

(Sermon Preparation) Lecture 06

by Alan Redpath

Alan Redpath's sermon emphasizes the exemplary faith, love, and hope of the Thessalonian church as a model for Christians today.

Duration: 41:35

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 1:1

Topics: "Sermon Preparation"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by apologizing for the time and cultural differences. He then expresses gratitude to the audience for allowing themselves to be subjected to his treatment. The speaker mentions his hope of finding time to finish defining the approach to a subject in preaching. The main focus of the sermon is on the study of a chapter in the Bible and the questions that arise from it. The audience is asked to identify the main theme of the chapter, which is determined to be greeting and sharing the gospel. The speaker emphasizes the idea that serving a living and true God means giving up all rights to oneself. The concept of steadfastness of hope is discussed, with hope being defined as expecting Jesus' coming. The speaker highlights the example of faith, hope, and love demonstrated by the early Christians, noting their working faith, love that labored, and hopeful attitude. The sermon concludes with a call to read Acts 17 to witness the perseverance and impact of the early Christians despite facing challenges and opposition.

Transcript

Thank you. Please be seated. Now we have just about thirty-five, forty minutes or so, and we're going to look at one chapter in the Bible, 1 Thessalonians, chapter one, and we're going to ask Mike? Mike? William.

I thought it was Mike. William, to read it to us. Now, just listen and watch how he reads it.

But just a minute, William. 1 Thessalonians, chapter one. Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace and peace to you.

We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before all God and Father your work produced by faith and labor promoted by love and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Brothers, loved by God, we know that He has chosen you because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord in spite of severe suffering. You welcomed the message with joy given by the Holy Spirit.

And you being a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia, the Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it. For they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us.

They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. Could you all hear, Terri? No. You couldn't.

Otherwise, all clear? Yes? You could all understand? No? A little bit... Soft. Soft? Oh, I see what you mean, yes. Hesitant in places also.

Any other comments? Favorable or unfavorable? There aren't many people. Well, William, I'm subject to this, but I know you can take it. Yes? Well, yes, I know, but... Trouble is, you see, if you read the word from where he comes from, they'd be saying the same thing about you and me.

That's the problem. So that... I could also have said that, but I understand what you mean. But they cannot comment on accents.

Yes? Commas and stops? Mm-hmm, yes. Not using commas, stops, and periods. Any other comment? Because it's very unreal, asking somebody to do it, and it's not really fair on them, because it's a totally different setup to what you'd normally have.

And also, I just plunged on him on very short notice. It wasn't really fair. So all those things you have to make account of.

I would just say, as a general principle, somebody, I don't know who it was, was very helpful to me after I'd spoken about platform technique and voice production, and the importance of standing up straight, perhaps waving your arms around, getting your breath coming, and speaking clearly. I don't know whether William did this. I couldn't tell from behind him.

But I wonder, did he think about how he was using his voice at all, and was it coming from here, or from here? You wouldn't know. But when you're reading the Word in public, the first thing is to be sure that people are ready for it. That is, you've announced the portion of Scripture at least twice, and you give them time to find it, so they can follow you.

The unfortunate thing is, they probably are reading from a different version. But you can't help that. Were you reading from the NIV, William? So most people here would be able to follow you clearly.

But as usual, it's better, I think, to say twice what the portion is, and just hold it a moment until the rustle of leaves ceases, and they've found the place. I think William could vary the pitch of his voice a bit, up and down, not maintaining on the same level. That's the only comment I would have about it.

And when you finish, I always like to say, but it's my own peculiarity perhaps, this is the Word of God. Or just some comment. Or the usual phrase in Anglican churches here ends the reading of something of this kind.

Some Anglican churches, this is the Word of the Lord. And everybody, the congregation responds, Blessed be the name of the Lord. But that's purely cultural, and not important.

Putting more expression into it, I think would help. Into the sentences. But well done, and thank you so much for allowing yourself to be subjected to that treatment.

I promise I won't do it again. I'm hopeful of just squeezing in one hour next week somewhere, so that I may finish those definitions of approach to a subject in preaching. But this morning, for the remainder of our time, exactly 30 minutes, we're going to concentrate on together the study of getting something out of the chapter that was read to us.

This would be therefore exposition of the Word of God, of a chapter in the Word. And we could ask ourselves the questions that you have down in your notebook. What is the chapter all about? What's the main theme of it? How would you answer that question? Quick.

What would you say the chapter is about? Greeting? Greeting to the church and their example. Yes. Somebody else said something there.

Yes. Greeting to the church and their example and the Christian life, from verse 5 on. That's all right.

Anybody else got a suggestion? Yes. Response to the gospel on whose part? Thessalonians. Their response to the gospel.

Yes. Those are all valid. And they all tell us what it's about.

Yes, Tessa? Yes. Three great qualities of Christian living. Right.

First of all, I can't allow it to go on too long. First of all, you need to remember how the church in Thessalonica was formed. How it began.

And for that, you would read Acts chapter 17. And you would learn from it that the missionaries only were able to stay three weeks. And they were driven out.

Expelled. Paul, Silvanus, by the way, that name is really as well, equally, Silas. Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

To the church, Thessalonians, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, relating the Father with the Son. Right away.

Grace to you and peace. Peace is always the result of grace. Grace to you and peace.

You want to try and let a window, remember what I said about a text being a window? Try and find a place in this chapter where you can let a window in. Somebody gave the clue to it when they said this church, this letter is about the Thessalonian church and it being, you said, what was the word you used? An example? That's right. Where is that found? Verse 7. So that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

This church, then, is the model church. The model church. It became an example.

Come back to that in a minute. Someone else pointed out the three great Christian virtues, this church had. We thank God always for you all, constantly remembering you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith, your labor of love, your patience of, or steadfastness of hope.

Three words there, I've ringed round, faith, love, hope. And I've called it three-dimensional Christianity. 3D Christianity.

Faith, that's depth. Love, that's breadth. Hope, that's length.

Faith, depth. Love, breadth, hope, length. Pause there when you get that far and say to yourself, well, I know lots of people who've got a lot of faith, but no love.

I've got a lot of depth, but no breadth. And I know quite a lot of people who've got a lot of love, but they've got no faith, no depth. They live on experience, hugging each other.

And I know a lot of people who've got no hope. But when you meet someone who's got faith, hope, love, you meet a 3D Christian. That's three qualities worth noting.

Faith, hope, love. OK? Say something more about that in a minute. Come back to the fact that somebody mentioned just a second ago, that I'll refer to.

It became an example. Now you want to let a window in there. What's that word really mean? Oh, thinking it through.

Go back to John chapter 20, in verse 2. Not verse 2. John chapter 20. First Easter day. Remember? Easter Sunday evening.

Jesus stood with them. The disciples were shut in because of fear of the Jews. And then Jesus showed them his hands on his side.

Verse 20. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you, as the Father hath sent me, so you can so I send you.

And when he said this, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, We have seen the Lord. But he said, Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, place my finger in the mark of the nails, place my hand on his side, I won't believe.

And a week later, the disciples were there again, and this time Thomas was there. And Jesus came, stood among them and said, Peace be with you. And he said to Thomas, Put your finger here and see my hands.

Put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not be faithless but believing. And Thomas answered them, My Lord, and my God.

Now what's that to do with 1 Thessalonians 1? This. The word used for, in John 20, verse 25, for the print of the nails is exactly the same word as is used in 1 Thessalonians in verse 7. Example. The word is tupos, t-u-p-o-s.

It means a blow, a mark. And what the print of the nails were to Thomas, the Thessalonian Christians were to everybody where they went. They bore the mark.

You became an example. They had on them the marks. To me, that's a window right in to what Paul is saying.

Incidentally, I don't think that Thomas ever did put his hand into Jesus' side. Or touch the print of the nails. He invited him to, but I don't think he ever did.

I think he fell flat on his face and said, My Lord, and my God. He'd seen the evidence. No, you need to, as you're thinking this through, for something you're going to say, you need to say, Lord, put your marks on me.

Never, never study a verse of the Bible without saying, What is this to say to me? You want to say, Lord, put your marks on me. Let there be evidence. Evidence.

Unmistakable evidence of reality. You became an example. Now, how did you become an example? Well, that's already been suggested.

Because of these three great qualities they had. Faith. Love.

Hope. It was amazing the church ever survived. Read in your own time Acts 17 and you'll be amazed.

Riots, street marches, protests, assassinations, imprisonment, the lot. But they survived. Not only survived, but became an example.

How? Notice anything special about faith, hope and love? Notice anything special about their faith, hope and love? Verse 3. What should we say about it? Yes. Pardon me? Come on, we're getting near it now. What did he do? Yes.

How? Yes. But how? Yes. But wait a minute.

That's right. That is attached to each of those words. Yes.

No, wait. Stop. Work of faith.

Yes. Put that another way around. What kind of faith had they? A working faith.

Okay. A faith that worked. They had a faith that worked.

Right. What about their love? Pardon me? A love that labored. That's it.

A love that labored. Right. What about their hope? Their hope endured.

Yes. That's right. An easier word than that.

Non-stop. Lasted? Yes. All right.

That I'll take. I'll buy that. In other words, they had a faith that worked, a love that labored and a hope that endured.

Right. How did their faith work? How did their love labor? How did their hope endure? I wouldn't say that was how, but it was perhaps the cause, one of the causes of it. Yes, that's also one of the causes of it.

But what were the evidences? What were the evidences of having faith that worked and love that labored and hope that lasted? What were the signs of it? Pardon me? Yes. Yes. Right.

How did they live their life? Well, what evidences are here? Ah, we're getting there now. Who said that? Return, you said. Yes.

You're on it now. Keep on it. Keep on it.

Keep on the trail. Snip it out. She's on it.

She's got it nearly. Come on. Yes.

That's right. Now, don't say that again. Yes, but the whole thing, say it again.

How did their faith work? Yes. No, wait, stop. That's all right.

That's enough. Their faith worked because they turned to God from idols. Right? How did their love labor? They served the living and true God.

How did their hope endure? Waited for a certain moment. That's it. That's quite it.

You're answering the whole thing there, see. It was the evidences of them being an example. Their faith worked.

Their love labored. Their hope endured. All right.

Let's ask ourselves one or two questions about those three things. How did their faith work? You've already said it, but let's hear it again from somebody. How did their faith work? They turned to God from idols.

What does that mean? Pardon me? Certainly does mean repentance. But what else does it mean? Pardon? Taking action. Yes.

That's right. Taking action. What do you say? Pardon? Trust.

Yes. But what does it mean to turn from idols? Yes. Yes.

Change of masters. Yes. Yes.

Yes. But I'm thinking of this in terms of your own life. To turn from idols to God from idols for them would be turning from idols of stone.

What does it mean to us? Pardon? That's one thing. That's it. You didn't know.

Who said that? Turning from turning from yourself to God. That's right. Your faith works.

Because it means you've turned from self to Christ. All right? That's good. But then apply that to your own life.

You didn't do it publicly. You didn't do it, say it aloud. Take one minute, sixty seconds to apply that personally, what it means to you.

What particular thing or what particular situation does it mean in which you turn? Or you have turned in your life. Turn from X to God. The root of it is self.

But you've turned from to God. Just take a few seconds to think that through. Does your faith work? Third word? Reverse it.

Is it possible for me, for you, to turn from God to idols? To reverse the procedure? Very easy. Can you turn from God to idols? Yes? Or no? If you do so, will you be happy? That's unanimous. Right? If you are not a Christian, not a genuine Christian, if you are merely putting up a performance and a pretense and hiding behind a mask, if you turned from God to idols, then you'd be happy, wouldn't you? No.

No. You mean in no case would you be happy if you did that? That's lovely, yes. Thank you for your honesty.

Certainly. Yes. Sure.

Yes. Yes. No.

That's a good statement. No idol is great enough for us. Of God, you mean? Or idols? Yes.

Of idols. Yes. In other words, you're always wanting more.

But you say you couldn't be happy in serving idols. But there's pressure in sin. And if you do it for the first time, somebody says, it's fun.

No. The thing that I'm trying to get out from you is this. If you're a genuine Christian, you're born again, you can turn from God to idols.

But the proof that you're a genuine Christian is that you will be miserable, if you do. Right? The Holy Spirit will make you miserable. Right? But it's possible.

On the other hand, if you're not a Christian, you can have a measure of happiness living like that. Serving idols. Because every very accepted believer is doing so.

And there's happiness, there's pleasure in it. But only brief. OK? Now, they turn to God from idols.

That's turning from myself to Jesus. What else did they do? Their love labored. They served a living and true God.

They became examples. In what way would you say that that is evidence of reality in our love? Their labor of love. They served a living and true God.

Give me an example of reality in that. In your life. What do you expect to see of someone who serves a living and true God? Just say a bit louder.

That's good. It is done without any expectation of return. That's good.

Give me another example of serving a living and true God. You don't care how much it costs. You don't mean in terms of dollars and cents.

Yes. All right. But, not only is it money, but there's something else.

Yes. That's a good statement. Whatever God gives to you, you don't keep for yourself.

Yes? Something else? That's right. You're not afraid of being vulnerable. In other words, when you're serving a living God, you put your life at risk.

You're open to hurt. Yes? Someone else? Yes. Very important.

It doesn't really matter. You sacrifice your reputation. It doesn't matter anymore.

Yes? Being RFA. Ready for anything. It's a great thing to be an RFA Christian.

Yes? Something else? Yes. I see what you're getting at. You have to wait till the Lord tells you what to do.

That's true. There's something else I want out of that quickly from somebody. You're sensitive to the real need of the person.

Yes? Yes. Sensitive to their real needs inside. Ready to serve.

We rejoice in the Lord, you see? Yes. You do it for Yes. Rejoicing in Him.

Yes. Yes. Yes.

Now, we're getting near it now. We're just about on the punchline which I want to hear from somebody. Ready? Pardon? Yes.

Yes. Pardon? Longing to share the gospel with the fire of God in your heart. Yes.

I'm just almost bursting with one thing I want to get out. I'm not letting it out. Yes.

Yes. Yes. I'm... You almost said it.

Unconditional love. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes.

You're really saying... It's not fair to hold it. You're really saying what I'm trying to get out. I'm saying that if you're serving Elohim, true God, you've given up all rights to yourself.

Given up all rights. You've no more rights. And we've only time for just one quick thing.

What do you call steadfastness of hope? How would you define hope? What is hope? Jesus coming? Yes. That's what is said here at the end of the chapter. Yes.

No doubt. Hope is no doubt. Yes.

It's more than that. Yes. You've got a word there.

Expecting. Looking forward to something. Yes.

You're very near it. Expectation. Hold that one word and just one little stronger word than that.

One stronger word. Let me have it quick. What? What is hope? It's first expecting and it's longing? Yes.

It's desire. You may expect to be fired from your job but you don't desire it. You may desire a rise in salary but you don't expect it.

But if you link expectation with desire that's hope. They waited for his son to come in with expectation and desire. Well now, that's only a very, very brief summary of this chapter but it's given you some inkling, I hope, as to what you can get out of it.

And remember those questions that we put to each other that you can put regarding that chapter. If you never saw the chapter again what would be your favorite verse? Verse three? Yes. Mine would be verse seven.

Verse seven. I think so. Right.

It's now four minutes to one. Sorry about that. Let's start.

Goodbye.

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