

# How To Know You Belong To God

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[0:00] All right, 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 4 through 7. 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, and in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction.

You know what kind of men we prove 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.

Amen. Have you ever heard the phrase, the proof is in the pudding? That's a weird phrase, isn't it? It's kind of an odd thing.

I thought about that this week in studying this passage, and I thought, I don't even really know what that means. I'm going to look that up. Apparently, it's a shortened version of an expression that dates back even to the 17th century, maybe even earlier than that.

The original expression goes like this. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Now, it's a simple statement, isn't it?

[1:20] The expression simply means that you can only know the quality and authenticity of a thing once you have tried or used or experienced it.

Last week in our partner meeting, we had a chili cook-off. You can say that your chili recipe is better than anyone else's.

The proof will be in the eating of the chili, right? Again, in the passage before us in these short verses, Paul makes a bold and confident claim about the Christians in Thessalonica.

You saw it right there in verse 4. He wrote that he knows for certain, for we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you. He says, I know for certain that God has chosen to save you, that you are part of God's elect, he means.

Now, of course, it comes in the midst of his thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians' faith, love, and hope in Jesus Christ. That's what we studied last Sunday.

[2:34] But as we discovered last week, it does seem odd that Paul would recall the actions of the Thessalonians and instead of thanking them, he thanked God for those actions.

That's odd, isn't it? Because we give thanks to those who are ultimately responsible for a particular act. Gus is celebrating a birthday this week.

And since my daughters are in Raleigh and worship with their grandfather today, they couldn't be here to celebrate with him. So they sent me a gift and they said, make sure that you give this to Gus since we can't be at his party.

So before service this morning, I brought it in and I said, here you go, Gus, this is from Ashland and Harper. They're sorry they can't be there for your party today, but they wanted to wish you a happy birthday. Now, it would have been really weird if Gus would have looked at me and take that present and said, oh man, this is wonderful.

And then turn to Marty and say, thank you, Marty. Thank you for this gift. That would be weird, wouldn't it? And yet that's exactly what Paul does in this passage. In verse number three, he says, we thank God for you.

[3:42] And then he goes on to explain that what he's giving thanksgiving for is something that the Thessalonians have done, but the object of his thanksgiving is God. That seems weird. We give thanks to those who are ultimately responsible for an act.

And what Paul understands in this text and what he communicates in the text is that God and his grace was the definitive cause of the Thessalonians' conversion.

And when we get to these verses, verses four through seven, what we find Paul doing is he explaining that further. He's explaining to them why he's giving thanks to God.

And the interpretive clue for that is in the very first word of verse four. It's the conjunction four, which is a grounding statement. It's referring back to something else, which we can see very clearly is this thanksgiving.

In other words, verse four, this phrase, is the grounding statement that explains why Paul is thanking God in particular.

[ 4 : 51 ] And what is the content of this explanation in verse four? It is God's electing love of the Thessalonian Christians. We might read it this way.

We give thanks to God always for all of you, for we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you.

That's the principal clause in the passage. Everything else that flows out from verse four through verse seven is supporting statements for what Paul says in verse four, that he is certain of their election.

But the question is, why is Paul saying this at all? Why is he even bringing this up? Why does he feel the need to make such a confident assertion and affirmation of these people?

There's a few ways we might answer that. We might surmise it. It's possible that there were people in the church of Thessalonica who were struggling with the assurance of their salvation.

[ 6 : 00 ] And what they needed was the reassurance that is offered by Paul in these verses. And certainly this would have been wonderfully reassuring to them. Now you may be here this morning and that's a particular battle for you.

A struggle for you even this morning. What you're facing is how can I know for sure that I'm saved? How can I know for sure that God has saved me?

And this text can bring you tremendous clarity, can't it? It can bring you clarity as to where you stand in relationship to God. On the whole, however, it does not seem that Paul is addressing a church that is generally overcome with doubt.

But rather a church that is overcome with discouragement. Affliction. Suffering.

Conflict. Opposition. Temptation. Kill. Are all words used in this letter to describe the immediate circumstances of the Christians in Thessalonica.

[ 7 : 16 ] Though they notably persevered in their faith, they were undoubtedly discouraged.

Because who doesn't get discouraged at the constant barrage of hardship, especially the hardship that comes in spiritual forms.

So Paul sought to encourage his brothers and sisters in Christ by reminding them that while they are disdained and persecuted and hated by their unbelieving neighbors, they are loved and chosen by God.

And what a wonderful encouragement that must have been. The doctrine of election is never meant to confuse or frustrate us. It is always meant to encourage us.

Isn't that Paul's reasoning in Romans chapter 8? And he says, this electing work of God. When he gets to the end of this, that golden chain of grace, what is it that he says?

He says, if God before us, who can stand against us? He who did not spare his own son, but gave himself for you. And then he goes on and he says, who can separate you from the love of God?

[ 8 : 32 ] None of these things can. And he offers up this glorious doxology in that moment. What is all of that relating back to? The encouragement that can be found in God's electing love.

But Paul didn't merely say they were part of God's elect and move on. That would be to say that, well, the proof is in the chili recipe on its own. That's not what Paul does.

No, he substantiated the claim by recalling the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the Thessalonians' conversion to Christ and in the Spirit's persevering work in their faith.

For Paul, the proof was in the preaching of the gospel and their perseverance in affliction. All things being orchestrated by the gracious and powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

And that is the point of this text. You can say that you're part of God's elect. The proof will be the same for you as it was the Thessalonians.

[ 9 : 40 ] So this text this morning, it will either be for you a line in the sand that exposes your spiritual state, or it will come to you as a wonderful encouragement that reminds you of God's saving love for you.

This text then reveals two ways to know that you belong to God. Two ways to know that you belong to God.

Number one, the proof is in Spirit-empowered preaching. The proof is in Spirit-empowered preaching. Look at verse 5.

We know He has chosen you because our gospel came to you, not only in word, but in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full conviction, you knowing what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sake.

The first thing Paul did to substantiate the claim was call the Thessalonians to remember their gospel beginnings. Remember, we talked about this in great detail a couple of weeks ago, and Paul now turns to them and he says, I want you to remember when the gospel came to you.

[10:56] There are so many things, both theological and philosophical, that Paul and Silas and Timothy, that they could have reasoned over with the Thessalonians.

Still, it would not have been enough for them to arrive in Thessalonica preaching just anything. It wouldn't have been enough.

For their preaching to make a lasting impact, it had to be laser-focused on the gospel message. For as Paul writes to the Romans, it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

The gospel is. But what exactly is this good news that they proclaimed in Thessalonica? That's what gospel means. It means good news. What is actually the content of that gospel?

Well, we're told in Acts chapter 17, verses 2 and 3, Paul went in, this is in Thessalonica, 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 that Christ.

[12:21] The good news of the gospel is about a Savior. It is all about a Savior. God promised in the scriptures that this Savior would die in the place of sinners, and that after that death, he would rise from the dead to prove that his atonement was sufficient to satisfy God's wrath, that it would prove in his resurrection that he provided sinners with true eternal life because he alone has the power over life and death.

All of that is foretold in the prophets and in the law, pointing forward to this promised Savior. And Paul says, Jesus of Nazareth is that Savior.

He is that Christ. He is that Messiah. He is the sinless Son of God who bore the punishment for our sins, and he rose from the dead to prove it.

That is the gospel. And he offers forgiveness of sin. He offers reconciliation with God. He offers eternal life in his name to all who will trust him.

That's the gospel message. That's what Paul came to Thessalonica preaching. That's what Paul went to Philippi preaching. That's what Paul went to Berea preaching. That's what Paul went to Athens preaching.

[13:49] That's what Paul went to Corinth preaching. Everywhere he went, that's what he preached. Why? He could have preached about so many things. He could have reasoned with them over so many philosophical things, particularly in Athens.

But no, he doesn't do that. What does he do? He goes and he preaches the gospel. Why? Because it is the gospel that is the power of God unto salvation. There's a lot of instruction.

There's a lot of messages out there that will stir you. There is a lot of instruction that may even change you.

There is only one message that can save you. Apart from the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus, you cannot be saved.

Acts chapter four, there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved other than the name of Jesus.

[14:50] Romans 10, 17, faith does not come by epiphany. Faith comes from hearing. Hearing what?

Hearing the word of Christ. What's the word of Christ? It's the gospel. It's the gospel message. What Paul preached in Thessalonians. How could Paul say, well, I know for certain that God has chosen you because Paul knew that what they received was the true gospel message.

He knew what was preached to them. And apart from the preaching of that gospel, there can be no salvation. You say, well, how can I know I'm saved? Well, do you know the gospel? If you don't

know the gospel, Paul, if the true gospel has never been proclaimed to you, you can't possibly be saved.

But it is proclaimed to you now. Therefore, the door of faith is open. The proof of the Thessalonians' election is not less than the gospel message.

That's what I'm trying to say. It's not less than the gospel message. That is essential, of course. But what we find in this text is that the proof of their election wasn't merely the words of the gospel, though.

[16:05] Look again at what he says. Our gospel came to you not only in word, but in power.

Power. We talked about this in our Sunday school class this morning in Lakeside Connect. That word power, it's deuteronomy. In Greek, it's the word we get dynamite from. It's powerful.

It's explosive. The source of that power, Paul says, is the Holy Spirit, God himself. The display of that power, how he knew that that power was actually being made evident, was the full assurance with which Paul preached the gospel and with which the Thessalonians believed the gospel.

So follow what he's saying. I preached the gospel, but when we preached the gospel, it wasn't just empty words. There was power to it, and it wasn't our power. It was the power that was sourced in the Holy Spirit, and we know that power was at work because there was a full conviction, not only in our preaching, but in the way you received it.

Power. Their gospel preaching had a spiritual power that could not be manufactured.

[17:23] It couldn't be manipulated. That's what he's saying. It is a gracious work of God's Spirit that occurs according to God's saving purposes through the proclamation of the gospel, whether from a pulpit on a Sunday morning or at a coffee shop on a Tuesday afternoon with Bibles open, the gospel being proclaimed.

That's where the power is. Can I just prove that to you in a few other places? You're in 1 Thessalonians. Set your eyes on chapter 2 and verse 13.

Notice what Paul says here. We also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you.

Now, that's an important phrase, isn't it? That it's not that the word, the gospel didn't come in word only. That's what he's saying. But as the gospel came, the gospel itself was doing a work, and what was the source of that work?

The Holy Spirit. In Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 12, that's clarified for us. The writer says, the word of God, the scripture, the gospel, it's living, it's active, it's sharper than any two-edged sword.

[18:49] It pierces to the division of soul and spirit, the joints and marrow. It discerns the thoughts and intentions of our heart. That's a strange thing to say. We read books, and the author of Hebrews says, the Bible is a book that actually reads you.

Well, how does it actually do that? It's just a book. It's just words. Oh, but it's not just words. When it is infused with the power of the Holy Spirit. Let me give you another one.

Acts chapter 16 and verse 14. This is the narrative of the beginnings of the church in Philippi. It says, one who heard us was a woman named Lydia. In Thessalonica, the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

And what was said by Paul. The same thing he said in Thessalonica. And there was power in it.

How did he know there was power in it? Because the Lord opened her heart to believe.

First Peter chapter 1, verse 23. You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable. How? Through the living and abiding word of God, Peter says.

[19:59] And then we have in this kind of strange statement here at the end of this verse. He says, you know what kind of men we proved to be among you. What does he mean? He's like, you know. You know what this was like.

You know who we were like. Paul lived among the Thessalonians in such a way that they could be sure of his character. His character then giving credibility to the power of God that was at work in his preaching.

And he's going to elaborate on this in chapter 2, so we won't spend a lot of time on it now. But here he acknowledges that they knew he didn't behave as some charlatan. That he wasn't manipulating them for personal gain.

And they knew because they watched him live. They saw when he refused to take money from them. He's going to elaborate on that later.

He's saying, look, we came to you. We preached the gospel. And you know, you know the character and integrity with which we preached that gospel. What they experienced was not the

power of Paul's rhetoric, but it was the gracious power of God, which is a similar argument that Paul makes to the Corinthians.

[ 21 : 10 ] In 1 Corinthians 2, he says, when I was with you, I came in weakness and fear and much trembling. And my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom.

That is, they weren't meant to be eloquent. I didn't come to you trying to impress you with my speech. No, my words were in demonstration of the Spirit and of power so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

What is he saying? He's saying that the power of gospel preaching is not in the speech itself. It's in the Spirit's work through it.

That doesn't mean that the gospel cannot be communicated with eloquence, that it cannot be communicated with persuasive rhetoric, apologetic, or undeniable apologetic persuasion.

It's not what that means. But what it means is that those things are ultimately unnecessary to the power of the gospel. And many times they're actually even harmful.

[ 22 : 28 ] Why? Because they may, someone may rest their faith based on the way someone has formed their speech rather than on the thing itself. That's what Paul's saying. He says, we didn't do that.

The best sermon is utterly ineffective without the Spirit's power. And the most simple and basic presentation of the true gospel is infinitely powerful when the Holy Spirit is at work in it.

And some of you, sometimes you question yourself. Maybe you even question the insurance that you have because you look back on your conversion and you think about the guy that was preaching that day and you just think, well, that guy was very smart.

It really wasn't that great of a presentation. Or maybe you look back on it now and you think, you know, I'm so different about him on theological things. Can I really trust that what he gave me that day, it doesn't matter.

He doesn't matter. The speech and the way it was formulated, it didn't matter. Even the most simple and basic presentation of the true gospel when it is infused with the power of the Spirit will make an eternal difference in your life.

[ 23 : 43 ] Brian, I think it was Wednesday morning, quoted R.C. Sproul and he said, it doesn't matter how beautiful a ship is if there's no wind in its sails.

It's just gonna stay adrift. Sometimes we're looking but we say, okay, I'll trust Christ when somebody finally convinces me with just the right argument.

No, you won't. No, you won't. I can give you every possible argument and defend it to perfection and it won't make a difference in your life if it doesn't come with the power of the Spirit.

Isn't this what Jesus meant in his conversation? with Nicodemus? John chapter 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus, don't marvel that I said to you you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes. You hear it sound. You see the evidence of it that it's there. But you don't know where it comes from or where it goes. And then Jesus says, this is how it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

[ 24 : 55 ] Preaching is only effective when it has the power of the Spirit. This is a soliloquy you can take with you today. Preaching is only effective when it has the power of the Spirit. Paul's preaching in Thessalonica had the wind of the Spirit.

Therefore, he knew for certain that God chose the Thessalonians and he praised God for them.

Can I ask you, has there been a time in your life when upon hearing the gospel message, the wind of the Spirit blew?

And you know that it did because it came with conviction. It convinced a dead heart, brought it to life.

Turning your unbelieving stony heart into a heart that expressed genuine saving faith. That's the work of the Spirit, my friend. How can I know I belong to God?

Has the Spirit been blowing in your lives? Now I want you to follow Paul's argument as it unfolds in the text. He was sure of the Thessalonian church's election because his gospel preaching in Thessalonica was infused with the Spirit's power.

[ 26 : 14 ] But how could he know that the Holy Spirit empowered his preaching? Verse 6. 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.

Proof number one is Spirit empowered preaching. Proof number two in this text. Spirit enabled perseverance.

Spirit enabled perseverance. perseverance. The proof was in the Thessalonian spirit enabled perseverance here. When they heard the gospel they received it.

That is they believed what they heard. And their reception of the word was marked by what? Joy. They were excited to hear and believe the gospel.

You remember what that was like don't you? Don't you remember when you finally came to faith or at least when you got to the point where you realized and you put all the pieces together that oh I'm a Christian. There's joy that comes with that right?

[ 27 : 27 ] And when they received the gospel when they received the word they did so with joy. But again the ultimate proof of their genuine conversion was not less than joyful belief.

But in this verse it's more than joyful belief isn't it? For the Thessalonians. Paul recognized that the Holy Spirit must have been the one to supply this joy because their faith in the gospel endured in much affliction he says.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. The proof of God's electing love is in persevering faith. It's in persevering faith.

You see this is not something you can determine in prospect. It is something you determine in retrospect. Jesus said something about this in his parable of the soils.

Do you remember it? In Mark chapter 4 these are the ones sown on rocky ground. The ones who when they hear the word immediately receive it with joy but they have no root in themselves.

[ 28 : 40 ] They endure for a while. Then when tribulation persecution arises on account of the word immediately they what? They fall away.

That's the words of Jesus. Jesus's point is that there are people who for one reason or another joyfully receive the gospel but their faith proves to be superficial when they abandon it under challenging circumstances.

now this is not a reference to a person in a moment of weakness. Think Peter and his three denials. Peter's three denials were not true denials were they? He was trying to preserve his life certainly he shouldn't have done what he did but Peter wasn't really denying Christ personally in his heart right? That's different than Judas though isn't it? Judas's betrayal and rejection was a heart level rejection. So what Jesus is talking about here he's not talking about a person who has a moment of weakness and a moment of doubt where they don't follow through on their faith like they should.

[ 29 : 56 ] The scriptures actually clarify for us that this cannot be an individual who after truly being saved by God loses or forfeits that salvation.

Instead the Bible teaches us that this falling away reveals that their initial display of faith was not actually authentic. A verse we often turn to for that is 1 John 2 and verse 19.

John says in speaking of the spirit of Antichrist those who go out denying the Christ denying the gospel they went out from us but they were not of us for if they had been of us they would have continued with us but they went out.

Why? That it might become plain that they are not of us. Paul was certain of the Thessalonians election because the Holy Spirit enabled them to persevere despite severe persecution.

Look at this text on the screen from 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verses 1 and 2. This is when Paul is describing to the church in Corinth the struggle of the churches in Macedonia which is the church of the Thessalonians.

[ 31 : 14 ] We want you to know brothers about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia for in a severe test of affliction their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

He goes on later and he says this is explained because they first gave themselves to God before they did anything else. By remaining faithful in affliction the Thessalonian Christians followed in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus who for the joy that was set before him in endured the cross and what was the net result of the Thessalonians conversion and perseverance?

Verse 7 So that that's a purpose statement it's a result action result. What's the result? You became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

We're going to unpack that next week but it's important that we recognize here the pattern of grace Paul was thankful to God that the gracious work he was doing in the Thessalonians resulted in the gracious work being accomplished in others.

Now I told you why is Paul saying this? Well it could be that some of them just needed some assurance. They needed to be reassured about their salvation but I think this is really meant to be

an encouragement and what a joyful encouragement it must have been for these faithful persevering Christians to know that their suffering was not wasted.

[ 32 : 58 ] Not only did their perseverance and affliction prove God's electing love for them but the testimony of it was being used by God to bring others to saving persevering faith in Jesus Christ.

The joy of which is yet another proof of their election. Now before we finish you may be struggling at this point because you think okay the text is about proofs of our salvation.

Proofs of God's electing love set on us in particular. Okay I've heard the gospel. I think I experienced the power of the Spirit in the presentation of that gospel because I responded in joyful faith.

But then you get to this point and you think well you know I'm struggling a little bit because I don't think I've been tested like this. Can I actually be assured of God's saving grace in my life if I haven't gone through such suffering?

Can I really know that I belong to God? The fact is that none of us may ever face the kind of affliction that the Thessalonians endured.

[ 34 : 12 ] But the point is not for us to compare our suffering to anyone else's. That's never recommended. That's never commended in the scriptures at all. And that's not the point of this statement here.

I want to suggest to you that if that's where you are, that's a struggle for you. I want to suggest that your faith has been tested in more ways than you may realize. Maybe your life hasn't been threatened.

Have you ever faced a trial? Some kind of suffering in your life and the greatest temptation for you was anger at God? How could you do this to me?

After everything I've done for you, how could you do this to me? You're supposed to be good. How could you allow this to happen in my life? You ever been there?

Probably, right? Can I ask you, in the midst of that temptation, did you persevere through the anger? That's an affliction.

[ 35 : 21 ] Have you ever struggled with doubts since you've become a Christian about the reliability of the scriptures? Whether Christianity really is, as Tim Keller said after he became a believer, he said, Christianity, the resurrection of Jesus, it is intellectually credible and existentially satisfying.

Since you became a Christian, has there ever been a time in your life where you doubted that? Where you wondered, what am I doing? Is this really real? Am I foolish for thinking this?

Can I ask you, did you keep trusting Jesus even when those questions didn't receive answers? That's affliction.

Have you ever been hurt or abused by a professing Christian who even used the Bible to justify their abuse?

And the temptation in that moment was, how could I possibly follow a Savior whose disciples do this? Can I ask you, did your love for Jesus persevere through the abuse of those who claimed to follow him?

[ 36 : 49 ] What about your sin? Have you ever wondered from, wondered away from faithfulness in terms of the way that you live and you just did something really, really stupid?

blatantly sinful? That brought tremendous reproach upon the name of Christ? Maybe it destroyed your family or at least threatened to.

I mean, you blew it. Can I ask you, in the midst of that, did you rest in the finished work of Christ on your behalf despite the grief of your own sin?

You don't have to wait for some overwhelming test of faith to be assured of your salvation. If you are persevering in this moment, loved ones, that is a testimony of God's grace in your life.

It's not because you figured something out that no one else has. It's because you're the beneficiary of a work of grace that cannot be fully explained.

[ 38 : 06 ] It's the power of the Spirit at work. What does all of this have to do with election? This saving and persevering faith, it's not something that we can produce on our own.

Just like Paul, as capable as he was, and you only have to read through a few of his letters to realize he could have come preaching with quite a bit of eloquence and persuasion, and yet that's not what he did.

He couldn't manipulate or manufacture what was happening in the people in Thessalonica. He couldn't do that. You can't manipulate it in yourself either.

The Scriptures describe our natural condition in at least three ways. We're told that in our natural condition we are in bondage to sin. We're slaves to sin, just like Israel was slaves in Egypt. We're told that in Ephesians chapter 2 that in our natural condition we are dead in our trespasses and sins. Not dying.

[ 39 : 12 ] Not dying. Not drowning. Drowned. Dead. In the Corinthian letters we're told that in our natural condition the natural man cannot even really fully comprehend the gospel in and of themselves because it's spiritually discerned and they do not have the work of the Spirit to discern it for them.

And we're told that in our natural condition, Romans 3, we are unwilling, not just unable, we're unwilling to come to God on His terms.

That's our condition. If we are to be saved, it requires that someone who is free break our bondage. That someone who is living bring us to life. that someone with true spiritual power take our hardened hearts and transform them to love and worship God.

If we are to be saved, that's what it will take. God's election then is a divine act of grace whereby He accomplishes those things through Spirit-empowered preaching so that we might then willfully respond to the gospel in repentance and faith and continue forthwith to respond to the gospel in repentance and faith.

[ 41 : 08 ] When God makes someone His own, He never lets them go. Isn't that wonderful? No matter how great the trial, He will hold them fast.

And the proof will be in their willful perseverance of faith. Now here's the truth. We have an enemy that would love nothing more than to hinder that perseverance.

That would love for our discouragement like the discouragement of the Thessalonians to be so severe that we would begin perhaps to show signs of falling away.

That's what He wants. We should expect to face significant temptation to abandon the faith throughout our lives. But the wonderful thing about God's grace is that it holds us even when we don't feel we can hold on to Him.

Why does Paul say, I thank God for what's happening in you? Because Paul knows that it's God doing it. So how can we know that God has set His saving love on us?

[ 42 : 27 ] Well, did the wind blow when you heard that Jesus died for your sin and rose from the dead and invited you to receive eternal salvation from Him as a free gift?

You may not be able to pinpoint a particular moment. And don't let that discourage you. If you are in the faith today, it's because the wind was blowing and it may have been blowing for a little while before you realized it.

Not everybody has a dramatic transformational moment. Some people do to the glory of God. Some people do have those Damascus Road moments as Sarah Lynn talked about in her testimony last week.

Many of us don't have that. The Lord does His unique work in everybody in different ways but the truth is it always comes through the gospel and it always comes in the power of the Spirit. Did you turn from sin and trust in Him if not, what's keeping you from doing it now?

You can turn to Christ now by faith and you'll prove in the process that you do actually indeed belong to God.

[ 43 : 44 ] Well, the second thing is are you persevering in that faith? Does it mean that you don't regularly face temptation to doubt the Lord but it does mean that your perseverance continues despite all the doubt?

That's not because you got it all together but because God has made you His own. So we thank God and we find encouragement in God's saving electing love.

Let's pray. for better