lives of the Thessalonians.

that we're a true church. A believing church. A saved church. One of the marks of faith's work is this.

It's confidence. It's an assurance. See, our life, our life, our spiritual lives and our relationship with Christ is not to be likened to what, you know, the proverbial daisy.

[34 : 45] You know, he loves me. He loves me not. He loves me. He loves me not. And you're hoping when you get to the last pedal it's, he loves me. That's not it at all.

True faith. And the work of that faith is assurance. Assurance that cannot, cannot be taken away. Cannot be violated. Cannot be destroyed. Alright, so the church of Thessalonica was a saved church. One where faith's work was vibrant and visible. In fact, I would have you note there, finally, before going on to the next one, so that, verse 7, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.

Who believe. This, this, this, work of faith in the hearts and lives of these believers in this church in Thessalonica was visible and it was vibrant and, and others observed it and took note of it all the way to, to Macedonia and Achaia.

Alright, let's move on to the second one. That's the labor of love. Now, the work of faith looks back to the crucifixion, back to the, to the, to the, to Calvary, to the crucifixion of the Savior.

[36 : 15] The labor of love looks up to the crowned Savior. It looks up to the crowned Savior.

Now, again, just like with the work of faith, grammatical construction and therefore the, the, the meaning of it is not so much a labor as a result of love, though it is that, but more love's labor.

The way Paul penned this, again, he is, in essence, personifying each of these, these virtues of the Christian faith.

Faith, love, and hope, and we'll get to hope in a minute. It's love's labor. It is love at work in and through the believer as a result of faith's work.

So this is the next step. Faith's work produces in us love's labor. Love's labor. Love's labor is an expression of faith's work in us.

[37 : 23] Look at verse 9. For they themselves declared, who? That's the folks in Macedonia and Achaia and other places. They themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you and how you turn to God from idols to serve who?

The living and true God. Now, this is how it works. Through faith's work, work, our eyes are open to the glory and majesty and infinite value and worth of God and with that the magnitude of our salvation.

It is thrilling. This is what faith's work does. And then it brings about, this brings about a change in our devotion what we're devoted to, our affections in relation to things in this world and so forth. It brings about a change in our love. Love in all directions. It brings about a change in our allegiances from the things of this world to God.

Like the words of one of my favorite, favorite hymns, the chorus, turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful faith and the things of this world will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.

[39 : 10] See, that's it. That's love's labor. Now the change, this change in devotion, this change in allegiances has an expression and the expression of that is love's labor.

Love's labor to serve the living and the true God. Let me just ask you, why do you come to church on Sunday to worship? possibly for many different reasons, some of you.

Is it love's labor? Faith's work and the expression of it being love's labor? And my desire is to worship with God's people, to worship the living and true God.

Why do you tithe? Maybe I should say, do you tithe? Most pastors would start with that. Do you tithe? If not, why not?

No. Why do you tithe? Is that love's labor? Not labor in the sense of laborious and tedious and burdensome.

[40 : 33] Our tithing ought not to be thought of as burdensome. It's our love's labor as a result of faith's work.

Why do you serve the Lord? And we had our wanas lined up here. And I tell you, these choice saints of God have served and served.

You know, sometimes it's not easy. They've served faithfully and God has richly blessed our church for the lives of these young people, but blessed their lives as well.

Why do they do it? Because some pastor asked them to or some committee asked them to? It's love's labor as an expression of faith's work.

Why do you refuse to follow the way of this world? I know we all struggle with that.

[41 : 39] I'm not suggesting that any of us are perfect. Certainly not this guy. But why is it our desire to not follow the way of the world, to refuse that way, to choose God's way, God's word?

Why? That's love's labor. See? Now listen, the expression of faith's work then, which is love's labor, is two-pronged.

That is, it's expressed in two ways. Let me give this to you real quick and I'm going to put them in reverse order. Verse 9, we're to love God supremely.

This is how our faith is expressed through love's labor. We're to love God supremely. That's what he says in verse 9, for they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had and how you turned to God from idols.

Now don't miss the order of those two things. To God from idols. Most of us would word that in the opposite.

[42:49] way. Turn from idols to God. Just like we would express the relationship of repentance and faith. Turn from our sin and turn to God.

But it's deliberately put in this order because I believe that the first step is to God. As opposed to somehow buying into the idea that I can clean up my life and get rid of all my idol worshiping first and then I can turn to God.

It's deliberately put in that order. To God from idols. To God first, once and forever and always, and second, from idols now and continuously.

And by the way, we certainly need to define idols as anything that comes before God. God. Doesn't have to be some kind of statue made out of stone or wood to qualify as an idol.

Anything can be an idol. We certainly grapple with and in many ways bow down and worship a lot of idols in our lives. And part of the work of sanctification is the removing of all of these idols, anything that comes before God.

[44:08] We've turned to God and we continue throughout our lives, this is love's labor, to turn from idols. And so in that sense, I guess we could identify this second thing, love's labor, as sanctification.

And so faith's work is assurance and love's labor is sanctification, making us more like Christ. We've turned to God and we continue to turn from idols.

All right, so the first expression then of our, of love's labor is to love God supremely. The second one is to love man savingly.

To love man savingly, not just a man, mankind, our fellow humankind. We're to love them savingly. Verse 8, look at it. It's a great testimony. For from you the word of God, word of the Lord, has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place, your faith toward God has gone out so that we do not need to say anything.

[45:22] What a testimony of the, of love's labor in, in the lives of the Thessalonians. Amazing. In the first place, there's, it, love's labor sounded out.

That is, he said, for from you, out from you, the word of the Lord has sounded forth. What a statement.

Would to God that that would be, that that would be our testimony. That others could say that of us, always, and particularly, to say out from you, from out of you, the word of the Lord has sounded forth.

So there's the sound of love's labor. Secondly, there's the scope of it in every place, he said. Now, certainly, specifically in Macedonia and Achaia, but then he had said, but not only there, but in every place.

What a, what a testimony. Is that not the, the, the very spirit and heart of the great commission? That we would go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

[46:41] So there's the sound of love's labor, there's the scope of it, and there's also the spread of it. The spread of love's labor. See, faith's work in, it's talking about faith's work in others.

He said, your faith toward God has gone out. Now, I prefer the King James rendering of the one word in the text, and it should be this, spread abroad.

Your faith toward God is spread abroad. It's moving out, spreading out to Bartlesville and Oklahoma and the United States and North America and around the world.

And then finally, the success of it. The success of love's labor. Paul said, we don't have any need to say anything. That means that Paul then can give up the ministry and not preach anymore?

That's not the point. means that the gospel that was being spread out from the testimony of the Thessalonians didn't need any correcting, didn't need any adding to.

[48:03] Or, you know, he's not saying that we've got to do a little bit more, kind of tweak it a little bit more so that they'll understand what you're talking about. In essence, he's saying that we don't have to take up the slack for you.

your witness is that powerful. So the work of faith looks back to a crucified Savior. The labor of love looks up to the crowned Savior.

And then third and finally, the patience of hope, he says. That's the third thing. The patience of hope looks on to a coming Savior.

You knew the second coming was going to get in here eventually, didn't you? The patience, or maybe the better word would be endurance.

Some translations, I think, render it that way. The endurance of hope. It looks on to a coming Savior. That's what he said in verse 10. And to wait, to wait for, we could paraphrase a little bit here and still be within the bounds of the word, to wait in a sense of longing for, his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath that is to come.

[49:41] What a verse. Hope's endurance, you see, is this, it's the unshakable confidence in the promise of God that in Jesus Christ, those in Jesus Christ, have been and will forever be delivered from the wrath of God, that one day will be poured out upon all unbelieving people, as well as demons and angels and so forth.

A judgment that's going to come. Now this wrath, what is this wrath he's talking about? Well, I believe in light of the context of the letter, he is speaking of a particular time of wrath.

and that being identified in the Bible as the great tribulation. And so, this, supported by many other texts in the letter, is speaking about being absolutely delivered, actually delivered and taken out of, of the way for that time when God's wrath will be poured out upon this planet, accomplishing all the purposes that he intended.

That's, that Jesus is coming. No, he didn't come yesterday. He may come today. And for those of us in Christ, his church will be delivered out of the wrath that is to come.

The wrath. But we need to also understand this word wrath in its larger sense. because certainly the wrath of God in the larger sense is going to come, not just going to be spent in tribulation, in the tribulation period.

[51:57] It is his holy and righteous wrath that will fall upon all unbelievers for all eternity.

in a place the Bible calls hell. Now, either way, you want to interpret wrath in that text.

If you're in Christ, you're delivered from it. The endurance of hope, see. So the church looks on to that.

We look on to it. On to the second coming of our Lord. Not wondering about it in the sense of a fearful kind of wondering and anxiety.

Not wondering about it. Not hoping in something that may or may not take place. We can just kind of hope so. It's a certainty.

[53:01] And we endure in that hope. It doesn't wax and wane or waver. That hope is sure. And that hope has a full assurance that Jesus is coming.

He's coming. And the hope of His coming is the hope that we all have, those of us in Christ, that we have been delivered from the wrath of God.

Both the great tribulation as well as the great judgment. Final judgment. Now in closing, I would say to you, Harold Camping, this pastor over in California, who for last year or so has been preaching Judgment Day, and has set the date, May 21st, going to start in New Zealand at 6 p.m.

And then follow the sun and move around the world. By October, whatever date it was, the earth was kaput October.

He was wrong about that. Wrong to set the date, wrong about the date. But if I may say, he was right about one thing.

[54:35] Jesus is coming. He is coming. And like two car salesmen said to me yesterday, two different ones on different occasions, said, I guess the important thing is to be ready.

Yeah. are you ready? Yeah. Thank you.