

# Reason for Thanksgiving

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[ 0 : 01 ] Amen. If you would open up your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians. Today is the first sermon of nine. We're going to make our way through the book of 1 Thessalonians.

It'll bring us through November. And then by the time we get to December, we're jumping into the book of John, the gospel of John. And then we'll be in John for some time after that.

1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 1 through 10. This is on page 1172 of your Pew Bible. Hear the word of the Lord. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians and God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace.

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

For we know, brothers, loved by God, that He has chosen you. Because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

[ 1 : 09 ] You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake? And you became imitators of us and of the Lord. For you received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

So that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything.

For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among 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, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

May God bless the hearing of His word. Do you know what a chain reaction is? A chain reaction is when there's a catalyst, a powerful initiating force or action, and it sets in motion a series of changes after it, a series of reactions.

Do you know the song, It only takes a spark to get a fire going. You know that song? You know, it's campfire season. When you start a campfire, chain reaction. Flick, flick, flick.

[ 2 : 26 ] Click, click, click. Kindling, burning flames. Oh, the light, the warmth, the crackle. Chain reaction. I know there's at least one man who served on a submarine in this room.

A nuclear sub, Ohio class, U.S. Navy. You know what it's got power in that thing? A nuclear reactor. A reactor. It's a chain reaction.

The fission happening in the nuclear reactor is affecting the whole boat. It powers the whole thing. And then, of course, dominoes.

When I was a boy growing up, me and my brother would get these dominoes, and we'd stack them on end in long lines, and then my brother and me would flick the first domino, and it would start a chain reaction.

And then growing up in the 70s and 80s, there were these, like, shows devoted to these domino fallings, like the Guinness Book of World Record, the biggest domino fall of all.

[ 3 : 30 ] One domino is struck, and a whole gymnasium is transformed with all of these dominoes falling. Chain reaction. The gospel of Jesus Christ is God's catalyst that brings about a chain reaction in the lives of people.

The gospel is God's divine catalyst which brings about change. And the book of 1 Thessalonians is record of how the gospel has radically changed a people's lives.

You can break 1 Thessalonians basically into two parts. Chapters 1, 2, and 3, and then chapters 4 and 5. And 1, 2, and 3 is like a long introduction.

And chapters 4 and 5, Paul gets to a lot of the content that he wants to teach on. Here in 1 Thessalonians 1, 1 through 10, I want you to see this.

I want you to see something that is the effect of the gospel. It's Thanksgiving. Chapter 1, 1 through 10, it's all about Thanksgiving.

[ 4 : 44 ] And what we have here is that the gospel of God makes people thankful to God. The gospel of God makes us thankful to God.

It's a cause-effect relationship. And so here's how this unpacks. It's in the outlines in the back of your bulletin. I'm going to give you the blanks, fill in the blanks right now.

The Christian norm. The Christian norm. Constant thanksgiving. Reason 1, chosen by God. Reason 2, changed by God.

Reason 3, converted to God. And these provide the reasons why Paul, Silas, and Timothy are so thankful to God for what's happening in this church in Thessalonica.

The gospel of God makes us thankful to God. It changes the way you pray and it even changes the time zone you're living in. Let's look at the Christian norm.

[ 5 : 50 ] Constant thanksgiving to God. One of the obvious changes the gospel brings to somebody's life is it makes them grateful, makes them thankful.

So look at verse 2. We give thanks to God always, always for all of you. We give thanks to God always for all of you. The we, of course, we find in verse 1.

Paul, Silvanus, also known as Silas, and Timothy. I'll refer to them as PST. Paul, Silas, Timothy. Paul, Silas, and Timothy, PST, are so grateful to God for what's going on in the Thessalonian church.

I mean, if you know anything about Paul and Silas and Timothy, you know that these three men have been radically changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ themselves. Paul was formerly a persecutor of the church and then he met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus and he went from being a persecutor of Christ to a proclaimer of Christ and a planter of churches who worship Jesus Christ.

The Thessalonian church came into being during Paul's second missionary journey. And here's the story behind that. At the end of Acts 15, Paul takes Silas and they're going to go back to the churches that were established during his first missionary journey.

[ 7 : 21 ] Well, they stop in Lystra. They pick up Timothy and now they've gone to two to three, PST. You get it? So they start moving along and Paul is given a vision of this guy in Macedonia, which is the Balkan Peninsula, more on that later, and he's like, come to me.

And so PST changes their plans and they go to the city of Philippi. You're familiar with Philippi because that's where Paul was preaching and they get arrested, Paul and Silas.

They're in a jail cell. Midnight, they're singing hymns. Big earthquake. The jailer's like, what must I do to be saved? And he and his whole household become Christians.

Remember that story? Acts 16? From Philippi, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, PST, they go to Thessalonica. And so the we here is Paul the Apostle, Silas, and Timothy, and they are so thankful to God always for all of you.

The you is actually a y'all. The church of the Thessalonians. And they are quite an interesting people.

[ 8 : 36 ] If you turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 17, here's the account of the gospel first coming to the city of Thessalonica and how it was received.

I'm just going to read it. It's on page 1100 of your Pew Bible. Acts 17. Now when they had passed through Amphipolis, something of that nature, in Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

And Paul went in as was his custom. And on three Sabbath days, he reasoned with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead and saying, this Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ.

That's him proclaiming the gospel. For example, Jesus is the Christ who died and was raised for your salvation. And then look what happens. Verse 4. And some of them were persuaded.

Some of the Jews who were in the synagogues were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas. They switched teams. They became Christians. As did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

[ 9 : 50 ] Those are Gentiles. And so there was a group of Jews that became Christians and then a really big group of Gentiles that became Christians. But the Jews, those who didn't believe, the Jews were jealous.

And taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out of the ground. Them being Paul, Silas, and Timothy, PST.

And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers, recent converts, before the city authorities, shouting, These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.

And Jason has received them, that punk, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there's another king, Jesus. Amen.

Amen. And the people in the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things and when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

[ 10 : 52 ] Look at verse 10. The brothers, recent converts in Thessalonica, immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea.

That's the start of the Thessalonian church. It's extraordinary. The gospel comes, comes in power, there's this huge response, and not just a response of followers of Jesus, there is persecution that breaks out, affliction, hardship, hardship.

But there's more to the story. When Paul leaves by night, if you look at chapter 2, verse 17, here's his own words on it.

But since we were torn away from you, brothers, something happened between Paul and the Thessalonian church. Something sweet, something good. It was a tearing away from this people. He didn't want to go. And so they leave, they then go to Berea, and then Paul goes to Athens, chapter 17, preaches to the Areopagus, right, Mars Hill, if you remember that.

[ 12 : 01 ] And then from Athens, he then goes to Corinth to plant a church there, and he's in Corinth for 18 months. But before he went to Corinth, they sent Timothy back to Thessalonica.

You can see that in chapter 3, verse 1, therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's co-worker in the gospel of Christ to establish and exhort you in the faith.

So they send Timothy back. They're like, Paul's like, will you please check on these Thessalonians? I'm so concerned about them. And so Paul goes on to Corinth, and then they all meet back up in Corinth.

And could you imagine that meeting? Paul sees Timothy coming up wherever he's staying, now if I was Paul, I'd be like, okay, I gotta be nice to Timothy, but I really wanna know about the Thessalonians.

So Timothy, how are you doing? Anything interesting? How are the Thessalonians? And what Timothy shares, you can see in verse 6 of chapter 3, but now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that always, you will always remember us kindly and long to see you.

[ 13 : 17 ] Look at verse 8. For now we live if you are standing fast in the Lord. They were suffering for Jesus in their absence and they were thriving in Jesus.

You wanna know why this book is written? Paul is so thankful for what God is doing among these people. So thankful.

And it's a constant thanksgiving. But it's just not true of Paul, Silas, and Timothy having regular breakouts of thanksgiving in Corinth for what God is doing in Thessalonica.

If you look at most of the New Testament books and how they start, Colossians 1.3, Philippians 1.3, Ephesians 1.16, 1 Corinthians 1.4, Romans 1.8, 2 Timothy 1.3, Philemon 4.

It all starts with thanksgiving for what God is doing in a particular church. That's a lot of prayers of thanksgiving that PST were making.

[ 14 : 22 ] What's extraordinary about it is how they are so others focused. Their prayers are to God with thanksgiving for what he is doing in the lives of so many other people.

Their lives were enriched. in their knowledge of what God was doing. When you pray for people, what are you praying?

Are you giving thanks for what God is doing in their lives? Do you know? It's very instructive. So what we see here, the Christian norm, is this constant, constant thanksgiving.

And now, let's get into the three reasons. There are reasons why Paul is so thankful. Why this group of three are regularly giving thanksgiving.

Reason number one is they know that these Thessalonians were chosen by God. Look at verse four. For we know, brothers, sisters, loved by God, that he has chosen you.

[ 15 : 35 ] What a statement coming from an apostle. Wait, the apostle Paul is thanking God that he has chosen us?

That would have been so encouraging if you were a Thessalonian. Now, when you hear and read chosen, we're talking about God's role in our salvation.

And with that come some other words that you may or may not be familiar with. Election, predestination, and all of a sudden, we're all together swimming in the deep end of the theological pool.

What is the relationship between God's sovereignty, his choice, and our responsibility of repentance and faith? How does that work out?

Well, let's get in the deep end of the pool a little bit. There are basically two ways to understand what it means to be chosen by God. The first way is to think along this, like this.

[ 16 : 40 ] God chooses us, his choice of us is determined by us first choosing him. And the idea behind that is an interpretation of Romans 8:29 where those whom God foreknew, he also predestined.

And so the thinking goes like this. God foreseeing into the future those who would choose him, trust him, believe in him, he predestined them based on their choice of him.

So God's choosing is made on our choosing in his foreseeing of that. It's a common view. I used to hold to this view and I used to hold to this view passionately.

I got into some fights over it. But that changed. The second view is that our choosing God is determined by God first choosing us.

That's the second view, second way of understanding that. And it understands Romans 8:29, those whom God foreknew, he predestined. It's not so much of a foreseeing as a foreloving, as a love from eternity past.

[ 17 : 57 ] And before the foundation of the world, God set his love on those who would later choose him. So, it's God initiated. Now, I personally came to that view, it took a long time.

I had to have a lot of conversations with a lot of people and wrestled with my Bible quite a bit. When I first heard this view, I was repulsed by it.

It wasn't my experience. But as I strove to understand God's word fully, and as I strove to understand what exactly is God's sovereignty, and what exactly is the extent of our sinfulness, and how that affects us, I soon realized, oh man, I need to give this more thought.

Now, if this is new to you, I have a book for you. I've got one up here and four on the connect desk outside those doors. It's called Humble Calvinism.

It's by J.A. Meadors. It's a laugh out loud book. He doesn't take himself too seriously. And so, if this is new to you, this would be a great book to read, to get acquainted with this idea of God's sovereign role in choosing us before the foundation of the world.

[ 19 : 21 ] Now, there's a word in verse four that I want you to see. It's not the word chosen. It's the word loved. For we know, brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you.

God's choosing us was out of his love for us, loved before the foundation of the world. So, whether you believe God's choosing us was first determined by our choosing him, or our choice of God was first determined by God's choice of us, we do know that he chose us because he loves us.

Listen to Ephesians chapter one, verses four and five. deep waters. Deep waters.

A lot to think about. God. But what Paul is saying here is he's giving thanks to God for this Thessalonian church because he recognizes God had chosen them.

They belong to him. And again, if you were a Thessalonian reading that, you would be incredibly encouraged by that. It would be a tremendous assurance, a tremendous comfort, and my opinion is the doctrine of election, the doctrine of predestination is to encourage and comfort Christians.

[ 21 : 12 ] But Paul points to something here. He says, here's how I know. Here's how I know you're chosen. It's in verse five, because.

For we know brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you because. Because what? What happened? Because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.

We're back in Acts 17, 1 through 10. We're back there where Paul is preaching Christ in the synagogue in Thessalonica three Saturdays in a row, and something happens. PST is aware of a unique happening during the preaching of Christ. theologians talk about it as the general call of the gospel and the effectual call of the gospel.

The general call of the gospel is when a person proclaims Christ with words. The effectual call is when God is powerfully working in that preaching to draw people to himself.

[ 22 : 26 ] And that is what they're describing here. they were aware that God was powerfully at work in Thessalonica when they were preaching the gospel.

Look at how they describe it. Because our gospel came to you not only in word, not just a general call, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction.

It was effectual. Paul describes this power in two ways. He describes it, the source of the power, as the Holy Spirit, and the effect of that as full conviction.

The Holy Spirit, more likely than not, there were signs and wonders happening in Thessalonica when the gospel was being proclaimed. But you can better believe it, that the Spirit of God was convicting these Thessalonians of their idolatry.

That they were worshiping false gods. That the lives that they were living were abhorrent in God's sight. That their sin condemned them in God's eyes. It was a kindness that the Holy Spirit would convict them of that.

[ 23 : 36 ] But then you can bank on it, the Spirit was illuminating them at the same time so that they would see that Jesus is the only name given among men by which we can be saved.

Their eyes were opened, their hearts were inclined. And so this powerful pouring out of God's Spirit in Thessalonica, Paul is saying, we know you were chosen because look at it.

Look what God did. The full conviction is describing the response. It's kind of like this. it's when the Thessalonians were listening to Paul preach Christ and they're sitting there like, man, I am a sinner. Oh man, and this is the best news I have ever heard in my life. There's only one way to be saved, it's through this Jesus.

I'm fully convinced. In other words, they were all in. They responded with full conviction that they recognized this is God addressing their hearts.

[ 24 : 52 ] And so Paul, Silas, Timothy are giving thanks to God that this group of Christians were chosen by God. They're so thankful.

faithful. This is what the gospel does. Romans 1.16, I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is God's power unto salvation.

It's God's power to forgive sin and satisfy God's wrath. It's God's power to give spiritual life to the spiritual dead. It's God's power to change someone's eternity.

It's God's power to change your desires from wanting to sin to wanting to live for Jesus Christ, treasuring him above all else.

Only the gospel does that. And that's why they're giving thanks. They're so thankful. The gospel of God makes us thankful to God. It's a catalyst.

[ 25 : 54 ] And so this first reason is that they're giving thanks because they were convinced that this church is chosen. Chosen by God's grace and mercy.

Reason number two, they were changed by God. They're given thanks because they had been changed by God. And I'm going to fast forward this one because I really want to get the reason number three.

So let me give you the nuts and bolts. Changed by God. We see it in verse six, and you became imitators of us and of the Lord.

The gospel had such an impact that these Thessalonians got flipped. They switched to who they were imitating.

I don't know who they're imitating before, but then they start imitating Paul, Silas, and Timothy, and Jesus. Did you see that in verse six? And you became imitators of us and of the Lord.

[ 26 : 53 ] So they were changed in who they imitate. imitate, and we get to ask the question, in what way? How were they imitating them? And we see in verse six, for you received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit.

What marked their change and their imitating of PST in the Lord Jesus Christ was not only that they were being afflicted for Christ, but they were full of joy from the Holy Spirit in the midst of that.

How do you explain that? Other than they've been changed by the power of God. And so they became imitators of Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Jesus.

But it's more than that. Not only did they become imitators, look at verse seven. They became examples. So that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

That's the Balkan Peninsula. Maybe you know where Greece is. Maybe you know where Albania is. On the west side of the Balkan Peninsula is the Adriatic Sea.

[ 27 : 59 ] On the east side is the Aegean Sea. On the south side is the Mediterranean Sea. The churches in this area, they would have been the churches like Philippi, of Corinth, of Athens.

Sancraia, where if you're familiar with Lydia from Romans 16, where she is from. Berea. These were the churches in this area and they became aware of what God had been doing in the Thessalonians.

Here's the equivalent of it. What's happening is the equivalent, first century equivalent, of something going viral. It's gone viral.

The faith of the Thessalonians, of what God has done, has gone viral. Their example, not only of their suffering, but of their evangelism.

Let me point that out to you. For not only, verse 8, has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia. That sounded forth, the word of the Lord, that's the gospel.

[ 29 : 08 ] It's echoing through the region. But your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything. Do you see how they've become examples? Not just in their joyful suffering, but in their bold evangelism.

The evangelized have become the evangelists. It's beautiful. So, they've been changed by God. They're no longer proselytizing something other than Jesus.

They are proclaiming Christ boldly, at cost. We can ask this question coming out of it. It's, has the gospel changed you like that?

Who are you seeking to imitate? Are you seeking to imitate Jesus? How bold is your evangelism? Are you talking to other people about Jesus?

You see, the gospel is God's catalyst, and it brings about a chain reaction in the way that we suffer with joy, and it brings about boldness in our evangelism.

[ 30 : 20 ] The third reason why PST, we're so thankful to God for the Thessalonians, is that PST were convinced that they had been converted to God.

So, chosen by God, changed by God, third reason, converted to God, and we see that in verse nine. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and here comes the conversion language, and how you turn 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, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Amen. What has gone viral is that the Thessalonians had been radically changed by the gospel.

And this turning language, and how you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God, that is getting at this idea of conversion.

Turning from idols and turning to God, God. It's how you become a Christian. You've become a Christian by being converted. Imagine this.

[ 31 : 39 ] This is going to be incredibly, this is a very sensitive topic. And so, please, just hear me out.

Could you imagine this? A Bears fan converting to becoming a Packers fan. Could you imagine that?

Here's what would happen. Here's what would need to happen. The Bears fan would be like, I'm giving, burning my jerseys. I'm pulling down my posters.

I am taking off the license plate frame thing. I'm peeling off the bumper sticker. I am no longer watching Bears games. I don't care what's happening to the coaches and players and trades.

I don't, where is Soldier Field anyway? They don't care. They've turned their back on being a Bears fan, and they've gone full in to being a Packers fan. They've got Packers fan jerseys, knit hats.

[ 32 : 40 ] They have Packers platters in which they serve cheese. This is what they do. Really cool bumper stickers, and they get a tattoo of a cheese head.

You know that they're all in. You switch teams. When someone becomes a Christian, they switch teams decisively, definitively.

I'm no longer part of team world who are living for things that are fake and have no life, and I have made a full switch to team Jesus, in whom alone is salvation, the living and true God.

Conversion is a dramatic, decisive change. Conversion. You're turning your back on sin, and you're turning to God through Christ.

Conversion. And what Paul is saying is here is like, we know you were converted. We know you've been radically changed. We know that you are no longer living for idols, false gods, false promises, no life there.

[ 34 : 06 ] The Thessalonians were probably worshiping Greco-Roman gods. They were probably living sexually promiscuous lifestyles, because that was the norm of the world. They were probably just living for themselves.

In 21st century America, what Carl Truman says, expressive individualism. Live your truth. We've got to turn our back on that.

Moral therapeutic deism. It's God works for me to make me feel good. It's making God in our own image. We turn to these things.

These are idols. There's no life in them. Or maybe it's the God of the like. We just want to be liked. You just want to be approved and accepted. There's no life there. You've got to turn to that. Idol.

[ 35 : 04 ] Turn away from that. And you turn to the living and true God. The God of the Bible. The living God. Who is the giver of all life. Both physical and spiritual.

The God who is the true God. He is true reality. Reality. And he reveals what is true in his word. You turn from these false, dead, hopeless things.

And you turn to that God who is alive and is true and is our hope. But. You can't do that on your own.

The only thing that can make a dead sinner who is living for idols want to live for the one true living God is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's the power of God unto salvation. There's nothing that you can do to change yourself. It's only by God's grace and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[ 36 : 21 ] Think about this. Jesus is the ultimate repo man. You can't repo yourself. You are in wicked debt to God because of your sin.

But Jesus came for you. And he repoed you. And now you belong as you should be to the living God. There's no going back. Or maybe do you remember the 16th century stargazer, Nicholas Copernicus?

Because before Copernicus, everybody thought that we lived in a geocentric solar system, that the sun orbited the earth.

And then Copernicus, with his kind of observations, realized, no, no, no, no, no. We live in a heliocentric solar system. The earth orbits the sun.

It was always like that. He just discovered reality. What the gospel does is it gives sinners eyes to see that you are not the center of your solar system.

[ 37 : 23 ] Jesus is. And it moves us from living for ourselves to living, bring brought into reality that Jesus Christ, risen, reigning, one day returning, he is the controlling center of all things in whom we orbit.

He is. Joyfully. This is conversion. This is the change that happens when you encounter the power of God in the gospel.

And it's wonderful. So here's the question it begs. Have you been converted? Have you switched teams?

Have you turned your back on false idols in order to serve the living God?

Have you done that? You can do that today. You just cry out. You say, Lord Jesus, you're where it's at. I'm a sinner. You've died for my sin. I'm living for you.

[ 38 : 24 ] It's the stake in the ground. And you can do that today. Come find me after the service. I'd be happy to help you pray that to God. And you go from death to life.

You switch teams. Please. There's one effect that I need you to see here. One additional effect. When you become a Christian, you switch time zones.

We recently had some people from our church in Israel that came back. And it takes a while to switch back to time zones. Did you notice verse 10?

Word is out. It's viral. That the Thessalonians had been converted. And now they're waiting for his son from heaven.

Whom he raised from the dead. Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. They were living in a new time zone now. It's called Christ time. Not mountain time.

[ 39 : 27 ] Not central time. Christ time. And what that is, is now, because of the gospel, it now changes your outlook. It changes your hope.

And now we're waiting for the return of Jesus. And we're living lives in accordance with that. First Thessalonians is packed with references to the return of Jesus Christ.

It's very strategic to a church that's suffering. It aims us. So one of the further effects of the gospel is that it changes our hope.

What we're looking forward to most. First, and in this case, it's the return of Jesus Christ. Steadfast in your hope, Paul says in verse 3.

The hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Him coming back. And here's how it all works. When you are on Christ time, you're saying things like, we're one day closer to Jesus coming back.

[ 40 : 35 ] Woo! Come, Lord Jesus, come. When you're aware that Christ is coming back, you're going to be aware of eternal things.

You're going to be aware that when Jesus comes back, not only is he coming to deliver us, but the wrath of God is coming too. Which means it changes the way that we see people.

We see people, and how will they stand on that day? So when you're living on Christ time, it will embolden your evangelism.

It will change the way that you see people, not in relationship to you, but in relationship to Christ. Christ. It's a good effect.

It's a healthy effect. When you're serving the living God. And it was because of this conversion that they are giving thanks.

[ 41 : 38 ] Chosen by God, changed by God, converted to God. This is what stirs their thankfulness. This past week, midweek, I started changing the way I pray for you.

I pray for 10 of our members every day. And I'm usually praying, Oh Lord, would you help so-and-so treasure you? Would you help them treasure you in their marriage, in their parenting, in their work?

If I'm aware of other things going on, I'll pray for that as well. But did you know when I started praying for you this week? Oh God, thank you so much for choosing this person, for changing this person, for converting this person.

Thank you God for your kindness to them. Thank you. It's a game changer in terms of your prayer life. It gets you focused on what God is doing in the lives of others around you.

And it gets our focus on God. It changes the way you pray. And it changes how you synchronize your watch.

[ 43 : 01 ] The gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of God, makes us thankful to God because of what God is doing. Let's pray. God, thank you so much for your word.

Thank you for 1 Thessalonians. God, would you use this to stir us in new ways that we would delight more and more in what you are doing in our midst.

And then more and more, we are awaiting the return of your son, our king, Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen.