

1 Thessalonians 1-5:28

Sunday 7/17/2005

We're going to enter into the book of 1 Thessalonians. As you know, we have been really working hard at this, trying to give you a complete overview of the Scriptures. What we want to do is we want to provide not only for you, but for people coming into our church down the line, that if they want to really get a study of the Word of God, they can get these tapes and begin to go through them. It'll be a pretty concise overview of the complete Bible, giving you enough information that you can basically outline every book in the Bible. That's our goal.

Remember, we started all the way back with Genesis a long time ago and have worked our way through pretty consistently. There have been some times when we have stopped and looked at some other things, but basically we have stayed pretty on task with it, which is what we wanted to try to accomplish. Today we are moving into the book of 1 Thessalonians. We only do 1 Thessalonians this week, but these two books kind of go together here, so we're going to talk about it in just a minute, how they fit.

The background here, again, Paul writes these books somewhere between 52 and 54 AD when he's at Athens on one of his missionary trips. Just like many of the books that we have seen in the Bible, as we accept the Bible, we accept it as the Word of God in every facet. I believe the Bible that you have in your lap is the most unique book that has ever graced this planet. I'm not one of these guys who believe that God inspired it someplace, and then we've got to go search for it to find it today. I'm not one of these guys that believe that when God had the Bible put together, He left it totally in a man to decide how it goes. I believe that God had His hand in the preservation of that book in every aspect of it.

I believe that God waited, knowing that the English language was going to be the universal language of the world. I believe that He waited until the English language came to its perfect form and then allowed His Word that was going to last for the next 400 years to be written. That's what I believe. I believe that the chapters in it are in there by God's design. I believe that the order of the books are in there by God's design. In other words, I'm not one of these guys who say, "Yeah, I believe the Bible is the Word of God, but I believe man put it together." For me, the issue has always been simple: it's either God's Book or it isn't. It isn't halfway. It either is or it isn't. At least I'm honest about it.

I believe the punctuation in the Bible is important. I believe that God had a hand in everything that He did when He wrote His perfect Book. He wrote it in the language that at the time was at its most perfect form. I believe there's a reason why He gave it when James was on the throne. I know in my Bible that nine is a number of fruit bearing. I know that in the book of Galatians, which is your ninth book in the New Testament, there are nine fruit of the Holy Spirit of God in verses 20 through 23, which equals the nine. I believe there's a reason for that because I believe when He put it out in 1611, 6 and 3 is nine, showing you that that's the most fruitful Book that ever lived.

I believe that when King James was on the throne, God couldn't put a Bible out to the end of the world when Elizabeth was on the throne or when Charles was on the throne. He'd have to get

Jacob. Do you know why? Or James, do you know why? Because James means Jacob. This is a Jewish Book. Every writer in it was a Jew. So what God did is He waited, and God is the Father of history and the Author of history. He waited till the English-speaking world and the language got to its pinnacle point, when it was at its purest form, and gave the world the purest Book that it has ever seen under a Jewish king, Jacob. You're not going to find many people to believe that, but I don't care. I gave up probably the second year of my being a Christian caring what people thought about what I believed.

I believe today that these books are in the placement of 1 and 2 Thessalonians. It's very important, much like the rest. Remember, a couple of weeks ago, we looked at Philippians, and I showed you how the Philippians represented the Philadelphian church period. Last week, we looked at Colossians, and I showed you how the book of Colossians showed you the Laodicean church period. Now today, we're going to enter into the book of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, particularly 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians falls right in line because where Colossians shows us the Laodicean church, Philippians the Philadelphia church, and those are all periods in church history you should know by now from our previous studies. The book of 1 Thessalonians shows me right now, right before and including the rapture of the church, what my job should be as a Christian and what this church should be in detail. Then 2 Thessalonians goes on, and in that book, we're going to look at it next week, he reveals the man of sin. One focuses on the rapture, the other one focuses on the coming of the Antichrist. Wow, what do we get in that book next week?

The breakdown of this book is very simple. It's chapter by chapter. You only have five chapters here. But in these five chapters, Paul gives us a picture of what the model church should be in the last days. In other words, we're living in the last days right now. There's no question about that if you know your Bible. You know that any moment the rapture of the church is going to take place, and this thing is going to begin to wind down. In this book, he shows us during the Laodicean church period what we ought to be in every aspect as a model.

- In chapter 1, you're going to find the model church for the last days.
- In chapter 2, you're going to find the model servant for the last days.
- In chapter 3, you're going to find defined for you the model faith in the last days.
- In chapter 4, you're going to find defined for you the model walk of the believer in the last days.
- In chapter 5, you're going to find the model life for the believer in the last days.

Again, it's laying out just another angle, as we've talked about this many, many times. You hear me make reference to it probably more times than you'd like to hear it, but that's all right. The price of learning is repetition. This is just another angle on our building a Philadelphia church in the Laodicean church period.

With that in mind, let's go to the Lord and ask Him to open up our hearts. Let's take this time to get any sin out of our life that would block Bible doctrine coming into your life. Let's ask the Lord to open up our hearts and let us see that in our own lives in these last days, how to be a

model church, how to be a model servant, how to have a model faith, how to have a model walk, and how to enjoy a model life.

Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus. I love You, Father, and I thank You today for these great people that You've called together in these last days. Thank You for the visitors who are here today, and may they receive a blessing today. They are our honored guests. Father, we just want to have them enjoy the Lord today with no pressure in any way, shape, or form for anything, but that the Holy Spirit of God may have free course in their life to bless them, however their needs may be.

But for our own people, bless us today. Show us. Help us when we leave here today to do it a little cleaner for You, a little better. Let us leave here a little tighter with You, a little tighter with each other, as we understand our job and our ministry and our mission a little clearer. We love You. We ask You now to open up this book. Lord, we've opened the pages, and probably everybody in this room right now has their Bible open to 1 Thessalonians. That's all we can do. You have to open up the words, the verses, the chapters, and show us in this great little book what You have for us. We'll always be careful to give You the honor and the glory and the praise in Jesus' name, for His sake we ask it. Amen.

I. The Model Church (Chapter 1)

The first thing we're going to talk about here and examine in chapter 1 is the model church. I know that when you come to the book of Acts, and I've already told you this, that Antioch is the model church for the complete New Testament as far as church history is concerned. So when I tell you that this church in Thessalonica is a model church, I'm talking about for you and for me in detail in these last days. This book is specifically aimed at a period of time, and it's for you and for me and how we are going to function and what we should be doing and functioning in these last days. There are some great principles here.

All my life I've found people that came to church for a while, didn't come to church, tried things out, and we all go through those things. I have come to the conclusion after many, many years of dealing with churches and people and preachers and Christians and spending time in the Bible that there's no such thing as a perfect church. You've got people that all their lives go from church to church to church, and they're constantly on the lookout and trying to find the perfect church. I'm going to tell you right up front, there is no such thing as a perfect church because churches are made up of Christians and human beings, and there are no perfect human beings.

I learned a long time ago, I don't think most churches really want a perfect pastor; I think they just want a real one because there's no such thing as a perfect pastor. I make mistakes, I'm going to make mistakes, I'm going to make bad choices, bad decisions; we all are. There's nothing really that separates me and you in any way, shape, or form because we're all fallible, and we all have our old sin natures, even though we're saved and on our way to heaven. I've come to realize that I'm not perfect and will never be a perfect pastor, but I'll try to do the best I can based on what the Word of God says.

I've always felt that God's people miss the boat when it comes to looking for a church, and I've heard every angle over the years that there is. Sometimes I've had people that I always wanted to say this to: if they come to church and they nitpick everything about the church. "Oh, they like this, but they don't like this. Well, they don't like that, they don't like this." I understand to a certain degree that it has to fit into your character and your makeup. I understand that, I really do. But you have to realize that I would like to see it where when somebody came to join a church, that they followed them around for about six months and then decided if their criteria, how they lived their life, fit joining the church. You wouldn't like that, would you? None of us would.

I've known people that went to churches and when they went to church, they judged the song service. They either liked the songs or they didn't like the songs. I have my style of music, I do. I don't like all this modern stuff; it's worldly. I like the stuff that has the doctrine in it. I'm sorry, that's where I'm at. But if I went to a church that said something else, I would deal with it. They'll judge that. They'll look around the room, they'll judge the building. "Well, they don't have a cross," or "they don't have a Christian flag, they don't have an American flag." I had a guy one time, I was preaching at a church, he said, "Well, I don't know how you can come preach this church." I said, "Why not?" "They don't even have an American flag or a Christian flag in the corner." It wasn't a care whether God was there or not; they didn't have a flag in the church.

People come in and they'll say, "Well, what do you think of the preacher today?" "Well, I thought he was too loud." "Well, I thought he was loud enough." "I didn't think he was loud enough." Somebody said, "Well, I think it was really cold in there today." Somebody else said, "Well, I think it was really hot." If we ever have a church building, I've got some builders here, Steve and John. This is probably for you, if we ever do this, you'll be on the ground floor with some of that, because you know what you're doing. Hook me up a thermostat on the wall that is not connected to anything, because as long as people think they have the power to turn it wherever they want, they get themselves to think they're cooler or hotter. It works that way. So put me up a thermostat with a big sign: "Adjust the temperature the way you want. We want you to be happy." Problem solved.

I've been in churches where people have come in, they've judged the preaching, they've judged the temperature, they've judged the song service, they judge the way people dress, they judge the way you cut your hair, they judge the way the lighting is, they judge this. They spent a two-hour church service judging everything but themselves, and that becomes the problem. There's no such thing as a perfect church. What you want is a real church. You don't want a perfect church; that'll be in heaven. What you want is a church that has a perfect Book, and then the rest takes care of itself. People get some strange ideas about what a model church ought to be.

I'm going to show you from the Bible what a model church ought to be, and it has nothing to do with the way you dress. I like people to dress; I mean, I have standards, but at the same time, I realize that you can't judge a person's spirituality, so you just have to look beyond that. When you get into this book, in this chapter, you find the model church doesn't say one thing about clothes. Some of you ladies, your hair looks nice today. Some of you look like you just got hit by the north wind. I don't care, and I would never tell you which you are. I have some

recommendations you ought to try, "Just For Men," Jimmy, take the gray out. I have some comments I'll give to the guys, I use "Just For Men."

For years and years, I went to get my haircut. It's hard to find a real barbershop today, any place. You know, you've got to go in and you've got it, nobody gets their hair cut anymore, you get it "done." I don't want my hair "done," I want my hair cut. I'm old school, I know that. I don't want to go in and have some fruity-looking guy looking at me with excitement, running his fingers through my hair to "do" my hair. My hair doesn't need "done," it needs cut. You say, "Well, they'll even charge you for cutting it now." They charge me for looking for it, but that's okay.

You're going to find when you come into this chapter, you don't find any of these things in the model church. This church is a model of what we should be in these last days. This church shows us in detail what we ought to be focusing on in these last days before Jesus comes back. So you want to find a church, or you've got some friends looking for a church? Give them this.

Now the first thing, look at 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7. Here's what he said:

1 Thessalonians 1:6

And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

1 Thessalonians 1:7

So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

Then I love 1 Thessalonians 1:8: "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord." I like that. That's the first thing a church ought to do: it ought to sound out the Word of the Lord. I like that.

But the thing I want to draw your attention to is that little word there that we've talked about before. You remember when we came through the book of 1 Corinthians, and we got into chapter 10, and I showed you how that in 1 Corinthians 10 it was really a chapter that talked about that everything in the Old Testament that happened to the nation of Israel, good and bad, the Bible says that those things happened to them for our admonition. It gave us two great words. One of them we don't use anymore, it's a shame. It gave us two great words: it gave us the word "example" and it gave us the word "ensample." We don't use those words anymore much, but the bottom line is the English language has degenerated so much, and we think they're one and the same, but they're really not. All you have to do is look at how the words begin and know they're not the same.

"Example," "ex," "ex," like you're going to exit. See that sign up there? Look up there, everybody, look around, see that sign? It says "Exit." You know why? Because when you leave here, you're going to exit. So an example is something that is outward. Now it says "ensample." If "example" is outward, "ensample" has to be inward. We studied before that an example is what you do or something you do, but an ensample is something that you are. A church not only needs to be an example, but this church was set apart because it was an ensample.

Christian churches, as Christians, pastors, leaders in the church, I am never impressed with what somebody can do. I'm always impressed with what somebody is. I never look outwardly. I learned that principle a long time ago because you can be outwardly, you can say the right things, you can know the right things, you can give all the right answers, you can be great with everything in the Bible, but the bottom line is, you can fake that. You can fake it. But what you can't fake is what you really are. You know why? Because the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 8:3, one of these little dynamite hidden gold nugget verses, it simply says this:

1 Corinthians 8:3

But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

You can fake everything about Christianity with what you do, and it happens all the time, but you cannot fake for ten seconds true spirituality because "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." You can guard your actions, you can make sure that you do the right things, that you even say the right thing, but you aren't that good, nor is anybody that good, to hide the real spirituality. What you are will leak out sooner or later. Of course, that's why when you get over there in 1 Peter, when he's talking about the leaders of the church, pastors, elders, deacons, the leadership of the church, he says in 1 Peter 5:13 that they are to be ensamples unto the flock, not just examples. In fact, it doesn't even use the word "example." If you are an ensample, you will be the right example. You can be the example without being the ensample because you can fake that.

So when he comes down through here, the first thing he says about this church is that this church was an ensample. This church not only did the right things, this church had within it men and women who were the right thing. They were the real deal, as we say today. They had everything going for them that needed to go. They were more than just what they did; it's what they were.

Then he says this in 1 Thessalonians 1:3:

1 Thessalonians 1:3

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

Not only were they ensamples, but if you look at this, there were three things that set this church apart. Looking for a church? Here it is.

1. A Work of Faith First of all, it talked about a work of faith. Now, faith is a cheap word today; we use it so cheaply. Just like last week, I gave you that little test, or maybe it was the week before, I gave you that little test on knowing who Christ was. No, it was last week I gave you that little test of Colossians 1, "Do you really know who Christ is?" I mean, we walk around and talk about Him, we walk around and pray to Him, we walk around and tell everybody about Him, but we really don't know Him ourselves. We have fallen in, why? Because Laodicea is just 12 miles down the road. Faith is another word like that. I promise you, 95% of God's people who use the word "faith" don't have a clue how the Bible defines faith. They think faith is trusting God for things. Of course, faith is never in the Bible defined as trusting

God for anything. Faith is not anything about trusting God. Faith is about what you see that nobody else sees. The greatest example of a model of that in our lives would be Abraham. Abraham is a great example. We don't have time to get into it this morning, but he says things down here that this church was an ensample because of its work of faith. A work of faith, in other words, a work that was based on biblical New Testament faith of seeing what God sees when nobody else can see it. It's an incredible concept. This is why in James 2, so many people have this problem that they can't get over there in James 2:20, one of these strange verses, and it says, "Faith without works is dead." So the crowd takes that, they don't know what to do with it. They take it and say, "See, you've got to work your way," because you don't have faith without works, and so you've got to work your way to heaven. The other stupid side of it says, "That's not what it's talking about, it just talks about this or not," but nobody really knows for sure. This is what he's talking about: your faith is no good, your faith is absolutely no good, invalid, if you are not involved in a work in a New Testament local church that is doing what God's called it to do. Your faith by itself is nothing if it's not tied to the program that God has called and put forth in this day and age, called the Church Age, the work of the local church. This church had a work of faith. Its faith was in the work that God called them to do within that church. You're going to find out that the job of the church is one-fold, and that is to look out there in this world and see the world as God sees it. When Abraham was out there, the Bible says about Abraham back in the book of Hebrews that he endured as seeing Him who was invisible. Over in Romans 4, probably the greatest definitive verse in all the Bible on faith other than Hebrews 11, it would be a toss-up. It says there that Abraham called those things that were not as though they were. We think faith is just, "Well, I don't know what's out there, and I can't see what's out there, so I'm just going to take a step by faith and hope that God sustains me." That's not New Testament Bible faith. When you get into a New Testament local church, a work of faith, you have now the ability through the Word of God to see what nobody else sees. When the whole world sees America and is scared by terror attacks, look at them in London, look at them in Baghdad, look at them around the world, and they're afraid that they're going to happen here. You don't have to fear because you have a Book that tells you that you can see what others can't see. You don't have to be afraid, and that's why it's called a work of faith, because we're not going to do anything that we're afraid of; that's not in our nature. But when you have a work of faith, you see the work as God sees it. You're not afraid of the things around you that scare most of God's people. Very frankly, that's why a lot of people don't join a church. A lot of people never join a church in their life. They want no accountability, and they don't want to. They want to maintain their spirituality, and they think that they don't have to be part of a New Testament local church to really serve God. Obviously, you don't have to join a church to go to heaven, but you've got to join a church to have a work of faith. There's nowhere in that Bible where God ever told you to work outside a New Testament local church. There's nowhere in that Bible where a child of God in the New Testament is ever excluded from being part of a local New Testament church that is involved in ministry. There will never be a ministry that should not be run and operated within the confines of a local church. Outside of that, you've got your own brand of faith, but it isn't a Bible New Testament line of faith. The thing that first set this church apart and first made it a great ensample was its work of faith.

2. A Labor of LoveThe second thing was its labor of love. He said down there, "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and your labor of love." I've had a distinct advantage over a lot of you, which is the fact that I've gotten to watch God's people for a number of years. Not only have I gotten to watch them, but I've gotten to work with them and deal with them through problems, and probably just about every problem that a person could get into. I've watched how they reacted, I've watched how they responded, I've watched how they did what's right. Some of them did what was wrong, some of them didn't give a flip. I've watched every scenario there is, and I've firmly come to the conclusion that I totally agree when the Bible basically lays out that there are three types of Christians. He says that over and over again in so many different ways, and we've looked at it many, many times. I find that there are many of God's people, now these people are saved and they're going to heaven, but they serve God out of fear. They go to church every Sunday morning because they're afraid that if they don't, God's going to give them cancer by Tuesday, or God's going to kill their kid. You've got preachers that prey on that, and they'll tell you that, and they'll hold you in a grip of fear by telling you that if you don't do what's right, God's going to come down and whack you. Now, I'm not going to say that He's not going to come down and whack you, because there's such a thing as chastisement in the Bible, but you're not going to see me getting up and preaching that and beating you over the head. Let me tell you something, when it happens, then I'll work with you, and we'll decide how it was. But you're not going to hear me get up here and say, "Well, if you don't do this, God's going to kill you." The truth of the matter is, if God had His way in what should be right, we should all be dead anyhow. So I find some of God's people that serve Him out of fear, and I always felt sorry for those people because they never got to the place in a relationship where they could ever have a comfortable time with God. Yesterday in our discipleship, we were talking about prayer on one of the lessons, and that was the lesson yesterday. I gave them the Old Testament example back in Exodus where Moses was pleading the nation of Israel's cause with God. Nikki called me afterwards and had some questions because when she read the chapter when she got home, it really confused her because she got looking at it when she read it, and we didn't really go through it in detail because of time. But when she read it, she obviously saw there where Moses was almost argumentative with God, and he was. She said, "I just really, really, I didn't quite understand that." I said, "That's why the Bible says Moses spoke to God face to face, like a man speaketh to his friend." Your relationship with God ought to be where you can say whatever you want to say, in any way you've got to say it, to get your frustration out, and God just sits there and listens. There were times, and if you don't know that, you don't know very much about praying. There were times when Moses got into that thing, boy, and he just told God. He said, "You know what, God?" God says, "I'm going to kill those people. Those people are the most selfish people in the world. I am going to come down and wipe them out." And Moses said, "Now look, Lord, let us reason together. Now I know they're stupid, and I know they're dumb, and I know this and all that, but what are all these other nations going to say out there if You come down and whack them?" And he pleaded his cause. The Bible says, I know somebody will have a tough time grasping it, the Bible says God listened to Moses, and then God repented from the evil He was going to do. God said, "You know what, Moses, you're

right." Then there are other places in there where Moses is going into God saying, "God, kill them all! Every one of them! I'm so sick and tired of them!" And God saying, "Now, Moses, come on, slow down, take a couple deep breaths, and just breathe this thing through." If Moses and God would have ever gotten together on the same day, they would have wiped out the planet Earth. It shows that my relationship with God is just as personal and honest and as open as it is with any human being on this earth. I can tell God whatever I'm feeling and not hold it back and lay it out however I've got to lay it out. God, because He knows the bottom line, is my frustration is based on I want to do what's right, and the circumstances are overwhelming, that I'm not evil against God, I'm not evil against the Word of God, that I desire relationship, and He is my best friend in the world. Most of God's people never get there, so they serve Him out of fear, and the tragedy that is, they wind up serving God as slaves. Then you have some of God's people that are just pretty tough when you start spitting on your own glasses. Then you have some of God's people that are serving for a reward. They're in this thing to see how big they can get and how much everybody can look at them. They study the Bible for one reason: they want to walk into a room and they want everybody to go, "Oh!" They want to get all the adoration, and they want to take all the glory from God and put it on themselves. They want to get in this thing called the ministry as high up as they can. They want to live like the millennium is here now. They don't want their mansion over there, they want it here. They don't want the reward over there, they want it over here. They want people to bow down and recognize them. They want people to do everything in the world for them. "Change my light bulb, do this, fix this, do that, come over here, I'm the pastor, don't you know you've got to take care of me? I'm the man of God, I'm the man of God, I'm the man of God." Of course, I feel sorry for people like that, and I've seen pastors like that, and I've seen Christians like that, and I feel sorry for them because they serve God as hirelings. But every once in a while, you find a child of God that serves Him and labors for Him just because they love Him. They don't serve Him as slaves, they don't serve Him as hirelings, they serve Him as sons. They do what they do because of the fact that they know what He did for them. They've invested their life finding out all the price that was paid for their salvation. They know every in and out of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit, and all of those things that God has put in their life. They come to the point now where they know that there's nothing else worth living for, and "I'm doing this just because I love Him. I don't want anything from it. I don't want any notoriety from it. I don't want a degree out of it. I don't want adoration of people out of it. I want to do it just because I love Him." My dear friend, if you can ever get to that place in your life, you'll understand what it means to have a labor of love. A lot of things go along with that. I mean, you can say that all you want, that that's the way I do it, but it comes back to that little thing of example and ensample. We'll talk about it here in a minute.

3. A Patience of Hope Then the third thing that set this church apart and made it an ensample was a patience of hope. He says, "Remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope that are in our Lord Jesus Christ on the side of God and our Father." Patience of hope. That's one of the greatest virtues a Christian can have is patience. Unfortunately, none of us have that probably the way that we should. I've found in my life, as hard as I've worked at being patient with some things, that working on patience in a general

sense doesn't cover all the deals. I find about myself, I can be patient with some things and not with others. Why is that? Why doesn't the blanket of patience wrap me up completely in everything? You learn very quickly that patience is the greatest virtue a child of God can have, and I'm going to tell you something, patience is important in a church in these last days because there's so much going on around you that turns things upside down. We live in a very chaotic world that is not given much patience. We live in a very chaotic world that isn't given much of any kind of patience. I've told you this before, we live in a world where we want everything right now, and the world does its best to give it that because they know we'll pay for it because we're such impatient people. It's incredible. Sometimes I just have to sit back and go in awe at how this world, at what a fast pace and what it demands right now. I've seen people waiting in line at the bank where there are maybe four tellers, now there are only two because it's a lunch hour. Here's how it works: you get off your lunch hour, you go to the bank, they've got to eat, so they go to lunch. See how it works? So instead of four, there are two. I've seen people just so impatient. I'm looking at me in the mirror now, this is what I do at the bank. They're just, they can just tell, and I don't know what, and they want me to know they're impatient, like I'm going to walk up and say, "Tough day?" because they go, "Hmph!" so everybody around them knows they're impatient. We're just a very impatient people. We want everything right now. When my parents bought their first house, they were married for like ten years before they bought their first house. Boy, you get married today, you go out and buy a house. Why? Because that's what society says. You don't do, I mean, when it comes to cars, we don't want to buy an older car and work our way up. No, no, we've got to have the very best. You see, they make it so easy because they will give you all the money you need at 25% interest, and they know that our desire to have is more than our desire to be patient. I remember, and I've told you this before, but we've got new people here. I remember in Canton, Ohio, that's where I'm from, I remember in Canton, Ohio, the first McDonald's that showed up. McDonald's was revolutionized because in that day and age, you sat down and had dinner with your family when you went to a restaurant. There were no Taco Bells then, there was no Burger King, there was nothing. I was only about eight years old, and I remember the big golden arches on Raff Road, and my mom and dad and my sister, we went in there, and we ate at the first McDonald's. It's the only one we had in Canton. Now they're everywhere. When we went there, you went in, and it was called "fast food" because you went up to the counter, you ordered it, and right behind you was somebody putting it into the bag, and then you went out to your car. Now that was in, well, I don't know, I must have been eight years old, so that was in about 1958, maybe I was ten, 1960. But today, sometime after that, fast food wasn't fast enough, so they had to put a fast drive-through lane in so you could get your food faster than you got it fast. You know why? Because our society wasn't fast enough. That's how it works, and we fall into that very subtle, very subtle. I remember I went to school, when I went to school, if you were a real man, you wore blue jeans, and you turned the cuffs up, and you wore white socks with penny loafers with a penny in the deal. Now a penny won't do you any good, but back in those days, you could buy a lot with a penny. Not today. They just put them in your eyes when you're dead to hold your eyelids shut today. You've got nothing else they can do with them, they do that, but that's beside the point. The thing every kid hated going to school was when you bought new jeans that were blue and

stiff. After about six months of going to school, your jeans got really where you wanted them. They got washed, now three, four hundred times, you'd worn them a lot. They got to fade a little bit from the wash and bleaches and all those things, and then after six or seven, eight, nine months, you had a perfect pair of jeans. But I walked out there the other day, and there's an Abercrombie & Fitch there, there's a pair of jeans for \$78, got both knees ripped out, had a hole up here, I don't know what that was for, and looked like they were something out of the South Asian army for \$78. You know why? Because we're not willing to wait today for our jeans to wear out. We've got to have them right now, the way we want them. No patience. I know this is true because at Christmas time, my kids bought me my first pair of washed-out jeans. No, I have washed-out jeans, but they're the real thing. These are the phony ones. I've done this test: I have worn them to Bible study, and I've worn them to places, and I've worn nicer jeans than these jeans, and nobody has ever looked at my nice blue denim jean—I don't roll the cuffs up anymore—nobody's ever looked at them and said, "Nice jeans, Bob." Why, wear the old ones that look like, you know, they've been around, off Goodwill, you know, we got them off the truck, you know, and I reached in the container and got them out and said, "Oh, they fit," and took them home. Everybody said, "Wow, look at those jeans, they're really nice." Do you know why that is? Because we've been programmed. We have no patience today, none of us do. I'm not preaching this just to you; I'm telling you, we're all in the same boat. When it comes to doing the work of God in the last days, patience is a virtue. You know why? Because the world is upside down, it's inside out, it is chaotic, it is one gigantic mess. This country is an insane asylum run by the inmates, and we have to maintain an even strain in this world we live in. It takes patience. Patience on what? Knowing that the Lord's coming, knowing where I'm at in relationship to all that. That's what it takes.

II. The Model Servant (Chapter 2)

Now chapter 2, we looked at the model church. Looking for a church? There it is. Now look at the model servant. You notice over the last couple of months, we've had, we've seen this consistency of the Bible doctrine building in a lot of different ways about the attitude of being a servant. This chapter contains one of the greatest verses in all the Bible that shows what my attitude, I'm going to say me, should be toward my being a servant versus my just being a minister. In fact, in this passage is my personal verse for the ministry. In fact, I gave it to you one time, if you remember.

He says in 1 Thessalonians 2:3-7:

1 Thessalonians 2:3

For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

1 Thessalonians 2:4

But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

1 Thessalonians 2:5

For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness:

1 Thessalonians 2:6

Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:7

But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:

What a great passage, and that shows us one of the greatest concepts of what it takes to be a servant. Next year, and I told you about this, sometime next year we're going to install our first deacons. We have taken a couple of years; I want to give it a good three years. The way that thing will go down when it happens is that we'll take a Sunday, and I'll go completely through the New Testament, laying out the three offices that are in the New Testament local church. We'll talk about what a deacon should be, what the qualifications are. Then, just like in Acts 6, there won't be a vote. It won't become a political thing. It won't be based on who's your buddy and who's your friend. It'll be based on, once I lay it out as pastor, "These are the qualifications. Does the guy fit or does he not?" And then you will choose those men, and then I'll make the final determination based on who and where and what in those situations. But the bottom line is, one of the qualities that I want you to look for is an attitude of a servant. That's what it takes to really make this thing work.

Then along with 1 Thessalonians 2:7 comes 1 Thessalonians 2:8. Here comes my verse, this is it:

1 Thessalonians 2:8

So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

The ministry for any pastor, and it has to start at the top, the ministry of a pastor is to be a servant. My job is not just to impart to you truth; my job is to impart along with that my very soul. My passion should become your passion. I firmly believe that my job as pastor is to find myself and God in the Word of God, and then find God's vision for this church. Your job is to line up so close with me in this ministry that you see God's vision through my vision. God will not give you a vision for this church; He'll give me the vision for the church. You're not the pastor, I am. He'll give that to me. If I do what's right, you getting on board and following the same principles that I have to follow, God will show you my vision through the concept of not just imparting out the Word of God, but also our own souls.

So you want to look for men, I'm sick and tired of selective ministers, I'm sick and tired of selective Christians. You want to look for men that will do any job that needs to be done, many times without asking. I never, when I look at somebody for leadership, the key for me is not how much you know, but rather how much you see of what needs to be done. I mean, I find people all

over the world that know a lot about the Bible, but finding the attitude of heart, no matter what dirty job it is, you don't get selective. You don't say, "Well, I work here, but I really don't want to work here." You don't say this or that. You just simply say, "Whatever the need is, wherever it's at, that's where you put me, that's where I'll go." There's no selection to it. Of course, that comes from not somebody just knowing the Bible, but being willing to impart their own souls.

I said it before, a successful ministry today necessitates the man in charge being right down in the mix of it with you. That's why I don't care whatever problem you have, I've told you before, and I've chided some of you before about apologizing to me for bothering me to ask me a question about the Bible. There is nothing in this world I enjoy more than talking about the Word of God, and you have got to know that. We have to have that freedom. You have to know that in your pastor, you have someone, it doesn't matter what it is, when it is, if it's a legitimate thing and you're trying to figure the thing out, or you have a legitimate problem you're dealing with, that's what I'm here for. I will never keep you at arm's length. I would never tell you to go study now for yourself, unless I'm already in the thing with you and giving you something to do.

I learned a long time ago that it's more than just being willing to give the Gospel of God on Sunday and then you go your way and I go my way. You are part of my life as I should be part of your life. We're one big family here, and we help each other through everything that there is. There isn't nothing that you don't go through that I shouldn't feel your pain. I may not be able to do anything about it. You may have made a mistake to get that pain in the first place, but we've all made mistakes. It's the fact that we do the best we can do, but we do what needs to be done, and that's just not holding you back and saying, "Here's a Bible verse." Most pastors stand at the top of the stairs yelling at everybody, "Get up here where I'm at!" Not too many pastors will take the time to walk down those stairs, put their arms around and walk them back up one step at a time. Sometimes those steps are a lot steeper than they appear. I've walked people up them steps and made it pretty quick. I've walked people up them steps that had to take it slow. I've walked people up them steps that we went three steps and they fell back two. It doesn't matter as long as we're making forward progress, that's all it takes. Most churches aren't looking for a perfect pastor; they're just looking for a real one. You're not going to find a perfect church, but you'll find a real one. It's as simple as that. You're going to find that this is a great concept in here of not only just imparting the Word of God, but your own souls.

III. The Model Faith (Chapter 3)

Then look at chapter 3. Let's look at the model faith in the last days. The storyline is this: Paul's been separated from this church. I don't know what it did or what happened, but he says in 1 Thessalonians 2:18 that Satan has hindered him, and he's away from this church. He knows now that this church is going to get blasted because he knows what I know and most of you know, and I tell you this all the time: the real struggles in your life don't come before you're saved; the real struggles in your life come after you're saved because the devil wants to keep you from ever plugging into God. So he'll double-dip you every time he can. He will nail you every way he can, every time, every way, every place, and that's what he does.

You're going to find out that he's worried. Paul's worried that the attacks that this church is going to face are going to weaken, and he wants to be there with them. I understand where he's coming from. So he sends Timothy in 1 Thessalonians 3:2 to help comfort them in their affliction. He says in 1 Thessalonians 3:3 that they not be moved from the faith that they have. He says in 1 Thessalonians 3:4, "Remember, I told you this tribulation would come." I've got a little note in my Bible here; it simply says, "Paul, the mother hen." I know that concept. I worry about some of you, I really do. Some of you are well on your way, some of you are doing really well, some of you've been around forever, and you'll be there till the cows come home. But I worry about some of you. I worry about your struggles. I worry about when I don't see you and stay in the Word of God the way that you should, because I know how subtle it becomes. I know what you don't know. I know that before you know it, this thing hits you, and it's so subtle that before you know it, you wake up, and what you once thought you loved God has now been replaced with something else. It doesn't take much. I'll be honest with you, I, like Paul, play the mother hen more than I should probably, and I worry about some of you simply because I want you to make it. I want you to stand there at the judgment seat of Christ with everything that God has for you.

Timothy reports back in 1 Thessalonians 3:6 that everything is fine, that they're stronger and better than ever. In this particular story here, a great Bible concept comes to light, and that is that when you have a work of faith, true biblical faith, that's what this church had. These were not a bunch of Christians just running around talking about believing in God in their faith. These were Christians that had a working faith. Their church was working through the ministry, understanding everything, and their faith was tied to that work. True biblical faith will only get stronger, not weaker, in the face of adversity if it's a biblical faith.

He says in 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13:

1 Thessalonians 3:11

Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

1 Thessalonians 3:12

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

1 Thessalonians 3:13

To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

The end result of our trials, the end result of our trials will establish our hearts toward God in His Word. Paul saw that in this church, and of course, that's a great set of principles, that's a great concept for all of us to understand that our trials, the things that we go through, our daily struggles, as long as we stay within the work of the ministry, the faith, the work of faith together, there isn't anything that none of us would have to face that we couldn't go through because there's enough people in this room right now that when you're weak, they'll be strong, and when they're weak, you have to be strong. That's why the concept of a work of faith within a New

Testament local church that is not a perfect church, but a real church, that has been set apart in a work of faith, labor of love, and a patience toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. The Model Walk (Chapter 4)

Then he comes in chapter 4, and he talks about the model walk. I want to read here 1 Thessalonians 4:13 where he begins, and he says a great passage:

1 Thessalonians 4:13

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:14

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

1 Thessalonians 4:15

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:16

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

1 Thessalonians 4:17

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Now we use this verse, or I do anyhow, many times when I do a funeral service, and I've got a little three-point outline. I'll talk about the certainty in death, we're all going to die. I'll talk about the hope in death, Christ died on the cross. Then I'll talk about the comfort in death, the fact that your loved one is in heaven and you're going to, and all that stuff. That's the way.

But remember now, in chapter 1, we saw three things that set this church apart: work of faith, labor of love, patience of hope. What we have in this chapter, when it comes to our model walk in these last days, is the reality of our walk as a child of God is based on our understanding of Christ coming for us. There is a reason, I'm going to say it again, I've said it over and over and over again, I'm going to say it again: there is a reason why God saved you. There is a reason why God allowed you to be born where you were born, when you were born, and all the events that brought you up to put you where you're at right now. It's no accident that you're here this

morning. God has you here for a purpose, maybe not the same purpose for everybody, but God has got you here because Psalms 1:1-3 says:

Psalms 1:1

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Psalms 1:2

But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Psalms 1:3

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Apple trees don't bear apples in February. God allowed you to be born where you were born. God allowed you to have what you've got. God gave you the job that He gave you. God puts you everywhere He's put you, and God saved you for one purpose and puts you here: you have a season to bear fruit. I don't know how long your season is. Some of those seasons may be longer for some of you than others. I don't know how long that season is, but I know this: there's a beginning and there's an ending to every season. There comes a point in your life where you can't do what you once were able to do. There comes a time in your life where you pass the point of your vital productivity.

You need to understand that the reality of our walk in these last days is not to live the way we want to live down here for ourselves, not to get caught up doing all the things we want to do and leaving God out in the cold. That's what happens. We're living in a Christianity world today that has absolutely forgotten, conveniently, that Christ is coming back, and we are living our lives like there will never be a judgment seat of Christ. God help us to see the great truth.

He says in 1 Thessalonians 1:10, "And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." We're to wait for His Son from heaven. We have a job to do, and that job is to find out what God wants me to do with my season in this New Testament local church: a work of faith that produces a labor of love that produces a patience of hope, and realizing that the rapture of the church is coming and we don't have a lot of time left. We are on the backside of this whole program of God, in the last few seconds of time, and that's where God has stuck us at the outpost, at the farthest reaches, and God has said, "Occupy till I come."

My comfort, my comfort, my comfort, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." We always use that in the sense that because you lost a loved one and you're saved and they're saved, that you're going to see him again in heaven, and the bottom line is, comfort yourself with that. I'm not saying that isn't right. What I am saying, when Paul wrote that, he wasn't thinking of funeral messages in mind. He was telling me, in these last days, it's going to get tough, and it's going to get hard, and there's going to be every temptation in the world for you to give God the sharp stick in the eye and do what you want to do. What he's

saying here is, "Hold the line till He comes." No matter how bad it gets, you can take comfort in one thing, brother. Sometimes this is all you can take comfort in, and it's simply this: no matter how bad it gets, it's only temporary, not permanent. I'm in this for just a season; it's not permanent. So I'm not going to live my life like this life is permanent. It's temporary. I'm a pilgrim in a strange land. This old world is not my home. My home's laid up there beyond the blue. I have a season to do what my Commander-in-Chief has called me to do, and the reality of it is, there's coming a judgment seat of Christ when He's going to airlift me out of here, and I'm to hold the line while I'm here.

V. The Model Life (Chapter 5)

Chapter 5, the model life. He says in 1 Thessalonians 5:1, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you." Where chapter 4 showed us the rapture of the church, chapter 5 lays out one of the greatest doctrines in all of the Bible, or the greatest doctrine in all of the Bible, and that would be the Second Coming of Christ. The reason for that is that you've got to get them both in perspective, because for you to really have patience and hold the line and occupy till He comes, you have to know where you're at in relationship to all of that.

I know that many times, some of you are somewhat at a disadvantage because you were born way after the Philadelphia church, where all you've heard is the expose of garbage when it comes to the Bible. You've never had the advantage to be around and listen to or even read some of the great men who really believe what we believe today, which is looked at as heresy today. There's a reason for our, as a church, having a patience of hope, and that is that we know that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back. We saw it in chapter 4 where there's a rapture of the church, but again in chapter 5, we see the great doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ to help solidify even more where I'm at in relationship to all this. Some great concepts here. In fact, when you come down and read this, and we're going to read it here in just a second, you're going to find that almost every key word and phrase found throughout the Bible that denotes the Second Coming of Christ is found in this chapter.

Let me read it for you in 1 Thessalonians 5. Follow along with me:

1 Thessalonians 5:1

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

1 Thessalonians 5:2

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

1 Thessalonians 5:3

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

1 Thessalonians 5:4

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

1 Thessalonians 5:5

Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

1 Thessalonians 5:6

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

1 Thessalonians 5:7

For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

1 Thessalonians 5:8

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

1 Thessalonians 5:9

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Thessalonians 5:10

Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

I don't know where to even begin in this chapter; there's so much here. But let's just begin to walk down through and do in the few minutes we have left what we can do.

- **Times and Seasons**The first thing he says down here in 1 Thessalonians 5:1, "But of the times and the seasons." I don't know what you know about the Bible, but God has two great ways of laying out His coming. One of them is in the concept of time. So you're going to find within that a day system. A day system is a period of time. You're going to find that he begins to focus down even closer to show you more specifics because the next time system that he has, well, he really starts out with a year system, and then he works down to a day system, and then he works down to an hour system: years, days, and hours, or time. So when he says "the times and the seasons," he takes for granted that you have studied your Bible enough to understand those three things. Now, if I was teaching this in the average Baptist church today, I would be hailed as a heretic, and that's okay. I remember a number of years ago, probably back in the early 70s, where I got to read a copy of George Wilson's book. George Wilson was a great Bible student, wasn't a Bible scholar, a great Bible student. He lived in the 1800s, and he wrote a paper in 1887. His work was 1055 pages and over 685,000 words. What George Wilson laid out in the middle of the 1800s was the whole concept from the beginning to the end of the day system, the hour system, and the year system, showing clearly that the rapture of the church would take place sometime after the year 2000. Incredible work. In 150 years, there's never been one person able to refute with an open Bible what George Wilson said in 1887. Who knows who George Wilson is today? Nobody. What's even more tragic is, who cares? Because we are so caught up in buying worn-out jeans and getting our food fast, and we think that we can get our Bible just as fast, and of course, you can't. So he says "the

times and the seasons." George Wilson also wrote in that great book, and I wish I could have kept the copy, I don't even know where to begin to get a copy of it today, but he also laid out the seasons. George Wilson said, if I remember this correctly, "You know what?" he says, "When God made everything, He made everything after a pattern, and when He gave this earth, He gave this earth four seasons." On this earth, you have four seasons, not the ones that sang "Stop! In the Name of Love," but summer, fall, winter, and spring. Did the Four Seasons sing that song? No, that was the Supremes. God gave me that. He began to lay out how that the Bible, within the Bible, there are, on this earth, for the times, this is why he says "the times and the seasons." We know the time represents 7,000 years or 6,000 years of man, and in that 6,000 years span, there are four seasons in your Bible. Dr. George Wilson laid it out when he laid it out that from Genesis 1 to Genesis 12 was spring, from Abraham to 606 BC where the captivity was summer, from 606 to Acts 7 was fall, and from Acts 7 to the Second Coming of Christ was winter. He understood things that the average Christian never could grasp today, but Paul understood. You think Paul was talking about the times and the seasons that he was talking about the time of the year? I don't think so. You go back to Daniel 2:21, you will find out how God changes those times and seasons. Incredible study.

- The Day of the Lord Then he says in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, "the day of the Lord." The day of the Lord is defined for us, the Second Coming of Christ. Over 600 times in the Bible, you'll find it made a reference in the Old Testament alone.
- Peace and Safety Then he says in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, "peace and safety." That's dealing with the Antichrist and Daniel 8:25 and Daniel 11:24. When he sets up his kingdom, the false kingdom, we're going to look at it next week in glorious detail, but he brings upon a world of false peace and a false safety, which everybody in this world will buy into in a heartbeat because every legislator in this world, in this country, and around this world is trying to do the same thing.
- The Woman in Travail Then he talks about in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, "the woman in travail." Of course, you go to Revelation 12:2, you go to Isaiah 21:3, you go to John 16:21, and Isaiah 26:17, you know that the woman in travail is Israel. Here's what it's like: a woman going to give birth. One of the things that you've heard me say this many, many times, and I got this from the book of George Wilson, not original. I remember George Wilson in his book saying, "You know what?" he says, "Watch Israel." He says, "Nobody can tell you the exact time that Christ is coming back, but it's instructive that when the Holy Spirit of God wanted to inform us of His coming, that He chose the example of a woman with child who was pained to be delivered, almost ready to be delivered." He said, "You know what?" he says, "When a woman finds out she's pregnant and she goes to the doctor, the doctor will try to figure the thing back and forth and give her what we call a due date." That due date is the date that she is probably due. Not very many women ever hit the exact due date. Some do, some don't, but the exception proves the rule. Most women do not hit their due date, but most women know when their baby is coming very closely, and they cannot predict the day and the hour, but they know, and they better not stray too far from home because, "Ready or not, here it comes!" Of course, that's what we've got with the coming of Christ. I don't know the day and the hour, but I'm told to watch Israel. Israel is pained to be delivered as we speak this

morning, and she's about ready to give birth, and that birth signifies all the prophetic events that are going to take place.

- Children of the Day, Children of the Night He says in 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6, "children of the day, children of the night." What a great study concept that is. That takes you back all the way to Genesis 1:5 where the Bible says, "God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night." You can connect those two together, and you'll find how that thing works with children of the day and children of the night. Somebody said, after I taught that, they raised their hand and they said, "Well, Brother Bob, I always thought that was just the first day and the first night because that was the first day and the first night." I thought, "That's all that was." I said, "Well, that would be good, except this is the first day, and the sun doesn't show up till the fourth day. Kind of tough to have a day and night literally without the sun, don't you think?" But it's not talking about that. You're going to find that great battle before you go to Genesis chapter 1, first five verses, you're going to find that the battle is going to be light versus darkness, and darkness is going to have her children, and light's going to have his, and the children of light should understand all of these things. Do you, children of light, do you?
- Not Appointed to Wrath Then 1 Thessalonians 5:9, one of the greatest verses in all the Bible that shows you and I, in fact, the greatest verse in all the Bible that shows you and I that the church will not go through the tribulation period. It says: 1 Thessalonians 5:9

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, You see, in Isaiah 57, Isaiah 64, Isaiah 54, and Psalms 102, Israel gets God's wrath. In John 3:36, an unsaved man gets God's wrath. But a child of God, the church, was never appointed to wrath. We obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. You and I aren't going through it. We get taken out, chapter 4, before it hits chapter 5. That's the promise of His coming to me.

In closing out his letter in the same chapter, chapter 5, Paul gives us seven great principles for us to have a model church. We've talked about that: a model faith, a model life, model serving, the model walk. Now here's what he says in 1 Thessalonians 5:16, closes out his book with this.

- Rejoice Evermore He says, "Rejoice evermore." The attitude of the child of God today in your outlook will be in direct proportion to what you know about your Bible, because the world is so dark, the world is so bleak, the world is so black, the world is so downcast. That's why you find so many of God's people are the same way. Why? Because they don't understand a great lesson: you may lose some battles in this life, but I've got some news for you, the war has already been won, folks. The name Thessalonians means "victory." You've got the victory. You've overcome. 1 John 2:13. So he says, "Rejoice evermore." Somebody said, "Brother Bob, are you enjoying your salvation in this rotten time period, or are you enduring it?" I just looked back and said, "I'm enjoying my enduring, pal. What are you doing?" I'm not downbeat. I know what's got to happen. I'll tell you something else, it's got to get a lot worse. It could get a lot worse, probably will. I'm looking forward to it.
- Pray Without Ceasing 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." Ephesians 6, we talked about it in the armor of God, talked about praying always with all supplication. You need to learn how to pray. The greatest concept God's people should ever learn about prayer is the fact that we don't know how to pray. Romans 8:26. We find in Ephesians 6, in our battle in

this life, that we are to pray. The Bible says, "Pray without ceasing." When you're over to Daniel 10, you'll find why that's true. Here's a man that is praying to God for a particular situation, and for 21 days that prayer can't get answered because God's help that He sent him is being held up by the prince of Persia. It shows you in a kind of a glimpse capsule form, it shows you that every outcome on this earth probably to some degree is orchestrated by what battle takes place out there in the second heaven, and your prayer life is key to