

# A Good Report

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[ 0 : 00 ] through to verse 13. 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, starting at verse 6, it's on page 1187.

Let's hear God's word. But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love.

He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us just as we also long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith.

For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.

[ 1 : 16 ] May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

Daniel. Daniel. Thank you. I'm going to pray for you.

Let's pray for Daniel and for us. Father, again we thank you so much for people that you bring to us and people that you gift, enabling them to handle your word and to be able to speak it.

And we thank you for Daniel and pray for him that you would empower him and fill him with your Holy Spirit. That he may be able to speak to us with clarity and passion the truth of your word.

And that for us as we listen that we would be hearing your words and that they would change us and transform us. Changing us into the church that you would have us to be.

[ 2 : 39 ] And transforming us as people to be more like you. So we pray your blessing on us all. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Amen. Thanks man. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Helps if you have the right PowerPoint and such.

Good morning. I want to say thanks very much for the privilege of coming this morning. Sorry, no. Do you want a little adjustments? I have knocked these things over in the past so I don't want to do it halfway through.

[ 3 : 38 ] I'm not going to start hitting it or anything. It's just to get the distractions out of the way now rather than in 10 minutes.

Okay. Okay. So again, thanks for the invitation and the opportunity to come this morning. Just for those who are interested in these things, the three girls who are with us this morning, two of the girls are our daughters, Evie and Emily, the younger two.

The taller girl is actually my niece. Many people think we have three daughters because they look so similar. My niece is Jasmine. And they love coming.

They're actually getting quite into the summer months of going around visiting all the other churches. And we'll get a full report of when we go back what creche was actually like. So... I'm going to pray.

I know Johnny's prayed. I always feel we can never pray enough. Father, I do thank you for this time this morning. It is a privilege to be involved in your service, Lord.

[ 4 : 56 ] You gave us the greatest example of service, Lord. For how you gave up heaven to come to us. How you walked with us.

How you washed your disciples' feet. And how you went on the cross. And suffered and bled and died for our sins. And rose again and opened the way to heaven. Help us to do everything in our lives in the light of who you are.

Guide us this morning, Father. Lord Jesus. Lord Holy Spirit. Show us the way. Amen. Well, I know that as a church you've been looking at the message of 1 Thessalonians for a number of weeks. So I have an introduction that if I see them I'm going quite quickly, I will start to really slow down. So it's a quick introduction to recap a little bit and try and see where we've got to.

Now I know that Ralph gave you a reminder. A reminder to welcome the trustworthy message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He laid out for us the picture of the church. The believers as a chosen people.

[ 5 : 59 ] And it's God who calls us. And it's not only God. It's not only that he calls us. But the call is based on his son leaving heaven to come into a broken world to rescue and deliver us from the coming wrath.

And it's just like an echo of so many other verses in Romans 6.23. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus. Or Colossians 1.13 and 14.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son Helos, where we have redemption and forgiveness of sins. Because our position is based completely on the work of Christ.

And Ralph reminded us that the message at the time was turning the world upside down. That the Christian gospel was turning the world upside down. And the question was, how do we live in light of that?

And maybe it should be turning our personal world upside down. And turning the world around us upside down as well. And then Kevin came and he talked about our motives.

[ 7 : 03 ] And he reminded that our motives should be to live to please God. To examine ourselves carefully and make sure that our motives are kept in balance at all times. For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives.

Nor are we trying to trick you. On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people, but God who tests our heart.

And that applies in life and in ministry and all our Christian living. That our motives are to please God. And then to remember that we are to labour. To work always with right motives.

And then Tom came and he talked about great expectations. What a wonderful title. Great Expectations. And he reminded us that great expectations can be easily dashed.

But that our expectations have to be based on the good news of the gospel. And we also thank God continually. Because when you received the word of God which you heard from us.

[ 8 : 08 ] You accepted it not as a human word, but as it actually is. The word of God which is indeed at work in you who believe. So we have to rely on God's work at work with the Holy Spirit.

Because it's a living word. And even though they suffered and they knew trials, that's exactly what they did. They trusted God's word. And Tom challenged us to be different.

And he challenged us to be prepared to suffer. And to be careful and cautious when we are in a difficult time. And in the struggle. And not to be so sure about trusting our feelings.

Because our feelings can trick us. Not to switch off our feelings. Not to switch off our emotions. Our emotions are a beautiful gift from God. The full range of emotions that we've been given by God are a gift to us.

How we enjoy life. How we share time with each other. How we enjoy his nature, his beauty. How we enjoy God himself. How we love God. They all come from our emotions. But not to always trust our emotions.

[ 9 : 14 ] Because in difficult times, they can trick us. And we can let circumstances overcome us. So we have to trust God in all circumstances for the outcome.

And then last week, Alex was giving a message. Reminding us. And you notice I keep saying us. Even though I wasn't here. Because as you might have figured out, I've listened to those messages.

Reminding us. And at that point, I'll remind you that those messages are still on the website. And there are good messages on the website. So if you did miss them, go back and listen to them.

It will encourage you. So Alex reminded us that to be strengthened and encouraged in the faith. Especially in those times of trial. But in many ways, that every day is a time of trial.

As the tempter, as Satan or enemy, seeks to lead us astray. We will face trials. Alex reminded us that we need to encourage and remind each other of the truth.

[ 10 : 21 ] That we may be strengthened. And that our focus, just like Paul and Timothy in silence, would never be removed from the spread of the gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ.

He encouraged us, every one of us, to live together in full Christian fellowship. Bringing the guiding truth of the living word and the power of God's living word. The gospel. Into our lives. And when I was listening to those messages and preparing, it reminded me of something that I came across a while ago in a daily devotional from Spurgeon. And he said, The love which the early Christians felt towards the Lord was not a quiet emotion which they hid within themselves in the secret chambers of their souls. And which they only spoke of when they met on the first day of the week. And sang hymns in honor of Christ Jesus the crucified. But it was a passion with them of such vehement and all-consuming energy that it was visible in their actions, spoke in their commonest talk, and looked out of their eyes even in their commonest glances.

[ 11 : 33 ] Love to Jesus was a flame which fed upon the core and heart of their being, and therefore, from its own force, burned its way into the outer man and shone there.

So that's a quick recap that's brought us to where we are today. And I hope I've been faithful to what the other guys were trying to bring you. And I believe that I have.

And today we're at 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verses 6 down to 13. So we're going to read them again. But Timothy has just now come to us from you.

And has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.

Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.

[ 12 : 37 ] How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

So let's take a look at these verses before we begin to apply them to ourselves. But Timothy has just now come to us from you and brought us good news about your faith and sight.

Paul is happy. Put simply, he's happy with the report that has come back. Because he's concerned. He was concerned that they might have been led astray.

[ 13 : 43 ] And Paul, as a Jew, probably had good reason to fear. Because he knew the history of his own people. They had been repeatedly called by God and repeatedly turned and gone their own way.

Whether it was in the desert after coming up out of Egypt. Or whether it was their refusal to take the land when they were told to take the land. Or in the time of the whole period of the judges.

When they repeatedly rejected their God and turned to idols. Paul knew the history of his own people. And he knew how the devil, how Satan, the tempter, can get in and destroy the work.

So he had good reason and good experience to know. But he got a good report. And he was happy to hear about their faith and love.

And he got a good account as well of their attitude towards themselves. Their attitude towards Paul and Timothy and Silas. They had pleasant memories. And they were anxious to see them.

[ 14 : 48 ] It's a good report. I'm repeating that, aren't I? There's a reason. It's a good report. And he says to them, Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith.

Well, the outcome for him, for them, for Paul, for Timothy and Silas, was that in their struggles, the steadfast faith of the Thessalonians had encouraged them, had buoyed them up, had bolstered them in their position, and his joy outflows from that into verse 8.

For now we really live. We really live since you are standing firm on the Lord. And how can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?

Paul is so grateful, so thankful, even though they've had huge difficulty. And Paul's taken the time to remind them that they've been in difficulty themselves.

He doesn't focus on it. He doesn't make it the main factor of his communication. He is happy to leave it behind and focus on the joy that they all have together in the presence of God, in their

heavenly reward, because of their steadfast holding to the faith.

[16:06] Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. You're ceaseless, never-ending, never-stopping prayer. Even though Paul and Silas and Timothy have been involved in fostering their growth and have brought the word to them and have prayed with them and care for them, he's saying to them, we still haven't stopped.

We continue night and day to pray that we may spend time with you again and help you where you are, help you where you are struggling, with you to help you make up the things that are missing in your life of faith.

And come into verse 11, where he says, Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.

Paul's reliance on God. Even though it is his desire to get there, to be there to help them, he's clearly saying that he cannot do it, they cannot do it, unless God clears the way.

He's committing the journey to the Lord. Don't start the journey unless you commit it to the Lord. I don't know Peter and I don't know Maeve, but they are starting their journey.

[17:22] That struck me this morning. They came up here and with you, they are committing their journey to the Lord. And in verse 12, and you know, I keep thinking when I come to verses like these, we are told in so many places, in so many ways, how can you understand the Bible?

You know, the Bible is so hard to understand. And this verse, verse 12, is one of those very, very tricky, complicated, oh, very, very difficult verses to understand.

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as our does few. Hands up if you don't understand that verse. It's not that complicated really, is it?

But it's a prayer. It's not a castaway statement. May the Lord, again, that reliance on the Lord, Paul is saying to them, reminding them that your reliance is on the Lord, which will make your love increase and overflow.

Just as his does, as Timothy does, as Silas does. And verse 13, may he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of God, our Father, when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

[18:43] And he's saying to them there, and if you look at the beginning of the sentence, may he, because of the way we speak English, may he has a little bit of a, oh, he could like, you know, he could, it's possible, but it's more definite than that.

That sentence is more definite than that. It could easily be translated, so as, to establish. If you look at different translations, you'll even see they use the word establish.

But what he's saying to them is, that you would be set up firmly, that you would be so solid in your heart and faith foundation, that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our Lord.

And he is talking about the sure completion of the work. We talked about it already this morning, talking about the sure completion of the work that was begun, and it's in the same spirit as Philippians 1, verse 6.

God, who began a good work in them, will bring it to completion. It's the same spirit as in Colossians 3, verse 4, when it says, when Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

[19:55] It's about the completion of the work that had begun, and it's not just about their daily walk, and their daily sanctification. It's about the completion of the race.

Running the race well. When Johnny started talking this morning, I thought, oh, do I need to go home? Is he going to actually give my whole message? But I think we're okay.

It's about the holding fast, and running of the race well, and the perfect completion of God's work. When we come into glory with Jesus, and he is saying, as we've been reminded, keep your eyes focused, the Lord is coming back, and he goes on to talk more about this later in his letters, but that's where we come to today.

He's saying to them, be set up towards the goal, the goal that is set for you. So that's what he's been saying to the Thessalonians, a quick rundown through. So what's he been saying to us? Well, we have time to do so much. There is so much in these verses, you could come back to them time and time again.

[21:09] And as I was praying, and reading through these verses, this is the way it came to me to work through it this morning. There is a view to what's coming. There is a view to the glorious heaven. There is a view to what the completed work is.

When we leave this realm, we leave this earth and we go to heaven. And we are reminded in so many places that we are to have our hearts and minds set on heavenly goals.

But this morning, I want to talk about what I see in these verses that bring us along that path, along that journey. In verse 6, there was a good account.

Well then surely, as Paul got a good account back, we surely have to ask, if somebody came to bring an account of us back to the first people who brought us the word of God, what would their account be?

For me, the Lord led me to Lee Valley Bible Church in Ballin College where I go now. And, through God's grace, people opened the word to me.

[ 22 : 10 ] And very quickly I realised I was born again. And I went on. But there was people there who spent time with me, teaching me, fellowshiping with me, praying with me, and praying for me. Who brought me deeper into a relationship with Jesus, with the work of the Holy Spirit.

So what would the report be of me now back to those people? What would the report be of you back to the person, to the people who first shepherded you in the way of Christ?

Would their joy be the same as Paul's? As I woke this morning, I thought, don't use an Olympics example.

Don't use an Olympics illustration, but I can't help it. It's one of my favourite illustrations. When we talk about this, what would the report be back? I don't want anybody to get into a frame of mind where something's gone wrong this week or this period in your life and you feel down and you feel low and you feel that I'm setting a target that's so high for you that you can't reach and that you feel like I'm taking out a stick to beat you with.

I just want you to think. What would the report be? And like the high jumper, I think I used this example here before. I use it a lot, maybe because I did a little bit of high jump in school.

[ 23 : 31 ] But you don't set the bar down low and go, yeah, look, I got that. One metre ten. A high jumper wants to set it. You're going for the high jump.

We're trying to reach high. But the great thing about the high jump in the Olympics is if you do miss it, there's a great big mat to catch you on the other side.

When you're examining yourself, do not let the devil drive you down with self-examination. Let the report be good. If you see something working it, the mat to catch you are the loving outstretched arms of Jesus Christ.

But would the report say that your faith has deepened since those first days? Are we striving in prayer and study of the word and in meditation of the word and calling on God to have our faith grow in love and not just love for each other, so often when we encounter that word and the word love, people start talking about the love we have for each other.

But we have to think about the love we have for the Lord. Are we in love with the Lord? When you first came to the Lord, did it consume you?

[ 24 : 47 ] Does that love still consume you? Are you growing steadily and strengthening that love constantly in faith and love? It says. And I almost want to find the word hope here.

But Paul has hoped. He has hoped for a good report and that he has hoped that their faith would hold fast based on the gospel. So we have faith with hope and love and we have to live in the light of that hope.

And that hope is stored up for us in heaven which is the love of Christ shown for us in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ shown for us in nail-pierced hands and feet shown for us by the stripes on him by which we are healed.

So could we strive that there would be a good report of us a good report of us as faithful servants and not that it would just be a good report of what a great character we are.

You know like something you know you get Josephine Sofa she's great crack. She's great in the night out. Or Joseph oh do you know what now if you need your wall fixed or you need the place cleaned Joe's the man to go for.

[ 26 : 00 ] They're great to have that character. But a report that says you love the Lord Jesus Christ above all else.

That you serve God the Father. That you seek the Holy Spirit and his way. And that it is all that you are and all that we are and all that we live and is clearly visible in our lives.

Do we value reports like this? Do we value that that's what we think of other people and that's what we should put first when we want to think about them? And that's what we should put first in the

idea of ourselves when we want people to think about us so that we have pleasant memories of people.

It breaks my heart and I don't say this lightly. It breaks my heart the number of times I have had it said to me when I mention somebody's name and the response goes along oh yeah yeah you know but they're always bringing everything back to the Bible or they're always trying to spiritualize everything or talk about spiritual things.

It breaks my heart when that's the response. To me that's the greatest report that could be made about someone. If that's what somebody was saying about me I'd have to tell you I would be pleased.

[ 27 : 21 ] I don't know any of you here maybe that is not a problem here but it is one I have encountered. But if it is a problem we need to do something about ourselves if our memories of people are tainted by the fact that they're spiritual and properly spiritual.

If we truly have faith and love growing and love for the Lord feeding out into a love that we have for everybody else then surely our memories will be pleasant of our brothers and sisters because we will remember that we are sinners saved by grace and we have the same grace poured out on us and the same mercy given to us and just like everybody else that not one of us is perfect.

Not one of us got in here clean this morning. we are all sinners and if we would keep that in mind and take the time to look to look in love at everyone around us and you know the expression to look through rose tinted glasses could we look at people with righteousness tinted glasses not self-righteousness certainly not our own self-righteousness but the righteousness that they are clothed in by the completed work of Jesus the righteousness that God sees covering each other because of what Jesus has done so that we will see that and we will take pleasure in each other's company and miss each other and long to see each other like they did.

Maybe that leads us naturally into verse 7 where he says therefore brothers in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith in all their distress and persecution they were tied up and I don't mean tied up in what most of us call being tied up today like with you know I'm so tied up with my schedule it wasn't just a hectic life that kept them busy they were in real real trouble and they're letting the Thessalonians know that they were in real trouble and in that trouble what encouraged them the steadfast faith of those in Thessalonica they were uplifted and the other thing that I see is remarkable in this and again maybe you have this figured out and you have taken me aside afterwards and speak to me more severely Paul was in serious trouble when he wrote this letter but where is his focus his focus is on faith and love and his focus is on seeing them his focus in his trouble is on the gospel his focus is on his love for them he's not wallowing in self pity he's not getting so wrapped up in his own concerns that he's forgetting about them so I believe there is a reminder for us here to not get lost in our struggles it is so easy for us to feel depressed it is so easy for us to feel troubled and I don't think that where we live today we're persecuted much not in the way these guys were persecuted we can have difficulties in our families we can if you're very vocal about your faith where you work you certainly can have difficulties but in the kind of persecution where you're taken from your home without warning you're beaten you're arrested you're put in prison you're executed we don't have those kind of struggles but we do have life struggles but don't get lost in the struggles is a message to us here there are other people around us and we are building lives based on the gospel in faith hope and love as Alex said look around be encouraged and be encouraged helping each other to grow in that faith as we hold these things important and keep a focus on what is right the things that people do in service of the Lord will encourage us in our difficulties and as we serve we'll encourage people and we'll keep moving forward so that's just two things have a good account that people would have a good account of us and that we wouldn't get lost in the struggle the third thing

I want to move on to this morning is he tells them now we really live since you are standing firm in the struggle there will always be a temptation to quit my wife will tell you this is one of my biggest struggles when things start to go wrong the temptation to quit comes down on top of me the devil knows where my weakness is on this I come from a long line of quitters it is ingrained into me and I struggle with this but this has encouraged me so much everybody's going to have different areas fight the temptation to quit in whatever it is don't quit loving don't quit hoping don't quit looking at each other with righteousness tinted glasses remembering how much you've been saved from in grief in trouble in difficulty there will always be a temptation to hide but we do need to remind each other that God is sovereign and he knows where we are he knows where we've come from and he

knows where we're going to be we need to run that race well it all feeds in together their steadfast stand encouraged Paul

[ 33 : 37 ] Paul's joy in their steadfast stand encouraged them we need to talk to each other about what's really going on Paul has let them know how he's doing how he felt about them and that lifted them up it's a two way thing he's communicating with them they're communicating back and it seems very open and honest and frank so as we stand firm we encourage others by taking a stand but we need to speak to each other really really speak to each other to let each other know how we feel really feel about what's going on in our lives we can fall into the trap that really godly people paint on a smile and everything is hunky dory it's not hunky dory some of the greatest fathers of the faith right from back as far as Peter up to now have had dark days of the soul where it all felt like it was falling apart don't think you're alone but if we all look at each other and I'm going to say it again with righteousness tinted glasses we can build a trust that allows us to really open up with as many people as we can where we don't look at the troubles and the faults and everything else and we really do help each other and our churches are changing we have multicultural churches with people from different countries and you know what for Irish people here some of our brothers and sisters from different places can really help us with this one because as

Irish people how are you going grand how are you in Ireland is not a question it's a greeting and our reflex is grand one of the simplest things we can start doing to each other and again I work with a South African lady and when she started working with us it was kind of funny I come in the morning how are you and she would start to tell me and she'd be five minutes into telling me and she'd go oh sorry you just were saying good morning weren't you and I was saying you know what you've taught me something so now I make a point when I actually want to know I say somebody how are you and I go grand no no no how are you and there's a woman who goes to our church and she catches me every Sunday morning going out the door and she goes how are you and I do it I go grand and she's how are you and we have learned so much about how God works in our lives and those times of prayer

I've got sidetracked sorry we have to stand fast we have to come together we have to encourage each other and thank God in all the joy that we share while we're doing those things we have to care about the spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters we have to care deeply does it actually excite us does it thrill us when we see our brothers and sisters going on well in our walk does it thrill you when you see your brother and sister come to a difficult time and they stand fast or does it carelessly pass you by we live in a very me orientated society our whole western world is based on the I the individual as Christians we have to get past it we really have to work to get past it our struggles our joys our triumphs our losses are shared together we are united together in Christ we are fully joined together in Christ so that's three things a good account don't get lost in the struggle stand firm and pray pray deeply and never stop

Paul has his prayer section here he does it in all his letters he has a prayer section and he's praying and he is pleading and I'm heavy on the Spurgeon quotes at the moment because I've just read two books on Spurgeon but Spurgeon said that prayer is the throbbing machine that drives the church well pray ceaselessly day and night never ever stop praying and pray that we would build churches that look like this that we would work together with the Holy Spirit with God the Father with the Lord Jesus to build what is lacking in each other's faith faith we have to build the trust and love together so that we can share with each other fully so that if we lovingly see what the needs are we can speak into the needs that if we truly care we can get alongside someone and help them and avoid the trap of falling into the mindset of going oh I wish so and so would just insert your own personal gripe here because that's what can happen to us we can get into that frame of mind oh would they ever just do it my way or why aren't they doing whatever we have our personal gripes if we have to pray endlessly so we don't even have to go and talk to people but if we see things that we will pray pray pray pray pray and rely on the

Lord in that prayer to make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone it's often said to me if we could just love each other a little bit more we'd be doing better but that's starting from the wrong end you've got to love the Lord first so that love will flow out the Lord has to be involved from the very beginning seeking the Lord's way is what we need we have a responsibility to grow and work we cannot simply sit still and expect to grow now we can sit still and know the Lord and spend time with the Lord but growth takes effort and as a plant needs all the elements for growth the correct soil the right temperature light and moisture we like the plants need

the right conditions for growth we need to balance our lives properly with time spent in the word in meditation in prayer in proper

[ 40 : 20 ] Christian fellowship with one another where we share our burdens in the light of the gospel so we build something that is solid and lasting we need to build a solid wall in our lives and the foundation has to be Jesus so that we will start to look like what we're supposed to look like like in Romans in chapter 12 where we are told be devoted to one another flee from evil cling to what is good it's by doing all these things in proper balance that the Lord will set us up firmly where we are and we will know the joy of the presence of God the Father when the Lord comes with all his holy ones we have to be set up towards the goal there is a lot lot more that can be said about these verses some people might have wanted me to spend more time focusing on the last verses and talking about the heavenly things where we should have our minds and hearts set if you want me to continue for another half an hour

I'd be happy to do that now no but we've had five things let the account be good don't get lost in the struggle stand firm pray and never stop for everything and everyone we need to keep our eyes fixed on that point on Jesus the author and perfecter the author and finisher of our faith Jesus is coming again and all this struggle all this life all this thing that clutters up our existence will be swept away we live in the certain hope of the coming of the Lord he will return and we do not look at the things which are seen but we look at the things which are unseen and like Paul who longed greatly after heaven we need to know that as we groan on this earth we have a greater finish than the beginning we had for while we are in this tent we groan and are burdened because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life the life that is in the resurrection and

Jonathan Edwards said in this the apostle Paul acted as becomes a Christian for those who are indeed Christians don't belong to this world and therefore it is very unbecoming in them to have their minds taken up by these things the example of Paul may make all people ashamed whose minds are occupied chiefly with things of this world or about gaining estates or acquiring honours we have feet of clay and we look down so easily but just like Stephen when he stood in front of the Sanhedrin and it was coming apart and everything was coming down on top of him we have to get our eyes off our feet we have to get our eyes off our difficulties we have to look up and see the glory of God and the Son of Man seated at his right hand side and we have to know that power and seek that power and live in the light of that power so now may our

God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come insert here for you to go to each other in love may the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else just as ours does for you may he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of a God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones Heavenly Father I thank you for your word I thank you for this time this morning I pray Father that it will be used and that I have been faithful to your message Amen