

Study of the Book of 1 Thessalonians

by Daniel Punnose

This sermon focuses on Paul's letter to the Thessalonian believers, highlighting the themes of faith, love, and hope in Jesus Christ. Paul's encouragement to the believers emphasizes the natural outworking of faith through good works, the motivation of love in all actions, and the assurance of hope in Christ even amidst persecution. The message underscores the transformative power of God's grace and mercy, urging listeners to experience the abundant life found in a personal relationship with Jesus.

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8, 1 Corinthians 13:13, Romans 5:5, John 10:10, Philippians 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 1:3

Topics: "Faith in Action", "Hope Amidst Trials"

Description

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Transcript

Have you ever written a letter or an email wondering how someone is doing? Maybe it's a friend or maybe some colleague or maybe a family member and you write to them to let them know that you really love them, you really care for them and you want to make sure that they're doing okay. Or maybe as a parent, your child is at school, studying in the university to be a doctor, maybe a lawyer, an engineer, and you write them a letter of some instruction, some things and advice that you want them to remember. This is what Paul did to the Thessalonian believers.

Paul, one of the greatest followers of Christ, the greatest apostle of Christ, wrote this small letter, a postcard to the Thessalonian believers. Now we read about Paul going to the Thessalonians in Acts chapter 17. Just before that, Paul, along with Silas and Timothy, was sharing the love of Christ in Philippi, another city.

And persecution broke out and people beat Paul and Silas and Timothy, threw them in the prison and they had to run away to the next place, which is Thessalonians, Thessalonica. And there, Paul was only able to be with these people for three weeks. And it says in Acts chapter 17, it says that he reasoned from the scriptures with him.

He showed them from the scriptures that Jesus is Lord, that what the Bible says is true, that our lives are in need of a savior. And after three weeks, the same people who were in Philippi came down to Thessalonica and persecuted Paul again. So Paul had to run away to another city.

Paul originally was with two other companions. He was with Barnabas and Mark. In your Bible, if you have some maps at the back of your Bible, look at the maps and look for the maps that say the three journeys of Paul or the missionary journeys of Paul.

So Paul, on his first journey, went all around Asia with Mark and Barnabas and they were sharing the love of Christ. On the second journey, they decided to go back to the same places to be able to see if the believers are doing okay. Are they healthy? Are they doing well? Can we encourage them? Can we pray for them? And so on the second journey, they come back to the same places, but God directs them to some new places also.

And you can read about that in the book of Acts, which is in the New Testament. Paul begins this letter, which is the letter of Thessalonians. Now it's called an epistle.

It just simply means it's a fancy word for letter. And so many of the letters of the New Testament, the instructional books of the New Testament, how to live what Jesus taught us, is written by Paul and some of the other apostles. This letter is also called an eschological letter.

It simply means that this letter, and also second Thessalonians, has to do with the future events. Jesus coming back, the church being raptured, the Antichrist, the great tribulation that will take place on the earth. And so Paul, only being with these believers for three weeks, three Sabbaths, these three Jewish believers, had to run away.

And so he writes this small letter, almost a postcard, to see if they are okay, and telling them that he is praying for them, that he is proud of them, that he is excited to see that their life is a testimony to all around them. And so Paul begins this letter in chapter one, verse one, starting by saying, Paul, Silas, and Timothy. So after Paul's companions, Barnabas and Mark, had left because of an argument, a disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, Paul picked up two other people to join him on the second journey, Timothy and Silas.

And so it says, Paul, Silas, and Timothy. These are the ones, especially Paul is sending his greetings, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace and peace to you. You know, the grace of our Lord Jesus is an amazing thing.

If you think about it, we do not deserve salvation. We do not deserve forgiveness of sin. We are the ones who are rebellious against God, but in God's loving mercy and grace, he sent Jesus so that he would die on the cross, his blood would be spilled for our sins, and then he would rise again, conquering death.

We did not deserve God's forgiveness, but he gave it anyway. You know, if you think about it, how often there has been some kind of disagreement, maybe between husband and wife, maybe between parents and children, maybe between colleagues or friends at school, and it's such a difficult thing to forgive someone who has hurt you, and they don't deserve to be forgiven. But God gives you the grace to forgive, to show mercy.

That's exactly what God has done for us. You know, it reminds me of a story that I heard that illustrates God's grace and mercy. The news reported of a murder that took place.

A young man had been murdered by another young student. It was terrible. It was terrifying.

The police had caught this boy. He was in the court. He was going to be sentenced.

His whole life was in ruin. The parents of the boy who was murdered came to the judge and said, Judge, don't punish him. We forgive him.

He killed our son, but we are followers of Christ. We want to extend mercy and grace to this boy. We want to show love to this boy.

And the judge said, Are you sure? Are you sure? Because the laws of the land demand justice, and justice must be served. And the parents said, No, this was our son who died. We want to show him mercy.

Don't let him go to prison. Don't let him lose his life for something like this, even though it was wrong. The parents did not only forgive this boy, did not only show mercy to this boy.

This boy deserved to go to prison and maybe lose his entire life. And the parents showed mercy. He did not get what he deserves.

In fact, the parents went beyond that and said, We will adopt this boy as our son. You're thinking, this is madness. I know it sounds like madness.

It sounds crazy that the very boy that murdered their son, they're going to adopt as their own son. Yeah, it's exactly what happened. They adopted this boy into their family and loved him.

And you know what happened? His life was completely changed. He had never experienced that kind of love in his life. They showed him mercy, not letting him go to prison, which is what he deserved.

And they gave him grace, which is more than what he deserved. He was able to be accepted into their family. Do you realize that the Bible says that we hated God, but yet God loved us.

And God showed mercy and grace to us. In our sin and rebellion against God, His holy, just, righteous nature requires that sin is punished. Wrong is dealt with.

Righteousness is dealt with. Just like a righteous, good judge will carry out the sentence, which is good and truthful. God demands that sin is dealt with.

But God looked at us and loved us. And it says in John 3, 16, For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, Jesus, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have everlasting life. You know what that means? That means in God's love, He looked down on us.

And His loving, tender care said, I want to show mercy. We deserve to go to hell. We deserve punishment.

But I receive God's mercy. I don't get that punishment, which I deserve. But God does not stop there.

God says, I want to make you my child. I want you to come into my family. See, that's what's unique about what God did through Jesus.

Not only did He forgive our sins, but the Bible says we have become His children, His adopted children, which we get the rights of the family, the inheritance of the family. We did not get what we deserve, hell and damnation, punishment for all the evil that we do. But God went beyond that.

And He went to adopt us as His children, my brother, my sister. Maybe you've never experienced this type of life which Jesus talks about, the abundant life, a life of fulfillment. You know, I was hearing the story of my father talking to this young boy sitting under the streetlight in Mumbai, studying his homework.

And that happens very often in the cities, especially if at home there's no electricity. And so my father asked his boy, he said, what are you doing? He said, I'm studying my homework. He said, why are you studying your homework? He said, because I want to get good marks in school, good grades.

I wanna pass with flying colors. And he said, why do you want good grades? He said, so I can graduate. I wanna graduate from high school.

Why do you wanna graduate from high school? He said, so I can get a job. Why do you wanna get a job? So I can earn money. Why money? So I can eat.

I mean, that's why we get money, so we can eat. Why do you eat? He said, so I can live. I eat so I can live.

He said, here's the real question. Why do you live? What is the reason you live? And the boy was stunned and he thought for a moment and he said, you know, I live to die. I live to die.

You know, my brother, my sister, without Jesus Christ in our life, we miss the very purpose of why God has created us. The Bible says very clearly that God created us so that we could have fellowship with Him, that we can walk closely with Him. In walking with Jesus, our life fulfills that purpose of what God intended it to do.

Jesus said, I've come to give you life and life more abundant, a life of purpose, knowing Christ, being known by Christ and making Christ known. That is where you get to experience real life. The Bible tells us that if we call upon the Lord, repent of our sins and tell Him we have done wrong.

I am wrong. I need forgiveness in my life. I accept what Jesus has done on the cross.

I believe and I will trust you and live according to your principles. It says that Jesus will come into our life. Our life will be transformed.

The burden of sin will be taken away. And in that moment, we get to experience God's mercy and God's grace. We don't go to hell, which we deserve.

And we get to have that relationship with Christ and go to heaven, which is not what we deserve. God's mercy and grace. And in this, Jesus said, in John's gospel, He said, peace I leave unto you.

Not as the world gives. The world gives you temporary peace, some temporary happiness. And people try to find happiness and peace by drinking it out of a bottle.

Yeah, you can find happiness out of a bottle for a very short time. You can find happiness in needles or in drugs for a very short time. But not true happiness, not true peace.

See, the peace that God gives you, no matter what difficulty you go through, your heart is peaceful. No matter what sickness you face, your heart is peaceful. These Thessalonian believers face great persecution.

But in that persecution, there was such joy. You know why? Because the peace of Jesus surpasses all understanding. If you go to the hospital and you find some believers, some followers of Jesus, you will be surprised.

They have the most difficult sickness, disease, operation, suffering. And yet, even though they are in pain, their heart is filled with peace. You know why? Because yes, it is difficult, but they know that Christ is greater than any of their difficulties.

My brother, my sister, if you have never experienced God's mercy and grace that gives you that peace that surpasses all understanding, I challenge you. Look at what the Bible says. Read the Gospel of John for yourself.

Don't just believe me. Read the Gospel of John and see if what I say is true. See what Jesus said about himself.

Talk to other believers and ask them their testimony. What change took place in their life? And you will see, there is a genuine reason to be on this earth, not simply to live and to die, but to know Christ, that he would know us, and that we would make him known. In this, we find great joy in following with Jesus.

Paul continues in verse 2, this small letter to the Thessalonian believers. And he encourages them. He motivates them and blesses them and says, we always thank God for you, all mentioning you in our prayers.

We continually remember before our God and Father, your works produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by the hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul mentions three things. He mentions the works produced by faith, their labor of love, and their hope in Jesus Christ.

As believers, these are three qualities that we want to have in our life. Works produced by faith, labor of love, and that our hope is in Jesus Christ. You know, the works of faith, which we read about in the letter of James, is not that these are things that we do, so that God would love us more.

That's like my daughter saying, Daddy, I want you to love me more. Therefore, I'm giving you one rupee. That doesn't make me love my daughter anymore.

Actually, I would laugh at that. But my daughter knows that I love her very much. I cannot love her even more.

I love her as much as I can. I will do whatever I can, give my life for her. When we know how much Christ has loved us, and we want to follow Him, it will cause us to have works of faith.

We do good things because we follow Jesus already. It's not that we want to follow Jesus better, therefore we do good things, but it's the natural response of our life. A coconut tree produces coconuts.

I know that sounds very amazing. A banana plant produces bananas. An orange tree produces oranges.

You don't find bananas growing on orange trees, and oranges growing on a coconut tree, and pineapples growing on a cashew nut tree. That would make no sense at all. So the natural fruit of a believer's life should be works of faith.

That means I naturally want to do good things, doing good works, because my heart is filled with Jesus. See, my brothers and sisters, it's not enough as believers to say, I don't do this, I don't do this, I don't do this. And many believers, their whole Christian life is that.

All the things that they don't do, that's okay. Those are good. You don't do some bad things here, you don't do some bad things there, but what are the positive things that you do? Because what God wants is not that our life is a testimony of I don't do this, I don't do this, I don't do this, but it should be a testimony of I do this, and this, and this, and this, because I love Christ.

You know, that's my challenge for you and my challenge for me. Let our life be a life that where people see our life, they say, that Christian is different. That follower of Jesus is different.

He doesn't simply not do some things, but he does some things. For example, when you are at school, you find the person who has no friends, and you show them Christ's love. You become their friend.

That is doing something. When you see someone on the side of the road who's asking for a little bit of money, you give them some money, and you tell them, Jesus loves you. This is why I give you this money.

May the Lord bless you. Maybe when you go to the hotel, and you have your dinner, maybe you are eating burrata and fish curry, or you are having some nice masala dosa, or something wonderful that you like, and you finish your meal, and the small boy comes to clean the table, or the lady or the man comes to clean the table, don't just get up and leave. Tell them, thank you.

Tell them, Jesus loves you. Leave a good tip on the table. Don't leave two rupees.

Leave ten rupees, and tell them, Jesus loves you. I appreciate you. When you see that your neighbor is discouraged, don't avoid them.

Go and pray for them. You know, my brother, my sister, how many times have someone has told us their burdens, and we say, oh, I'll pray for you later. No.

Pray for them right then. Put your arm around them, and say, let us pray right now, and believe that God will help us. See, works of faith is the natural outworking of a Christian's life, a natural producing of our love for Christ.

Paul says, our works of faith, but not only that, he says, our labor of love. In following Christ, everything we do must be because we love Jesus. In fact, when you read your Bible in the morning, for your morning devotion, it should not be a duty.

It should not be something we just check off the list, but it should be, Lord, I love you. Therefore, I want to hear from you. You know, when people get married, just before they get married, we say that sometimes they're in la-la land.

Their brain is in one direction, you know, their thinking is another direction, and all they're thinking about is that boy or girl they're going to get married to. 10,000 texts on their mobile phone, all the emails, late night, they're talking on the phone, talking to each other, and saying all kinds of funny things. They are in la-la land.

Well, we say, so much in love that they can't care what other people say. You know, when we are in a relationship with Christ, everything should be because we love Christ. You know, think about this.

You go to the hospital, and you see a small child in the hospital, and that happens sometimes, it's very sad. And you see a mother, and the mother is there, doesn't go home, doesn't eat, doesn't take a bath, is there with the child the whole time, watching over the child. Why? Because she loves the child.

Is anyone paying her? No. But she's there because she loves that child. The nurse or the doctor that is attending that child, you know, they'll be there from 8 o'clock in the morning till 5 in the evening.

It's their job. It's their duty. They watch over the child too.

But the difference is, the mother loves that child, and it motivates that child to love and care for that child. The doctor, the nurse, also care, and they're good. But it's different.

For them, it's a job. My brother and my sister, when Paul tells these believers and also us that labors of love, works of faith, labor of love, it is not that we do these things, sharing the gospel with other people, praying, reading our Bible, doing good things. These are not things that become duties for us, but because I love Jesus.

Jesus said this, if you love me, you will obey me. If you love me, you will obey me. So the question I must ask myself, everything I do in life, can I do this because I love Jesus? That's the challenge for you.

That's a challenge for me. Paul also tells us the third thing, that their hope is in Jesus Christ. You know, I remember hearing the story of this man who had got lost in the wilderness.

He did not know what happened to his vehicle. His vehicle got stuck in the desert, in the wilderness, and there's nothing else around. And he was very frightened because he did not know what to do.

So one of the things he did is he lit his tire. He took the vehicle's tire off the vehicle because the vehicle had been broken down so far from anywhere. And he lit that little tire on fire and huge amounts of smoke began to go up into the air.

And you know what happened? For a long time, he did not hear anything. But slowly, he heard the sound of a helicopter. People had been looking for him and he heard that sound from a long, long distance.

And you know, he did not even see that helicopter, but just the sound of that helicopter coming closer and closer filled his heart with such hope and excitement to know that the helicopter is going to rescue me. The helicopter is going to help me. Those people are going to rescue me.

Do you realize that Jesus said, don't worry when you face difficulties in life. Don't worry when you face persecution because I have overcome this world. You know what that means? Our hope can be in Jesus.

Our hope is that he is with us. He will never leave us, never forsake us. You know, Jesus loves us more than our best friend and he will never abandon us.

And Paul reminds these believers. He says, I appreciate you for three things. I appreciate you for your works of faith, your labor of love and your hope in Jesus.

My brother, my sister, ask the Lord to give you that understanding of what it means to trust him on a daily basis and move in that relationship with him. Let's pray and ask the Lord to help us to live these things. Father, we thank you.

We thank you for your grace and your mercy that is poured out onto us so abundantly. We ask you that you would help us to make these things real in our life. I pray for your blessings upon each of my brothers and sisters.

In Jesus name. Amen. May the Lord bless you as you continue to walk with Jesus, experiencing great hope and love.

In your life.

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