



Sermon Series: First Thessalonians - Be Encouraged  
Sermon Title: 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

*"We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 ESV*

Paul, Silas, and Timothy are sharing with the church at Thessalonica a Prayer of thanksgiving - for the people- all the people, good and bad sinners. Constantly mentioning you in our prayers.

Ask, who are some people that you are thankful for? Ask people to include names of people in our church (if applicable) and also why they are thankful for those people.

Their thankfulness is specific for the believers in Thessalonica. Let's take a look at these three areas. Remembering before our God and Father your -

1. Work – these are the things we have heard about and have seen you do.
2. Labor - work, put me to work
3. Steadfastness – unwavering and unwilling to stray.

All three of these things are pretty natural. There is no real need for the Holy Spirit to assist in these things but notice that there are modifiers as to their work, their labor and their steadfastness. Without these "of's" that they mention, it would be easy to think we could "do enough" on our own. But the writers talk about these three actions in specifics. Let's take a look at these again more accurately as described by the writers.

1. Work of faith.
  - a. Where does faith come from? *Hearing the word of God "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Romans 10:17 ESV*
  - b. What is faith? *"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1 ESV*
  - c. Why is faith important? *"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." Hebrews 11:6 ESV*

So then, Who is the worker? John 6:25-29

*"When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." "Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.""*

*John 6:25-29 ESV*

Let's nail what this Work of faith really is. – It is believing in Jesus Christ, in all things at all times.

- When are the times you find it easier to exhibit faith?
- When are those times you find it most difficult?
- How have you discovered that Christ can be trusted and believed in all circumstances and all times?

2. Labor of love – it is not just work, but a work of love. Paul writes to the believers in the Corinthian church reminding them of their privilege and honor of loving others well.

*“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ESV*

This is a difficult kind of love. It does not come naturally but only through the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ-centered love requires surrender.

Make this statement - The opposite of love is not hate, but selfishness and pride. What do you think about this statement? How have you allowed God to work through in this area of your Christian life?

3. Steadfastness of hope - unwavering, solid, unmoving in your belief that God is trustworthy in all circumstances and in all times. We can do this not in our own strength but because of who Christ is - **Hebrews 13:8** *Jesus Christ is **the same yesterday and today and forever.***

There are basically two reasons for us not being truthful.

1. We choose to be people pleasers. Paul reminds the church that none of their encouragement is seeking their approval but is out of obedience to God.

*“For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.”*

*Galatians 1:10 ESV*

2. False encouragement. (When we employ encouragement falsely it begins to destroy our credibility. People begin to wonder when you can be believed.) The idea of Fake it ‘til you make it is a cute saying, but a terrible way to honor Christ and others.

Define flattery – “excessive and insincere praise, especially that given to further one's own interests.”

Some people think that using false encouragement can help others rise to the level of the praise. In chapter 2 of 1 Thessalonians, the writers stress the truth of their words -

*“For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6 ESV*

Allow the group to discuss this statement - **Church should be safe for your soul, but not for your sin.**

Remind the group to Be encouraged -

- That God does not require great works of faith, other than faith in Christ
- That when we have faith in Jesus He empowers us to labors of love
- That it is okay to get our hopes up in Him - He is Who He says He is. God will never disappoint.

Take time to share prayer requests and take time to pray.