

March 24, 2018

Thankfulness, Faith, Love, and Hope **Thessalonians 1:2-3**

Our sermon text this morning will be First Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 2 and 3. Before we read that, we will pray. So please, if you would join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, as we come now to hear from your word, I pray, Father, that you would indeed speak to every one of us, and that the word would be applied to each and every one of us, as is fitting and as is according to your word. And may we all be given ears to hear, and eyes that see, and hearts that understand and obey. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

As I said, First Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 2 and 3. We'll read from verse 1. We'll read the introduction as far as the end of verse 3. So, starting at verse 1:

“Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

“² We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

As we started to say last week, Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, One Thessalonians, or First Thessalonians, is a letter that's very positive in its outlook. Paul is not at all given any grief by this church. He rejoices in the people who are in this church, he rejoices in the church, he rejoices in the evidence of the work of God amongst them. It brings him great joy.

Paul speaks of the fact that he sees in them the three things that, if we were to trace them out through Paul's letters, the three things that Paul constantly brings up as being the evidence of the work of God in their midst: Faith, love, and hope. They have work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope.

To Paul, this is evidence of the grace of God in their midst, and also it is confirming evidence of the power of the gospel that he and his friends were preaching in Thessalonica—the power of the gospel. There's nothing that confirms to a preacher the power of the word of God more than to see then effectiveness of the word of God in the people to whom you preach.

To my mind, it's a very humbling thing to be here in front of you, sharing with you the word of God. As I speak, I am being made aware of the fact that I myself, of myself, have nothing to give you. I've got nothing to offer you. I am in no way different to you, in terms of the sin into which we were born, and the sinfulness of our natural human nature, and I have no wisdom to give you that has come from anyone but God Himself—or I should say, I have no wisdom to give you apart from that which has come from God Himself. And so being aware, and being

made aware of my own inadequacies, when I see the fruit of the word of God in your midst, all I can do is thank God. The one that I give the glory to is God.

Whilst Paul may, for example, say to the Corinthians in Second Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 2 that the Corinthians are his letter of reference, so to speak, his letter of commendation, Paul says to the Corinthians, “I don’t need a letter of commendation. If I look at you, you are the letter of commendation. The things that God is doing amongst you are the things that prove that I, indeed, am a servant of God.” Yet he says, “I don’t need the letter.” All he needs to do is see the fruit of the work that he is doing.

Paul is thankful to God for them. “We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly.” We give thanks to God always for all of you. Notice that that thankfulness is immediately tied to prayer—“constantly mentioning you in our prayers.”

As I pondered this during the week, I had to ask the question, Just how much is your prayer life based upon thankfulness? How much thankfulness do we have and do we know? How much thanksgiving do we make before God our Father for every single good thing that we know? Are you saved? Do you give thanks to God for it? Do the Scriptures feed you? Do you give thanks to God for that? Do you have loving relationships in your lives, whether it’s family, whether it’s friendship, whether it’s the fellowship of a church? Do you give thanks to God for that?

Are we thankful, as we ought to be? Or are we inclined to somehow or other think that perhaps these good things come to us because we deserve them, because we’ve earned them? Somehow or other, I can’t help but think that people who are not thankful are people who do not pray. People who are not thankful are people who do not know God.

To people who draw on the good things around them, and see those good things around them as something that builds themselves up, something that adds to their own glory, God is not big enough in their lives. God has not taken a big enough portion of their love. God has not taken a big enough portion of their thoughts. And that’s not God’s fault, that’s their fault. That’s our fault. That’s our selfishness. That’s us, doing wrong.

In Philippians—turn to the book of Philippians chapter 4. Let’s read verses 4 to 7, Paul speaking to the Philippians. “⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Notice that Paul wants them not to worry about anything. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known to God.” “With thanksgiving.” All the good that we have we ought to be thankful for. We’re saved by grace. It’s a gift of God.

Paul is actually thanking God that from these Thessalonian Christians, he can see faith, love, and hope. He is thanking God for faith, love, and hope, which he sees in the hearts of the people around him. Paul is not giving the glory to man, he's giving glory to God. But even as he gives glory to God, he confirms that in the Thessalonians, he's pleased with them.

It's kind of a backhanded way of praising them, in a way. In a way, he's saying to them, "You know that I'm very happy with you. You know that you bring great joy to me. You bring great joy to me because I am so thankful to God for you." So he's kind of saying to them, "You're a gift from God. You are a gift from God, and for that I am thankful."

Turn to the book of Romans, in chapter 1. We're going to start reading from verse 18. Paul is speaking in Romans chapter 1 about those who are not under the grace of God, but are under the judgment of God. Romans 1, from verse 18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened." People who are under the wrath of God are people who do not give honor or thanks to God.

So immediately, here in verse 2, we're forced to consider the concept of thankfulness. I'm sure all of us do give God glory from time to time, but the question must be asked, Are we thankful as we should be? Are we thankful as we should be? Whatever we have that is good, we have because God has given it to us. If God had not given it to us, we would not have it. Are we thankful as we should be?

Thankfulness is inspiring prayer. Thankfulness is leading Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy into prayer. "We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers." God gets the glory for the goodness that is found in the church of the Thessalonians.

Moving on into verse 3, then—I've already mentioned, but we will keep talking about this—verse 3 speaks of prayer. First Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 3. "Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."

So the next point I just wanted to look briefly at is this point, prayer. Thankfulness inspires prayer. Conversion should make a Christian a praying person, prayer should be a feature of our lives. And look at how Paul describes prayer: "remembering before our God and Father." Remembering before our God and Father. That could read, "Remembering in the presence of God the Father." Remembering in the presence. Remembering.

Isn't it funny, whenever you start to think about prayer and try to, let's say, rationalize in a human way the act of prayer, you almost always end up asking questions. God knows all things; God does all things; God will do whatever God pleases to do. Why am I asking God to do something? You see the problem. We don't change God. God is unchanging. God's plan is set in all of eternity. God Himself cannot be changed by us. But God requires of us prayer. We're required to ask. There are things that we are supposed to remember before, or in the presence of, our God and Father. We're supposed to speak to Him. Why? What would be the point of this?

Well one, it's an act of submission. It flows from thankfulness. If you're thanking God for something, you're acknowledging that things come from God. And so it's placing our heart in the state that it ought to be in. For our benefit, we speak to God. We remember before God the things that God has given. And we remember before God the things that we hope that God will give. We're not actually asking God to change His plan. We're not actually asking God to cease being God and to release His control of the universe to us when we pray, even when we pray for particular things to happen.

True prayer is asking God to do what He has said He will do. True prayer is asking in accordance with the will of God. It's obvious that God's will for us is that we remember, in His presence, all of those whom we know and whom we love. We are to remember, in His presence, our church, our families, our fellow Christians. We are to remember these things before our God and Father. Why? Because He is our God and Father. It's His will that we remember these things. In acting in obedience to His will, that is a means by which He is accomplishing His will.

Our prayer lives are poor and feeble. I'm sure you feel the same way I do. When you hear people start talking about prayer, this vague feeling of guilt settles upon your shoulders. It certainly settles upon mine. I can't help but feel I ought to pray more, I ought to pray with more fervor, I ought to pray with more understanding, and that one of the reasons that the church in Australia does not grow is that we who are the Christians of Australia do not pray—or at least pray as we ought. It seems Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy are people of prayer, and as they are setting the example for us, we ourselves should be modeling ourselves upon them, and we too should be people of prayer.

It says Paul constantly mentions them in his prayers. I'm not sure that he's describing a state of mind whereby he can do nothing else but pray. I'm pretty certain that he's not saying that he spends twenty-four/seven on his knees, although I'm sure that at times he prayed on his knees. The Jewish man usually prayed standing. A formal prayer said by a Jewish man was usually said standing with hands raised. That may well have been the way that Paul still prayed. But I think what he's saying is that every time they came to mind, he prayed for them; that every time he remembered them, he remembered them in the presence of God.

Our prayers are feeble. It feels as though our prayers are faithless. We feel dry. We feel we're not what we ought to be. Or perhaps we should go back to where Paul started at verse 2, and

start with thanksgiving. Maybe that would help us to continue remembering before God the things that He wants us to remember.

“Remember before our God and Father,” let’s continue moving on in verse 3, “your work of faith.” Now notice here, we have faith, love, and hope. And as I’ve already said to you this morning, these things are three of the great signal indicators of true Christian life in the life of a Christian. Again and again and again, in the letters of Paul we find in any given order—it could be faith, love, hope; love, hope, faith, etc., etc., etc. Faith, love hope. What I want you to notice first of all is that these things are not vague emotions, or vague moods. They’re not just a certain happy frame of mind. Notice that faith is a work: “Your work of faith.” Notice that love is labor: “Your labor of love.” Notice that hope is determined: “Your steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” These things are actually things that result in action, in doing.

Faith. Paul gives thanks for their faith. Why? Well, for example in Ephesians 2:8, or in Philippians 1:29, Paul tells us that faith is a gift. Faith is something that’s granted by God. Paul gives thanks for their faith, and notice that faith that they are doing, it’s work. “For the work of faith.” All right. We preach here that a person is saved by faith apart from works. Why does this passage speak of the “*work* of faith”? Well, Paul’s not talking about them being saved, is he? He’s not actually talking about how they became Christians. He’s not actually talking about how they accepted or received Christ. These people are Christians. He’s talking to them about their ongoing Christian walk. The faith that saved them was faith—they were not saved by faith.

But as it is often said, saving faith is never alone. Saving faith is accompanied by work. It’s accompanied by a certain amount of doing. If you have this true faith, it’s a transforming faith. Psalm 32: “Blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit is no deceit.” No deceit in spirit. David’s not just speaking of the fact that the person has been forgiven their sins. He’s speaking of the fact that they have been changed. In their spirit there is no deceit. They are doing something differently.

We’ll get there in a moment, but if you want to turn in your Bibles to the book of James in chapter 2. Faith that is not accompanied by a transformation of life, by a transformation of the things that we do, is no true faith. It’s not true faith. Faith is not simply just knowing who Jesus is. Faith is not simply just knowing a few verses of Scripture and saying, Yes, I agree with them. Faith is not just simply repeating a prayer. Now I’m not saying that repeating prayers is always false or a bad thing. But there’s more to it than simply just having an idea in your head. Faith is something that transforms. There is such a thing as false faith. False faith is a fruitless faith.

James chapter 2. Let’s read James chapter 2 from verse 14: “What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?” The answer’s obviously, No. That faith that has not transformed the person is not saving faith. That faith that has not changed the things that a person does is not saving faith.

James is not saying that a person is saved by faith. He's not actually dealing here with the subject of soteriology, which is the theological description, or descriptor, of salvation. He's dealing here with Christian life in an ongoing sense. What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? The faith that James is speaking of here is obviously nothing other than a surface-level idea or knowledge that's nothing other than knowing something.

In this case, it would appear that at least those to whom James is writing know that Jesus is Lord. They know that Jesus is Messiah. But that knowing is not faith. It's not sufficient. It's foundational knowledge. No one can be saved apart from knowing those things. You have to know those things if you are to be a Christian. You must know those things, but just knowing them in and of itself is not transforming. Our life must be transformed by the things that we say we believe. Faith expressed is not simply an idea. It's not just words. It's not just something spoken. It's something that's done, it's something that works—"Remembering before our God and Father your work." The word is *ergon*. For example, they talk about car design, ergonomic car design, meaning "efficient," it works well, it's well laid-out—"your work of faith."

My friends, once again, passages like this invite us to examine ourselves. What are we doing? What are we actually doing? What is being transformed in our lives—not only what do we do, but what don't we do? What is the actual fruit of faith in our lives?

If James comes to you one day and says, "You say you have faith, but what are your works," what would we have to say? What would we have to say? Can we talk about how things have changed—the things that we do? Not that we're to become list-keepers, legalists, and nasty little fools. There's plenty of them around. They don't help at all. We don't want to know them, to be honest. But we must have in our lives the evidence of the things that God has done in our lives. If our faith is true faith, our true faith is accompanied by works that come from faith. Our faith is accompanied by works that are the fruit of that faith. That faith has us doing something.

Paul goes on, the next part of verse 3, "and labor of love." Notice the intensification. Your *labor* of love. The word is *kopos*. What does it mean? It's cost you something. You do a work of faith and you do a labor of love. Your love costs you something. You've expended yourself in some way. You've actually poured something out. You've given something.

Again, this is not the love that is simply the love of words. You know, there is this tendency in the church to talk about love, and it's this kind of floating, ethereal emotion. You know, "I just have such love." You hear it all the time. Paul here says that it causes us to expend ourselves, to labor, to work. When it's finished, we're tired. The whole thing has been intensified.

Faith works, love labors, says Paul. And Paul thanks God. Remember, he's thanking God that in the Thessalonian church the people labor in love. They make effort. They expend themselves. What does that look like? I think it looks like a church where people are willing to serve. Later on in the letter, Paul gives us some more details. They labor in love.

Then in the next part of the verse, he speaks of their “steadfastness of hope,” and we need to think about that. Hope. Now today when we talk about hope, in our present day and age, hope is, I would call it, an unlikely good. When we say we hope for something, we say that we want some good to happen, we hope it does happen, but we’ve got absolutely no reason to be certain that it will happen. “I hope that a member of my family would win Lotto.” That’s the way we use it today. “And then they’ll remember me, and pass me some money. I hope. It’s not likely, but, gee, you can’t help but dream and imagine that life might be a little bit different.” I hope. That’s not what Paul’s getting at. It’s tied to the expectation, or certainty of something that is coming. It’s not: If all goes well, the day will come; but it’s: The day *will* come; therefore, I hope and wait.

The Thessalonians have a hope in our Lord Jesus Christ that is certain. What would it be? Well, both of the letters to the Thessalonians speak of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the day when all evil is put in its place. They hope for the revelation of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. They hope for the final act of salvation, which is God separating the sheep from the goats; which is God, through Christ, judging the wickedness and the evil of this world; which is God bringing to an end this present evil age—whenever that might be. They have a certainty of hope.

And Paul says they have a “steadfastness of hope.” Steadfastness. The word’s *hypermenos*. Now the word *menos*, the second part of the word, simply means to stay—to stay in the one place, to stay on something, or in something.

Think of the word *hyper*. In our modern language, it comes to us as hyper. You’ve got a supermarket, you’ve got a hypermarket. Hyper. What do we think of when we think of hyper? It’s bigger, it’s better, there’s more effort being put into it. If we say that someone is hyped up, we’re saying that that someone is really running on all eight cylinders and putting maximum effort into whatever it is they’re doing.

Well Paul here is saying that these people have a hyper attitude towards remaining in hope. They have set themselves with hyper-determination upon the idea that the good of the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ is coming to them. They’re utterly determined to stay in Christ.

There’s a doctrine called “the perseverance of the saints.” What does it mean? It means that God will not allow His people to fall or fail. He may allow us to stumble, for purposes of His own glory and our discipline. Sometimes you need to stumble to learn to stand. But He won’t let you fall away. He won’t let you be lost. He will take you through to the very end and to the accomplishment of His purposes in you. That’s the perseverance of the saints.

God perseveres with us, but here’s the thing, my friends. If God is persevering with us, what would you expect to find in us? If God is persevering in us, with us, through us, we then should be persevering. We should be persevering people. We should be certain, or set in our gospel hope, certain of the good things that are coming our way.

Our motivation for going on in our Christian life is what? The absolute certainty of our eternal life in the presence of God, the absolute certainty of the fact that God will judge good and evil. God will make a difference. God will separate the sheep from the goats. This is an absolute certainty, my friends.

We live in a world that to us looks like it's filled with darkness at this time. We see the wickedness of the world around us, we see people doing crazy, self-destructive things, we see people in places of government, people in places of moral responsibility, calling good "evil," and evil "good," decreeing iniquitous decrees.

And Christian, it's very easy to get discouraged—very easy to get discouraged in this environment. The more you listen to that kind of news, the more discouraged you can become. You feel like there's no stopping it. How do you stop it? You know, it's like a steam roller, rolling down a hill. How do you stop it?

Understand something. If there's a steamroller rolling down a hill, it's according to the ordained will of God. Understand something. All of these things are happening according to the will of God, for the purpose of revealing the glory of God. He will reveal His glory in judging evil and wickedness. He's also revealing His glory in that He has a people who have been set aside in Christ Jesus, and those people who have been set aside in Christ Jesus are Christ-like. They are godly. They are what He wants humanity to be.

That little argument at the start of the book of Job—have that in your mind. That's part of what's happening in our world today. What's the little argument? Remember Satan follows the angels into the presence of God. He stands in the presence of God and says, "I've just been walking all over the world—all over the world." And God says, "And what did you find?" Well, the implication is everything was just according to the way the Devil wanted it—wickedness, idolatry, all forms of sin. And God says, "Ah, yeah, but have you seen my servant Job? He shuns evil. He serves me." And the argument starts up. "He only shuns evil and serves you because you bless him. He's not really a good man."

The argument still goes on today, my friends. It's an argument that has been won. Jesus won the argument by going to the cross, by displaying perfect, sanctified humanity—perfect obedience to the will of God, perfect obedience to God's desire that sinful humanity be punished for its wickedness. Jesus submitted to the will of God His Father. And in submitting to the will of God His Father, He opened the door to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He opened the door to the outpouring of God's grace. He opened the door to people being called to salvation.

So the argument has been won. God's victorious argument now is, to the Devil, "You're doing what you will with those who are yours; but in this world, the evidence of my authority is that I have my people in this world, and they are doing according to my will. And you will find them in my church. And they are proclaiming my gospel. And their lives have been transformed.

They are not your servants, and they will never be your servants, for they are my servants, through Jesus Christ, My Son.”

Our hope, our absolutely rock-solid, certain hope is that this will be declared in such a way that all of creation will bow the knee and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, that all of creation will acknowledge that God is righteous in His judgments. Even the wicked will know and declare the goodness of God. Even as they make that declaration, they are actually declaring their own condemnation, because they refused to submit to the revealed righteousness of God and be thankful. And that’s our hope. That’s our hope, my friends.

Jesus did tell us that we have to be willing to part with everything in this world, that we have to be willing to let go of all of our hopes in this world, and have no other hope, other than that which is to be found in Him. He did tell us that we have to take up a cross and follow after Him. And at various time throughout the ages, various Christians and churches have been tested to one degree or another. Sometimes the testing has been very, very hard. Yet God upheld His people in that testing.

Sometimes the church has appeared to be victorious. It appears in our lives and in the society in which we live, testing times are once again to come. But do not be without hope. God is greater, far greater, immeasurably greater, than the forces that are against us. God is immeasurably greater and more powerful than the wickedness that we see in the world around us. Wickedness is a parasite. Evil is a parasite. You must always remember this. Whenever you see evil in the world, it can’t exist apart from the fact that God has said what is good. Evil can’t exist apart from the fact that God has said, There is good. And God has defined that which is good. For evil is a rebellion. It’s a rebellion against the goodness of God.

God must win. He has already won. We’re proclaiming, in a way, His victory. Every time you say to someone, “Put your trust in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, and you will be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of eternal life,” you’re actually proclaiming God’s victory. You’re proclaiming this certainty of hope, this steadfastness of hope we have in our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you listen to the news, it should be causing you to pray. And you should be praying with thanksgiving, and you should be remembering the faith and the love and the hope of the people of God. I don’t like to see evil happening in the world, I don’t like to see evil people being victorious, I don’t like to see them boasting of the wickedness that they can do, and I don’t like to see them destroying other people. That can be very, very discouraging.

But if our eyes are truly on Christ, if our eyes are truly on God, and if our hearts are truly set upon the works of God, my friends, we will always have hope, and we will always persevere. It’s worth doing. It’s worth doing. You know, this life, this seventy to eighty years that we get given on this world, it’s a pinhead compared to eternity. It’s a pinhead.

You know, they talk about philosophers arguing about angels dancing on pinheads. Well I'm going to tell you that most people in this life upon this earth are trying to dance on a pinhead, and claim it for their own. They're trying to say, "I have possession of the pinhead! I'm the king of the pinhead!" And God, who is eternal and infinite, is just laughing. He's just laughing. "I gave you seventy years, and then you're going to come and face me. And I judge from eternity, and I judge for eternity." It's just a pinhead of time. It's nothing. It's absolutely nothing. Our hope should be set upon Christ.

Let's move on, the last little point that I want to draw out of it. Notice now, we need to look back to verse 1, "To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." And we talked last week about the fact that the location of the lives of these people is in the very essence of God: "*In* God the Father *and* the Lord Jesus Christ." And we talked about the oneness between the Father and the Son: That to be in the Son, to be in the Lord Jesus Christ, is to be in God.

Well now, Paul speaks, looking back at verse 3, "Remembering before our God and Father," so now he's praying to God the Father, "your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." So now we're getting into what's often called the works of the "economic" Trinity.

The economic Trinity. What does that mean? Who's doing what? Our relationship to God is a trinitarian relationship—God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, all working to bring about our complete and full salvation, and the revealing of the glory of God. Who's doing what?

Well, we find the steadfastness of our hope—we find the transforming power *in* the Lord Jesus Christ. God has revealed Himself to us through the Son, through His only begotten Son. God has revealed Himself to us through Jesus Christ. The Father did not die on the cross. The Son of God died upon the cross. The Father was not resurrected from the grave. The Son of God was resurrected from the grave.

Our salvation is found in Christ. Though God the Father and God the Son be one—and as we move further into the letter of First Thessalonians, we'll find Paul also teaching concerning the Holy Spirit—though they be one, and though all of their works can be said to be done by the whole Godhead because they are one, yet we ourselves relate to God, we worship God, our life with God is to be found in Christ.

We are in Christ. Our life is hidden in Christ. Christ has been crucified; we are counted as having been crucified; Christ has paid the price for our sins; we are counted as having paid the price for our sins. Christ has been resurrected to life; we are counted as being resurrected in Christ, already. Though yet we will die, yet we already have eternal life. The new creation that we so long for is already here and to be found in us, because we are in Christ. All of these things are to be found in Christ.

So let's just try and wrap it all up, and remind us of the application that has been made so far. We are to be a thankful people, a people of prayer, constantly giving the glory to God, because that's where the glory belongs.

If you know a person, if you meet a person, if you know of a church, that is doing well, do not make the mistake of giving glory to man. Do not make the mistake of giving glory to a particular preacher or pastor. If God is using them, that is great. If God is doing good works through them, that is wonderful. But it's God who's doing the work. If Christians are growing, that is great.

If you know a Christian who is growing and being transformed, that is wonderful. But God gets the glory. If a Christian is working, doing the works of faith, that is great. But we work because God is working. If a Christian is loving, that is great. But we love because God has transformed us and given us the gift of love. If a Christian is steadfast in hope, if they're persevering, that is great. But it's God who's persevering with them and in them, God persevering in us making us persevere. How? By confirming us in our relationship with Himself, through Jesus Christ our Lord. All of our relationship with God comes to us through the Son of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ. And He is to be glorified in all of these things.

And so, as we close—and I'll just simply say, my friends, our lives should be lives that are marked by thankfulness, faith, love, and hope. And the evidence that these things are there is not just that we can say the words. The evidence that these things are there is in the things that we do: thankfulness, praise; faith works; love labors; and hope is steadfast, it perseveres. Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, we do indeed give you thanks for the work that you do through Jesus Christ our Lord. We thank you that you have given us life by the power of your Holy Spirit, that we may obey you. We pray, Father, that we indeed would be a thankful people, always giving you the glory, and that in our lives, there would be the evidence of faith, hope, and love. Father, we ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.