

God at Work

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[0:00] Turn to 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, where the Lord reveals to us something more of what he's decreed for this world.! 2 Thessalonians 1, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians and God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering.

God is just. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled and to us as well.

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

[1:32] They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.

On the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you because you believed our testimony to you.

With this in mind, we constantly pray for you that our God may count you worthy of his calling and that by his power, he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you and you in him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we read the Bible, we read and hear the thoughts and feelings of Jesus, our Lord. Do you believe that?

[2:41] Too often I don't hear Jesus. I hear words. I read the words. But I don't connect the words on the page to the person who is speaking to me, who is saying them.

And that is a tragedy. All scripture is God breathed. It's a revelation of the inside of God.

God. So when you speak, you reveal your heart. And when God speaks, he reveals his heart to us. And I'm not saying this because it sounds spiritual and that's what I should sound like.

I want you to hear God as we read God's word. And I want you to hear God's word for what it is. It is God's word.

So listen again to 2 Thessalonians, just verses 3 and 4. And listen for Jesus' voice. We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more.

[3:53] And the love every one of you has for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith and all the persecution and trials you are enduring.

So what thrills Jesus' shepherd heart? Well, it's the same things that thrill Paul's shepherd's heart. Growing faith, increasing love, perseverance.

And so when you think of Jesus, you shouldn't think of him being standoffish or indifferent or cold to any of his churches. And when you think about how he thinks about grace fellowship, you should not think that he is standoffish or cold about us.

When he sees love, when he sees faith among you, it thrills his heart. And how do we know that? Well, because when Paul saw that, it thrilled his heart.

And all scripture is God-breathed. And so when we read and we see Paul's feelings and his thoughts about the church, we see and feel our Lord Jesus' thoughts for us.

[5:01] Well, this evening, I just want to look at verse 3. It's an initial thanksgiving for the Thessalonians. As he usually does, he begins with a thanksgiving to God for what he's been doing in his work.

And Thessalonica and wherever city he's riding to. So Thanksgiving week, it's the busiest travel week of the year. And so maybe you are traveling this week.

And if you're going any distance at all, you're probably going to go through a construction zone. And if you go through the construction zone at the very beginning, you're going to see a sign that says, men at work.

And so what you're going to expect to see there is, well, if you're driving on Thanksgiving and around then, you're not going to see men. But if on normal times, you're going to see men working. And verse 3 is like that sign, except it doesn't say men at work. It says God at work. God at work. So God was at work in them. And Paul was thankful.

[6:05] He was happy about what he saw. And he couldn't help but say thank you to God. Now, as I sat in front of this text and I meditated on it, I couldn't help but ask, what kind of heart drives this kind of Thanksgiving?

What was going on in Paul's heart as he sat down and reviewed the Thessalonians and what was going on there? What kind of heart drives this kind of Thanksgiving?

We struggle to pray for people, don't we? Praying for ourselves, well, that's fairly easy. Praying for other people, not so easy. And then asking things for people, interceding for people.

We can do that sometimes. But what about thanking God for his action and his work in people's lives? I think that is something that I struggle with. I'm more than willing to ask.

But I don't thank God often enough when I receive an answer. Well, so what's behind this Thanksgiving?

[7:20] What is behind what's going on in Paul's heart? And I think the best answer is that Paul had a very well-developed pastoral heart. He thought like a shepherd.

He felt like a shepherd. And it was those thoughts and those feelings that were going on in Paul that caused Paul to thank God when he saw God at work in those people.

And so as Paul sat down and he reviewed the Thessalonians and what was going on in that church and the reports he was receiving, he couldn't help but be encouraged and be thankful for what he saw.

Now, Paul was encouraged because he loved them. And when you love someone, you have an interest in their well-being and you want to see them doing well. And they were doing well.

And so he was thankful. He really loved these people. He was glad to see them carrying on. And not just carrying on, but did you see they were growing?

[8:20] They were increasing. They were growing, really growing in love and faith. You see, Paul didn't believe in the Christianity that passes for Christianity in so many churches.

It's basically summed up in that phrase, once saved, always saved. He didn't believe that. It wasn't, bam, you're in. You've confessed, you've repented, and now it's over.

You've been baptized, and so now my job is done. It's over. I can stop worrying about you. See, Paul had a pastor's heart, a shepherd's heart.

And he knew that the Christian life is not just a gate that you walk through. The Christian life isn't just coming to Christ. It is that. But it's also a road that must be walked. And so Jesus said it, enter through the narrow gate.

For wide is the gate, and broad is the road that leads to destruction. But, and many enter through it, but small is the gate, and narrow the road that leads to life.

[9:23] And only a few find it. So brothers and sisters, Christianity is more than just coming to Christ. It is actually walking a road.

It's living a life. It's going through the narrow gate, and then it's walking on the road that you find at the narrow gate. So when you're driving through Bremen, and you want to go to South Bend, do you get to South Bend by just turning north on 331?

The answer is no. That's how you get on the road that goes to South Bend. But when, but in order to get to South Bend, you have to turn on to 331, and you have to drive all the way to South Bend. And if you stop at any point, you haven't arrived. That's what the Christian life was, is Paul knew it. The Thessalonians weren't home safe yet.

There was a life to live. There was a road to travel. And Paul, knowing that, was so thankful to see that these Thessalonians were traveling. They were going down the road.

[10 : 31] They were increasing. They were growing. And Paul knew that making it to the end means holding fast to the truth. He wrote that to the Corinthian church.

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you. See, we don't need just the gospel when we enter the road. When we begin our Christian life, it's something that we have to keep living.

The gospel I preached to you, which you received, and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel, you are saved if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you.

Otherwise, you have believed in vain. Brothers and sisters, you are only saved if you hold firmly to the gospel preached.

If you don't, you have believed in vain for no purpose. The author of the Hebrews said, we have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at first.

[11 : 34] Not only first confidence, but ongoing confidence. So you must hold firmly to the end. And Paul knew that. He knew that about the Christian life.

And then he saw the Thessalonians living. And they were holding on to the truth. And they were traveling down the road. And they were holding on through persecutions and trials.

And he was thankful. Because he knew that's what it took to get these sheep to the end of the road.

To get them safe and sound. Paul knew that you have to overcome to inherit eternal life.

So flip in your mind to the last book of the Bible. Book of Revelation. And chapters 1 and 2 and 3. What did Jesus say seven times to those seven churches in Asia? To him who overcomes. To him who overcomes. He who overcomes.

[12 : 38] Seven times. The Christian life must be an overcoming life. If you are not overcoming the cold heart.

If you are not overcoming persecution. And sexual immorality. And false teaching. If you are not overcoming. You will be lost.

The Christian life must be a victorious life. Or it is a failure. And so many people hear that with a prosperity gospel in mind.

And that is not what John had in mind. That's not what Jesus had in mind. And that's not what I have in mind. We have to overcome sin. And flesh. And the devil. And the world.

Or we will not inherit eternal life. And so no matter how good your start is. If you don't end. Then.

[13 : 36] You don't make it. All is lost. And Paul knew those things. And he knew. What was involved in the Christian life. And his heart was wrapped up with the Thessalonians.

And how they were doing. And so when he looked at them. He. Was happy. He was thankful. That he saw them growing. And increasing.

And enduring. He was encouraged. And he was thankful. And. Let me say to you. Brothers and sisters. As one of your pastors. On behalf of all of the pastors.

That. Paul's heart for the Thessalonians. Is our heart to you. It is our heart for you. We love you.

And our work. Is to make sure. That you make it to the end. And. If you wander off.

[14 : 35] We have to bring you back. And if you fall into sin. We have to rebuke you. And correct you. We have to do these things. Or else. Your blood. Is on our heads.

Yes. And so. As one of your pastors. I can honestly say. We have a certain. Godly. Anxiety. About all of you.

Just like Paul. Had a certain. Godly. Anxiety. About all the. The churches. That he had planted. And we won't be happy. We won't find relief. Until you have made it.

To the end. And when you're wandering. Heaven's hills. And when you've made it. Then our job will be over. And then we can say. You made it. But until then.

Paul said. We're in the. We're in the pains of childbirth. Until. We see Christ. Formed in you. And so. We're jealous for you. We're jealous.

[15 : 32] For you. Paul's words are our words. I am jealous for you. With a godly jealousy. I promised you. To one husband. To Christ. So that I might present you. As a pure virgin.

To him. And so. Grace fellowship. You have been betrothed. To Jesus Christ. You have been engaged to him. And your pastors. Want to present you.

To him. As a pure. Bride. And we haven't been able. To do that yet. It's not all over. All of you haven't made it. We haven't made it home.

We haven't made it. To the. To the wedding feast. And so. There's more work to do. And so. We like Paul. Are looking. For God's work. In you.
And when we see it. We are thankful. And we are encouraged. It encourages us. To see you growing. And you are growing. And we're so thankful for that.
[16:27] And. We're encouraged. Because what is our hope? What is our joy? What is the crown. That we will boast in. In the presence.

Of Jesus Christ. Is it not you? It is. It's you. Brothers and sisters. You're our work. And until we can present you.

To the Lord Jesus. Our work is ongoing. And so. When we see God at work in you. We're thankful. We're so thankful.

For what God is doing. And it is our joy. To see you growing. So. This passage. Has God at work. Hanging over it. What does that look like?

How can we know. If. If Paul were to come here. If the Lord Jesus. Were to come here. And give his assessment. Of grace fellowship. How would we know.

[17:23] That we would be. A church. That he could thank God for. What does God at work. In a church. Look like. Well you see it in verse three. We ought always.

To thank God for you brothers. And rightly so. Because your faith. Is growing. More and more. It's growing exceedingly.

Your faith is like a good. Tree planted. And it's producing. All kinds of good fruit. And so it's. It's bearing more. And more fruit. Last week. We heard about.

Jesus. Telling the parable. Of. Of a tree. That was planted. In a vineyard. And. It wasn't bearing fruit. And so the owner. Was frustrated.

With this tree. And he wants to cut it down. Because. Here it is. It's worse than useless. It's wasting soil. And so he wants to get rid of it. But that's not what was going on.

[18:19] In Thessalonica. That was not the church. Of the Thessalonians. The church. Was bearing fruit. It was taking advantage. Of God's blessings. That it was pouring out.

On that church. So God really was. At work. And. Because their faith was growing. And wherever faith is growing. God is at work. Because faith is a gift from God.

It begins with him. He brings it to life. And he sustains it. And so Paul thanks God. When he sees it. Faith is a gift of God.

But it is our responsibility. Nonetheless. To believe. To believe. And these Thessalonians. Were taking their responsibility.

Seriously. And they were growing stronger. And stronger. In their faith. Well. Let's take a portrait.

[19:14] A picture. And let's look at what growing faith looks like. If we were to have that plant. How would we. In front of us. How could we describe that plant. That tree. Of growing faith. Well.

Growing faith looks like. An embracing. Of more. Truth. It looks like a growing. In knowledge. Of the truth. More understanding. Of the truth.

And so. Biblical faith. It isn't a leap in the dark. It isn't based on. Our feelings. Or a hunch. It's believing. The truth.

Of the scripture. And embracing it. More and more. Fuller. And deeper. It isn't believing. In some vague spirituality. That is so. Common.

Today. So. I was looking through my Facebook. The other day. And. Someone wrote this. And this is a quote. My passion.

[20:08] And purpose. In life. Is to be an agent. Of awakened consciousness. Or awakened spirituality. In the lives of others. Sort of this.

Vague. Eastern mysticism. Spirituality. So. Does that person. Believe in faith. Yes.

And he's growing. In his faith. But is that a faith. That is according. To the scripture. Is that a faith.

That is. Corresponding. To the truth.

That God has revealed. In his word. Not at all. It's. It's just some belief. In some vague. Mystic. Spiritual.

Thing. Going on out there. You want to know. What the scary part. About that is. That whole quote. That quote. Came from a man. Who used to be.

[21:04] A reformed. Baptist pastor. So. He walked away. From the faith. Of the Bible. But he didn't. Walk away. From faith.

But when God. Is at work. Faith. Grows. In knowledge. Grows. In knowledge. And embraces. More of the biblical truth. And so. Last week. We talked about.

The discipline. Of study. Of taking. Seriously. Sitting down. And learning. More of God's truth. And when God. Is at work. Study.

Becomes. More important. It doesn't matter. How long. He's been. In the faith. It doesn't matter. How much. She knows. There is still. More.

To know. There's still. More of God. To learn of. There's still. More. To appreciate. Of what Jesus Christ. Has done for us. And so. Growing faith. Means. Growing knowledge. Growing faith.

[22 : 03] Also means. A growing. Confession. Of that truth. So. It's not only. Inward. Into our minds. It's outward. To other people.

That our faith. Is growing. So it isn't enough. To know the truth. It isn't enough. To know. About the truth. You have to. Intellectually. Agree to it. And be able.

To hold on to it. And that's what. Paul said. In second. Corinthians. Second Corinthians. You have to hold on. To the gospel. That's preached. And so. We must hold.

To the gospel. Growing faith. Means. There's a growing. Willingness. To stand. On. The truth. So young people. What will growing faith.

Look like for you? Well. It's going to look like. When you're in the classroom. And everyone is saying. That you know. God did not create this. And it was. Chance. And evolution. That you're going to have to.

[22 : 56] Stand up. For what God. Has revealed. And. You're going to do that. In the classroom. And you're going to do that. With your friends. And you're going to do that. On all sorts of topics.

I saw. Like an article. 40% of people. In America. Believe marriage. Is irrelevant. It does not mean anything.

You get married. You don't get married. It doesn't matter. It's an obsolete idea. And. So you know what confession. Is going to look like. It's going to be standing. On that. And saying. No.

Marriage is. Between a man and a woman. This is something. From God. And it's something. That God does. And when everyone. Is saying. You know. There's. Every way is the right way to God.

Growing faith is going to say.

No. And it's speaking. The truth. And so. Growing faith. Doesn't only grow. Inward into our minds. It grows outward. In our confession. And then thirdly.

[23 : 52] Growing faith. Grows upward. To God. And so this. This plant. Is growing. In all directions. It's growing deeper. Into us. It's growing out. Into the people. That we know. And it's growing.

Upward. To God. And so. Growing faith. Is a growing. Trust. In God's character. In God's promises. So.

Faith. Isn't faith. Until you've leaned on it. Until you've. Depended on it. Until you've trusted it. You put your weight on it. And you live. Like it's true. And so.

When God is at work. In a church. And when God is at work. In a person. It's going to look like.

More trust. Your life. Is going to be. More dependent. Upon. God. There's going to be.

More reliance. More trust. In his character. And his promises. As part of my. Preparation for.

Adoption. I've been reading a book called.

[24 : 47] The Connected Child. And. It isn't written from a Christian perspective. But it is very helpful. To understand. What it's like. To be moved. As a child.

From an orphanage. And an institution. Into. An adopted. Family. Family. And. You would think.

That children. Would just be so happy. And. You know.

This. Disney. World. Ending. They. They finally have this family. And everything is so good. And so right. But. Reality. It isn't like. That at all.

Adopted children. Offers. Often suffer. From what experts call. Attachment disorder. And basically. That means. They don't. They can't learn. They haven't learned yet. How to attach.

And trust. Their parents. They're an adult figure. And so. Because they've never lived. With a mom and dad. They don't know. What it means. To live with an adult.

[25 : 41] That they can trust. And so they don't know. How to attach to people. They've never known. What it's like. For a mom and dad. To take care of them. They've always had to do. All the taking care of.

Themselves. And so. They've always had to look out. For themselves. Because no one ever. Has looked out. For them. And so. Often. When. Adopted children. Who've spent any time. In an orphanage. They. Come into an adopted family. They will. Hoard food. Because food. Has been something. That they've had. A hard time getting. And they never knew.

When it was coming next. And. Well. Why do they do that? Well. You understand. The back story. But. Underneath that. Is they don't trust.

Their parents. To provide food. For them. And. When they're put into. A new situation. Adopted children. A lot of times. Until they've acclimated.

[26 : 35] To the people. And they've learned. To trust their parents. They can go hysteric. With anger. And with fear. Because you've just totally. Taken their world. Away from them. Everything that they've known.

They're put into. A totally new situation. And so their world. Is out of control. And they do. What people do. Who have no certainty. They lash out. They try to control things. They try to escape. And so. When they deal with people. They don't see people. As someone to. Befriend. And to love. They see people. As those. Who they can manipulate. And to control.

And so. They lie. And they steal. And they hit. Because that is the only way. They know. How to control their world. And to make sure. That they're safe. That's how they've learned.

To survive. Because they've never learned. What it means. To live in a home. Where parents love them. And take care of them. So as I'm reading this book.

[27 : 34] I'm realizing. That as Christians. We have an attachment disorder problem. So why do we worry?

Why do we hoard? Why do we get angry? Why do we seek to manipulate people. And conversations. In order to protect us. Ourselves.

Why do we put on masks. And act better than what we are? It's because we don't know. What it means to trust our father yet.

We don't know what it means. To have. To be adopted. Into God's family. But you know what? As adopted children. Spend more and more time. With their family.

They learn to trust. More. And they begin to attach. To their parents. They begin to love them. And trust them. And they stop worrying. They stop hoarding.

[28 : 30] They stop hitting. They stop lying. They stop trying to control. Everything and everyone. And as we spend time with God.

We learn that we don't have to try to control everything and everyone. We don't have to hoard. We don't have to play. We don't have to hide behind masks. Because we realize he's caring for me. He's taking care of me. His promises are good. And when the Lord says he'll provide. He'll provide. And so I don't need to hoard my possessions. And our trust grows.

And as our faith grows. Just like the Thessalonians. Their faith was growing. Our lives take on a different shape. And so we quit trying to do life on our own.

And we begin to live with our Father. We begin to live with our Father. And we begin to talk to him. We pray more. And we sing more. And we love more.

[29 : 31] And as God lives with us. And grows us. And matures us. And makes our faith to increase. We trust his character. And his promises more. He becomes the foundation of our lives.

Not ourselves. And that's what was happening in Thessalonica. You know. They were facing persecutions. They were facing family problems. But they were trusting their Father through it all. And they were experiencing all sorts of new scary situations. You know. When you're not being persecuted. And all of a sudden you are. When you were on the inside.

And now you're on the outside. Your world gets turned upside down. And things. You realize you're not in control anymore. But the Thessalonians were learning to live as children of God.

And so Paul saw it. And he said. Thank you. This is something that is beautiful. This is what I long to see. This is good. God is at work.

[30 : 34] And this is something beautiful. Their faith was growing more and more. And that was the first sign. That God was at work. And the second was.

That their love was increasing. Their love was increasing. You see that in the next sentence. The love every one of you has for each other. Is increasing. Notice.

When God works in a church. No one is left out. Every one of you is growing in love for each other. So all are giving.

And all are receiving. That's what happens when love increases in a church. No one is left out. There aren't cliques. There aren't people on the outside. And there aren't people on the inside of love.

Everyone. Is in the circle of love. Concern and compassion. Reaches out from everyone. To everyone else.

[31 : 33] And no wonder Paul says. I ought to thank God. Because love isn't something that we just naturally do. Is it? Naturally. You know. We get in with the people that we like.

And the people that we know. And we stick with them. But when love breaks out of all those bonds. And love starts saying no to self. And yes to other people. That is a work of God.

And so. When the church grows in love. It's a beautiful. God glorifying thing. And Paul says. Thank you. This is. This is exactly what I'm longing for.

And this is all God's work. God is love. This is love. Not that we love God. But that he loved us. And sent his son.

As an atoning sacrifice. For our sins. Dear friends. Since God so loved us. We also ought to love. One another. And so there's the source.

[32 : 32] Of love. There's the power. That we need to plug into. It's the love of God. For sinners. In Jesus Christ. You caught the first sentence.

This is love. Not that we love God. But that he loved us. And sent his son. As an atoning sacrifice. For our sin. It's Christ. Loving sacrifice. For us. Brothers and sisters. That gives us.

The ability. To love. So brothers and sisters. Why should you love. Everyone. In your family. Family of God here.

Because Christ. Because God. In Christ. Loved. You. God loved. You first. And so. What were you. When God loved you.

For that first time. When he. First showed his love to you. Well. If you were someone that. If you were someone. If you were someone special.

[33 : 32] Then feel free. To not love. Those people. Who are as special. And as wealthy. And as good. And as smart. And talented. And good looking. As you are. But. If you were dead.

In your transgressions. And sins. When God loved you. Then who is below you? Who is below your love?

Well. There is no one. Because if. If they are alive. In Christ. Then. They. Right now. Are so much more.

Than what you were. When God first loved you. And if you were righteous. And you were good. When God loved you. Then feel free. To not love.

Those brothers and sisters. Who are not as holy. And righteous. As you are. And look down your nose at them. Look down your nose at them. Because they haven't reached. The heights of your holiness. Yes.

[34 : 31] But if your righteousness. If your righteous works. Were like filthy rags. Then who is below you? Who should be outside of your.

Who should be outside of your love? No one. No one. If God has so loved you. Then you should love your brothers and sisters. And so think with me for a minute.

What would. Increasing love look like at Grace Fellowship? What would it look like? It would look like more devotion. More devotion to each other.

Romans 12.10. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Be devoted. David. So. Increasing love looks like. Increasing. Devotion.

And. You should be saying. More. And more. With David. You know. As for the saints in the land. They are the glorious ones. In whom is all my delight.

[35 : 34] So my heart isn't with those worldly people. And my heart isn't with. The TV stars. And the movie stars. And my heart isn't with. The actors. And the athletes.

And my heart isn't with the musicians on the radio. And my heart isn't with the make believe people on the online fantasy world. My heart is here. With God's people.

My heart is here at Grace Fellowship. And when the doors are open. I'm here. Because these are the people that I love. And these are the people that I care about. And these are the people that I'm devoted to.

I'm devoted to them. I've given myself completely to them. I am at their disposal. And so increasing love should look like increasing devotion to each other. And increasing love would look like more hospitality.

Because devotion isn't just a feeling. It has to be carried out. So 1 Peter 4.9. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. You know today we saw about in what way God delights in doing us good.

[36 : 38] We saw that in Sunday school. He does it with all of his heart. That's what Peter is talking about. That's the kind of, that's the attitude that should mark our hospitality. With no grumbling. Increasing love would look like more generosity.

2 Corinthians 8.7. See that you also excel in this grace of giving. It would look like more expressions of compassion. Ephesians 4.32.

Be kind and compassionate to one another. It would look like more patience. 1 Corinthians 13.4. Love is patient. It would look like more forgiveness.

1 Corinthians 13.5. Love keeps no record of wrongs. It would look like more encouragement. 1 Thessalonians 4.11.

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up. It would look like less judgment.

Romans 14.13. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another.

[37 : 42] That's the old way of living. That has no part of the church of God. It should look like less slander. James 4.11. Brothers.

Do not slander one another. Isn't it amazing that James has to write that. To people that have been loved by Jesus Christ. He says stop talking bad about each other.

And so brothers and sisters. Do those things mark grace fellowship more and more. Do those things mark you personally. Because that's what growing love looks like.

It's not just feelings. It has hands. It has a heart. And it carries itself out. When people sin we're forgiving. And when people are hard to live with we're patient. It's not just feelings.

It's not just feelings. It's not just feelings. It's not just feelings. It's not just feelings. Well that's what God at work looks like. So it's God at work in you. And if you say. You know what. My heart is cold. My heart is cold.

[38 : 46] And who can make a cold heart warm again. And I would just tell you to go back to the place. Where it was first warmed. The gospel. The cold heart doesn't need more effort.

It needs more gospel. And so it's the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's his incarnation. It's his life. It's his death. It's his resurrection.

It is his ascension. And it's his intercession. It's his reign. It's everything that you need. He's done. And so that's where love comes from.

Dear friends. If God has so loved you. You also ought to love one another. So if you go away here. Thinking. You know what. That person over there.

He needs to really work on his love. Then I fail. And if you go away here thinking.

[39 : 42] You know what. I need to try harder. Then I failed. If you go anywhere besides to Jesus Christ. Then this is a lost cause.

And so if grace fellowship. Slips away from the gospel. We're done for. It's a lost cause. And the church in Thessalonica. Was holding on.

To the gospel. And the result was. Their faith was growing. And their love. Was growing. And that's what God at work looks like. Now.

Now. Very briefly. Let's. Just apply these things. And how can you apply all this. First. Use this to examine yourself.

Use this to examine yourself. A healthy. Active. Active. Christian life. Where God is at work in you. Where you're taking your responsibility seriously. Where the gospel is bearing fruit.

[40 : 41] It looks like this. It looks like increasing faith. And increasing love. And so go to the doctor. Get your checkup. Compare yourself to what. Healthy.

Looks like. So. Do you match the pattern? Do you match the pattern? Or do you need. To beg. For revival. Do you need to beg.

For the work of the Holy Spirit. Do you need to root out that sin. That is dulling your love. And your faith. It's ruining your conscience. Conscience. And. It's killing your relationships with people.

And you're hiding behind masks. Because you. Have sin. And you're toying with it. Well get rid of it. Stunting your growth. So are you growing? Well.

Use this passage. As self-examination. Secondly. Do you see how you can encourage your pastors? Do you see how you can encourage your pastors?

[41:39] You're not to make our job hard. The Bible says that. But if we can. If you can make it easy. Then it's to your benefit. So do you see how you can encourage.

Your pastors. By excelling in these things. I want you to think for a second. If you're at all familiar with 2 Thessalonians. You know that church had problems.

Their eschatology was so messed up. They thought Jesus had already come. And they had lazy people in the church. And Paul was able to say. You know what?

Your eschatology is messed up. And you have some lazy people there. But I am so thankful.

Because you are growing in faith and love. Growing faith and love.

That trumps a lot of things. A lot of problems. And so brothers and sisters. If you do the same. Your pastors will be encouraged. And remember what I said at the beginning.

[42:35] We do have a godly anxiety. A godly jealousy for you. And we won't be happy until you're home. And we don't want our ministry to be in vain.

And so when we see you excelling in love. And in faith. Then that thrills our hearts. And we are encouraged. Some of you have been thrown for a loop.

I mean your jobs are up in the air. And life is changing. But you're trusting your father. And that encourages us. And we thank God for you.

And you're loving each other. You are. And all we can say is. Excel still more. Don't be satisfied with where you're at. Keep growing.

And if you do. You'll encourage your pastors. And third and last. And this application is specifically for you. If you're wondering. About whether God has been at work in your life or not.

[43:41] You're wondering about your spiritual condition. You think you might. You think God might have saved you. But you're not sure. Well how can you know? Well this passage is perfect.

So go to this verse. And look at it. This is what God at work looks like. This is what God at work looks like. When God saves people. This is what it looks like.

And so are you hungry for the truth? That is a good sign. Are you reading the word? That is good to know. Are you confessing Christ more and more? That is a good sign. Are you living more like an adopted child of God?

Instead of trying to live life on your own. Instead of trying to control everything and everyone around you to protect yourself. Are you living with God as your father? That's good. Are you loving God's people?

Is your heart turning away from other people? Turning to the people of God. And saying. You know what? I'm realizing the people here at church.

[44:42] These are the people that I love. These are the people that I want to be with. These are the people that love Jesus. And that is so attractive. If that is going on in you.

Then be encouraged. You see. When God is at work. The gospel changes you. It changes how you feel. And how you live.

And you begin to grow in love and faith. So if that is you. Be encouraged. And next week we are going to see. That when God works.

People persevere to the end. And they persevere. All the way through trials. And persecutions. But that's next week. Let's turn in our hymnals then.

To hymn 290. And in hymn 290. We ask. God to revive us. To revive his work. To refresh us.

[45:43] Let's pray. Our heavenly father. We. Thank you for your great goodness. And mercy to us. Thank you for adopting us. Into your family. For being so patient with us.

As we. Struggle to believe. As we struggle with unbelief. Will you please give us. Grace to grow in that area. To learn to trust you more.

To learn to depend upon you. And your promises more. And will you help us to love one another. As brothers and sisters. You have made us a family.

I pray that we would start acting more and more. Like that family that you. Have called us to be.

Father thank you for the Lord Jesus.

Thank you that in him. And his death. For us. There's all the grace that we need to live this Christian life. We cannot make it on our own.

[46:43] And so we look Lord Jesus to you. Will you please help us. Heavenly father. As we live this week. We help us to remember the promise. That you live.

With those who are low. And contrite. And will you help us to. See ourselves as that. And to find encouragement in it. Thank you for all your goodness to us. I pray that you would save sinners. That you would encourage. God's people. That you would encourage. Your family. In Jesus name. Amen.