Thankful for God's People

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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.!

Somebody check the live stream and please tell me they caught that. I love those last two songs we sing, which does not bode well if the microphone is on.
I feel nervous. That last song, a newer song that Keith and Kristen Gettia put out, a friend of mine helped to write on that, and so I've been aware of that for a while.
We've learned it here recently. A couple weeks ago at Shepherds Conference, I guess just last week, a few days, ten days ago or so, so Shepherds Conference has, I think it's 5,000 men who were there this year.
Every state was represented and 70 countries were represented. There's about 3,500 of us in the sanctuary and then registration filled up in like four hours when it opened up last fall.
[1:24] So they allowed, I think it was 1,500 men to be in the overflow. So on the last day of the conference, Friday night, this was the last song that we sang together, and they allowed the men in the overflow to come in, and they just filled in the aisles and anywhere there was space.

And so about a 3,500 seat sanctuary was hosting 5,000 men at one time. And this was the last song that we sang together.
It was just so, so powerful. And I had a front row seat for it. They're kind enough. They reserved two seats for our group at the front.
And so I got to sit right there at the front, and when we were singing this, I was able just to kind of turn around for a minute. I had to turn around because 1,500 people were invading my space.
I had nowhere to breathe. But you could turn around and just see what it looked like to see 5,000 men just declaring Christ the victor.
[2:33] Such a powerful, powerful moment. But as always, to be at our own church with our people and to sing and to worship with our church family is just the sweetest sound to me.

I hope that my singing was not the sweetest sound to anyone else on that. I'm extra nervous because some of our people who help us with that are out of town on the mission trip.
And so I don't know that I trust. I don't know who's back there running things, but I don't know that I trust them. I know I don't trust Mr. Landis back there. He has a weird look on his face. I'm kind of nervous right now.
2 Thessalonians. I don't preach that well. I sure don't sing that well, so I'm kind of running out of things I can do. But 2 Thessalonians, we are beginning our study here today.
I'm excited for us to be here. For those who come on Sunday evenings, you've been with us since August. We are walking through 1 Thessalonians, and this is obviously a response to that letter.
[3:37] Let me take just a brief moment, try to kind of catch everybody up to what is going on in 2 Thessalonians. Paul and Silas and Timothy, around 50 AD, go to Thessalonica where they begin a church.

Thessalonica is a thriving metropolitan city back in the first century. The most important city in that Roman province of Macedonia.
It had a key road along what's known as the Ignatian Highway, this east-west highway that connected Rome to the eastern parts of the Roman Empire.
So Thessalonica is a harbor city. It's got a population at that point between about 150,000 to 250,000 people.
While they are there, they start this church, but because of opposition and resistance, they are run out of town. A mob threatens them, and they are forced to flee the city.

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[4:50] They're going to go about 50 miles away to Berea. This is Paul and Silas and Timothy. Soon after this, Paul is going to send Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the church, to see how they are doing, how the church is doing.

And based on that report, Paul writes what you and I know as 1 Thessalonians. That first letter, which was a letter to encourage the people, to encourage them to continue living godly lives, holy lives, to help them to understand key doctrine.
One of the prevailing themes in 1 and 2 Thessalonians is what we know as eschatology, the study of the last days.
And so Paul is instructing them on those things, remind them of their hope and their comfort in the coming of the Lord Jesus. But something unsettling has happened.
It seems that someone has forged a letter to the church claiming to be a letter from Paul, or some kind of false teacher has been able to penetrate the congregation and cause a great disturbance among them.
[6:19] Telling them that they were in the day of the Lord, that they had missed their being lifted away to be with Jesus into heaven. Some other problems had begun that because they were thinking of the return of Christ, which is healthy and good, they were struggling though because they ceased to do their full responsibilities that you should do while you're waiting.

So today, we're waiting on the Lord. We are eagerly awaiting His return. But while we wait for Him, we're to be doing the work He's called us to do.
Well, part of what was happening in this church is because they were thinking and focused so much on the return of Christ, or on eternal things, some of them had stopped being diligent workers. Some of them have stopped providing as they should for their family, have stopped serving as a part of the local church, as they should. And so, about 51 AD, from Corinth, just a couple of months after writing 1 Thessalonians, Paul's going to write a second letter to this church, what we know as 2 Thessalonians.
Now, at this point in the young church that he writes to, they're facing some unique opposition. Because of where the city is, it has quite a large Jewish population in the Roman Empire, and so they've got opposition from the Jewish contingent.
[8:02] They have opposition from the Gentile contingent. And now, they're facing significant opposition from false teachers. So this is a very difficult spot to be in.

Socially, they're right in the middle, and they're getting hit on both sides. Spiritually, they're getting hit by false teachers. So Paul writes this brief letter, 2 Thessalonians, and what he's going to do is correct their wrong understanding of a few things.
He's going to confront them on a few things of their behavior that are not right, and he's going to comfort them as well because he loves them. There are good, faithful people that just need some correcting and some help on some things they're not doing right.
And so what you're going to see Paul do is correct, confront, and comfort. This is exactly what we talked about last Sunday from 2 Timothy 4 on what it means to preach the Word, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort.
Correct, confront, and comfort. Exactly as the New Testament says, faithful teaching and preaching should. You're going to see all of those things at work in this brief letter.
[9:20] So when we begin this letter, that background helps us a little bit to understand why Paul says what he does and why he's addressing the issues that he is addressing.

And in spite of some of these challenges and things that need to be corrected, what you're going to see from the very beginning of the letter is a real sense of gratitude that Paul has for this church. This church isn't a perfect church, but this is a church that he's very thankful for and he's very proud of. There are some things that they need to learn better and do better.
But this is a church where he's very thankful for God's people. We're going to look specifically today at verses 1 to 4 at the things of which he is so thankful for about them.
This first greeting in verses 1 and 2 begins, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
[10:25] Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy. You might just make a note to help you to, when you're reading through your New Testament here, Silvanus is Silas, same person. Silvanus is his Roman name.

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Silas is his Jewish name. Same person. Paul, Silas, and Timothy. These are the three men who were serving together when the church was started.
Paul wrote them the first letter, and now he writes this second letter. And it's just worth noting, I think, to the very opening words here, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church.
This is a reminder that ministry is a team effort. That while Paul is the apostle and the one that has been used and commissioned and sent by God as an apostle, this is not a one-man show.
Ministry never is. All faithful leaders need faithful co-laborers. And no matter who it may be in the Scripture, in church history, in our current day-to-day, any time you see someone who has a ministry that is well-known, that is strong, that is influential, that is being used powerfully by the Lord, there are always ministry teammates laboring side by side.
[11:46] Some of those teammates are known. Some of those teammates may be behind the scenes. But this is a good reminder for us that all of us join together to do ministry work.

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy are writing, he says, to the church of the Thessalonians, in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Just a very obvious reminder for things that we learned as a child for most of us, that the church is not a building, the church is about the people.
When he writes to the church, he's writing to the people. Our church is made up of saved brothers and sisters in Christ.
Now remember, Paul is writing this letter just a few months after he wrote 1 Thessalonians. He received a good report. He wrote 1 Thessalonians.
[12:44] He gets another follow-up report, and now he writes 2 Thessalonians. And just look at, even in these opening words that are so filled with rich theology for us, verse 2, Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace. Grace speaks of God's unmerited favor. Grace speaks of what God has given to His people as a pardon for sin.
And he says that we have peace. That when the New Testament speaks about believers having peace, it's multifaceted. This is the peace we have with God.
We have peace with God because of grace. We have peace with God because our sin's been removed. We have a peaceful relationship with the Lord. We can come boldly into His presence because of grace.
But it's not only peace with God. The New Testament speaks that Christians also have the peace of God. The peace of God rules and reigns in our lives. So we have peace with Him relationally, and we have the peace of God at work in our lives, allowing us to go through a hard world without being fearful and anxious, but with boldness and with courage.
[14:06] How is that possible? Because we have peace with God and the peace of God at work in our life. So when Paul writes these words, these are not throwaway words.

These are words reminding the church of the deep gifts that the Lord has given to His people.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
In verses 3 and 4, he's going to share three reasons why he is so thankful for this church. Why he's proud of them.
Why he is grateful for who they are. And this really is helpful for us because in our day and age today, people get impressed with all the wrong things.
When people think about what makes a good church, a strong church, when people talk about what makes them proud of their church, our culture today has gotten this entirely wrong.
[15:16] People today will boast about how large their church is or how wide their social media influence may be or how well known their pastor or musicians may be or how many people have joined their church.

All these kinds of things. And none of those things by themselves are wrong things. A church that's large is not a wrong thing. A church with a well-known pastor, not a wrong thing. A church with a wide influence, not in and of itself a bad thing.
A church with new members, it's a great gift from the Lord. But the question becomes, what is it that should make us truly delight in our congregation?
In any congregation? And this becomes not only instructive, but corrective, because we live in an era today, even among church culture, where people often associate success based simply on size or notoriety.

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Now I want you to notice the things that in the Scripture should make us thankful for our church. Number one, he mentions that he is grateful for their growing faith.
[16:42] This comes right from the text here. We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly.

He's grateful for their growing faith. Now Paul speaks here, in these opening words of this letter, we ought always to give thanks to God for you.
He speaks of his gratitude, which really resonates with me, because in my heart, I feel so much gratitude for this congregation. I love to tell people about our church, not because I think that we're perfect, not because I feel like we've arrived, nothing like that, but I do believe that as I look at this text and see the kind of church that biblically is commended, I see these things in you.
It's a growing faith. And I think it's right, I think it's good for us to be thankful for the blessings of God.
And the greatest blessings God gives his people will never be measured on an attendance chart or a giving chart or anything that you can look at with numbers.
[18:05] We ought always to give thanks because your faith is growing.

And the word he uses here, we ought to do this, it means it's a fitting response. In fact, the same word can be translated here to pay a debt. There's a debt of gratitude to be paid, meaning that it's not only the right thing, it's a fitting thing, it's a good thing, it's an appropriate thing to speak of the gratitude that he has for this congregation.
I think this helps us because this reminds us that not only should we be grateful for each other, but we ought to say that, we ought to speak that. Whoever teaches your children in Sunday school every week, whoever teaches your children in Awana every week, I hope that you're thankful for them, but I want to encourage you to speak that, not just feel that.
Speak that. Tell them that. Write that for them. Bless them with a gift.
Bless them with a gift card just for no reason to a restaurant, to whatever, just as a way to say, I don't only feel thankful for you, but I want to express my thanks for you.
[19:35] When people serve your children in VBS or at kids camp or people open their homes for events or when people take off work to serve as sponsors at Falls Creek or for people who teach your adult Sunday school classes or those who teach your youth, whatever it may be, whatever ministries you and your family benefit from, all those ministries have leaders and servants and volunteers who are pouring their life into helping to, for you and your family to be growing in faith.

And the first step here is to feel gratitude, but the second step is to speak and to show gratitude. And one of the things I want to pray for our church to continue to grow in, I think this is a strength for us, but I want it to be a continual strength for us is that we would be grateful for the people who help instruct us in the faith.
All of our leaders, all of our teachers, all of our servants, all of our volunteers, all of our deacons, all of these people who are giving of their life to help you grow in your faith, Paul says, we ought always to give thanks.
Don't take people's ministry for granted. Don't take people's time, they invest in you, in your family lightly.
Be grateful for that and follow Paul's example to not only feel gratitude, but to speak gratitude and to show gratitude.
[21:27] I read this and this just resonates with my heart because I feel like this is true among us. I feel like we have so many servants and so many people who are working hard to help us to build our faith and I feel like our church is thankful and I feel like our people are so grateful for that, but I don't want that to be assumed, I want that to be taught, I want that to be purposeful, and I want you to see that this isn't just a mere human emotion, this is a biblical behavior to feel gratitude and then to express gratitude.

And look at the way he phrases this, we ought always to give thanks to God for your brothers as is right because your faith is growing abundantly.
It's a compound word that means to superabound. Your faith is growing and it's growing abundantly and it's growing superabundantly.
For your faith to be growing, this speaks of your knowledge of God's Word that is growing, your obedience to God's Word that is growing, your dependence upon the Lord that is growing, everything about their faith, what they knew, what they believed, their obedience, their dedication,

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their dependence upon the Lord is growing.
Now it's not perfect. There's some things he's got to correct and that's always true in a church. There's always things that we need to correct, always things we need to do better, always things that we're trying to continually refine under the power of the Holy Spirit.
[23:08] but if you wait till some ministry or some church or some person is perfect to give thanks for them, you're going to go through your entire life taking people for granted.

Don't do that. Don't do that. If you're married, your spouse isn't perfect. Don't wait for them to be perfect to express your gratitude for them or else you'll never do it.
It's true in the home, it's true in the church. We ought to be thankful. This is fitting. This is right. In fact, look back again at verse 3 just to help you see this.
He says this twice. We ought always to give thanks to God for your brothers as is right. The expression of gratitude should be something that continually flows through the body of Christ. You bless somebody, they bless somebody else, they're encouraged to bless somebody else. There should just be this never-ending, constant tide of the body of Christ expressing gratitude, expressing thankfulness, not taking each other lightly or for granted and giving thanks specifically because the Lord is using these people to help you grow in your faith.
[24:37] Such a beautiful thing to be thankful for. If you're a part of a church and your faith is growing, your knowledge is growing, your appreciation for the Word of God is growing, it doesn't matter if that church runs 40 or 4,000, you are in a church for which you should be thankful.

Thankful. Thankful for a growing faith. There's a second thing he mentions and that is he's grateful for increasing love.
Keep looking here in verse 3. Your faith is growing abundantly and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.
Now, here's what you need to know. While their faith is growing and their love is increasing, it's not because circumstances are easy.
Just look down briefly to verse 4. I just want you to see the context here. At the very end of verse 4, in all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring, this church is facing persecution, that persecutions result in affliction.
[25:58] This is not an easy time to be a part of this young church. And in spite of the opposition they're facing, in spite of the, those waging war against them, both Jew and Gentile and false teachers from every corner, from every side, this church is facing persecution and yet, in the midst of that, their faith is growing and their love is increasing.

One of the things that we should pray for and be thankful for is to be a part of a church where the church loves each other.
Now, notice what is in the very first verses of this letter here. It is a love of God, that's their faith that's growing, and a love for each other, that's their love increasing.
There are some congregations that really prop up loving each other and caring for each other and that's good, but they don't teach, train, and equip their people.
Other churches where the training and equipping is strong, but there's no relationships with each other. But in the church that we should be and in the church that we want to pray to be and the church we should be thankful for is where you see the congregation growing in faith, their walk with God, and increasing in love for each other.
[27:39] And this can only happen if there are relationships among the body of Christ. This is one of the reasons in the Bible why just sitting at home and reading your Bible or just sitting at home and listening to sermons online is not enough.

Those are good things. Those are blessings. Those are things that are wonderful to do. Read the Bible for yourself? Absolutely. Listen to faithful teaching. Read good books? Absolutely. But those things are not sufficient if that's all that you're doing because part of what should be happening for every believer is that our faith is growing but it's growing together.
It's not just me. It's we. We're growing together. And while your faith is growing your love for each other is also growing. The Christian life absolutely has the vertical element and the horizontal element.
Paul mentions this very clearly here. Their faith is growing. That's their vertical relationship with God and while that's happening their love for each other horizontal is increasing.

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They're not just tolerating each other. They love each other and it's a love that is increasing. Increasing. Sometimes people think to themselves you know I'll hear things you know people talk about their churches and they may say the thing that they love about their church they're most thankful about their church they love the music whether it be our church or some other church and they love to come and they love to sing and that's really what worship is all about for them is the music and then they leave don't know anyone don't talk to anyone don't serve anyone they just love to come and sing hear the music and leave.
[29:30] Well music is good and music is a great gift where the songs of the church are rich and biblical and doctrinal and true praise God for that but that by itself is not all that this is about it's more than music it's about growing faith and increasing love for each other other people other churches people may say you know I just love the teaching because I learn so much I've got a notebook and I take notes and I feel like I learn so much and so much doctrine is coming alive for me that's good that's right that's a wonderful thing but if all you do is come to church listen to a sermon take notes learn some things and go home and you don't know anyone and don't love anyone you're not a part of the church like you should be and so Paul makes it crystal clear here that the church is both faith with the Lord and love for each other and this demands meaningful relationships we talk about this in our new members class every time we do it that that we want this to not be an address where a bunch of strangers happen to show up at the same time in the same place we want this to be a family that's important but all of us have to work to make that happen all of us have to be willing to go out of our way to meet someone to talk to someone to pray for someone to serve someone and not just talking to people who are just like you to say to someone hey we've not met or you're a new member or you're an older person and you go up to a younger married couple introduce yourself to them and that might feel odd for a few minutes but you do it because if you're 70 and all your friends are 70 you're missing out our college students are over here if you're 20 and all of your friends are 18 to 22 you're missing out if you're newly married and the only married people you know are your parents and everyone else who's newly married you're missing out that the church that we pray to be the church that we should be thankful for is both growing in faith with the Lord and increasing in love with each other this is distinctively

Christian love this is this is how the church should operate look at the exact wording again here and the love of every one of you for one another you mean we're supposed to try to love everybody seems that way and it's increasing there are people in your life that's harder for you to love and there may be people who think you're the one that's harder to love both those things may be true this is why we keep working at it keep striving to build relationships keep striving to serve each other keep striving to get to know each other don't only talk to people in the church that have your exact same interest don't only talk to people in the church who cheer for the same team you cheer for or serve in the same ministry you serve in the wider your relationships are in the church the deeper your love and appreciation for what God is doing grows he's thankful for growing faith and thankful for increasing love one author put it this way to describe the church to which he writes in Thessalonica no one is merely a taker all are givers what a beautiful thing that everybody would be a giver everybody would be a servant that people aren't just taking there's not you know people on the sidelines just saying let me just take take take take take but instead the whole congregation says how can we serve how can we give how can we pray how can we help let's all be a part of what God is doing he's thankful and he's grateful for their growing faith and their increasing love there's a third thing we see in verse 4 and he's grateful for their prevailing endurance verse 4 therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring when Paul says he's boasting about them this is in the positive sense this is boasting in a church for the sake of the glory of God for the sake of God's honor how do we know that because he begins the letter by reminding them that their salvation was all verse 2 about grace grace grace is unmerited favor grace is what
God gives what God provides and so when Paul is boasting in this church this is a Christ centered kind of boasting that says to the glory and praise of God you're living in a way that reflects his grace grace Paul writes this from Corinth and so when he says that he is boasting of this church to other churches he's talking about assemblies in Macedonia assemblies there in Achaia and what is it again that Paul is so proud of this church for he doesn't boast in their attendance he doesn't boast in their offerings he doesn't boast that the house or structure they're meeting in is larger than somebody else's he's grateful for their faith grateful for their love and grateful for how they endure

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during suffering
I also want you to notice biblically here that what Paul says he's doing is he's using this church he's writing to their example to encourage other churches which reminds us that our church here we need to conduct ourselves in such a way that our church is an encouragement to other churches not in competition with them not seeking to climb some arbitrary ladder of status but that other churches should be able to look at us get to know us watch us interact with us and that we would be used by God to encourage them not to want to be a larger church not to think they have to go build a new building but they would say I want to have faith like them I want us to love each other like them that our example of
Christ likeness would be so true and so pure and permeate all that we do that our church here could be used by God to encourage and strengthen other congregations for the glory of Christ therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God here's why here's the third reason for your steadfastness and your faith in all your persecutions Paul is proud of them for how strong their faith is during persecution this church is doing well though it still has challenges and in spite of their challenges they are being steadfast they're being courageous over and over again this is not the way most people talk about their churches one of the things that when
[38:03] I meet someone new if they find out they're a believer they go to church I'll often ask them what church do you go to and I love to ask them what is it that you love about your church and there's a lot of things that people can be thankful!

there's a lot of reasons but the reasons why we love our church most need to be really biblical ones the things that we pray about for our church need to be biblical prayers and maybe you think to yourselves I don't really know how to pray for our church or I don't really know even what to say we'll just use this text as a way to clarify your prayers Pray that our faith would be love would be increasing and pray that we would patiently faithfully endure any suffering affliction persecution or trial that we would go through today on Facebook I saw earlier this morning a memory popped up from today's
March 16th so this is from March 16th 2020 and the thumbnail came up of the video I knew exactly what it was it was the video that Jeff and I recorded Monday after March 15th right when COVID was breaking out things were beginning to shut down and I remember that day really well we met all day we were trying to figure out what are we going to do what are other churches doing how do we continue to serve each other how do we help lead and guide our church through this new challenge that was upon all of us and for some to think back pastors especially trying to lead a congregation if they think back to March 16th 2020 it just brings back memories of all kinds of fear or frustration
I'm going to be completely honest and transparent with you when I saw that video today my first emotion was gratitude and I'll tell you why because through a very long and difficult season you were amazing you were so flexible you were so patient you were so supportive you were so easy to lead and to guide you were so supportive I've told people a thousand times that in the 25 years I've been privileged to be a member here nothing has been used by God for more good for our church in the season during COVID because the things that our church already believed and already were committed to were put to the absolute test and what was demonstrated was your faith your steadfastness your flexibility your patience your grace all the things that you hope will be true of a congregation all the things that you pray will be true of a congregation all were magnified and put on display and when
I saw that video pop up from five years ago I just stopped again and thanked the Lord for the blessing and privilege of being a part of this local church and being a member of this local church who imperfect like the church he's writing to yet faithful because your faith then and today is growing your love for each other then and today is increasing and your faithfulness through whatever adversity or trial may come our way you endure with true faith I boast about you he says in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring!
[42:44] Don't think that for ministry to be going well it needs to be easy don't think that for your ministry to be successful as church it needs to be a ministry that's problem or pain free some of the most faithful ministry that takes place is when people are faithful and endure through suffering and persecution and affliction and your example of faithfulness through whatever it is you're having to go through is something that in scripture is worthy to be honored and respected so in these first few verses of 2 Thessalonians it brings up a question for us to consider here as we bring this to an end

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this morning what what do we want to be known for what kind of people do we want to be known to be it can't be about attendance because there will always be a church larger and always be a church smaller let's not take our joy or our gratitude from how many people come here versus some other church it's a dangerous way to do it you look at a church smaller than you and you feel arrogant you look at a church bigger than you and you feel frustrated it's a bad way to do it

Paul makes no reference here to attendance what kind of church want to be known for it's not just going to be about a pastor or a group of leaders leaders change pastors move pastors die what remains the people of God the kind of church we want to be known for is not a building or a location or a size or any of that we don't want to be known primarily for any of those things we don't want to be known for a singer a teacher a musician a leader any of those things we want to be known as a church where our faith is increasing our love is increasing and we are faithful under any trial let's be that kind of church let's be that kind of church on purpose that we pray for those things we labor for those things and it would be fitting for me to tell you that as I get the privilege by God's grace to travel and speak at various places

I hear these things about you all the time and you need to know that not for the sake of being conceited not for the sake of us taking some kind of worldly pride in what we do but you need to know that God is absolutely using you to strengthen other churches just as he writes about here two weeks ago we had our ladies on a theology and we had people from all over the state that were here that night and there is a lady here for the first time goes to a different church and she said to me what I hear so often on Sunday mornings during our break in the hallway in the lobby there she said to me she said the thing that blew me away was hearing hundreds of ladies at one time opening their Bibles and just the loud sound it made of that many people wanting to be in the word that's the comment I hear the most from anyone who's new to our church the audible sound of so many people just opening their Bibles to hear from the Lord my wife and

I were in Atlanta two weeks ago I was preaching there and she was teaching with the ladies there and part of the group that we were there teaching and leading with that week was a part of the group that was here in October for the G3 conference that we hosted and I had maybe a dozen comments there in Atlanta talking about the hospitality and the kindness and the love of our church that they experienced when they were here last October for the conference that we hosted on their behalf and they were saying to us how are your people so hospitable how are they so friendly how are they so kind how are they so good at opening their doors and welcoming people and even know that your example there is blessing other congregations and other people all over we've had the chance to host a number of things here and I hear all the time comments like that now let's be clear we're imperfect to those things and as I share with our new members in class you could come to our church any given

Sunday go through the wrong doors sit in the wrong row go to the wrong class catch it on the wrong Sunday and think man that church isn't very friendly at all we're not perfect at this we're only as friendly as you are what will people think about our church today well if they're sitting by you they're going to think whether you are friendly or not you can't hand that off to somebody else if you're not friendly to those around you those people won't see our church as warm and hospitable so we got to keep working at this we got to keep growing in this but to have increasing love for each other means we are increasingly saying how can we show the love and grace of Jesus to everyone that comes our way but I want you to know that this church while by no means a finished product you are a faithful example in what it means to be a part of a church that takes seriously training people in the word of

[49:24] God you are a part of that and you're a part of a church that takes seriously the gifts of hospitality and welcoming people here because we love them you're a part of that and that's seen and that's recognized I was sharing with our men in the institute last week a week ago at shepherds conference I was invited to be a part of a seminar on Thursday afternoon at the conference and the reason why I was asked to be a part of that is because of you because of the work the Lord has done here through the institute like I told the men there we can plan it I can write lessons I can show up to teach if we don't have people show up to take the class there's no institute I can write final exams if nobody takes them there's nothing to grade and this isn't just about what a few men put together to offer this is about an entire congregation who rallies together to say how can we do what God has called us to do and the reason why I was asked to be a part of that last week in California is because of you the people there know you and know what you do and know who you are and

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know we're not perfect and yes we've got things to keep working on just like the church that Paul writes to here but you need to know that you are absolutely faithful examples of the very things for which

Paul gives thanks and so I want to follow Paul's example and publicly specifically show my thanks for you and appreciation for you for the fact that you are doing the very things in scripture worthy of being honored and respected and let's keep praying this way for each other what kind of church do we want to be we want to be a church with a growing faith a church with an increasing love and a church that faithfully endures through trial and when you find a church like that you're a part of a good thing and let's just close where we begin because every perfect gift comes from
God so back to verse 2 this is all an act of grace this is not to the praise of us but to the God who has saved us opened our eyes to his love and his word and his spirit that's working through us with Paul I am grateful for God's people and pray that we would continue to be the kind of church that would make much of the grace of God that others around us can know the peace of God and experience peace with him Lord we thank you for your word today and as we embark on this study through 2 Thessalonians I pray that it would be helpful that it would be encouraging for us that it would strengthen us we thank you today for your grace in Jesus name amen if there's a way we can serve you a way we can pray for you there's a way that we can help you grow in your walk with the Lord guest or member use that connection card write down how we can serve you we'd love to help you with that drop that in the giving box on the way out and we would love to respond to you evening service five o'clock tonight hope to see you there god bless you you're dismissed thank you so much for joining us via live stream this morning if you have any questions whatsoever about our church or the ministries that our church provides please visit us at fbcmustang.org we would love to follow up with you and get to know you better as always we try to emphasize if at all possible if you could be here physically present with us we would love that and that'd be a joy to serve you in that way but thank you again for joining us via live stream today have a great day so we'll see you again can see you here at come like can see you there go can see you there are there are there are there are there are there are there or there are there are there are there are there can ch can...
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