The Hope Salvation Brings

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us.!

Let me read it for us. Verse 1 says, Finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men.
For not all have faith, but the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one.
And we have confidence in the Lord about you that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ.
It was just a couple of weeks ago that we celebrated Resurrection Sunday on Easter Sunday just a couple of weeks ago.
[1:33] And in our culture, on Easter Sunday, nearly everyone is a Christian. I don't mean that literally, of course, but figuratively.

While most of our culture has become a post-Christian kind of world, still on Easter Sunday each year, it is normal, and even still in many cases expected that people would either be in church on Easter Sunday or at least give some kind of acknowledgement of what the day means for Christians.
The next day, of course, the Monday after Easter, things very quickly are back to normal and not in a good way necessarily.
For some who attend church rarely, Easter would be an occasion for which they would normally be there, but once they attend service on Easter, they go back home, wake up Monday morning, go to school, go to work, do whatever their normal life routine is, and for many, they, again, feel empty, confused, frustrated, and lost.
Sadly, many of them will wrongly conclude from that that going to church must not have any value because if they went to church on Easter Sunday and then immediately again felt empty and confused and lost, 24 hours later, they may conclude that nothing is different, and because of that there is no purpose or value into what takes place in this sanctuary.
[3:29] Of course, the truth is that the problem is not in the gospel message and the problem is not in the promises of Christ. The promises of Christ are true, every one of them for His people.

What is missing would be for those who do not know Jesus, who just simply try to act religious on a certain day in hopes that just where you physically go by itself would somehow give your life meaning and purpose.
We recognize that's not the way life works, and if that were true on Easter Sunday, I suppose that could be true on Mother's Day as well. Could be for some of you here that you're here just as a favor to your mom or as a favor to your wife.
And make no mistake, we're delighted you're here. Whatever your motive is, I'm glad you've come to this place because we want you to hear the truth. But do please understand that there is nothing simply about a holiday and there's nothing about simply showing up in a church service by itself that is going to change your life.
Lives are changed by God's grace, not by attendance in an event. And I think of that when we come here to 2 Thessalonians 3 because this passage I've just read for us this morning speaks of things that are only true of God's people.
[5:08] That He establishes us, that He guards us, that we can know we are in the Lord, that our hearts have been made to love Him and that they are held together by the steadfastness of Christ.

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And so please, let me be clear this morning that while we are thrilled you are all here and we would love for every one of you to be back next Sunday and every Sunday and all of you are always welcome and wanted in this place, please do understand that just simply showing up to a church service by itself, if you don't know Christ, if His love and His grace has not changed you, you should not expect that merely attending a church service by itself, if you don't know who Christ is, is going to all of a sudden flood your life with meaning or purpose.
That which your heart so craves and longs for is absolutely found in Christ, but it's found by having a personal relationship with Him.
And so the promises that we read about here in 2 Thessalonians 3 are true and I want them to be true for every single one of you. But we are reminded that salvation brings hope to be sure, but it brings hope to those who have been saved.
It brings hope to those who are united with Christ by grace through faith. In this passage, we find a great example also of the love that Paul has for the church as he talks to them here about how to pray and how to live and how to love each other.
[6:50] And if you think about it, these three things really are what all of us would long for. All of us would love to know how should we live and how can we have a life that's impacted by love and how can we receive love and how can we give love to others and how can we have a life with meaning and a life with purpose.

All of us would long for those things. But we do understand that those things truly are only found by those who would call upon the name of the Lord.
So my prayer this Mother's Day is that by God's grace for all of us who are gathered here that we would look beyond ourself and look to the person of Christ alone to grant to us what only He can give us.
And so as we continue to walk through this letter together, we're going to look here in verses 1-5 this week and next week and I'm going to give you three headings.
We're going to get to just one of them probably today. We'll see how it goes. But in the next couple of weeks, we're going to look at just three simple headings that come straight from this text.
[8:03] Number one, how to pray. Number two, how to live. Number three, how to love.

Paul, as he writes this, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wants to encourage this church and strengthen this church by talking to them about where we find these answers.
How is it that God's people can pray in a way that the Lord would hear and the Lord would honor and the Lord would answer and because of our faithful prayers, then we are freed up to be able to live the life that we've been created and designed to live and then we are able to love each other the way that we would so long to do in a way that would magnify the fact that Christ has first loved us.
So first, let's begin here this morning. How to pray. Finally, brothers, verse one, pray for us.
How to pray. Paul invites this church to be praying for him and not just him. It says pray for us. This is praying for Paul and others who are leaders. These are the men that God has raised up to strengthen, serve, and help establish the church.
[9:27] And Paul unashamedly asks for the church to be praying for them. Brothers, pray for us.
Now, the interesting thing is going to be how does he ask the church to pray for him and for the other leaders?

Because this becomes very instructive for us because these are the very things that we want to be praying in our church as well. And notice the first thing under the heading of how to pray that he gives them is to pray that the Bible would be treasured and obeyed.
He says, finally, brothers, pray for us that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored.
Pray that the Bible would be treasured and that it would be obeyed.
If the apostle Paul needed prayer, how much is that true for us today that our leaders need prayer as well? Paul is asking the church to surround him in prayer.
This is a man who is used by the Holy Spirit to do so much work in the New Testament. This is the man the Holy Spirit used to pen much of the New Testament and yet Paul himself recognizes that he cannot do what God has called him to do apart from the prayers of the church.
[10:56] We must be a praying people. And we need to be praying for those who are in leadership.
Praying that the word of God will be treasured in their heart and obeyed and that that would be true of all of us.

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So what we want to try to pray for and strive for under the power of the Holy Spirit is that in the local church we've got to make sure that we don't get off balance either way.
We don't want to have leaders who love the word and treasure the word and obey the word and it just stops with them. That's no good. We also don't want to have men who are calling other people to do what they themselves will not do.
So now you have leaders who don't know the word, who don't live in the word but are asking others to do that. That's no good. What the church must have are leaders who treasure the word, who obey the word, who are in the word and then through their faithful example lead others to do the same.
This is a very important part of understanding how a church is to operate. That it's never the case that the church is simply its leaders.
[12:15] That's not the case. The church is not ultimately defined by or judged by or evaluated by just a few. Ephesians 4 is clear that the leaders in the church, the pastors in the church have a calling by God but that calling not only is to lead, it's to equip the saints for the work of service and the work of ministry.

So rightly understood, you could never rightly evaluate a church based strictly on its leaders because if the leaders love the word and live in the word but they're not trained equipping others to do that, there's been a disconnect and that church is not functioning how it should.
But you can't define the effectiveness and faithfulness of a church without its leaders. You can't do it solely on that.
But you can't do it without including them. Understanding that, Paul says, finally brothers, pray for us.
Why? Because the greatest gift you can give to someone is the gift of faithful prayer. This truly is a gift that you give to somebody.
[13:31] Prayer takes time. Prayer takes effort. Prayer takes intentionality. Prayer takes sacrifice.

To faithfully pray for people, you've got to say no to other things to create time to do that. To pray biblically, you have to be in the word to make sure your prayers are honoring to the Lord.
Prayer is a labor, but it's a labor of love. Paul, understanding that the greatest thing you can do for somebody else is to pray for them, now asks the church to give that gift to himself and to those who labor with him as he asks for them to pray for him.
He says, pray this way, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored. Paul's request here is for the gospel to move forward with great swiftness.
This is a prayer that the word of God will accomplish the work of God in their life. This is praying that the gospel will move fastly with them and through them.
[14:52] This is how we should pray for each other. And as we often think about, of course, of course, it's good and right and fitting to pray for the earthly needs of your children.

Of course, that's good. But can I just encourage you, do not limit the prayers you pray for each other simply to the temporal things.
If your child's sick, of course, we pray for them to be healthy. If your child is hurting and grieving, of course, we pray for their hearts to be encouraged. If your child is lonely, of course, we pray for them to make meaningful friendships.
If your child's needing a job, of course, we pray for employment to be provided. But do notice the kinds of prayer that Paul specifically makes mention of in our passage this morning.
Pray that the word of the Lord may speed ahead, that the word of the Lord will be honored in our lives. On this Mother's Day, I can't think of anything more helpful for us to think about of how we would love our children and to be prayerful for our children.
[16:10] And as we pray for them, to pray like this. Pray that the word of God would speed through them, would rush through them, that their lives would be marked with a fast obedience to the word of God.

And on this day of all days, not only being Mother's Day, but for our church, Senior Recognition Day, this is a wonderful way to pray for those in our church who are graduating. We pray for them to make friends in a new college.
We pray for them to find a job in the workforce wherever the Lord may be taking them. We pray for them to get scholarships. We pray for them to have all these things when you send your kid off to school or your kid off to the workplace, all these things that we pray for, that's normal and well and

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good.
But do you pray for the spiritual lives of your children? And not just of your biological children or adopted children, but what about in our church?
We are a church family after all and we should be praying for each other and even in a moment when you see our graduating seniors, if you want to know how can I pray for them, pray like Paul asked to be prayed for that the Lord would speed ahead, that the word of God would be honored in their lives.
[17:24] This is a gift you can give to someone that very few people receive. And when you look at all of the graduates, not just in our church, but all the thousands and thousands and thousands of students graduating high school this month all across our nation, most, all of them are going to receive graduation gifts.

Some a few, some a lot, some in between, but most of them will get some kind of graduation gift. Mom and dad, grandparents, aunts and uncles, friends, whatever it may be.
But how many people are going to give those graduates the gift of faithful, continual, fervent, spiritually minded prayer?
this is the greatest gift you can give to them. And sometimes I think that we go through phases of our life where we're really aware of how short our time is and we go through phases where we think, I really want my life to count.
I really want to do something significant for the kingdom and we start to look at how we're serving and what we're doing and try to somehow measure our effectiveness and we struggle at times with wondering why can I not find a place of work or service that feels more meaningful?
[19:03] And I just want to say to every one of you, if you want a life of kingdom impact, dedicate your life to being a person of faithful, fervent prayer emphasizing the spiritual needs of people in your life.

that is where kingdom impact is found. And you don't have to have a seminary degree to do that. You don't have to have wealth to do that.
You don't have to have notoriety to do that. You only need a heart that longs to pray people through.
And if this church is going to be the church that the Lord would call us to be, it will not happen without or apart from God's people being faithful to pray for each other.
How do we pray for each other? We pray that the Bible would be treasured would be treasured and obeyed. And notice, he goes on, pray for us that the word of God, the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored as happened among you.
[20:17] He recognizes that the Lord is at work in the church. He recognizes where the Holy Spirit is moving and he gives voice and gives thanks for the spiritual progress that has been made.

And this is very important because as you're praying for your children and your grandchildren, as you're praying for those in your Sunday school classes, you're praying for those who are graduating in our church, take time to recognize the progress that's been made.
This will energize your prayer life. Recognize, not that things are perfect, but where you see people growing in sanctification, take time to acknowledge that and be encouraged by that.
It's very important that we pray that way. So how do we pray? Number one, pray that the Bible will be treasured and obeyed. Number two, pray that the righteous will be delivered.
Verse two, and, so we're praying the first prayer. Here's a second kind of request. And, that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men.
[21:29] This is a prayer that those who are leading, those who are on the tip of the spear in spiritual battle would continue in ministry. This is recognizing that it's not an easy thing to strive to lead people spiritually.

And I want to say to you, just as Paul said to this church, church family, please pray for us. Pray for those that the Lord has raised up to be your servant leaders.
Please pray for us. Pray that we would be faithful and pray that we would live a truly godly life and pray that we would be strong in the faith.
When Paul is writing to this church, he's recognizing not only his need of prayer, but he's recognizing the power of prayer.
prayer. And this is one of the realities that we as Christians have to really ask ourselves because there's not a Christian in this sanctuary this morning who would say anything other than we believe

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prayer is powerful.
[22:47] We would all say that, but the truth of how much we believe that can be measured by how much we actually do pray.

we do the things we think have the most value. We do the things that our hearts most love.
And the question is, not what would we say, but what do we do? Paul understands he has a great need for prayer. He also understands there is great power in prayer.
And so this text becomes for us a call for all of the body of Christ to faithfully practice what we would undoubtedly say we believe, that we need prayer and that prayer is powerful.
If you're a Sunday school teacher, it's hard work to study every week. Whether you're teaching children or adults somewhere in between, it's hard.
[23:59] You've got to read, you've got to study, you've got to write, you've got to labor, you've got to craft your lessons, you've got to prepare your lesson. It's hard, hard work.

Harder than most people who, if you don't teach, you don't know how hard your Sunday school teachers are working. It's hard work. work. But I do want to say to those of you who are teaching, your work is not finished until you have prayed for your people.
Your study is essential, but it's not adequate. We've got to be a praying people too. just as you work and labor and strive in your study and your preparation of lessons and sermons and Bible studies for the good of your people, so as their leader, as their shepherd, pray for them.
But church, please see this is a reciprocal relationship here. Just as they are to be praying for you, don't forget the words of Paul as he says to the church, please pray for us.
church, be praying for your leaders. Pray for your pastors, pray for your Sunday school teachers, pray for the Awana teachers that teach your kids, whoever, wherever, someone in this church is making spiritual investment in you and your family.
[25:29] Let that be a call for you to be faithful to pray for them. We're to give the gift of prayer for each other.

prayer. You know, so much of life is, particularly as you get older, it's just the pressure of just, there's just always another holiday, isn't there?
I mean, you get it through Christmas and then it's Valentine's Day. We've got to get something for Valentine's Day and then you may have a birthday thrown in there and now it's Mother's Day and then you have an anniversary and then it's Father's Day and you're just kind of, your head can just kind of spin.
You know, you've got so many gifts to give and it's not just about the money involved, it's about the time, it's about having to think of something, it's about having to create room in your week to go and think of a gift, buy a gift, wrap a gift, give a gift, and that's well and good.
But if you want to give gifts that are meaningful, kingdom impact meaningful, it's not going to be found in the occasional tangible gift.
[26:48] The greatest gift you can give to someone is done quietly away from the crowds where you speak their name to heaven asking for the word of God to work quickly through their life.

Now, word of the wise, this is just me, it's Mother's Day. Don't say, I didn't get you a gift, I'll just pray for you.
Don't blame your mistake on me, alright? Get a Mother's Day gift. gift. But tomorrow, give the gift to your family of being a faithful prayer warrior for them.
And the next day, and the next day. So, thinking about this, just this first heading of how to pray for those in your life, he's told us, we pray for spiritual things specifically for a love of the word of God, specifically for a delight and obedience of the word of God, and we pray that our leaders would be delivered, that our leaders would be protected, that our leaders would be kept strong in the things of the Lord.
Let me just give you three quick words of application this morning. Number one, pray for those who lead you. Children, teenagers, if you're in the home, this includes your parents, pray for your parents.
[28:37] We often think in terms of parents praying for children, and that's good and right, but that's not all it should be. Children, teenagers, you ought to be lifting your parents up by name in prayer.

Pray for those who lead you. Pray for those who lead you in your home. Pray for those who lead you in the church. Number two, make your homes centered on God's Word.

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This is the heart of his prayer. Pray for us that the Word of the Lord may speed ahead. The emphasis of his prayer, the first thing he asks prayer for is related to the Word of God.
So, make your homes centered on the Bible. Do everything you can to help your home be a place where God's Word is taught and loved and treasured.
And then a third application, a word specifically to those who are hurting today. Don't be afraid to ask others to pray for you. Paul did this.
[29:47] You shouldn't be afraid to. to ask you to pray for us. He knows they need prayer. He knows that they cannot serve the way they are called to serve without the strength that comes from God's people praying for them.

And so, if you just need to be reminded that it's fitting and right and okay to ask others to pray for you to be strong, here's your example in the text today.
So, I want to encourage you, do not be afraid to ask others to pray for you. Now, perhaps you hear that and you think, well, we know that. Why would anyone not do that?
Well, there are reasons why people fail to ask others to pray for them. One reason would be pride. Pride can keep us from asking others to pray for us.
We want people to think that we've got it all together. We want people to think our families are doing just fine. We want people to think that everything is well organized, but in the reality of your heart, you know you're struggling and barely hanging on, and you need the prayers of the brothers and sisters in the church to strengthen you, but pride will keep you from asking others to pray for you, which is just getting walloped on both sides, because now, not only are you hurting and struggling, but now, you're letting the sin of your pride prevent you from getting the strength and healing you need.
[31:17] church, be encouraged. Paul says to his church family, please pray for us. You can do the same.

Don't ever let pride be in the way of you asking those who love you and care for you to pray for you. Sometimes we don't ask those to pray for us because we don't want to burden others.
but can I just remind you the body of Christ is made to be a burden bearing body. It is who we're to be.
And when you ask someone else to pray for you, not only are you receiving the strength that comes to the ministry of their prayer, they are receiving the blessing of doing what they've been called by God to do.
Don't let pride be a hindrance and don't be hindered by thinking I don't want to be a burden to somebody. We are a burden bearing body. Another reason why somebody may not ask others to pray for them is because they just don't view their problems through a biblical mindset.
[32:34] Sometimes we just think I've got a problem, I ought to fix it, I ought to out work it, I ought to out research it, I ought to out tough it, whatever it may be. But what was Paul's response in this text?

Brothers, pray for us. We need your prayers. We are not only a needy people, but we believe in the power of prayer. And if that's true, then let's approach our struggles with a biblical mindset.
And a biblical mindset is that we believe prayer is powerful, and we believe the body of Christ has been called by the Lord to pray for each other. And so the first thing that we see in our text this morning is how to pray.
Now as the Holy Spirit inspired this text, the next two things we'll look at next week would be how to live and how to love. It's interesting to me that he begins though first with how to pray.
pray for God. Because until we are faithful to seek the strength that only comes from the Lord, we will not be able to live right and we will not be able to love as we should.
[33:46] This really is the starting place of all faithful Christian living, to be faithful in prayer and to be deep in the Word. And you can't help but notice that's what he says in verse 1.

The call to pray is inexplicably linked here with the Word of the Lord. Pray for us that the Word of the Lord may be at work. This isn't choosing between prayer and Bible.
This is understanding that this is how we pray with a Bible in our hand. That we're not only to read, we're to pray. We're not just to pray on our own thoughts, we're to pray with his thoughts.
And if you want a life of significance and a life of strength and a life of blessing, do that by being faithful to pray for yourself and for others.

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On this Mother's Day and Senior Recognition Day, if you're wondering what is a true gift I could give for someone, what is a lasting, enduring, powerful, effective gift I could give to someone, here's the greatest gift you'll ever give to anyone, to faithfully lift up their name before the Lord, asking that the Word of God would move powerfully in their life.
[35:02] Lord, we do desire to be obedient to your Word and we pray, Lord, even today that we would put into practice what we have seen, that we would be faithful to pray for each other and with each other and to bear burdens of those in our church and our lives.

In Christ's name, Amen.

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