

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
Presbyterian Church

“THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL GOSPEL LABOR, PART 2”

For individual study or group discussion

In 1 Thessalonians 2:1–12, Paul reflects on the sincerity and integrity that characterized his ministry among the Thessalonians. His witness was not rooted in personal gain or human approval, but in a deep desire to honor God and to see others live lives that bring him glory. Having established **the marks of faithful Gospel labor**, Paul now turns to its fruit. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16, he identifies key evidences of faithful Gospel labor: the Thessalonians’ wholehearted reception of God’s Word, their perseverance under suffering, and their solidarity with the larger body of believers who, likewise, face hostility for Christ’s sake. Paul rejoices over those who receive God’s Word with faith and endurance, but he also grieves over those who reject it and therefore face inevitable judgment.

Faithful Gospel labor is being thankful for those who embrace God’s Word and endure. (vv. 13–14)

Earlier in the letter, Paul expresses thanksgiving for the visible fruit of faith, love, and hope in the Thessalonian believers (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Now he specifically gives thanks for the way they respond when the Gospel was first proclaimed to them. They did not treat his message as a mere human philosophy or opinion; rather, they recognized it as the very Word of God. This Spirit-empowered recognition produces a profound transformation in their lives. Because they embrace the message as divine truth, the Word continues to work powerfully in them, shaping them into a community marked by endurance, even in the face of hardship. Leon Morris highlights, “*When Paul speaks of believing, Paul uses the present tense, conveying the idea of a continuous process of belief (rather than the single act of decision). It is the condition of the working of God in people that they continue to exercise faith. Or to put it another way, we cannot live today on the spiritual capital of yesterday.*”¹

- Why is the distinction Paul makes between “word of men” and “word of God” important? (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:4–5)
- Read Hebrews 4:12. How is the Word of God at work in the hearts of believers?
- Read 2 Timothy 3:12. What must be the common lot for all genuine Christians?

Faithful Gospel labor is being troubled for those who reject God’s Word and are judged. (vv. 15–16)

Yet alongside his joy, Paul also acknowledges the painful reality of opposition. Many of the Thessalonians’ fiercest adversaries were Jews (v. 14). Though Paul longed deeply for his fellow Jews to come to faith in Christ (Romans 9:1–3; 10:1), they were often his most relentless persecutors (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:24, 26). Their resistance to the Gospel not only displeased God but also hindered others from hearing the message of salvation. In rejecting Christ, they continued to accumulate guilt, hastening the certainty of divine judgment. God’s wrath had already begun to be revealed against their persistent unbelief, and Paul saw this rejection not merely as a personal affront but as a tragic opposition to God’s saving work.

- Read Romans 9:1–3. Discuss how Paul’s condemnation described in 1 Thessalonians 2:15 can be reconciled with his sacrificial love in Romans 9.
- Read Genesis 15:16 and Matthew 23:29–33. When Paul states, “...so as always to fill up the measure of their sins” in verse 16, his language hyperlinks back to Jesus and the OT. How do these passages help us understand what Paul means by “filling up the measure of sins”? What does this imagery reveal about God’s patience, the reality of judgment, and the responsibility people bear when they continually resist his truth?

DATE: August 24, 2025

SPEAKER: Wil/Brian

SERIES: 1 Thessalonians

PASSAGE: 1 Thessalonians 2:13–16

Family Dinner Table

Giving Thanks in All Circumstances

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 that he gave thanks “*constantly*” for the steadfast faith of the Thessalonian church. His call to constant thanksgiving echoes his later exhortation in 5:18, “*Give thanks in all circumstances.*” Such a perspective on gratitude is not easy to live out, yet history gives us powerful examples of believers who did just that. In her book, *The Hiding Place*, Corrie ten Boom shares a powerful lesson she learned about gratitude during her time in the German concentration camp, Ravensbrück. She and her sister, Betsie, were housed in terribly overcrowded, flea-infested barracks. One morning, they read 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18, which says, “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.*” Betsie challenged Corrie to thank God for every part of their grim situation, including the fleas. Corrie was hesitant at first, but Betsie’s persistence eventually convinced her. Months later, they were astonished to find that the guards rarely came into their barracks, allowing them to hold Bible studies and prayer meetings without interference. They later discovered the reason: the guards stayed away because they were afraid of getting fleas themselves. This difficult circumstance, which at first seemed unbearable, became the very thing that protected their ministry.²

- What is one situation in your life right now where it feels hard to be thankful, and how might gratitude change your perspective on it?

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Amani ya Juu, *strategic partner ministry*

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Tsendee, *supported national partner*

¹ Morris, Leon. *1 and 2 Thessalonians*. 1984. Grand Rapids. Wm Eerdmans Publishing. 81

² Ten Boom, Corrie, with Elizabeth and John Sherrill. *The Hiding Place*. 1971 and 1984. Grand Rapids, MI. Chosen Books, 1971. 209–210, 220.