

Flourishing in Faith, Hope and Love

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[0 : 0 0] If you would, let's turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter number three. We're going to close out this chapter tonight with a message entitled, Flourishing in Faith, Hope, and Love.

Now, I have a little bit of a fascination with these three words, faith, hope, and love. And as you read through the Bible, have you ever noticed how often these three words pop up together?

We know in 1 Corinthians 13, and there's plenty of other places where faith, hope, and love pop up together. Now, as you read through this, you might say, well, hope doesn't show up in here. The word doesn't show up, but certainly the idea of hope shows up, and they are directly tied together.

And, you know, one of the skills that I find most helpful is when somebody's able to boil down ideas or concepts into a few things that you can get a hold of. It reminds me of growing up, we had a wood stove, and, you know, all winter in Ohio, that's how we heat our houses.

You know, go out to the barn, load up a wheelbarrow, bring it through the snow into the house, and shove it in the wood stove, and, you know, that's how you stay warm.

[1 : 0 6] Now, that also makes your house very dry, that kind of heat source. And so what we'd do is we'd set a pot of water on top of the wood stove to evaporate, you know, and bring some moisture back into the air.

And our well water always left something behind. When it got boiled down, you had these crusty minerals. You know, all the minerals that were in the water, they ended up in the pot. And one of my favorite pastimes was going over to the pot and see how it was looking and, you know, poking the different things because they're all crunch and, you know, all these things.

It's like, that's what's there. That's what's in the water. That's the essence of what it contains once you remove everything else. And I think that's sort of what happens in Paul's mind.

Because Paul had this thing where he's like, I want to talk to you about faith and I want to talk to you about hope and I want to talk to you about love. And if he's going to boil down the Christian life, he's going to come out with those elements of faith, hope, and love.

And he's like, that's what I want to pay attention to. Now, this might sound like, okay, come on, this is really basic, right? We're going to talk about faith and hope and love. Like, we got those. Those are the fundamentals. Like, that's the easy stuff.

[2 : 1 3] That's the small stuff. But is it not true that the foundational building blocks of anything are really what are most important? Because everything else is constructed on top of it.

And if you lose sight of those foundational things, then you've really missed the whole point. And that's kind of what happens. In his care for these new Christians in Thessalonica, he's like, here's what I want to do.

I'm going to pray that your faith is perfected. Really, he's praying that he would have an opportunity to perfect their faith. He's willing to express his desire that God would cause their love to increase and to abound.

And that is related to his desire, they express, that their hearts would be established wholly, established wholly, blameless before the Lord when he returns.

And that's the hope element. And so if you ask Paul, like, what is the core of the Christian life? I think he would say faith, hope, and love. And that's what he also wanted to minister to.

[3 : 19] That's also what he wanted to focus on, saying, how am I going to help these people grow? I want to address their faith, their hope, and their love, those things together. Listen to this phrase. The center of our lives and our ministry to others is a maturing faith, an ever-growing love that establishes our hearts in holiness in hope of Christ's return.

Think about that. Is that not the core of our lives? A maturing faith, ever-growing love that establishes our hearts in holiness in hope of Christ's return.

Looking forward to Christ's return. So let's do this. Let's pray, and then we will get into the last part of chapter 3 and look at these elements and how they're laid out. Father, we come to you tonight. And Lord, I thank you for your word.

Thank you for the truth that's contained in it. It is truth. It is your word. It has been given to us, passed down through the centuries, to be where we are today, having this book to open in front of us to know you, so that our faith might be whole, so that we might love you and love others around us, and so that we might be prepared for the day that you return.

God, tonight I pray that you would help our hearts and minds to be focused upon your word. Help us to be ready to hear and to receive. Lord, I pray that we'd never lose track of what this Christian life is all about.

[4 : 45] Lord, there's many things that would pull at our attention. And Lord, I pray that we would stay focused upon what is most important. We pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. So 1 Thessalonians chapter number 3, let's start in verse number 9, and we're just going to read down to verse number 13, and then we'll back up to the top and take it one verse at a time. Look at the scripture with me.

For what thanks can we render to God again for you for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before God? I do want to make a comment here.

This is kind of where we left off last week. Last week we talked about the hardship they faced, the pressure cooker of persecution, and the fact that there was an incredible amount of hardship, but with that there was an incredible amount of joy too.

He says, listen, there is so much joy that I have and I don't even know how to express it to God. Because he is at work in the Thessalonians' lives. Look with me at verse number 10. Night and day, praying exceedingly that we might see your face and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

[5 : 50] Now God himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way into you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men, even as we do toward you.

To the ends he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

All right, let's back up to the beginning and let's look at this. Starting in verse number 10, here's your first blank. Perfected faith. Perfected faith. This is where this begins. How is Paul going to minister to these people?

How is he going to encourage them and help them? Again, these are young Christians, new in the faith, suffering a whole lot, trying to work out what is it that I'm supposed to be doing in this new Christian life, right?

You come from a pagan background. It's not like your grandpa and your parents were Christians. Like you're new to this thing and you have very little foundation. So what do you need to know?

[6 : 54] It's like Paul saying, if I can tell you the basics of what you need to know, let me tell you this. I desire, I'm praying that I could come see you and perfect your faith.

That statement continues, my faith aligned with the faith. Now I want to explain that a little bit. Would you read with me verse number 10? Night and day, praying exceedingly that we might see your face and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

You see what the problem was with their faith, where it says your faith, their faith had problems, did it not? What does it say? It's lacking. And when you're perfecting something in Bible language, that means that you are bringing something to completion.

You're making it whole. You're filling in all the gaps. And so what's going on is he's saying the faith has come to you. And when we say the faith, we're talking about the body of Christian truth that had come to them, the word of God that had come to them and had been delivered to them, right?

Paul and Timothy and Silas, they roll into town and they're like, let me tell you about Jesus. Here's who he is. Here's what he did for you. He is the king of kings. He is the Lord of lords and you need to believe in him and he will save you, right?

[8 : 07] They were delivered this body of truth. Now he says, listen, they genuinely were Christians, right? They had believed the gospel. They had gotten saved. But their faith wasn't complete yet.

It had gaps. It had lack. It had areas that needed help. And he says, your faith is not all the way there with the faith, right? Because the faith, the body of truth that we've received, you need to get a hold of all of that.

And it might sound like, you know, this is pretty basic. We need to know the scripture. Amen. That's true. But here's why this matters so much. It matters so much because everybody has a faith.

I want to work carefully in these words. Everybody has a faith. Everybody has a belief system. Those are kind of the words that stick in my mind. That's your next two blanks.

Faith in terms of a belief system. Everybody has a way, a system of beliefs about God, about the world, about man, about life, about how man relates to God.

[9 : 09] Everybody, everywhere in the world, has some faith, some system of beliefs. Even if they would claim no faith, they have a system of faith, a theology, if you will.

Everybody has a theology. It's not even always stated, but everyone has it. It's the totality of our beliefs about God, about man, about life, the world. You might say, your worldview, right?

A Christian worldview or, you know, a biblical, a scriptural worldview. And it's incredibly practical because what we believe, it shapes all of our life.

every aspect of your life and of my life is formed and shaped by what we believe. You can't get around that. So, it's very important for us to have our faith be the faith that has been received, the faith that God has given us in His Word.

You know, I read this quote one time and it just stuck in my mind for some reason. This person said this, they said, you live what you believe and everything else is just talk. You live what you believe and everything else is just talk.

[10 : 19] You can have a doctrinal statement, but your life is going to show what your doctrinal statement actually is. What you believe. And he says, your faith has some gaps.

Your faith has some lack. And so, Paul's prayer was like, God, give me the opportunity to come to these people and to help them in their faith, to fill in all the gaps with God's truth.

And that might have meant that there were some areas that needed to be, you know, kind of trimmed out and it's like, okay, let's take your faith, let's remove this part and let's replace it with God's truth because God has given us the faith and that needs to be your faith too.

I think about the passage in Jude, Jude 3, it says this, Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith, there's that term again, the faith, which was once delivered unto the saints.

You see, there is a body of truth that God has graciously given to us. Isn't that incredible? That God, through the years and through the generations, truth has been delivered to us.

[11 : 29] That is the faith, the Christian faith. And it is, it is vital. We cannot, it is kind of funny, this feels very much like the, what is it, preaching to the choir, right?

We are here together on Thursday night, you love the Lord, you study the Bible, many of you teach the Bible. This matter of the faith, we can't overlook it, right?

Because as soon as we move away from the faith, that is where all the problems are going to start. And that is really what happens with the Thessalonians because when you get down to chapter number four, he is going to start dealing with some of the very specific issues that they had in their faith, right?

Their faith was not complete, it wasn't in line with God's truth. And so he is going to say, you've got problems with the way you use your body, you've got problems with work, you've got problems with how you look at the future, at the second coming of Christ.

He is going to go through and work through all those things. When he gets into chapter five, he is going to say, listen, you need to know how to walk before God and you need to know how to relate to one another. All of those things are faith matters.

[12 : 34] Their faith needed, perfected. This faith that we've received, there's a couple things to think about with it. And I believe, these are not on here, but I wrote these out and it's like thinking about what is this faith that we've been given?

It is a treasure. It's a valuable faith. It's a treasure that has been passed down to us. This faith is attacked and opposed. Oftentimes, and especially in the Thessalonians' world, it was brazenly, brazenly opposed.

They're being brought in before the civic leaders saying, you guys are committing treason by this truth that you're believing, by this faith that you've received. It's also subtly eroded.

Truth is subtly eroded. Always, always. Satan, what is his scheme? To inject lies, to question God's word, to question the faith, the truth, to oppose it.

And as we've said, it is incredibly practical that it forms our lives and transforms our lives. We can never forget, never forget, that beliefs and actions, you can't separate those two.

[13 : 46] They are so deeply interconnected. Something to know in this. Something to think about. But where you might have difficulty, weakness in, say, in putting off sin or in something that you know you ought to do but you don't do, you know, either way, whether things that we know we shouldn't do but we do or things that we should do but we don't do, I'm convinced that every single one of those things is a gap in our belief.

There's something that we, we don't truly believe what we say. And I think one of the most important things you can do is sit down and say, okay, I'm in this place, I have this problem, there's this thought process that goes in my head and it's like my, my heart, like I want to follow the Lord and certainly our flesh, it opposes us, it opposes walking with the Lord but there's a gap in our believing that we might need to look and say, hey, what needs to be done here?

And so what happens? What was the solution? It's like, okay, you've got gaps in your faith, your belief system is weak and it needs help and so what happens? Here's your next few blanks. Paul, what did he do? He sent a minister.

He sent a minister. He sent somebody to go help them. Even though at this time when this scripture was written, Paul couldn't go to them himself. What did he do? He sent Timothy. You remember that?

He says, I couldn't bear not knowing how you're doing and how your faith is doing, right? That was the core of the whole thing and it almost sounds a little like negligent or unkind to not say, listen, I'm praying a hedge of protection around you.

[15 : 20] I'm praying for your well-being, right? I'm praying that you don't get taken and beaten and persecute all these things. But he said, no, no, no. The most important thing is how is your faith?

Are you standing in the faith? So he sent a minister. He sent Timothy. He also sent letters. That's your next blank. Paul sent letters and that is what we are holding and reading tonight is the letters.

They said, man, I can't go right now but I have a letter to write to you and God, this was God-breathed, God's word that came to them and also helped them and strengthened them.

What else did Paul do? He asked for opportunity. He asked for an opportunity. That's your next blank. Paul asked for God for an opportunity to go see them. Did you notice that? Let me read verses 10 and 11 one more time.

I think these words are so powerful. He says, night and day. Do you feel the intensity in that? You ever had something that has just been on your mind night and day? Like all the time you're just eating up with it?

[16 : 17] You just can't get away from it? It's like, this, what is going on in my world? It's completely overtaken by one thought, one desire, one question. Paul's like, you know what's eating me up?

I just want your faith to grow and I am asking God night and day, look at what he says, that we might see your face and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith verse 11.

Now God himself and our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you. And this leads us into the last blank there. Paul trusted God to direct his way.

See, this is one of the things that I just, this passage has so many elements of what man, what God is going to use men to do and what only God can do.

Now, I probably said that in a weird way, but did you see that? Paul is saying, I want to come help you and help your faith, but who's going to bring me to you to help your faith? God himself, he is going to direct my way.

[17 : 21] It was a statement of trust because there's times when it's like, you might be thinking about somebody. There might be somebody right now in your life that's like, man, I just really need to help them with their faith.

They're struggling, they need truth, they need something, and you know what? I just don't know how to get it to them. Maybe you don't have the words to say. Maybe you don't feel like you have the relationship, right?

You don't feel like you have the trust to communicate something to them. It might be that there's genuinely, I think of, Graham, your testimony. It might be that you physically can't be with this person that's on your heart.

But what does God do? God himself directs our way. Isn't that incredible? He directs your way. It's not just that God was directing Paul, but he directs your path as well.

And so Paul, he deeply trusted, he said, man, I'm trusting God that God is going to lead me, guide me, make a way for me to get back there, to overcome Satan's hindrance. Remember, that was a big thing. He said, I would have come once and again, but Satan hindered.

[18 : 22] God was going to overcome that. That was his confidence. So a couple things to think about before we move to the next portion, right? Because he's talking about faith, a perfected faith. We can get to love in a second.

But think about these things. How well are you established in the faith? You might be saved. You might be baptized. You might be a member of this church. You might serve in some capacity.

Praise God for all of those things. But this matter of the faith, is it something that we ever check off the box and it's like, I got it down.

I can move on. Right? I don't need to pay attention to the faith. No, I don't think it ever is. This scripture, this book is alive and it's powerful and it works in your life.

You can never just set aside the faith like, yep, put it on a shelf, got it, move on with life. Never, never, never, never. And it might even be that if you were honest, you'd be like, you know, I've got to this level, but there's some things up here that I just really, I don't have a grasp on.

[19 : 26] I don't, if someone was to ask me about them, I don't know how to answer them. Why don't you go after those things? Why don't you go learn those things? Why don't you get in the word and go study them for yourself?

Why don't you get with someone else who's further down the road that would help you, that might help perfect your faith, fill in the gaps in your faith? That would be something you could do.

Something else to think about. Who are you meeting with to help their faith? Did you notice what he said? He said, I want to come see your face. I want to come be with you. You know, one of the amazing things about conversation is how quick the feedback loop is.

You know what I'm talking about? When you sit down with somebody and you're talking about a subject, you get information from nonverbal cues that you don't get when you text somebody or send an email or things like that.

Like, you can sit down with somebody and say, hey, Jesus is God. And they might be like, wait, what? You know something about their faith in that moment. That matter of face-to-face ministry.

[20 : 27] Or you might say, you know, this is what the scripture says about this area of our lives. And you're like, you know, I don't know about that. You know something about their faith. Faith-to-face. So it might be that you want to look and say, man, how can I be helping people's faith?

If you are in that place, it's like, man, I would love to do that. Why not ask God? I would love to do foundations with somebody. I would love to witness to somebody. I would love to help somebody. But I just, I don't really even know to begin.

Why don't you start where Paul started. Ask God for the opportunity to sit down face-to-face and to help someone's faith. All right, we got to continue on. Now, the second heading there is this, overflowing love.

Overflowing love. My love kindled knowing God's love for me. Overflowing love. Because look what happens. Would you go with me down to verse number 12? You start off with faith and you said, man, I want your faith to be perfected.

And I want to do everything I can and I'm asking God to help me to come help your faith. Now, let's talk about love. Overflowing love. Look what the scripture says. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men even as we do toward you.

[21 : 36] Now, the sentence continues but we need to pause for a second because there is just a gold mine here to look into. First off, would you notice two distinctions? There's two differences that are two transitions that take place between verse number 11 and verse number 12.

First off, he starts off in verse number 10, praying. God, would you direct my way? Let me go see them. Let me go help their faith. But how does he start off verse number 12?

Is he asking God to let him do something? Is he asking God to do something? Let's read one more time and think about this. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another and toward all men even as we do toward you.

What is that? That's a desire. That's an expression of man, I just want to see God help your love. To make, and look at what he says, the Lord make you.

That brings us to the other distinction where in verse number 10 he's saying, I want to come help your faith, but now he's looking at their love and he's saying, the Lord make your love abound.

[22 : 50] There's some distinctions there and I think they're really important. One of the important things about that is I can't make you love people. You can't make anyone love people.

But what does he say that God can do? The Lord make your love to increase and to abound. Think about that. That's something that God does in people's hearts.

And Paul, he very well knew that and he's like, you know, I'm going to trust this to God and I'm just going to come before you and say, man, this is what I'm expecting that God is going to do in your life. I'm expecting that, this is my desire and I believe it would be fair for us to say that this was also God's desire for them that their love would increase and abound and this is something that God would do.

And so how does God make our love to increase and abound? Because it is the fruit of the Spirit, right? The fruit of the Spirit is love. That's the very first portion of that passage.

Love that flows to other believers, we see that where he says this love that would be expressed towards their brothers and express the love that would flow to all men.

[24 : 02] How does this happen? Well, there's a couple things here. First off, God gives us examples. I think we see there in verse number 12 where he says, you see that last bit? He says, even as we do towards you, they had recognized that Paul was somebody who truly, genuinely loved them.

self-sacrificing, just loved them, like, hey, I'm going to do whatever I can to help you know and follow Jesus. God gives us examples. Now, when we, and this is where we get those elements of what God does and how God uses us in the lives of others.

God gives us examples like flesh and blood examples of love, but God himself is the one who teaches us love. Would you flip over with me to chapter 4 for just a second, or it might even be on the same page?

It is for me. In verse number 9, listen to these words. But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

Do you see the way that Paul views this aspect of our Christian life, of love? He's like, God's the one who's teaching you to love. Because here's the thing about love.

[25 : 12] We all know what it is to be selfish, to be lovers of self more than lovers of God, to be lovers of self more than lovers of other people. But he says, you know what I know about God?

God, he teaches us brotherly love. He teaches us self-sacrificing love. It is something that God teaches. God also, he gives us a church to encourage us.

He gives us a church to encourage us. Let's read verse number 10 right there. He says, and indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in Macedonia, but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.

Now this is where it gets interesting, right? Because what is Paul's desire and confidence? God teaches people how to love. Paul's like, I don't need to teach you how to love. And I know that God will make love to increase and abound in your heart.

But he also says, man, I want to urge you on. He says, I beseech you that you would increase more and more in love. God puts people around us to encourage us to love, to support love, to nurture love.

[26 : 17] It's much like what happens in Hebrews 10, 24 where what are we doing? We are provoking one another to, can you fill in the blank for me? There's two things, right? Love and good works.

Isn't that interesting? Right? We are part of helping one another love, but ultimately it comes down to, man, God is the one who teaches us love. God shows his love to us.

Think about 1 John chapter number 4. In 1 John, what do we know about love? Why do we love God? Because he first loved us, right? And so there's an element of, you know, how are you going to grow in love?

How am I going to grow in love? How is there going to be like a level of love in my life that just keeps going up and up and up? Because if I'm honest with you, there's times when it's like, I don't want to, I don't want to try and love anybody anymore.

It's like, I got enough to deal with, got enough of my own problems. I like sacrificing for other people. It's like, I like you guys, but I don't know if I want to go beyond into expressing that kind of love.

[27 : 18] But what happens is when we know the love of God, we love him more. And when we live and walk in love to God, certainly, doesn't love just begin to flow out of our lives as well?

Think about that. This is so important. God is love. As his love is known, experienced, lived in, looked upon, savored, and received, it generates love within us that flows out of us.

What do we need? We just need to know more of God's love. That kind of connects to the faith, right? Our faith being matured and growing, our love continuing to grow. And then finally, we come down to the last portion.

Hearts established holy in hope. There's an extra in there. You can cross that out. Hearts established holy in hope. Hearts established holy in hope.

When we get to love abounding, Paul's going to say, let me tell you what that results in. What does abounding love, growing love, result in?

[28 : 27] Would you read with me verse number 13? To the end, he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

This verse took me a while because it's a little dense. It's connected to what comes before. It's like, okay, what's happening here? These are a lot of words that we don't put together all the time.

But what's happening? Think first about to the end. To the end. It's like saying, this is the result of your abounding love. God making our love to increase and abound to the end that this would happen.

Or like, for this reason. That's what's happening here. That's the connection. It's like, love is growing to the end that your heart would be established holy in hope.

And there's a word in there that we can't forget. He says, unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father. Okay, so what's happening here? God desires that as our love would grow, our hearts would be established in holiness.

[29 : 31] Now, why does he say hearts? Why does he say hearts and maybe not say something more like that you would live holy lives? Well, I think it's because the heart, you know, that refers to the inner man.

That refers to who we are on the inside. And what do we know about the relationship between the heart and everything else in our lives? Proverbs 4.23 tells us, keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it, the heart, are all the issues of life.

He says, love establishes our hearts and holiness because, and that's what matters because everything else proceeds out of that. Was it not also said that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks?

every action and behavior problem is a heart problem. It all comes from the heart. And that's why it all has to begin in the heart that love would increase.

And this is all looking forward to the day that we would stand before Jesus Christ. And that's where the hope part comes in, right? Because this is so, this is so, oh man, this matters so much.

[30 : 38] we so often forget that that is our destination. That is where our, the life of the believer is heading to that day when we stand before him.

Now there's a couple elements of that. The fact that our life, my Christian life is heading to that day, that brings a seriousness and a soberness to today, right?

Because what's going to matter, the things that I'm caught up in today, you know, a strong, a high percentage of them are not going to matter that much on that day. Right?

There's a lot of things that we get, we get caught up in, we get tied up in, our attention gets put upon that's not really going to matter that much in that day. It does that. It gives us a reason that we would, we would choose to, to live for God today.

because again, remember, this is a desire that's being expressed. This is a possibility that, you know, that God, he will establish our hearts in love. But there's a, there's a part of this that takes place, that's a choice for us.

[31 : 50] You remember what Jesus said to the Ephesian church? You've left your first love. He says, come back to your first love. Right? They were even doing all the, they were doing a lot of good things, but he says, come back to your first love.

Talking to Christians, talking to believers. And so this matter of love and love and how it generates holiness in our lives, like, you can't get past that. Right? That is just foundational, fundamental to the Christian life.

This connection is going to show up so strongly in chapter four when we get into other elements of holy, of a holy life and how that, how that's all based upon love, love in our hearts.

You know, the other thing about this that sticks out in my mind is like, why does he connect love increasing and hearts established in holiness?

Like, why do those things go together? Why do those things rise and fall together? Because the problem is that we often think that external measures, external devices are going to make us holy.

[32 : 58] Right? if you just give somebody the right rules, they'll do well. If you just give somebody enough accountability, they'll do better. If you would just maybe teach or inform or instruct, someone could, you know, they could improve their life.

But see, here's the thing. Here's your next few blanks. Self-help might polish up the outside, but it's not going to take care of the heart. Rules, your next blank, rules, they might reign in actions, but it won't take care of the heart.

Only God's love, here's the last two blanks, only God's love can transform the heart and desires of men. And when I say men, of all people, right?

That's what God's love does. And so we have to look and say, okay, what is the core of the Christian life? What is the center of the Christian life? Is it not these things? Faith, hope, love?

That's the core of the whole thing. And they are connected one to the other. It's like this train that goes along. A perfected faith, a love that we're allowing God to grow and that would abound, that would overflow in our hearts, that would establish our hearts in holiness so that when we stand before Him, we would stand unblameable before Him.

[34 : 19] Can I give one more thing on that idea of established holy and hope that I think is so important? Ben and I were discussing this. Think about your own heart for a second.

We know that the Scripture tells us that the heart is desperately wicked, right? It's deceitful. Who can know it? Think about your own heart. I'm thinking about my own heart. Who would have thought that this heart could be considered holy in the presence of God?

Doesn't the presence of God just search out everything? It lays everything bare. It just opens all the books, opens every locked door, and it just lays it all out.

Isn't that what the presence of God does? And the thought that one day what God is doing in my life and in your life right now is preparing us for that day.

You know, there's the salvation, but sanctification is also just a vital part of the Christian life. What God is doing today, preparing us for that day, is an incredible work that we could not do on our own, that God is doing in our hearts and lives, and it's an incredible thing.

[35 : 33] And what's left for us to do, what's left for us to do is say, yes, Lord, and to participate with it and to say, you know, I'm not going to, what is, oh, last week Evans preached from Ephesians where it talks about, what, with the Holy Spirit?

That's it, grieving the Holy Spirit, right? Of saying no to what the Lord is doing in our hearts and lives. It's an incredible thing that God wants to do in our lives. Paul's boiled it down for us.

And so, let me give you a couple things just to think about. Do you see from this passage just the wonderful thing that God wants to do in your heart and life? Right? He wants to increase and abound the love in your heart.

He wants to establish your heart holy so that when you stand before Him, we'd be unblameable. And right now, He loves you and He's working in you and that preparation, it's happening now.

And so, would you participate in the process? How is your faith? Your system of beliefs? Are there weaknesses? Are there gaps? Are there areas that you need to learn and grow? Don't set those aside.

[36 : 36] Go after them. Let God work. Allow others to speak into your life and help you with Scripture to get a hold of the faith. How's your love? How's your love? Love is at the core of the Christian life.

What does He say in 1 Corinthians? Those three abide. Faith, hope, charity, and the greatest of these is charity. The greatest of these is love. Would you turn to God, open the door of your heart to Him, and allow Him to fan the flames of your love for Him and for those around you?

It may not be said about us that we left our first love and we stayed gone. That was not a way to live the Christian life. Would you bow with me? Father, we come to You. Lord, I thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the truth that is contained in it, the things that You give us to know You and live for You and to follow You.

Lord, You're doing a wonderful work in hearts and lives, and I pray that we would enroll in the process of Your working in our hearts. Lord, thank You for the people that You put in our lives to help our faith, to fill in the gaps.

And Lord, I pray that in this congregation, love would always abound in our hearts, that holiness would grow, our hearts would be established in holiness. Lord, we thank You for Your love.

[37 : 54] Thank You for Your goodness. Praise things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.