The Testimony of Salvation

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[0:00] You know what a critical thing to understand that your name is written in the book of life. It can be written a lot of places, but there's none more important in the course of our life to have it written in the Lamb's book of life.

Well, this morning we're going to start into a new series here. We're going to be looking through the book of 1 Thessalonians here coming up. And we're going to be looking here of the dynamic of living in light of his coming.
You know, we're going to see here this morning as Paul pens this letter back to a young church here at Thessalonica and to this young group of believers that have just turned to Jesus as their Savior during a short time that Paul had visited the city.
And the focus of this letter was to encourage the saints there to live in light of his coming. To have our focus upon where and what's going to happen in the future and how that impacts today.
And I think it's important because, you know, the same thing is for today because sometimes it's easy to get our eyes off the objective. Eyes off what we need to be paying attention to.
[1:14] And today it's important to keep our eyes focused and to live in light of his return. You know, when we live and move forward in light of the right things, it changes what we do now.

You know, when we're focused upon something, it changes because it guides us and directs us into what we ought to be doing. And we find here in 1 Thessalonians, we're going to find that it was pertinent to those serving the Lord there at the church at Thessalonica.
But I want you to understand it's still applicable to us today serving here at Plains. You know, for believers here today, I want you to understand it's applicable to us just as much as it was to them.
And when we understand that we serve the same Savior, it becomes clear that we need today to be looking, living in light of his coming just as much as we did, just as much as the church at Thessalonica was encouraged to do.
And so if you have your Bibles this morning, let's stand in honor of the reading of the Word of God. And we'll pick up here in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1. And we'll read down a few verses here as we get into the message here this morning.
[2:29] And so it says, It says, brother and beloved, your election of God. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, as we come before you today, Lord, we're just thankful for your truth, for your encouragement. Lord, as we look at these things that apply to every individual, Lord, the reality and need of your salvation, Lord, the necessity to call upon you to recognize you more than just one that lived, but Lord, the one that died and rose again for us, for our sin, for my sin. Lord, we pray just have your hand upon each heart, each life here today that we might live in light of your coming, Lord, that might change our focus upon the right things of this life. And Lord, we just give you all the praise in Jesus' name. Amen. May be seated. You know, as we look here this morning, we see Paul and his companions arrive in Thessalonica. And to give a little back detail here, because context is important. You know, whenever you're reading something, you need to understand the context of what's behind it. And the context of the letter to the Thessalonians was one, it was written very soon after Paul had departed from them. This letter was written from Athens, and we'll understand this dynamic, but he had just come from a city called Philippi. And if you remember what happened at Philippi, we know that

Paul had an impact upon the city, and you had some people that got upset because a young lady had a spirit cast out of her and was no longer able to prophesy and to do the things by demonic force, and her owners got upset. And they hauled Paul and Silas into jail, and they were beaten. And you might remember there at Philippi, what happened, it says that at midnight they were singing songs and praising God, and a great earthquake came, and the keeper of the prison had

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been set and charged to not let them escape, but all their chains fell off. And you remember the prisoner, the prison guard came, and he cast himself down, and he says, sir, what must I do to be saved?
Because they were all still there. He had heard them singing and praising God in the midst of what most would consider a horrible circumstance.
And I'll know, that's a nice way of saying getting beaten and put in prison. But Paul and Silas were praising God as God was working. It was a power they saw that transformed lives. And we know the jailer, and it impacted his family, and he wanted to be saved from the penalty of their sins. But we find that that next day, we find that the ones who had cast Paul and Silas into prison found out that Paul was a Roman citizen, and they got panicked. And they said, Paul, you have to go. Where did Paul go? We find this. When Paul wrote his letter here, notice here in verse 1, it says that he came there to Thessalonica. He went through, and he was there at Thessalonica, and he began to go into the synagogue there. Why did he choose that place? Because there was a synagogue.
[6:24] Look over to Acts chapter 17. Acts 17 records the start of this church. We need to understand what took place here in Acts 17 to understand what Paul here, I believe within just a few weeks or months after he departed, wrote this letter back to the church there at Thessalonica that had begun.

But we need to understand how it came to pass. Now look here at Acts chapter 17 and verse 1. It says, now they had passed through Amphiphas and Apollonia, and they came to Thessalonica. Notice this.
Why did he go there? Because there was a synagogue of the Jews. Now I want you to understand, Paul said, I'm going to go to the Jew first. And you know the other reason that Paul went to the Jews? It was an easy audience. It was an easy place for him to find people that would listen. Why? Because they would gather. They would gather there, and it'd be easy to be able to come and to speak when you understand how the synagogue operated. And we see here that Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scripture. Now here's your heavy math test. How long is three Sabbaths? You know, so we got about three weeks. Maybe four if you had a few days for him getting there, and a few days afterwards. For all that takes place, you got about a month of time that Paul was here within the city. You just got a few weeks that he was there, but notice what he did.
And Paul, as his manner was, went into them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them. Notice this, out of what? The Scriptures. He read the Old Testament. He took the Old Testament, and he showed him something. Look at verse 3. He openly, and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ. You know what he did?
He went into people who believed in God, believed God was going to send a Savior, and he said, hey guys, I want to show you from God's Word everything that matches up with Jesus Christ, and that he is the one you're looking for. He brought them that message of hope. He brought them that message, and it was just a few weeks later here in Athens that Paul writes this epistle, this letter to this young group of believers gathered at Thessalonica. He had not been there long, but the God, the gospel that he preached, the gospel, the Word of God, the truth of Scripture, because remember, the gospel isn't made up by some man. The gospel is God's idea. It originated with him, that empowered by him. Everything about it is about him, of what he has provided for us, and we see here that he writes back to this young group of believers, Jews and Gentiles alike, and it had altered their life dramatically, and they'd been organized into a local assembly, and they began to face opposition from those around them. But yet they stood strong in the certainty of the Savior as trials and temptations came upon them. You hear in Acts 17, look at verse 4, it tells us this, and some of them believed and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks, a great multitude, and of the chief women, not a few. But the Jews, which believed not, moved with envy, took upon them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort. I'll let you fill in the blank what that means. It should be pretty obvious. You know, they didn't go down and hire the high moral character people. They go down and they gathered the company and sent all the city in an uproar.
[10:27] Now notice this, they assaulted the house of Jason and sought to bring them out unto the people. I want you to see here within three weeks, Paul had gone there. He had preached the gospel through showing them from the Old Testament that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, that the gospel was there, and they had begun a church in the house of Jason. Why'd they look for Paul and

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Silas at Jason's house?

Because that's where the church was meeting. This young church had formed up. They'd begin to serve the Lord. They were trying to walk through these things, and we find here that opposition to the gospel came quickly.
You know, they were not alone because this young group of believers had something because the Lord was on their side. The Holy Spirit now indwelled them. The Holy Spirit empowered them. You know, when we understand that they're reminded that this fledgling church was backed by a powerful God. They were in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look here in verse 1 with me, what it tells us here.
It says this, it says, Now I want you to understand every church, every assembly of believers is empowered by God to do what God has charged us to do. And they had a responsibility. You know, consider what Matthew chapter 16 when Jesus is talking to his disciples. You know, Jesus asks a question about who he is, and notice this, Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
And Jesus responds in verse 18, says, I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church. Upon what rock? That he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The church isn't built on Peter, I'm sorry. God builds it, men don't. God uses men, but God builds it. It's God's work. It's not the preacher's work. It's not somebody that gets a wild hair about something's work. I want you to understand, it's God's work. It belongs to him. You know, this rock, the Lord Jesus Christ, you know, the Bible tells us he's the cornerstone that was laid in Zion as the foundation. This is the foundation upon what every body of believers should be built upon. Now I want you to understand, people call themselves a church, but it might not be built on the same foundation. Because remember, you can have an assembly of anything. But a true church is one that's assembly of the saints. Those who have been saved and been born again. They're in Christ Jesus. Plains Baptist Church is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not built upon us, it's built upon him. And this promise contains the promise that his favor and blessing will be upon it. Notice what it tells us in verse one, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. You know what Paul's saying?
[13:50] Hey guys, this young church, I'm going to encourage you in one big thing is the fact God is with you. Matter of fact, God's grace is upon you. This word grace here is not saving grace, but it's God's favor and God's assurance. That says God is here. I want you to understand, as a church, if we're going to serve God, we need to understand we need to be on God's side and that God is in favor of us. You have God's favor when you serve God as his child. But notice peace.

You know, this doesn't mean everything's going to be good. Because remember, this is just a few weeks after this whole uproar. And if we went back to Acts 17 and you read a little farther, you'll find that Jason and the others that were in the church were actually fined a large fine for starting a church. It cost them something to be faithful to God because they had a choice. Is it too much for me?
You know what? The Bible says they didn't even blink. If you want to find us, fine, but it's not going to change what God I serve. You know, Paul's encouraging them in the reality and the struggle that takes place. You know, we live in a day where Christianity is being kind of overcome by some things you might say as a whole.
Society has kind of turned us back. They want a Jesus made in their own image. They want a Jesus from the Bible. And we're going to see that this is the same here. You had Jews that didn't like what Paul preached. And when it boils down to, they were losing their authority and their power to the authority and power of God. And you know what? People get a hard time giving up their own authority because oftentimes we want it our way. God, how can I make this work for me? And God says, it won't work for you unless you do it my way. Because when we understand the importance of it here, we're going to see that Paul is encouraging them very clearly in the reality of what has taken place in their lives.
Because think, as Paul begins this and wants to encourage him to walk in light of eternity, every chapter in this book, in the book, this letter to the Thessalonians, Paul mentions Christ's coming. Matter of fact, Christ's coming is mentioned about 20 times, but at least once in each of the five chapters. It's the central theme, the central focus in the midst of their struggle, the midst of what's going on. But Paul tells them this, look at verse two in our text. He says, we give thanks to God always for you, making mention of you in our prayers. Here, Paul is praying for this young church,

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for these young Christians that had just believed, and they're trying to work through all these things and the chaos. I mean, you imagine your life, everything in life turns upside down. A couple of months, things aren't even settled down yet. I know we got some families moving, and they can understand it takes a while to get everything settled back in.
[17:08] You know, just because it's in the building doesn't make it settled. The same thing in our life, you know, we can have things that transform our life, and salvation ought to be an event that transforms your life. There's going to be some things that are going to be in upheaval for a little bit if you're going to make a choice to serve the Lord.

Because things are changing. Things have been transformed. You have to be different. And Paul says he's thankful for what has taken place. The evidence was seen and was reported about it, and it caused gratitude to God for what had happened in such a short time. You know, they thanked the Lord that he changed so many lives so quickly, which they knew had happened because of the fruit that they had seen in their lives. And we're going to look at this this morning as Paul mentions the reality. How did he know that things had been changed? You know, we talk a lot about salvation, but you know what? Salvation has a fruit that ought to alter a person's life.
Some things ought to be different. We ought to look at some things different and to look at that fruit that remains, you know, what was that fruit? What was seen in their testimony that revealed what God had done? You know, we're going to see three things that Paul mentions here, and they're mentioned other places in the scripture. You know, Paul mentions them later in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, in verse 13, where he says, now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity. I want you to hear Paul makes mention of their faith, their love, and their hope.
He says as an earmark, a visible thing, a reality that something changed internally. Because we're going to see here, notice here as he begins in verse three, he says, remembering, why is he thankful?
Because he remembers without seizing your work of faith. Your work of faith. Now, when we see this term work of faith, some people get confused because it seems contradictory to what we hear in the word of God, you know, to tie work and faith together. Because the scripture is clear that we are not saved by our works or our deeds. I want you to understand the Bible is clear. You cannot do enough to get saved.
[19:51] You know, it's amazing how many people that I meet today that want to tell me how good a person they are, or how much good they're doing. I want you to know that I'm down here serving and doing this. You know, that's good. I'm glad that people do good things, but I want you to understand that's not a measurement to get you into heaven. You know, the devil loves to deceive with good things that distract from the most important thing. All throughout our life, we'll find that, but I want you to understand the Bible makes it clear. Ephesians chapter two, it says, for by grace, are you saved through faith? And that not of yourselves is what a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast.

Titus 3.5 declares clearly to us, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.
So we have to ask ourselves, what's he mean here by the work of faith? I want you to see here, he's saying the same things that James tells us in his epistle.
The word work here doesn't mean work for salvation, it means action because of. Because if you know the Lord is your Savior, it should change the actions. Because you have a different perspective, a different lens through which you see. Now I think we can all agree, when you see things differently, you do things differently. You know, that's just a reality. The way you see something affects how you do something.
And we're going to see here this morning, because what we find, James tells us in James 2, you know, James, I'll show you my faith by my works. You know what James is saying? You know, you can talk about your faith, but if I don't see any action because of it, it causes me to question it. Now let me give you a practical example. Yesterday, there's a whole bunch of football games. Now think about for a moment, if somebody says, I'm a Huskers fan, but you never see, that's the only thing they ever say is, I'm a Huskers fan, but you never see him talk about them. You never see him watch them. You never see him support them. You never see him do anything. What would be your idea about that person? And you're in the promised land. But think about that. How would you respond to that person that just tells you, well, I'm a Huskers fan, but you see nothing else that

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would give you any consideration of that?
[22:11] Now let's make this practical. Somebody says, I'm a Christian, but you see nothing in their life that would even resemble that. What's going to be your thought? There's a problem here.

What you do is important. The choices you make are important because, you know, it's on that same token. You know, you had a whole bunch of screaming people down here at a stadium. We were out at a gathering yesterday to celebrate a birthday, 70 years. That's a big accomplishment. And they had the game on at the end of the game. You know, when they pulled it off, you know, we went from You know what? I never doubted their commitment to it. When you're in a small gathering and they start cheering, hollering, go big red. And they're responding back and forth to one. I was like, yep, we know where we are. Why? Because there was something that testified to it. Your life as a believer ought to testify by what you do that you're a believer. Paul said their work of faith. It's simply that your faith ought to be demonstrated. Now consider this because faith is important because look at what Jesus says in John chapter 6. John chapter 6, we see here in verse 28, Jesus said this unto his disciples. And then said they unto him, what shall we do that we might work the works of God?
And Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God that you believe on him whom he hath sent. You can do nothing for God until you realize who Jesus is. The work of God in your life begins at the moment of realizing you need a Savior. And when we understand this picture, Paul says, I've seen with my eyes that there's something different in your life. He never tells them that they came to God by their works or their works are going to keep them. He says, you need to come by faith and that faith will be revealed in your life. They were thankful that it had taken root. Their faith was apparent in the choice and the decisions that followed. Think about that. Here's Jason. He was saved. He's opened his house. They come and they assault his house. They drag him out and they fine him. He pays a heavy fine along with others. You know what? That's a commitment to say, I'm going to serve the Lord no matter what.
His work of faith. He trusted God in light of persecution, in light of trouble, in light of losing his resources. I want you to understand the importance of this young church was built upon the fact that it had a saved membership. To be a child of God is the place you start. And then you can work that work of faith. But notice next the labor of love.
Labor of love. Paul next mentions their labor of love. If faith moves us to action because we trust God and what God says, God says that love ought to be the motivation for what we do. The labor of love is that motivation tied to it. Why are you doing it? You know, people come and do things for God for all sorts of reasons. But I want you to understand their labor of love had to do with the intent of their heart, not with what everybody else was seeing. They were motivated for their labor, for their service, by a true faith in God. The reason they were faithful to the Lord in spite of opposition and oppression was because of their faith, was in the one that rescued them. Because you see, if you love, it will move you to action. Love always moves to action. You cannot have love without action.
[26:25] It's directly tied together. You see that tied in that labor of love. People will endure much because of love. Love moves them. You know, think about what Jesus told his disciples. John 14, 15 tells us this.

He says, if you love me, do what? Keep my commandments. He says, love will motivate you to do. What you love will affect what you do. But the reality is that if you don't love God, you'll find trying to keep his commandments tedious and tiresome because you're not willing to obey.
You know, the reality is this. 1 John 4, 19 tells us this. We love him because he first loved us. When you understand what Christ did for you on the cross that day to pay the penalty for your sin, it changes your reality of love. Christ's love for you was on full display. The Bible says, he commendeth his love toward us. And while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We see love on display and we say, because he loved me, I'm going to love him. Because of what he's done, none for me. These believers had shown resilience that only is sustained by love. The resilience in the face of opposition and responsibility. And Paul is remembering their willingness to be a part and to get involved in the work of God. A labor of love is being serving, being a part of what's happening. As a believer, you ought to be a part of a local church. You ought to be serving because that's the place God calls you to serve. I want you to understand Paul saying it was not a church, even though it was young. They didn't just sit in the pew. It was one that loved the Lord enough to get involved. To say it's a place that God would have you serve. It's called into, if you don't want to serve the Lord

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in the local church, I call into question your love for God. Say, preacher, that's harsh. No, that's what God says. If you love me, you'll keep my commandments. You'll do what you're supposed to do. You'll say, I'm going to put you as a priority. You know what love does?
Love chooses a priority. You know, today people have got a lot of messed up things because I want you to understand that in the context of scripture, love and hate just puts to priority. Love says, this is my priority. Because in order to love, you have to choose. When you choose, you're choosing to not have something else. Because in life, there's always competing things for our attention, for our desires, for our focus. So the question is, what do you love more? Do you love yourself and what you want? Or do you love what God has for you? And are willing to step out and to say, God, I want to do what you want me to do. Because if you choose not to do what God would have, you know what the Bible says? Jesus says, if you love me, keep my commandments. You know, the opposite is also true. If you don't love me, you're not going to keep them because you love something else. The Bible says you can't love two masters. You're either going to serve the one and hate the other. That labor of love that is there, consider that love is choosing one thing over another. If you love one thing, you have to refuse or ignore to put aside something else. If you say you love God, but have everything else before him, you might want to examine your love. You know, consider what Paul tells him in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 6 says this, for in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availing nor uncircumcision, but notice this, but faith which worketh by love.
Love, love, important. It supersedes because what we love drives everything else that we do. Because love puts a priority. Let's give a practical example. When two people decide to get married, when a young lady and a young man decide to get married, that day they get married, they testify of their love one for another. What are they saying? You are a priority. You are that focus. You are the one that I'm going to have, that's going to have priority over other things in my life. [30:51] That young lady guy, she ought to have priority over other ladies. She ought to have preeminence over other ladies. There's a priority of those things. Ladies, your husband ought to have a priority over other men. Ladies, your husband ought to have priority over other ladies. Let that one soak a while. I want you to understand why because of love.

But notice here, he tells them this. He says that your work of faith, your labor of love, the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, the patience of hope. Here we go. This is that sustaining faith that keeps things in perspective. These believers in the church at Thessalonica kept their focus on the future promise of God. This word patience here is hopeful endurance. You know what?
Hopeful endurance says, I know it's going to be a struggle, but I'm looking for the end. My eye is on the accomplishment. It's going to be difficult for the moment, but this is what it takes to get where I need to be or where God wants for me to be.
There's a price. There's a cost. That patience of hope, and we see here today, it's a hope not in our ability, but in our Lord Jesus Christ, the one who promised to come again.
Notice what he tells you, the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. You know, what's he talking about? He's talking about the promise that Jesus made because we're walking in light of eternity. [32:28] What Christ has done. Think about what Jesus said, John chapter 14, verse 3, the word of God tells us this, and he says, if I go and prepare a place for you, notice this next phrase. He says what? I will what?

I will what? I will come again and receive you unto myself. You know what? Jesus made a promise that he's going to come. Our hope is in his promise. The Bible calls it a blessed hope to realize that, yes, in this life, there's going to be a lot of heartache, but we keep our eyes on the one who has promised us. You know, look over to Hebrews chapter 11. Hebrews chapter 11 at verse 6.
The Bible says this, without, but without faith is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.
You know, our hope is in the fact that God doesn't just say, suffer this for now. You know what God says? Yeah, it's going to be difficult. You're going to face trials and persecutions, but he says, let you know there's a reward. It's not for nothing. God doesn't say, serve me because I demand it. God says, serve me because you love me, knowing I'm a just God, and I'm going to give due reward, that I'm paying attention to what you do. It's because of these that Paul says something here. Look at verse 4.
He says, because of this, he says, knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. Now we'll just cover this phrase here just briefly for a moment. We'll cover it more a little later, because when people get caught up on election, I want you to just look at election this way.

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[34:16] Election is not selection. Whenever the Bible says that you're elect, it's your security. Because God says, whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. God says, I've elected everyone that calls upon me to become a child of God, to have the power of the Holy Spirit upon them, and that they're secure forever. That's what election means. When you see election, you ought to rejoice because if you've called upon the Lord to save you, God says, you're secure. Ephesians chapter 1 makes it clear.

Election is there. We find the truth explained here in Ephesians 1, but notice it sums it up with this, to everyone who calls upon the Lord. Now notice the sequence here. It says, in whom ye also, what?
God trusted. Now notice the order after he heard the word of truth. You know what? That's the reason that people need to hear about what Jesus did. Not just what he did, but why he did it.
You know, it's interesting today that it's not hard to find people who can tell you what Jesus did. They might even be able to give you a synopsis of why he did it, but you know what? There's a missing connection because they don't realize it was for them. You can have all the information, still not get everything, get done what you need to get done. Because you have to act, you have to respond by faith in what Christ has said. There has to be a response. It can't be just believing that God is.
You know, the devils believe that God is. Any logical thinking person that sees the world around us can understand that God is.
[36:13] The question is, what are you doing with the truth that God has given? It says this, heard the word of truth. Notice this, the gospel of your salvation. It becomes personal.

In whom after that ye believed, notice this next phrase, ye were what? Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance under the redemption of the purchased possession of the praise of his glory. I want you to understand the word election here simply means God has secured all those who have called upon him. He says, you've been placed in a place that is secure when you call upon the Lord to save you. You can know. You can know God is. You can know that Jesus died for you.
You can know that you're a sinner. But the Bible makes it clear you have to do something with it to acknowledge that Jesus is the one who died for your sin.
That moves it from abstract to personal. It becomes a personal salvation. You know, this morning is your salvation one that's revealed in that work of faith, that labor of love, and an enduring hope in a Savior that says he's going to come again.
Heavenly Father, as we come before you this morning, Lord, you know each one here this morning. Lord, we can make assessments on surface, but Lord, only you know the heart of an individual.
[37:46] Lord, I pray that your Spirit will do what he has told us he's going to do. Lord, he'll convict, he'll comfort, he'll encourage, he'll convince. Lord, you know where each one is today. Lord, I pray that you just would work in their specific need here today. Whether that's need for salvation, it's need for obedience, it's need just to trust you to say, Lord, not my will, but your will be done. Lord, whatever the need might be, that we might turn to you here today as we live in light of your return. We ask it all in your precious name. Amen. As piano plays, what about you today?

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