Living as the People of God

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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.!

This week we kick off our choirs, but then in two weeks our youth choir will be back in here to help lead us on that Sunday evening. We'll be taking the Lord's Supper together the last Sunday in August.
We've got some great things coming up this fall semester as well with our kids' choirs doing some things in here. And we're excited about a new fall semester.
Open your Bibles with me, if you would, to 1 Thessalonians. And we're going to begin on Sunday nights walking through this book. This is obviously a much shorter New Testament book than the Gospel of Mark.
And so I suspect my plan is to finish this book this fall semester. So as you're able to, I'd love for you to be here as regularly as you can on Sunday evenings and to be a part of our study and trek through yet another book here.
[1:30] I was sharing this with someone that I don't remember I was saying this, but I'm 51 and I've been here at this church for 24 years. And so I did some math two weeks ago when I was telling a friend of mine, if the Lord gives me 24 more years to pastor here, that would put me at 75.

And that may seem like a terrible thing for you, but that's my goal. My goal is to be able to do that. And on the one hand, that feels like a lot of time.
But then I started looking, and if I had 24 more years to preach, I wrote down a list of the books that I've been able to preach every verse of since I've been here, and then looked at a list of books of the Bible that I have not made it to yet.
And I felt a bit panicked. Because time is short. I mean, on the one hand, I'm not guaranteed tomorrow. I know that. But if I was able to preach to 75, that would mean, at least in the ministry here at this church, I'd be exactly halfway.
24 years here, 24 years left to go. If I made it to 75, which I know I'm not promised to do. But if I was. And in thinking of that, there is so much of the Bible that I want to study and I want to teach and I want to be able to preach with you and help walk you through before my time is out.
[2:50] And while it feels like lots of time, when I look at how much of the Bible I still want to get through, it just makes me want to start having church on Tuesday night too because I'm not going to make it.

And I don't want to go fast and I don't want to go surface. I want to go as deep as we can and try to get as much as we can as we go through this. And so we've just got to make every Sunday count. But I am so thankful to be a part of this local church. And I'll share a little more about that even as we get through an overview of 1 Thessalonians.
What we're going to do tonight, the first part is going to be a little history lesson. I'm assuming if you're here on Sunday nights, you want to learn, you want to study a little bit. So we're going to do a little bit of background work to try to help to understand what's happening when we jump into 1 Thessalonians.
And then my plan is to make it through all the first chapter, which is just 10 verses, around this theme of living as the people of God.
[3:58] How are we to live? There is a way that Christians should live. And this book is going to address that. So let's do a little bit of background work.

We're going to do a little bit of overview. And then I'm going to show you how some parts of the New Testament fit together. And then we'll get through as much of chapter 1 as we can. There might be a few things you want to write down just to be able to help you to follow what's happening as we get into the context of 1 Thessalonians.

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In Acts 16, it tells us that Paul was at Troas and how he was called to go to Macedonia. He's going to pass through Thessalonica. He's going to be there for just a short time.
His initial ministry there is just about three weeks. It seems, when you put it all together, that he ended up being there at least in some different ways, a little bit longer than just the initial three weeks, because he's got time to teach them.
He doesn't want to be a bother to them. He has another job, so they're not having to support him. He's going to preach. People are going to be converted. A church is going to be planted.
[5:08] And then a year later, we get this letter that we call 1 Thessalonians. So it's about the summer of the year 50 A.D.

Paul and Silas and Timothy arrive in Thessalonica. They've had to walk or travel about 100 miles to get there.
And in Thessalonica, around 50 A.D. in the first century, Thessalonica is a thriving city. It's a metropolitan city. It's, at this point in history, the most important city in the Roman province of Macedonia.
It has a key road along the Ineation Way. It's a major east-west highway that connected Rome to the eastern parts of the Roman Empire.
So Thessalonica, the city, is a harbor city. It's an international city. It was home to anywhere from 100,000 to 250,000 people.
[6:17] It's a large population. Thessalonica also had a very significant Jewish population in the first century. It's named after Alexander the Great's sister.

The city itself was founded by a man named Cassander in 315 B.C. He was one of Alexander the Great's generals. He was married to Alexander the Great's half-sister.
And by 150 B.C., it's the capital of Macedonia. By the time you get to the end of that century, the beginning of the first century, it's a free city, which is interesting because it was ruled by its own citizens, yet it was still a part of the Roman Empire.
So, these Christian missionaries leave Philippi, travel about 100 miles, and they arrive at Thessalonica.
Paul does what Paul does. He goes to the synagogues and he preaches. But look at chapter 2, verse 17. It's going to give you a little bit of background here.
[7:39] He writes of what took place. He said, When Paul went to the city, establishes the church, he is at some point torn away and he is forced to flee the city.

Now, keep your Bible marked in 1 Thessalonians, but just want to give you a little bit of interesting background here. Turn back to Acts 17 for just a moment.
I just want to show you how these different parts of your Bible connect together. Acts 17 says, They came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.
Verse 2, And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.
And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.
[9:11] This is describing what we're studying in 1 Thessalonians. But look at verse 5. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, These men, who have turned the world upside down, have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.
And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things, and when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.
Go back to 1 Thessalonians. What we see from Acts 17 is that Jason was their host. The Jews resented Paul and his friends. They gathered a mob to assault Jason's house.
And after stirring up trouble and trying to create a revolt, Paul's friends usher him out of the city, and they're going to take him to Berea, about 50 miles away.
[10:37] While Paul then has left Thessalonica, he's in Berea, 50 miles away. Things are going well in Berea until some of the Jews from Thessalonica show up and start stirring up trouble again

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for Paul.

At that point, Timothy and Silas stay behind in Berea. Paul leaves Berea to go to Athens. Eventually, Silas and Timothy go and meet back up with Paul in Athens. That is described in Acts 17, verse 15. Then, while Paul is in Athens, he sends Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on them and see how things are going since they were forced to leave.
Are you with me so far? A lot of dates, a lot of names. I'm trying to give you some background to know. This letter doesn't just drop down out of nowhere. There's a context. There's a situation that's going on.
And according to 1 Thessalonians, as we'll study this semester, Timothy is now to go back and strengthen the brothers and encourage them. And then Timothy is going to meet up with Paul in Corinth and give Paul the update of how things are going in Thessalonica.
[12:04] Missionaries go to Thessalonica. Good things happen. Paul teaches. People are converted. People get upset. A mob rises up.

Drives them away. They go to Berea. Paul then goes from Thessalonica to Berea. Leaves Berea. Goes to Athens.
Sends Timothy back to Thessalonica. Says, go back and check and see how these people are doing. And then in Corinth, Timothy meets back up with Paul. Gives him the report that says, here's what I've seen.
I've gone back to check on the church. I've gone back to check on the brothers and sisters there. I'm able to tell you what's happening with the believers there. Based on that report, Paul takes out his pen, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and writes this letter we call 1 Thessalonians.
That's a bit of the history in the background that's going on when we read this. Paul is wanting to encourage them, teach them, remind them, help them.
[13:16] He's rejoicing in the report he's received, because the report he received was good, but there's still more work to be done. Look at chapter 3, verse 10.

Let me back up and read verse 9. Chapter 3, verse 9. For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God, as we pray most earnestly night and day, that we may see you face to face, and supply what is lacking in your faith.
So he's rejoicing, there's a spirit of thanksgiving, but there's still more work to be done, more training to do, and he's eager to be able to help them with that. So he writes 1 Thessalonians. Chapter 1, he's going to talk about how God's people are to live. Chapter 2, he's going to remind them of what ministry looks like. Chapter 3, he's going to talk about his affection he feels for them. Chapter 4, he's going to call them to holy living, to abstain from immorality. And then, he's going to talk about how our life and ministry on this earth is lived in anticipation of the second coming and the events around the return of Christ.
[14:35] Chapter 5, he's going to deal with the day of the Lord. That's very interesting to me, because Paul was there for a very brief time. He leaves, and when he gets the report of how they're doing, and he wants to write back to them, he's going to remind them of what he has taught them about the return of Christ.

Which is quite interesting. That for Paul, eschatology was not something that was irrelevant. Nor was it something that you just saved for the honor society Christians.
Eschatology was for the whole church. And he was there for just a short time, but talked to them about the significance of the return of Christ, our preparation to be with the Lord, our anticipation of what those events would be like.
All of that gets us to chapter 1, verse 1. These three are writing to the church of the Thessalonians, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace.
Now in chapter 1, in verses 1 to 3, make note of the expression of Christian love. The expression of Christian love.
[16:06] And Paul's going to mention three specific things as he expresses the love that he feels. He says first in verse 2, we give thanks to God always for all of you.

Write down gratitude. The expression of Christian love in this letter begins with gratitude. We give thanks to God always for all of you. Which reminds us that we should take time to be thankful and grateful for each other.
That God has put people in your life and you should be thankful for them. One of the reasons why I love Christmas so much is because at Christmas time, it's natural and normal to tell people how

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much they mean to you.
Now, you can and should do that other times. That's true. But at Christmas time, you send cards and letters to people you love and that you care about.
And you could do that year round. But honestly, if I sent out a letter to you and said, hey, here's an update on my family, you in October, you would say, that's fine. Who cares?
[17:18] Hopefully you wouldn't say that to me, but you might be thinking, why are we getting this family update? But with Christmas, it's normal to be able to do that. It's normal to be able to stop at Thanksgiving and count your blessings.

Should we be thankful all year? Of course. You don't wait for a holiday to be grateful. But there are times of our year that are just built in where it's a very natural time to give a gift, to express appreciation, to be able to write a note, to express gratitude.
I'm not saying you should wait for a holiday to do that. I'm just saying that one of the things I love and enjoy about the holidays is how normal it is to be able to express to people how much they mean to you and how thankful you are for them.
And that is part of the expression of Christian love is gratitude for the people that are in your life.
One of the ways to fight anxiety and to fight discouragement is to be grateful.
And one of the quickest ways to become grateful is to let your mind give thanks to God for the people in your life who have blessed you.
[18:28] Because stuff gets old and stuff breaks down and stuff wears out and stuff grows out of style. But when you let your mind think about the people that God has put into your life, that's where gratitude comes.

And one of the things we learned from the very beginning of this letter is that if you want to live a life that expresses Christian love, it's going to be from a heart filled with gratitude and specifically in this letter, grateful for people who have been a blessing to you.
I want to encourage you this week. Take time to give thanks to God for people.
People who have taught you, people who have loved you, people who have served you, people who have prayed for you, people who have encouraged you. Even the imperfect people in your life, which would be everybody, take time to be thankful.
Express to the Lord in prayer your gratitude for people. The problem is if you only or primarily give thanks for your stuff, you're going to always be aware of how your stuff isn't keeping up.
[20:03] You can be thankful for your vehicle and you should, but when you mention your vehicle, you're going to be thinking about it needs new tires and it's making some weird noises and paint's chipping off of it and on and on.

I hope you're thankful for your house and you should give thanks to your house, but for most of us, when we think about our house, we think, oh my goodness, that room needs painted, the siding's falling off, need to fix that tree.
Are we ever going to update and fix this problem we've got in our house? Why? Because the house starts to break down. I'm thankful for our church building.
It's a wonderful gift from the Lord. I'm so thankful for this place, but while I was thankful for rain today, I'm told we've got about 10 leaks. Probably 10 because we haven't found the others is my guess.
I'm thankful for the building, but if all we think about is the building, it's hard to not let your mind get distracted by all the things that are wrong and need fixed and need updated. But when we're thankful for people, when we take time to express our praise to God for people, that's where gratitude arises.
[21:21] And one of the things that believers should do, and I love how Paul begins his letter with this, I give thanks to God constantly, constantly mentioning you in our prayers.

That's number two, prayers. Gratitude is first, and then prayer. And of course, gratitude and prayer goes hand in hand. He's not just thankful for these people, he's mentioning them constantly to the Lord in prayer.
Verse three, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
gratitude, prayer, and memories. Memories are a good thing.
We need to remember more than we do. Last night, Marcy got out a box of old pictures, and several of them, and when we were brand new, just newly married, and I was looking at those pictures,

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wondering who let us be married?
[22:42] What did we know about being married? It's 28 years ago now. And I was looking at those pictures, there's a picture of us from a wedding shower, our church that we were serving at, gave to us, and just think about the people in our life when we were young that helped us, and loved us, and encouraged us.

Think about people in our family, in our church, who supported us, who made us who we were. It's good to remember the people and the events of your life that the Lord has used to shape you and make you who you are.
Whenever I perform a wedding ceremony, I almost always, in the beginning, will encourage the bride and groom to take just a quick minute and just look and scan the crowd that's gathered there as a reminder that there are people who have helped them be where they are.
They're not there by themselves. There's parents who prayed for them, and grandparents who prayed for them, and Sunday school teachers who taught them, and friends who supported them.
We don't do enough of that. Our lives are so busy and so hectic that it's very difficult unless we just discipline ourselves to just stop and just be grateful and to just pray to the Lord prayers of thanksgiving for the people and the memories, the events, and the moments that have shaped us.
[24:23] It's good for us to stop. While you're praying for things and jobs and health and those things are perfectly fine, don't pray less for those things, but do pray more for your heart to be thankful and to reflect the love of Christ.

And if you find yourself always asking and never thanking, it's not because God hasn't been good, it's because we have not taken time.
So we just stop here at the early part of this letter and remind ourselves that the expression of Christian love is that we are grateful people, prayerful people, and thinking not only of the people in our life that have shaped us, but also the moments and the memories the Lord has used.
He mentions here their work of faith, their labor of love, and their steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
If you want to encourage your faith, get to know people filled with faith, love, and hope.
[25:49] This is one of the reasons, friends, why Christian biography is a great way to fight for faithfulness. Read the stories of people whose lives in the midst of challenging and trying circumstances exhibited faith.

faith. Get to know the stories of real-life people who lived out hope, who lived out Christian love in the midst of horrible circumstances.
Christian biography is a great way for you to fight for your joy and to deepen your faith. We've got some around here in our bookstore at the left side, the last two shelves are Christian biographies. There's some really good ones there. There's some biographies, children's books on the right side on the bottom. There's several children's books that talk about different heroes of the faith.
Teach your children and teach yourself stories of faithful Christians. It builds our trust and deepens our faith. Notice, and go to chapter 5, I'll just show you how he does this.
[27:04] Chapter 5, verse 8. He says, but since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

Two things are interesting here. One is Ephesians 6, which has the armor of God. You see, that's not the first time that was in Paul's mind. He's already thinking and speaking of the breastplate and the helmet of salvation.
By the way, that whole metaphor comes from the Old Testament. That's more Old Testament than anything else. But in verse 8, he mentions those of faith, love, and hope.
Chapter 1, verse 3, those with faith, love, and hope. If your life gets kind of chaotic and hectic and you kind of wonder sometimes, how do I simplify my life?
What do I need to focus on? Here it is. Be people of faith, people of hope, and people of love. No matter your health, no matter your family, no matter your job, no matter your ministry, these are the things that God's people focus on.
[28:31] Faith in Christ, hope in Him, and a love for Christ and a love for His people. That's the expression of Christian love. Verses 4 to 10, this is the evidence of converting grace.

He talks about how we express our love in Christ, but then he's going to talk about the evidence of true converting grace. How do we know, how do we demonstrate that we truly are God's people?

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Verse 4, for we know, brothers loved by God, that He has chosen you. Now don't miss what Paul is saying here. He's saying as He thinks about their life, as He thinks about their faith, as He thinks about what He knows about them, He is confident in who they are.
We know, brothers, you're loved by God. We know, brothers, that He has chosen you. How do we know? How do we know that these people He's talking about in Thessalonica are believers? What's the evidence of converting grace? What is it that He saw and experienced? What is it that He was able to discern that would enable Him to be confident of their true salvation?
[29:56] Number one is the gospel message and the power of the Holy Spirit. Verse 5, because our gospel came to you not only in word but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with full conviction.

In other words, the gospel came to Thessalonica and was preached by the missionaries. It came in word but it wasn't word alone. It was accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit.
In other words, Paul says, as I was preaching the truth to you and delivering to you the gospel and the message of the Lord Jesus Christ crucified and raised back to life that the Holy Spirit was at work using His words uniting it with faith in the hearts of the people so that the Holy Spirit was working through the preaching.
It's very important because any preacher should understand that the power is not with us. It's not in our words or our intellect. It's not in our study or our creativity.
Those are tools. Those are means to an end. But the Holy Spirit does not accompany the preaching of God's word of power. It is of no value. This is why those who teach the word, yes, must labor and study but must also be genuine vessels of Christ seeking to not just preach the truth but to live the truth.
[31:35] And Paul says, when I was ministering to you, I preached the truth to you but I'm also aware that the Holy Spirit moved in power and that the Lord did the saving.

It wasn't manipulation. It wasn't tricks. It wasn't theatrics. It wasn't trying to get them in an emotional fervor. It was the preaching of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit.
That's what we rest in. There's a second evidence and it's that they lived like Christ. He goes on to say, you know what kind of men we prove to be among you for your sake.
In other words, Paul says, we didn't just preach the truth but we lived the truth. the message and the example went together.
In other words, Paul says, you heard from us what was true and you saw in us what the expression was of that Christian faith and so I'm confident that the Holy Spirit who has converted you is causing you to follow our example so that together we are all living like Christ.
[32:50] Christ. It's been said that people will follow your footsteps more quickly than they will follow your advice. I think that's true.

Verse 6, you became imitators of us and of the Lord. Imitators. The Greek word here means a little copy.
We get our English word from this word eventually. It's our English word mimic. You mimicked us. You imitated us.
Look at chapter 2 verse 14. For you brothers became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus. Same idea in 1 Corinthians 11.1.
Imitate me as I imitate Christ. He says. Paul says we came to you and we preached the gospel and the Holy Spirit was moving and convicting as we preached and we not only gave you a faithful message we gave you a faithful example to follow so as you believed our words you could follow our steps.
[34:09] Third, there is a Christ exalting joy. back to verse 6 you became imitators of us and of the Lord for you received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Let me read that again. You received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit. Sounds a bit strange does it? There was great affliction and you were joyful.
life was hard and you were joyful. Things were incredibly imperfect and you were joyful.
brothers and sisters that this is a part of the Christian life that we desperately need to take hold of. That Christian joy does not depend on circumstance.
[35:23] Christian joy depends on a relationship with Christ. For too many of us too many times we only exhibit joy when circumstances are just the way that we want them.

But we see in the early part of this letter that you received the word. You heard the word. You believed the word. You received the word.

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And there was much affliction. This was not an easy time. But you had the joy of the Holy Spirit. So let it be said of us that we gave evidence that we belong to Christ through Christ exalting joy.
My friend wrote of that verse God's word is our treasure even if it causes us trouble. You take a stand for the gospel and persecution arises and you retain your joy because though the gospel may cause you trouble it is Christ who is your treasure.
By the way friends this is why suffering is a blessing. Suffering is a great test to see if you really belong to the Lord. Paul would write in Philippians 1 29 for it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.
[37:09] Think of what Paul is saying in Philippians 1. You're a Christian because it was granted to you. It was given to you.

You're a Christian because God in sovereign grace granted to you the gift of salvation. But the same God who gifted you salvation has also exact same language exact same sentence exact same verb God granted to you not only to believe but to suffer.
It was God's gift to you when you were converted and it is God's gift to you when you suffer.
How would suffering be a gift? Because in our suffering we get to see where our treasure truly is.
So you lose your job? Did you love your job more than Christ? You lose your health?
[38:34] Did you love your strength more than Christ? You lose a friendship? Did you love the friendship more than Christ?

Christ? By no means am I saying that we shouldn't grieve when we lose those things. Those are painful things. Absolutely. But when you suffer it's a gift because if you retain your joy in your suffering it's because you recognize Christ is greater than anything you lost.
And when you recognize that truth you have confidence you truly belong to Christ. There's a fourth evidence.
It's the evidence of being a faithful example. Verse 7. So that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. In other words he says your church you believed you followed the Christian example and now you yourself became an example to others.
what a great thing Paul could say of them. You may be young you're imperfect but as you heard the truth believed the truth followed our witness you yourselves as a church have become an example to other churches.
[40:07] Now I want to say and I want to say this I hope you hear this in the way that I intend it to be heard because I do not want this to sound arrogant or prideful for us.

I do want to show you biblically though how this happens. One of the things I hear often including this morning and again this afternoon in the text is how many churches look to us for direction and encouragement.
Do not take that in a prideful way as if we've arrived. Do not take that in some way as if we're perfect. We are very imperfect. We are very much a work in progress.
Do not take that in a way as if our staff has figured out something that nobody else has figured out. That's not what I mean by that. Not at all. But I do want you to understand that one of the things I hear all the time literally from all over the place is how many churches are thankful for the example of this local church.
church. We don't receive that in a prideful way. But I do want you to understand one of the things that a faithful church should be is a faithful example to others.
[41:38] That's important. I don't have time to tell you, it may not even be helpful to tell you all the different ways that even just in the last couple of weeks I've heard things like this.

But I just want you to understand that the way we conduct ourself matters. The way that we follow our convictions matter.
The way that we live beyond these church walls, it matters. It's not a competition. We're not competing against other churches. They're not our enemy. They're not our opponent.
if they're gospel churches, we're brothers and sisters in Christ. We're co-laborers. We're not trying to be better than somebody else. There's not a hierarchy. We're not trying to win awards.
None of that matters. But what I do want you to understand is it does matter that faithful churches are examples to other churches. believers. I got a text this morning from a church that's trying to do a few things that we do and he said, I just want you to know I'm trying to help our church emulate First Baptist Mustang.

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[42:55] Now, it's in the 1 Corinthians 11 way, imitate me as I imitate Christ. We're not the ultimate example of anything. We're just trying to point people to Christ. I don't want you to hear that and be prideful.

I don't want me to hear that and be prideful. But I do want to say that when you read First Thessalonians, one of the things he says is that your church became an example to other believers in other areas.
And we should steward that very carefully. I was asked to go preach at a conference here in a couple of months that I'm going to do because they specifically asked me to come and talk about the church values and carries out higher level theological training in the church.
They want me to come speak to a group of pastors about how to do that. And what I want you to understand is when I go and preach to them, I'm not going as some kind of expert. It's not because of something I have done.
This is something as a church we have done. And I'm going to say to them, here's what the Lord's done for us. Here's how he's moved among us. Here's how we've seen the power of God work among us.
[44:08] And if we can be an encouragement to you, we want to do that. Not because we're better than you, not because we're higher than you, but if what we have learned can help you, we want to do that because we're all together doing kingdom work.

And though I may be the one being sent to speak, I'm nothing more than a member and representative of this church, of all of us together, valuing the things that God has called us to do. And if I go speak somewhere, and it may be my name that's introduced, but believe me, when I preach anywhere else, always on my mind is I'm representing Christ and I'm representing you. And I feel a thousand percent of my mind as if we were all there together trying to serve and minister to other brothers and sisters. And I don't say that to say that our church has arrived, but it is to say that in God's good grace, He has given to us and entrusted to us a significant influence that we can never take lightly.
And so I hope I've said that well. I hope that can be heard and received in the manner in which I intend it. The last thing I want is for us to beat our chest as if we're something we're not.
[45:24] But I do not ever want us to take lightly that the Lord in His grace and His providence has given to us a significant place of leadership and influence and we must steward that well.

That's what faithful churches do. Verse 8, another evidence is they have a trumpeting of the gospel. There's a trumpeting of the gospel and I picked that word purposely.
Verse 8, for not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything.
Sounded forth, it's a word, it's only found here in the New Testament and it's a word that means to blast forth. It describes a trumpet or rolling thunder or an echo.
He's saying that the preaching of the gospel, the living of the gospel, thunders out from you. What a beautiful expression.
[46:31] That their faith and their lives were trumpets sounding forth the grace of God.

About 3.30 last night I thought I heard a trumpet of heaven. Did it wake you up? And I painted because I was still there. And I checked and I wasn't floating up.
And I thought if I reach over to Morrissey's gone, I'm in trouble. And she was there, thankfully. I thought it was the trumpet of heaven.
That's the word. Your witness sounds forth. Your witness trumpets. Your witness echoes. Let that be true of our church that when people know us and hear of us and interact with us, not that we're trying to impress them, not that we're trying to present ourselves as someone that is, or some church that is perfect and has it all together.
God forbid we are all sinners, all in need of grace. But let it be said that when people interact with our church, that we trumpet the praises of God.
[47:44] And that if somebody knows anything about this church, it's that the ministry of our church is an echo of the Bible. Let that be true. We'll pick up next week here in verse 9 with a couple of other evidences that are given.

And then we'll move forward to chapter 2. Let me pray for us. Thank you, Lord, for your word that we've studied. I pray that it's been an encouragement to these saints tonight. Lord, for any good that has happened in our church, it's because of your grace.

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For any victory that we have enjoyed, it's because you are good. For any spiritual growth that's taken place, it's because you have given the increase.
And while we labor hard to prepare the horse for battle, victory is from you. And we may plant and we may water, but only you can give the growth.
So God, help us to always be dependent upon your power and your grace and your mercy, but may we steward our influence well, however big or small that may be.
[49:01] And may it be said of us, as Paul could say of them, that when people think of us, they see the evidence of true converting grace at work among us.

Not because we're perfect, but because our lives are an echo, a trumpet of your grace. It has saved sinners like us, imperfect, weak, frail as we are, but made strong in your strength.
In Christ's name, amen. God bless you. Thanks for being here. We'll gather back next Sunday evening. You're dismissed. You're dismissed. Thank you.
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