

Transforming Expectations

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[0 : 00] we're going to hear from the word of the Lord this morning and as we prepare to hear from God's word in the book of first Thessalonians let's take some time to give that first of all give thanks to the Lord for his word and second of all pray that our own hearts would be opened to the wisdom from God's word and that he would give us an eagerness and a receptive heart to understand all that he's communicating to you and to me this morning let's pray our God our Father I know up here I I would be very lost without your word I don't I have a very limited amount of wisdom that I can communicate each one of us is very limited in our perspective and our understanding we've only lived so many years of our lives we've only experienced a small fraction of all that human beings have experienced in this world but we thank you that your word gives us wisdom that is all surpassing wisdom that guides us and directs us and gives us insight that we could never have gained for ourselves and I pray today as we look at your word as we see what great expectations we are meant to have and what difference those expectations make in our lives Lord God make us receptive and eager to hear your word fill our hearts with gratitude for all the wisdom that you have given us and give us a renewed sense of hope in Jesus Christ would you over the course of this this fall over the course of this next year transform our church so that next Thanksgiving when we look back we will wonder we will stand in awe and amazement at the work that you have done among us and through us in this community we pray amen we were I was talking with with with Jonathan Chris with David and Carolyn this morning very briefly about Thanksgiving traditions and communicating the difference between American and Canadian

Thanksgiving traditions and how in the United States one of the traditions it is quite similar to Canadian Thanksgiving except one tradition is that after the Thanksgiving dinner you go you go over to your couch you lie down your couch in a coma in a half coma and you watch Thanksgiving football and that's something that sets American American Thanksgiving apart from Canadian Thanksgiving and each of us has our own tradition similar to that and one tradition that's really quite common in Thanksgiving in both Christian households and in the households of those who aren't Christians is to take some time usually before you eat but maybe after you eat the dinner and to review the year that has passed since last Thanksgiving and to answer this question what am I thankful for this year what am I thankful for this year now of course if you are not following the Lord if you aren't aren't a believer in Jesus Christ if you don't have a God that you worship the that does raise the question well who are you thankful to so maybe that's a good question to ask at Thanksgiving dinner but we as believers we have a God that we are thankful to that we are grateful to for all that he's given us and this is a valuable tradition because what it does is it encourages you it encourages me to to examine our lives to examine our lives and to look instead of focusing like we often do and like our culture encourages us to do instead of focusing on all these things that we think we deserve and all the things that we think we have a right to Thanksgiving instead causes us to focus on all that we've been given that we don't deserve the gifts of grace that lead to gratitude the gifts of grace that lead to gratitude it encourages us to consider who has given us these things that we don't deserve who has given us his grace but here's a question that maybe you and I haven't haven't considered before at a Thanksgiving dinner maybe this is one that you can ask your family your friends tonight if you haven't already this is a question of not not just what are you thankful for in the past year another question is this what do you want to be thankful for next Thanksgiving what do you want to be thankful for next Thanksgiving what this question does is it changes our thoughts and moves our thoughts to not just gratitude for the past grace that God has given us it turns our thoughts towards expectations of future grace expectations of future grace and future goodness from the Lord our God what are you looking forward to in the coming year what kind and I think specifically what kind of person do you want to be a year from now what kind of church do you want Squamish Baptist church to be a year from now what expectations of God's grace do you have and I've had a few people tell me that as I asked around this week I had a few people tell me that next Thanksgiving and they want to look back on this year and these people weren't believers and so their goals and visions in mind were that they were thankful they wanted to be thankful that they hadn't wasted another year to be a year from now they wanted to be a year from now dreaming about what could be because that's something that we do whether believers or not believers is sometimes we have these good intentions we have these good intentions and desires and then we just don't really act on them we have dreams that we don't go after these people they said they want to feel like their life has begun that they're settled in one place that they're starting a business another person I asked said that she wants to feel like her hard work has finally paid off with tangible results that her children's education is going well that they're growing in confidence those are the things that they want to look forward to

those are the things they want to be thankful for and each of us is going to have our own answers to that question what do you want to be thankful for and some of our answers are going to be thoughtful and wise some of our answers might be unreasonable might be futile and we really finished our sermon series on the biblical book of Ecclesiastes a couple weeks ago we finished that series and that's and during that time we critiqued we allowed the preacher of Ecclesiastes to critique and deconstruct some of our futile hopes some of our futile expectations for lasting gain in this world under the sun we've learned what the good life is not we've learned that there are things that we might be trying to hold on to and expecting and longing for in the coming year that are not going to deliver what we think they are going to deliver but having those false counterfeit hopes and expectations taken down deconstructed having them taken apart is not good enough because we need something built in their place we need to know what the good life really is we want to find out what those things that can really deliver on their expectations are so now that we've exposed these counterfeit hopes we're going to turn over the next few months and we're going to discover what our real hope should be what should you and I expect to be grateful for a year from now what should we expect to be grateful for 70,000 years from now in eternity what great expectations are you and I meant to have what effect should these great expectations have on your life on my life this very week this very month this very year what a great what effect should these great expectations have on our life together in this local expression of the family of God in our local church in Squamish Baptist Church so for these answers we are turning to the book of 1 Thessalonians and 1 Thessalonians that's the name that was given to a short letter in the New Testament of the Bible and this short letter was something that the Apostle Paul wrote nearly 2,000 years ago it's called 1 Thessalonians because it was one out of two letters that Paul wrote to the city to the church in the city of Thessalonica which is in modern day Greece near Macedonia now at the beginning of our service Steve read to us the story of how the good news the gospel of Jesus Christ how it arrived in the city of Thessalonica and the Apostle Paul what he did was he was on a journey bringing this good news of who Jesus Christ is and what he came to do and he brought it with him as he was traveling across what the Roman Empire around the Mediterranean Sea through what we would in the modern day called Turkey and Greece and the Apostle Paul arrived in the city of Thessalonica and he stayed there for a period of time in that city he was telling the good news first to the Jews to his fellow Jews in the synagogue and to the sympathetic Gentiles who hadn't become Jews but they believed the Jewish God they wanted to worship the Jewish God and so they kind of got they were some kind of outsiders and so they said they were sort of hangers on a little bit and so for them Paul communicated the gospel the good news that salvation was for not just the Jews but for Gentiles as well to people who were not Jews at one point Paul gets kicked out of the synagogue there are enough people rejecting the message that they want him out

and so Paul goes to more Gentiles in the marketplaces of Thessalonica most of the people who believe these believe this good news are Gentiles some are Jews most are Gentiles but there is a great opposition to Paul's teaching the Jewish leaders of the synagogue who are resistant to him gather a mob together and drive Paul out of town and we are going to find in the letter of 1 Thessalonians over the next few weeks that there was continued stiff resistance to the gospel message not just from the Jewish population but from the Gentile population of Thessalonica as well and so Paul is writing this letter 1 Thessalonians after a period when he has heard no news from Thessalonica and he is wondering what has happened to him and he is wondering what has happened to this church what has happened to these people that I love what is happening have they lost their faith have they withered under persecution under oppression but just before writing this letter he has received news that far from withering under the oppression they have remained faithful they have remained faithful to Jesus Christ to his good news to his gospel even through that oppression even through that persecution and opposition from their neighbors and from the leaders in their community and so what Paul does in this letter is he lays out for them great expectations that will enable these believers to live a life of joy a life of power looking forward to a good future that is awaiting them so let's read the beginning of Paul's letter turn your Bibles with me to the book of 1 Thessalonians if you haven't turned there already if you are using one of the blue Bibles that our ushers handed to you you will find it on page 986 near the end of the New Testament near the end of the Bible 1 Thessalonians follow along with me as I read chapter 1 from the English Standard Version

Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in 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 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 in 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

[14:07] Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come this is the word of the Lord and here's what Paul in verse 2 beginning in verses 2 and 3 here's what Paul says he is thankful for here's what Paul wants to be thankful for the expectations he has the longings he has in each and every place that he visits according to verse 3 Paul wants to be thankful that those who have believed in Jesus Christ are responding with what he calls Paul's your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ Paul wants to be thankful that they have turned toward God with a vibrant relationship with a vibrant way of life the way that Christians are expected to live and in the case of the Thessalonians that is exactly what happens and he is thankful for it

Paul says that he is remembering them not just occasionally but constantly they keep coming back to his mind Paul finds this church and finds these people to be unforgettable throughout the day they keep coming back to him and whenever they do Paul doesn't just kind of sit there with that knowledge not really do anything with that every time they come back to mind he thanks God for them he takes that opportunity to speak to the Lord to utter words of gratitude to God to speak to God thank you for this church thank you for these people that I know that I love thank you for what you are doing in their lives he knows that their faith in Jesus Christ is real he knows that the work Jesus Christ has done in them is real he knows that their love for Jesus Christ and for one another is real he knows that their hope in Jesus Christ's return is real and how does he know it?

he knows it for the same reason that you know whether you have gas in your car it's not just what the gauge says it's when you get in your car and you turn the key you start your engine and that gigantic contraption of metal and mostly plastic moves forward if something like that moves forward if something like that moves forward you know you've got something powerful inside you've got a fuel that can drive it and in the same way the faith, the love, the hope that the Thessalonians have generates real life, powerful, unforgettable results they produce work, they produce labor and they continue this work and labor with sin they continue this work and labor with steadfastness with perseverance they don't back down they don't give up one of the beauties of being one of the elders of our church is that

I've gotten the opportunity to get to know so many of you over the last year and it has been a joy, it has been a blessing to be a part of this church family this is a rare thing there's certain individuals here I'm not going to embarrass you because we could get up here and I could just spend the rest of the time embarrassing you one after another by calling you out that there some of you amaze me so many of you amaze me I know that your tanks that gas tank that is driving you it is full of faith, it is full of love, and is full of hope and the reason I know that is because I see the rest of all of us as elders see the faithful eager ways in which you work in which you labor for God for his people for our community and you not only work hard you work steadily you're steadfast you're not just people who have good intentions wishful thinking about oh yeah I'm going to do this and do this and I'd love to be a part of this and that and then never following through

I know so many of you follow through you're not just flash in the pan enthusiasm that gets excited about something and then just never, never completes the work that you started you're filled with hope your actions persevere from the perspective of your pastors from the perspective of your elders you are solid gold and we thank God for you some of you who are business owners and manager know what it's like to have someone like that on your team someone like that working for you someone who is faithful who is reliable who is hard working you know that you can trust this person you can count on this person and in fact not only can you count on them to follow through but they often exceed your expectations and so it is in the church active persevering Christians have an unforgettable faith a faith that is not forgotten but continually remembered by God and by his people

[19 : 42] Paul tells the Thessalonians that they don't just have an unforgettable faith they have an unmistakable faith as well so they don't have just an unforgettable faith but an unmistakable faith in verse 4 he continues 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 Paul calls them first of all brothers loved by God brothers loved by God that is a beautiful thing to hear Paul doesn't think of these people as resources that he can plug into the church to run the ministries of the church gears that he can just toss in there to keep the machinery of the church going Paul doesn't think about them as merely fellow club members fulfilling a role in an organization

Paul doesn't think about them merely as comrades in arms working together Paul doesn't think about them merely as teammates or even merely as friends they are his brothers they are his sisters they are family and when Paul thinks about them he thinks how much does God our Father love them?

how much does he love them? how much does he love them? that can be hard to believe understanding and believing the genuine fatherly love of God can be very difficult for us especially for those of us who don't have good fathers and have not maybe have never really seen that model of wealth maybe you grew up in an abusive home where you were told that you were unlovable maybe you committed a shameful sin against God and you think that there is no way that God could love you again maybe your understanding of God has is just always been more or less academic more or less theoretical so that you have trouble thinking about God as a real person a real father who really loves you how can you and I know?

how can we really know that God loves us? what Paul says in verse 4 the answer is this he has chosen you he has chosen you God has elected he is freely chosen he was not compelled in any way his arm was not twisted he freely on his own he said I am going I love this person I choose this person I am going to bring you into my family you are mine this is something that your father you who believe this is something that your father decided to do long before you were born long before he created the world he has always loved you he has always chosen to be your father and he did that knowing you even better than you know yourself if you think I am just not worthy

I am just too dirty I am too messy I am too shameful well tell you what God sees that more clearly than you do yourself and he said I still have chosen you I still have set my affections and my love on you I am still your father God was not compelled God was not controlled by anything that you did this is the same God who told Moses in Exodus chapter 33 I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy he decides freely it is up to him and he has chosen you you who have genuine true persevering faith in Jesus Christ Paul tells the Thessalonians in verse 5 that he knows God has chosen them to be his dearly loved children because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction all of us have each one of us has experienced what it is like to try to communicate something with words to try to persuade someone with words and it is just like our words come out of our mouth and just fall to the ground and don't do anything have you ever been in that frustrating situation where you just talk and talk and talk and you are like if I could just explain myself enough if I could just put it clearly enough this person is going to understand and they are going to come to see things the way that I see things anyone who is married knows exactly what that is like and knows that doesn't work sometimes it does not matter it does not matter how many words you use sometimes people just your words just don't do anything

[25 : 03] God's words are not like that it is easy for human words to land without effect and Paul experienced this many times himself when he would just speak words even in the city of Thessalonica he was speaking in the synagogue so many people did not respond to his words they did not respond to his message but then he saw how God's election God's choice turned Paul's words his human words into gigantic works of power empowered by the Holy Spirit of God the Holy Spirit made them powerful he made them effective to wake up these Thessalonians to see Jesus Christ in all his beauty and glory through Paul's words God woke them up he raised them to life he gave sight to blind eyes he gave hearing to deaf ears they saw Jesus Christ they understood who he was they marveled that the son of God that God the son would become a human being and take on this form would die on a criminal's cross for our sake would be raised to life again from the dead for us so that we would be forgiven of our rebellion against God and welcomed into his family to new life the Holy Spirit showed them these things gave them a new heart that could understand these things for the first time gave them the assurance that they needed to make that decision to embrace freely gladly

Jesus Christ the son of God and by believing to have life in his name their response is the fingerprint of God on their lives unless the Holy Spirit works in someone's heart it does not matter how many words you use they are a hundred million miles away from believing if the Holy Spirit does work in someone's heart they are going to believe because he has all the power that he needs because his word never returns without effect this vibrant faith is not only a remembered faith not only an unforgettable faith it is an unmistakable faith it is an unmistakable faith once the Thessalonians became Christians once they became new believers they were probably wondering okay what now what does it mean to be a part of God's family how do people in God's family live what are our family traditions what is our family way of life how do we behave in our father's household we have been made a part of this new kingdom this new people under our King Jesus Christ how do citizens of God's kingdom behave how do we live what is our way of life what is our culture like what's our culture like and so they looked for models and their modeling faith their faith that looked for models it brought them through a time of great suffering that wisdom of looking for models helped bring them through a time of great suffering in verse 6 Paul writes 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 these Thessalonian believers they grasped the message of the gospel and not just in a time of ease you know where they had all the time in the world to kick back over coffee and kind of think and understand this and you know the world smiling on them and everyone thinks wow this is a cool new thing that you're that you're doing they were rejected by their community they were rejected by all the people around them who didn't want them to turn from their old way of life didn't want them to reject their old way of life who didn't want this new and disruptive influence in their community yet they grasped the message of the gospel they were empowered by the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit gave them the power not only to receive the word but to endure and the way he did is by making them joyful by making them joyful we see in verse 6 the joy of the Holy Spirit and this is important because despite their circumstances they experienced that joy that joy that is very different from the counterfeit joy that people in Squamish are always running after that people in this town are craving this is not that contentment that comes in that I've seen with people who have all of their needs met all of their small dreams in life fulfilled who have retired and who have enough money to get by and they live in a really gorgeous and beautiful town and go out and play in the mountains and things are great and things are nice and I'm happy I've got all I want this joy isn't the thrill that comes from that adrenaline rush that comes from sexual adventures that comes from intoxicating relationships that comes from a successful business those are all counterfeit happiness those are all counterfeit happiness

the joy of the Holy Spirit unlike those things does not depend on your circumstances we talked about this through the Ecclesiastes series that these false counterfeits of the good life they will fail you they will be taken away from you you are going to lose them at some point you will lose that relationship at some point you will lose the physical ability to experience these experiences that you enjoy at some point you are going to lose that money at some point you are going to lose this season of your life and what will you be left with?

that is not the good life that is not the joy that we are looking for this solid joy this lasting pleasure is a gift do you remember that from Ecclesiastes?

that the preacher encouraged us to enjoy life that this joy was a gift from God and here we see Paul saying that this joy is a gift from the Holy Spirit it depends on the Spirit of God dwelling in us and among us as Christians and it can never be taken away from you it can only be taken away from you if your father stops loving you I think we have already seen he has seen from eternity past who you are and all that you will be and he already decided I love you and I have chosen you so when that love of God gets taken away from you then your joy will be taken and that is never going to happen you have all that you need all ready to enjoy our God and Father you have the good life Jesus offers us his joy he models for us this joy and Jesus told us told his disciples in John chapter 15 these things I've spoken to you the words he's given them he says these things I've spoken to you that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full there's this false idea out there that

[33 : 16] God wants us not to enjoy life that God doesn't want us to be happy that he just wants us to kind of grit our teeth do our duty as mere stoics that is a damnable lie God wants your joy and he wants you to stop settling for something less than the real joy of the Holy Spirit he wants your joy to be full and the joy of Jesus and the joy that the Apostle Paul had the joy that the Holy Spirit gave to them in the harshest of circumstances under the most brutal of treatments a solid and lasting joy that endures even in times of sadness that endures even through suffering and pain and sorrow this underlying solid joy is available to everyone who believes it is available to you you can look to Jesus you can look to the Apostle Paul and you can look to the mature believers in our church as you pattern your lives on them you will learn this joy your faith will become an unforgettable faith an unmistakable faith and a modeling faith and what's going to happen is that once you and I model our lives and our faith on those whom God has given us as examples once we do that then we in turn become models for others as we have been made disciples followers of Jesus Christ so we in turn become disciple makers

I think probably as elders I think our biggest joy one of the things that just gets us most excited is when we see people who were not followers of Jesus Christ become disciples of Jesus Christ and then we see those disciples not just stay disciples learning from others and modeling their lives after others but in turn become disciple makers and model their faith their action their lives for other believers take them under their wings bring them on bring them on oh man what a beautiful thing that is Paul tells the Thessalonians in verse 7 you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia for not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and in Achaia but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything the word of the Lord the gospel message this message that came with the power of the Holy Spirit it was brought to the Thessalonian church and now it is going out from the Thessalonian church it is being broadcast all across the region of Macedonia all across the region of Achaia to the south churches throughout all of these Greek cities are hearing about the power of God and are encouraged people who are not believers are hearing about this group of Christians and the way that they have turned from their old way of life and are now following this Jesus of Nazareth the God man who was raised from the dead

Paul can barely believe it he can hardly believe the influence that this church is having on their corner of the Roman Empire they have not only become disciples of Jesus Christ they are now turned in turn making disciples by becoming a model for other believers to imitate their faith not only a modeling faith it is a model faith for others to copy this is what you and I are meant to become this is what we are meant to be as human beings we are meant not simply to become disciples but to make disciples so that people throughout the world will see the image of God in us we'll see what God is like by looking at our lives seeing the way we talk seeing the way we make decisions seeing the way that we treat the people in our lives our spouses our children our parents our co-workers our neighbors that is what we are meant to be to spread the knowledge of the Lord throughout the world we are meant to communicate the gospel message we are meant to encourage instruct correct other believers we are meant to demonstrate this radically transformed life of a vibrant Christian faith our faith our faith becomes an unforgettable faith an unmistakable faith a modeling faith and then becomes a model faith how do we get there we've seen that God has called us has chosen us we've seen the Holy Spirit works in our lives but maybe you're thinking one day that's nice but what does he do

I've wanted that I've I mean I want to be this kind of person I would love to be this kind of person to look back a year from now and see that God is doing this in me to see that God has a year from now worked in our church to fill it with people who are doing these kinds of things people who are filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit how do we get there how does the Holy Spirit do this how does God transform us into vibrant people how does God transform us into vibrant people how does God transform us into a vibrant church God the Father he has chosen us from eternity past he has sent God the Son to live die rise again on our behalf they have sent God the Spirit to empower us to believe and in verses 9 and 10 Paul shows us the means by which God the Father Son Holy Spirit transform you and me into vibrant people of faith he shows us the means that they can transform Squamish Baptist Church the same way that they transformed the people of the Thessalonian church verse 9 Paul reminds the Thessalonians of their original state their original condition before he came most of them were Gentiles most of them were pagan idol worshipers worshiping Dionysus or worshiping the emperor the emperor or other similar gods of which there were many in the city of Thessalonica this past spring we were studying Paul's letter to the Galatian churches and we've read Paul's assessment of their past lives from Galatians chapter 4 where he writes formerly when you did not know God you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods the Galatians were enslaved to their false gods to their idols to their man-made gods to the things that they were looking for to deliver them that good life they were trying to get and the Thessalonians were also enslaved now idols literal physical idols on your mantle or in a temple you can find them in this corner of the world they're not as common they are very very common in many other parts of the world but here we kind of cut out the intermediary we're going for that deeper thing that the idols can get us the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Colossians in chapter 3 talks about coveting this this craving and desire this greedy desire for things for money, for sex, power, possessions many things that the ancient world personified as idols as gods we're not that much different from them we like to think that we're different all we've done is cut out the middle man we're going directly for those things ourselves just like them, we human beings today are enslaved to them and we will find all the things we will run after anything that can deliver these goods to us that can deliver us this these counterfeit goods this counterfeit good life that we are craving and running after for and we are unable to liberate ourselves from our slavery we are slaves and it is the worst form of slavery because we are slaves who want to remain slaves who love their slavery who don't want to escape

you and I we were not able to break free unless God sent his spirit to give us a new heart a heart filled with hope a heart filled with expectation that there is a better way that the good life that the good life is a life that is free from slavery to these false gods that by the way do not love you do not care about you and will definitely fail you and will ruin you in the process for God to transform you and me into vibrant people for God to transform us into a vibrant church for God to transform us into a vibrant church he must first turn us away from idols he must first turn us away from the counterfeit gods that we follow from the counterfeit good life but this isn't just a turning from slavery to idols into like a complete libertinism like into an anarchy where we throw off all masters and I do whatever I want

[43 : 54] I am free from any outside influence or power first of all that is impossible you are not free from outside influence and power you never will be that is just the nature of human beings the reality is we are always controlled by someone or controlled by something we always fear someone we always fear something someone or something is always at the center of our lives and everything revolves around it that is who we are as human beings it is inescapable it is frankly what we are meant to be what we need is not to be freed from fear which is impossible we need to fear someone who loves us and who seeks our good we don't need to throw off all masters we need a good master we don't need nothing at the center of our lives we need the one true God at the center Paul writes in verse 9 you turn to God from idols to serve the living and true God that is what the Thessalonians did they turned from idols and they turned to serve the living and true God so they exchanged bad capricious unreliable masters for one whose love is steady and constant and never changing they exchanged lifeless joy robbing masters for one who is life giving for one who is life himself they exchanged unreliable and lying and deceitful masters for one who is faithful and true to his word so now for the very first time they have real hope not counterfeit hope the real thing genuine they have great expectations why because they know this God because they know his nature because they know that he is living and true and good and you and I we have to know this too we have to know God for God to transform you and me into vibrant people

God must first turn us away from idols and turn us to serve himself and this service is not some sort of endless drudgery or task like the world paints it as it is not it is hopeful it is hard work but it is hopeful work it is expectant work again in verse 9 Paul writes 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 so because they know the God they serve because they know that his son is alive now and alive forever because they know that he is true to his promise to return to them they wait for his return to wait for his son from heaven that is not this passive apathetic thing like you are just kind of sitting around waiting for something to happen you know it is an active expectant eager longing those of you who are parents do you remember the longing that you had as you waited for your child to be born the women are like oh yeah oh I remember those long months you couldn't wait and you didn't just sit around either you were preparing for it you were excited about it you were longing for it and this is the longing that we are meant to have this expectation that the Holy Spirit gives to empower you to empower me to serve the living and true God to work faithfully we are expecting his son from heaven the wonderful thing is the wonderful thing is this isn't just a future thing we have just a little taste of his presence with us because the Holy Spirit is with us but oh how we long for more oh how we long for more than just that down payment that deposit oh how we long for Jesus Christ to return there is a verse from an old and almost forgotten hymn by Isaac Watts which reads

I love the windows of thy grace through which my Lord is seen that's his present experience that he sees the Lord of God but just through these through dimly through these windows that are cut into the walls and then he says and long to meet my Saviour's face without a glass between it's a difference between talking with someone on FaceTime and having them sitting there with you it's this longing and this expectation that God has placed on our hearts that you and I are meant to have and meant to experience if you feel unsettled in this world like you're not at home good you're not meant to feel like you're at home we are longing for our home to come to us for Jesus Christ to return and we want him to return not just so that he is going to bring bring peace and prosperity and justice to an earth that desperately desperately needs it we do look forward to that we do long for that but more so we long for that because we want him with us we want him we want him to be here with you and with me for his own sake because he is good because he is the good life if Jesus Christ is with us we have the good life and it is never going to be taken from us and we have great expectations that even though we may die even though our bodies may wear out, decay and die away we will rise again from the dead and be given new spiritually alive bodies and meet our savior face to face we have these great expectations because in verse 10 Paul reminds us that

Jesus himself was raised from the dead that is another foreshadowing of something that is going to come Jesus' resurrection was a guarantee of our own Jesus was raised from the dead that is how you know that you will be raised from the dead oh you who believe in him and are united with by faith with Jesus Christ Jesus' resurrection it is like a foreshock a trembling in the earth that comes before the great earthquake there is something coming a great resurrection and Jesus is just the first fruits just the beginning of the harvest there is a future resurrection for all those who are united with Christ by faith and Paul reminds us in verse 10 that we have this great savior he is Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come that word wrath is good news that word wrath is good news because what that means is that one day all of these idols false man-made gods that enslave the human race that have enslaved you and me that drive people to anger and fear and foolishness and despair that bring about all this terrible suffering in the world

God is going to destroy them in his anger and he is right to be angry he is right to be angry at things that hurt that harm that harm his those he loves at things that pull people away from the good life he is meant for them to have he is right to be angry the terrifying truth is this the overwhelming majority of human beings have not just enslaved themselves to these idols they have tied themselves to these idols and the only way to destroy them is to destroy those who have enslaved themselves to them there is wrath coming there are human beings out there who will be destroyed in the wrath of God who will suffer his anger and be condemned to hell if they don't turn away from their evil masters if they continue corrupting the world by pulling people away from what really is the good life but Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come

[52 : 54] Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come he delivers us by liberating us from our love for these evil masters and so we eagerly love him we eagerly look for him we eagerly wait for his return and we have great expectations that these evil masters are going to be destroyed and that we will be delivered you and I will be rescued for God to transform you for God to transform me into vibrant people for God to transform us into a vibrant church he must turn us to expect his son and this is why one commentator writes that expectation lay at the very heart of the Thessalonians faith it was their great expectations it was their future resurrection it was the return of the Lord Jesus Christ that's what the Holy Spirit used to transform them so how does God transform us into vibrant people through great expectations of life from Jesus his son through great expectations of life from Jesus his son only this hope can make you and me steadfast only this hope can give us joy when we are suffering only this hope can make us powerful promoters of the gospel message what's exciting is that from now from now through December we are going to be learning how we cultivate these powerful transforming expectations we are going to be learning what a difference these expectations make in our lives and if we can learn that from these scriptures if we can learn from the words of the Holy Spirit here's what we are going to discover these great expectations are going to make us people with a faith that is unforgettable and unmistakable these great expectations are going to make us people who find models for our faith and in turn model it to others and these great expectations will cause us to turn from idols to serve the living and true God how does God transform us into vibrant people?

it is through great expectations of life from Jesus his son let's turn to our God in prayer God we are responding now in prayer and in singing to what you have told us in your word to the word that your Holy Spirit has given to us and we are looking forward to seeing how you are going to use your word how you are going to cultivate these expectations in your life and I pray that you would nourish that you would grow these expectations in us make us long for the appearing of your son Jesus Christ make us unsatisfied make us hunger now for heavenly food make our heart cry out for God to be with us and as you work that in us would you bring to us a great joy a joy that endures a joy that endures a joy that enables us to work hard and faithfully for you a joy that enables us to remain steadfast and to be profound influence in our church and in our community and throughout the world so that the world may know that Jesus Christ is Lord and that he is coming soon

Amen