

1/17/21 - 1 Thes. 1:6-10 - "A Distinguished Church" (PT 2)

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[0 : 00] So I assume most of us have experienced at one time or another the picking up of other people's good and bad habits.

Growing up, for an example, we can often look upon times of learning from our grandparents, learning from our parents, maybe even our older or younger siblings. Maybe in high school or middle school, learning from upperclassmen or possibly even in your place of employment, learning from your manager, learning from your boss, or even looking at the TV, seeing famous athletes and learning behavior, good and bad habits from all of them.

I personally believe it's true, as James Baldwin said, that children have never been good at listening to their elders. But they have never failed to imitate them.

This could be good news or bad news for some parents, because your kids are watching. Church, the patterns of our lives often emerge solely due to imitation.

[1 : 14] And this varies at certain levels of degree from time to time, and even our awareness of that imitation. For instance, I'm married.

We're going on 10 years in July, and it has created opportunities of unknown awareness that we have sort of developed habits, mannerisms, sayings, verbal expressions, and much more from this 10 years of just marriage.

I could only imagine for people who have been married for multiple decades long. The habits that you pick up from one another. And actually, it leaves us spinning because we don't know where they came from.

We just do it. We just imitate one another in this strange way. All because of the consistent proximity that I have with my spouse.

A vital process of imitation is not something that's necessarily taught, but it's something that's shown. It's something that is observed. It's not, essentially, it's not an institutional endeavor.

[2 : 24] We don't necessarily gather and say, imitate me in these ways. Rather, it's an apprenticing endeavor where it's saying, watch what I do and say as I say.

Depending upon your setting, this sentiment can either be the most edifying reality in our lives or the most terrifying reality in our lives, depending on the source of who we're imitating.

You can imagine a medical residency that when you're standing next to the heart surgeon, you're supposed to be paying attention to do as he does, to respond to high intense situations as he responds, and to heed his example of imitation to hold, uphold within your own life.

And like I said, this could be an edifying reality or a terrifying reality. But while we can often admire and find ourselves imitating folks to varying levels of degree, the Bible calls us, as his church, to imitate.

Specifically, those around us who set godly examples. And we, too, have the responsibility to be imitable, if that's a word, to other people as well.

[3 : 46] To live a godly life, setting an example for another. This is all perfectly found in Jesus Christ and relationally found in one another, especially within, I'll just put my own self on a chopping block, your leaders.

This call of imitation stretches far beyond vibrant personalities or even skills.

Meaning that you can have the most creative sense of humor or awe or you can just, you go into a room and you just have this way about your personality that captivates an audience.

It stretches far beyond that. It also stretches far beyond maybe our biblical knowledge or biblical literacy. I can quote all the Greek and the Hebrew, and I can go backwards and forwards in both

alphabets.

But this emerges from the depths of the heart and personal conviction, which exposes either godly living or fleshly living, one or the two.

[4 : 49] One of the two. And what our text today will challenge us with is to define those worthy of imitating and equally observe our own worthiness of the command of being imitators to others.

It's going to duly challenge us of who we're imitating and are we imitable to others. And so it is a vital process in sanctification to be imitative.

Then we often see that much of the gospel momentum occurring within the city, specifically in Thessalonica, was not necessarily taught for any duration of time.

It was learned. It was replicated by example. It was that do as I do to say as I say. So let's pray as we continue in Paul's introduction to this church as he helps us to get to the heart of the matter of being a, quote, distinguished church.

Please join me in a word of prayer. Father, we turn to you at this time, looking to you to help us in our sanctification.

[6 : 01] Looking to you as the supreme example of who we ought to be striving to be like as you are molding us and creating us into your image.

Help us to heed the importance of those who set the example for us in our lives and also our own responsibility to be imitable to others as well.

And so we pray and we give this time to you. Help me to speak clearly and boldly your word that has the power to raise a sinner to life and forgiveness of their sin.

Father, help us all to navigate your word with great precision and accuracy. We praise in Jesus precious and his holy name.

Amen. Amen. The first section that we have today is the mark of faithful endurance. And so as we go through these three sections today, they're going to be marks of various objects, we'll say.

[7 : 04] This one is the mark of faithful endurance. And we see this in verse six through seven. He says, and you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.

You see, the heart of imitation is this. You become a learned observer in order to imitate something else. And to become a learned observer, it's knowing that you are not self-sufficient, that you've essentially not arrived, that there's something that might be worthy of imitation that somebody else within the Christian community may do well and excel at, that makes you challenge your own life, maybe along that standard of, yeah, there's something that I can probably do better.

In such curiosity behind imitation is the permeating thought that maybe there's something I can improve on or adopt something that this other person is doing.

This rubs against the, utterly, the grain of prideful people who think that they have it all together, who think that they have arrived in any sense of the imagination.

Verse six makes it clear that Paul brings in two spheres of imitation. Look at me with, look with me in verse six. It says, you became imitators of us.

[8 : 35] This pastoral team and of the Lord. Much of the Thessalonians gospel growth is given to the fact that they were imitators of this pastoral team.

It was not of themselves. It was of those who, that they were imitating. And if they were, they're imitators of this pastoral team, it can equally be known that they were also imitators of Christ because the pastoral team is also imitators of Christ.

So you see this passing along of this seal and this stamp of authenticity throughout this message. All Christian imitation should derive from the character and person of Jesus Christ.

His life and death give us the supreme example of what we are to imitate and follow. Jesus Christ, as seen in Hebrews 1, verse 3, says he is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.

Colossians 1, verse 15, says a similar usage of that word imprint. He says he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

[9 : 51] He's supreme over all things. And here we see clearly that so that these people would become an example. That word example means that it's the same sense of Jesus Christ being the exact imprint of the nature of God, the exact image of God.

And so you see that this imprinting is literally this wax seal that used to be used to emboss envelopes and to seal them. It's the exact imprint similar to that.

It's like the stamping of a coin. Every groove and every edge replicates the object that was being stamped and pressed upon. This is perfectly found in Christ and relationally found among one another.

And now considering this church's circumstances, context does matter. And there's great implications within the context of this passage and what the church was experiencing.

They weren't just sitting on their beach chairs, drinking a Kool-Aid, watching the sun go down. This church was experiencing much affliction.

[11 : 05] And the basis of their imitation came through that affliction. And guess who else experienced affliction and overcame affliction, church?

Jesus Christ and that apostolic team, that pastoral team, right? This is an imitation that is worthy to be followed.

And it was in their laboring and steadfastness that others became aware of their odd behavior. It's like they're content. This church is content. They're standing when they should fall.

They truly do have upstream muscles that they can flex that the Lord equips the church with. And this was given regional recognition that the Thessalonians were making.

This happened. This echoed through Macedonia and down to Achaia. Macedonia was about 16 miles away.

[12 : 11] That's about the distance from here to Warren. And Achaia was all the way down. If you travel about 10 to 15, maybe 20 miles past Cincinnati or exactly around Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

This was something that was being regionally recognized across this Greek culture. And so how many of us have experienced affliction?

I believe that many who experience various levels of affliction often say and they look back and they kind of just ponder and reflect upon the craziness that they just walked through.

And look at how it developed and matured their faith. They look back upon their affliction and often never regret those seasons of affliction. Now, it's another thing to ask them, would they do it all over again?

Now, that's probably where disagreement will come. Many of us will not sign up to go through the hard seasons that we were sustained through and given in this life. But affliction ought to be viewed as a gift church.

[13 : 24] Like the purifying effects of refining gold, when the church is put through that testing, through that fire, it is the true test of its devotion, of its character.

Through that process, the light of Christ is shown all the more brightly. Consider the context of the verses before. As we were talking last week of the work of faith, the labor of love, the steadfastness of hope.

Well, here, Paul is essentially defining that work that they're doing in faith. The work is the affliction. Affliction. That's the work that the Lord has called them to.

The work is affliction. And now how they're laboring within that season of affliction, they have a choice. They can labor in love. They can labor in complaining all along the way, as those Israelites did in the wilderness.

They can be steadfast with their mindset focused on not their immediate circumstances, but on what lays ahead.

[14 : 34] Nothing in this entire passage is easy at all. Which is why this truly is a work of faith. To faithfully accept this work, this season of affliction, and endure it and labor within that work in love.

As this passage will say, joy. This is where joy comes in. Great happiness. Pleasure. Counter to our nature and desires, we want to complain all along the way.

Along with the Israelites in the wilderness. Following Moses. One of the greatest testimonies to a self-seeking world and secular culture is the ability to have joy, church.

Despite your circumstances. Regardless of the portion that you're given. Having joy. And if not having that immediate joy. I'm not saying that you don't go through seasons of mourning and lament.

Those are integral within the Christian life. But seeking that joy. And joy only comes through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Through the word of God alone.

[15 : 44] This is the characteristic of a distinguished church. How many of us walk through the most troubling seasons and waste them?

Think about it. How many of us walk through those seasons where we just want to completely throw in the towel?

Because the feet that lay ahead seems too difficult. How many of us are not accepting those seasons as a work in our lives?

Not laboring through those seasons in love. Not having any joy. Just complaining. Bickering. Maybe arguing with God. Definitely not steadfast. There's no steadfastness in that. No eyes on hope. I don't know about you. But looking upon the news.

[16 : 46] Affliction may be coming to the church that we couldn't have even imagined in this country before. But I got news. And this is good news. That regardless of what we see flashing up on social media.

What we see flashing as news headlines of various content. Content. The news headlines have no power over the mission or the testimony of the church.

If they have any power whatsoever, it only enhances the glory and the steadfastness of his church. The world has nothing against the church.

Don't waste your affliction. Imitate our church fathers as imitating Christ. Because our affliction is an opportunity to suffer as Christ suffered.

And equally be sustained by him alone. Maybe you're not in Christ. Maybe this Christian ease, we'll call it. This Christian language just doesn't make sense to you.

[17 : 53] But I got to tell you, the joy that the Holy Spirit. That it gives us is something so real. Something so steadfast and anchor.

In our lives. And nothing in this world can touch its power. Or effect. What might your affliction, if you're not a Christian.

If you've experienced affliction, you're going through affliction. What might that mean in your life? Because often affliction comes into our lives and purifies the church.

It kind of cuts away the things that, you know, don't actually help and further the gospel within our lives. And maybe our corporate community. I see that a lot right now. But maybe this affliction in your life, being apart from Jesus Christ in faith.

Maybe this is God waking you up just like it breaks down the church to be completely solely dependent upon Christ alone. To revive us.

[18 : 53] Be revived today. If you're apart from him. Receive joy. Regardless of your circumstance. And come to Jesus Christ in faith.

There is great power in affliction. Gospel power, mind you. But do not waste your affliction. The second section that we have this morning.

Is another mark. It's a mark of faithful proclamation. A mark of faithful proclamation. And now I'll just tie in the context.

This is another work. Of faith. Okay. Verse 8 continues. 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. For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you.

[20 : 00] When I was growing up. Our family would often take these trips into literally the middle of nowhere. If you think the middle of nowhere is anywhere around here.

You have not been to the middle of nowhere. Okay. This is the middle of nowhere. This was up in a place called Goganda, Ontario. If you charted on a map.

If you're not tracking with a sermon. Maybe, you know, take a look on the Google map real quick. But it's in the middle of nowhere. Right around this region is a lake.

It's called Montreal River. And our family has a cabin up there. And to just imagine with me. The clarity and crystal clean air up there.

The clear skies. The utter silence. So rejuvenating. And often in the morning, you would get up nice and early.

[21 : 01] And you'd see that mist rising from the lake. The crystal clear and smooth lake. And it's interesting that even taking the smallest little pebble.

You'd throw it just deep across. Far across that shoreline. Land it right in the middle of that still water.

Regardless of the size of the pebble. It creates these waves. That just ripple away from that epicenter. The message and the manner of the church.

In Thessalonica. Was creating a ripple effect. And this had that regional impact. That was spreading outward. Even down from.

In our day and age. It would be known as. People in Philadelphia. Are talking about Youngstown Metro Church. In Youngstown. The revival going on. And what's happening in Youngstown.

[21 : 59] And we see that this ripple effect. Is made clear. In verse 8. Where it says. That the word of the Lord. Sounded forth. Not only was the Lord.

But sustaining their lives. In that affliction. As we saw in section 1. But their message. The proclamation. Of the word. Sounded forth.

This is a word that's used. Sounded forth. That means literally. Ringing out. I think of a church bell. Ringing out. Circulating audibly. Reverberating.

You see echo waves. Of sound. Being cast. From an epicenter. And this was. What was intended. For all Christians. To experience.

Since the early church. The first century church. To evangelize. A word that literally means. Verbal proclamation. And it is not. Do. Not the duty.

[22 : 57] That's solely. For those who are. Called to preaching the word. Like a pastor. Or a Teacher. This is something.

That everyone. If you're in Christ. You are called. To. Heed the. The. Instruction. Of evangelizing. Personally. Evangelizing. Because of the grace of God.

Through your faith. And there's no cop outs. This Thessalonica church. They were departed quickly. By Paul's presence. And they didn't say. Well. Hey. I don't. I don't necessarily have all the answers. For you. But that's a really good question. About what it means to be a Christian. Just wait a couple weeks. I think that Paul. And Timothy. And that guy Silas. You know those guys. You know. They're going to come back. And they'll explain everything to you.

But if you want a cup of coffee. In the meantime. Here. We'll be a good hospitality. Hospital. We'll host for you. No. They didn't have. These leaders.

[23 : 54] To be. Copping out to. It makes me think of a bell choir. Oddly enough. That it's one thing. To have a single person.

Ringling all these bells. But man. The vibrancy. When you have an entire table. Of people. Ringling those bells. Among a common melody.

How it can fill a room. So warmly. With such a. Such a beautiful. United harmony. Maybe that doesn't sit well with you. Maybe you hate bell choirs.

Let's try symphony. Because I. I'm a former French horn player. And. I played in a. A youth symphony. At YSU. Now there's one thing. From having. A solo artist.

As great as that can be. You can. Ew and aw over. Somebody's abilities. And how they can. Play so well. But man. When you. Take. And place. That solo artist. In the midst.

[24 : 49] Of an entire orchestra. And when all the parts. Are played. In different keys. Different. Different staves. And harmonies. The sound. That comes out.

From that. Is so. Vibrant. So. Beautiful. It almost. Sometimes. Brings you. To tears. This is sounding forth.

As a united message of Christ. In this church. If the church is defined. By its people. And the work of the church. Is to. Endure.

In section one. And now. Proclaim. In section two. We ought to. Obediently. Respond. In active. Participation. In not only. Word.

And like. Yeah. Brent. I know. I'll do it next week. This week was busy. I can't. I can't do. Do. Necessarily. What you do. And pray. You know. How you pray. And teach. How you teach. But it's also.

[25 : 44] Indeed. Each and every Christian. Is commanded. And commissioned. To herald. A message. The identity. Of the church. Since the days. Of the apostles. Was to be.

Hearers. And doers. James 1. 22. This identity. Is revealed. When. Singular. Obedience. Is united. With corporate.

Engagement. When. Each and every. Person. Owns up. To that. Heralding. Responsibility. And command. That. Yeah. I'm not just supposed. To carry this around.

Like it's a virtue. Signal to the world. That I'm with. Jesus. No. But to open this up. With a non-believer. And to read it. With them. To use our moments. And our time. In this life. As. As a gift. Because we're not. Promised tomorrow. We're not promised. To have that lunch break. With our co-workers. At work.

[26 : 39] This is the role. And responsibility. And command. To all. To be heralding. As ministers. Of the gospel. This is the gospel.

Movement. That God intended. To go forth. That sound. Of that orchestra. Playing. Which means. Literally. To be widely known.

In this context. Going forth. Widely known. And guess what. It's hinted. In imitation. Because it also means. To be passed. On. This challenges us.

Man. I'm getting a little riled up. Up here. But this challenges us. I believe. In our call. To being ministers. Of the gospel. Not copping out.

And just. Redirecting. Yeah. There's Brent. Yeah. He can answer your questions. About this. Yeah. I'm here to support you. Don't.

[27 : 34] Don't get me wrong. But we all. Equally. Are participants. In. The ministering. Gospel message. And administering that. To the lost world. This challenges us.

It challenges us. To own that role. So I got to prod. A little bit. At our consciences. Mine as well. Because. Believe it or not. God. I'm not perfect. As well.

And my. If I inventoried. My week. I can't say. That I was. Necessarily. Pouring. The amount of time. That I need to. Into. Ministering. To others. Other than. Sunday morning.

Preparation. But is your faith. In God. Defined. By it's going. By heralding. That message. Forth. By sounding. Forth.

The message. Of the gospel. Or is it just. Merely coming. Like going through. XYZ. Yep. Sunday. You know. Your neighbors. Can attest. They see. On Sunday morning. That garage. Go up. Hopefully. At 10 o'clock.

[28 : 28] So you get here. At 10. 30. To start. Our gathering. Here. Right. 10. 30. Any members. Of the church. Who are at the members. Meeting. 10. 30. They see.

That garage. Go up. Probably. Around 10 o'clock. Not. 10. 25. So that you get here. Promptly. On time. And your neighbors. Can attest.

To the coming. To you. Coming back. All filled up. And the kids. Running around the house. You know. Shortly after. Around 12. 30. Depending on how long. I'm blabbering up here.

Right. Now. You can be. Defined. By good Christian habits. Not swearing. You're always reading. You're always reading the Bible. And things like that. But how many of us.

Can truly say. That the world. Can define us. By how we go. And herald. The message of the gospel. Not only in how we. How we respond. How we act. And expose it.

[29 : 23] In our lives. But what we do with it. Is your Christian walk. Faithfully. Carried out. In a mere. Solo. Hundred meter.

Sprint. Or is it. A 400 meter. Relay. Race. God is calling.

The church. Not only to. Faithfully gather. Because obviously. When we're going through. Very hard times. We are stronger together. We are. We observe. The Lord's Supper.

Which helps us. To remember. That participation. That we have. To one another. And also. Jesus Christ. But we faithfully. Go. To herald.

The message. Of the Savior. Jesus Christ. Together. When you survey. That you're weak. This past week. We'll just. Pick on that. A little bit.

[30 : 17] Was there any. Instances. Marked. In ministerial efforts. Maybe mentoring. Someone. Who's maybe. Younger in age.

Than you. Maybe older in age. Maybe spiritually. Less in age. Maybe the spiritually. Robust. Or maybe. Training someone. In the gospel.

Maybe praying. For someone. Dare I say. Don't wait. For a discipleship. Group. Or a church. Program. To equip you. For the opportunities.

Of discipleship. This should be. Ingrained. Within the DNA. Of the church. All the way. From Monday. To next Saturday. How does your survey look?

This is a command church. Colossians 3.16. Says. Let the word of Christ. Dwell. Richly. In you. Teaching. And admonishing. One another. Maybe I should say it.

[31 : 13] A little bit louder. Teaching. And admonishing. One. Another. In all wisdom. Singing psalms. And hymns. And spiritual songs. With thankfulness. In your hearts.

To God. A little challenge. For you. Take a look around this room. Just real quick. Yeah. I want to see Headstern. Look around. Look at the people. That are around you.

This is the assembled. Church. Ecclesia. Church. Who within this room. Might you be able to maybe meet with. Every other week. Or something like that.

To simply read. The Bible. And to pray. Together. After a year's time. Who might they. In turn. Be able to. Pass on.

On. What you've. So. Graciously. Sown. Into their lives. To be imitators. Of you. The church. Is to be distinguished.

[32 : 06] Especially in the call. Of all Christians. Of being. Disciple. Making. Disciples. And we see. As we come to. The end. The last. Section.

Of this passage. Another. Mark. And it's the third. Mark. The first. Mark. Was. The endurance. The second. Mark. Was proclamation. And this third.

Mark. Is. Faithful. Conversion. And so. We see. In the second. Half. Of. Verse nine. That's. That it mentions.

I'll start at the beginning. Of verse nine. For they themselves. Report. Concerning us. The kind of reception. That we had among you. And how. You. Turned. To God. From. Idols.

To serve. The living. Living. And true. God. And to. Wait. For his. Son. From heaven. Whom he raised. From the dead. Jesus. Who delivers us.

[32 : 59] From the wrath. To come. Now. Throughout the regions. Of Greece. Where all this movement. Was happening. Those ripple effects. Were reverberating.

All through. The region. Of Greece. It was easily. Verifiable. That these. Christians. In Thessalonica. Were truly. Changed. Without a doubt.

They were truly. Changed. They were living. Their lives. By. Some. Power. That was found. Outside of themselves. Message. Last week.

And the response. In affliction. Was striking. Their proclamation. Was truth. And everyone. Was doing it. And now.

It seems. As if their DNA. Seems to be. Completely. Altered. They're new. Now. Being a Gentile.

[33 : 55] Church. It might bring. To our mind. Maybe. Acts 10. Because. In Acts 10. There was like. A visual. Verifiable. Immediate. Evidence. That the Gentiles. Were converted. Through speaking.

In tongues. In Cornelius. His house. But we see. No indication. Of such wonder. In this context. It was simply. That these Gentiles. Came.

And heard. The word. Of the Lord. And. Through. Hearing. The word. Of the Lord. Their faith. Was ignited. By it. And their lives.

Were visibly. Verifiably. Changed. And they were. Set apart. Trust me. If you talk. To people. From. From maybe. My high school. Years.

And say. That I'm. On a pulpit. You might. Get some. Some weird. Looking. Eyes. Like. Are you serious? What's going on. That church? I'm telling you.

[34 : 50] The power. Of conversion. Changes. You. It's visibly. Verifiable. In your life. That you can. You can't even. You can. Struggle. In. And withhold.

From that change. But it is the power. Of God. Working from. Within you. That exposes. Your new nature. Your new status. Of being set apart. This is what the. The bible calls.

Sanctification. All of which is. Attributed. Not necessarily. To man's source. But it's brought to fruition. By God alone. Conversion. Is the inner working.

Of God. Which exposes. An outer working. Change behavior. This miraculously. Occurs. In the depths. Of our being.

As the holy spirit. Regenerates us. And sets its seal. Upon us. And reaches. Even our corporate. Confirmation. When you come. And join a church. You're essentially saying.

[35 : 44] That I want you. To come alongside of me. And I'll come alongside of you. And we're going to work. Our Christian issues. Out together. And remember. With one another.

Who we belong to. When you're going. Through affliction. I'll help you stand. When you're going. Through affliction. I'll help you stand. It's an imitative process. It's a corporate endeavor. Corporate engagement.

All because. Of a changed nature. And God places. You. Within this body. Here. And now. At Youngstown Metro Church. For that very purpose. Similar to that source. Of God's. Sustaining power. Within us. In affliction. The sustenance. Of conversion. Is through the power. Of God alone. As well. So we know.

That if there is. Any. Labor whatsoever. In conversion. Meaning the quality. Of our working. It can only be.

[36 : 43] Our response. Of what the Holy Spirit. Gives us. To empower. That labor. Especially. Especially that labor. Of love. And this passage.

Richly defines. Conversion. I would. Circle this passage. Which. Book market. Has one of the best. Definitions of conversion. In the New Testament. I believe.

It mentions. In verse nine. The turning. Away. From idols. Meaning to repent. To redirect. Your focus. If you could imagine. If all of life.

Apart from God. Is considered. Wandering. Sojourning. And God. Brings us. To repentance. To turn. There's a certain.

Turning. Turning. Turning. Turning. That we're. Turning to. And essentially. We're turning. Back. To God. As it was originally. Intended for us. As image bearers.

[37 : 41] As the chief end of men. And so we see that turning. We see a turning. Toward the living and true God. To serve him. In this passage. In verse nine. And what one.

What you turn to matters. You could turn to. Maybe a book on the quote. Christian book selection. At Barnes and Noble. You can. Turn to your favorite theologian.

To give you. The answers. And the hope that you desire. But this passage. Makes it clear. You're turning. To the. Living. The true.

God. You're not turning to. Me as a pastor. You're not turning to. A self-proclaimed. Prophet. You're not turning.

To yourself. You're turning to Christ alone. Literally. Meaning. Being a slave. To Christ. Christ. That all your rights.

[38 : 37] Are. Completely. Surrendered. In service to him. And you see. In verse 10. As conversion. Is brought to full circle. You see this.

Steadfastness. There's an anticipation. Of the arrival. Of the son. Second coming. The one. Who was raised. From the dead. All of which is.

The work. The saving work. Of God. Where he divinely. Intervenes. Within his creation. To save his church. From his divine. And just. Wrath. Which will come.

Church. This is a vital. Vital teaching. In the Christian. Life. Because our faith.

Is often identified. As being saved. Right? We have conversations. Amongst one another. We say. How long you been saved? When did you be saved? Like. Tell me your story. About when you came.

[39 : 34] To know Jesus Christ. When you were saved. How are we saved? What are we saved from? Well church. The Bible says. That we're saved. From God's wrath. Jesus Christ.

Bore. The wrath of God. To atone. For sin. Upon the cross. Every drop. Of blood. And atonement. For. Our sin.

And his death. Was a satisfactory. Substitute. In our place. He died. The death. That we all. Deserve.

We deserve. God's wrath. And if you are in Jesus Christ. You are saved. From God's wrath. In the work. Of conversion. We are entitled.

To life. Now. In 2021. And hopefully. Lord willing. Years to come. And we are assured. In the steadfastness.

[40 : 29] Of hope. That it will. Be secure. For us. Through eternity. For all time. This is nothing. That the world. Can take away. From us. This is where. This is the source. Of joy church.

This is the gift. That only God. Can give. And can only secure. Until the ends. As we come to a close. Today. I want you to notice.

The timeline. Of all these. Verses. This isn't talking about. A certain point. Of your Christian walk. This isn't.

Grappling. With our. Desires. Of. Yeah. Maybe I'll start tomorrow. Or maybe. You know. 2021. Isn't looking. Too. Too bright. Yet.

Right. Maybe I'll wait. Till 2022. To start. Maybe. Maybe. With a new year's. Resolution. Don't be foolish. Church.

[41 : 23] This is for us. Now. Look. In all these passages. This is. During. Sanctification. And if you're in Christ. It's already begun. There's no.

Next year. There's no. New year's. Resolution. There's here. And now. This is. All. A concern. Of the work.

Of faithful. Sanctification. Our. Laboring. And sanctification. And our. Steadfastness. In sanctification. You get that? A work.

Of faith. A labor. In love. Steadfastness. Of hope. This is all. Found. In faithfulness. In our. Sanctification. Faithful. Faithfulness. In our.

Laboring. Faithfulness. In our. Working. Faithfulness. In our. Laboring. Faithfulness. In our. Steadfastness. And since. The moment. We were born. Until the moment. Jesus.

[42 : 19] Comes again. Or. Calls us home. The church. Is given. These. Marks. Of health. And characteristics. That will naturally. Break through. The darkness.

Of the world. And in turn. Glorify. God. And that the glory. Of his name. Will shine forth. Vibrantly. Regardless of. Out. Out. Outer.

Circumstances. That we may. Endure. This passage. Should challenge us. And now. I'm. You might not like me. This morning. But I am going to challenge. All of us. And myself. Included.

Does our journey. In life. Offer a cause. For. Imitation. Please listen. This morning. Does our journey.

In life. Offer a cause. For imitation. Meaning. That are we marked. By. Love. Are we marked.

[43 : 13] By joy. Are we marked. By peace. Or are we marked. In hatred. Marked. In despair. Marked.

In wrath. Vengeance. Second question. Do our words. Offer. Cause. Of imitation. Do our words. Offer. Cause. Of imitation. Meaning. Do our words. Edify. And instruct. Others. Around us. In our lives. Or are our words. Destructive.

And self-serving. Third question. Do our motives. Offer. Cause. Of imitation. Do our motives. Offer. Cause. Of imitation. Meaning. Do our motives. Reveal. Empathy. For other people. Does it. Reveal. Compassion.

[44 : 08] For other people. Or do our motives. Reveal. Malice. Or selfishness. I want you to think.

Does your life. Reflect. A converted. Christian. This is important. Church. Are you striving.

To die. To your flesh. Daily. Repenting. Turning away. From your idols. Yeah. We pick up. Some garbage. Along the way. We can't be silly. To neglect.

The fact. That this world. Is sometimes. Very captivating. And we pick up. Bad habits. From really. Bad sources. Are you striving.

To die. To your flesh. Daily. And fixate. Your eyes. Upon Jesus Christ. Every day. Not a new year's. Resolution. Daily. This is a progressive endeavor.

[45 : 04] It's never regressive. In our behavior. In this. We find it vital. To drive. Our corporate community. And bring emphasis. Of this gathering. We're having a new members class.

This is the emphasis. Of becoming. Part of that. Community. That corporate partnership. With one another. It's not about getting. A close-up parking spot.

Or maybe. Being recognized. As a member. Of the church. This is. For. For your. Sanctification. So they. We lean on each other.

We grow. With one another. That we have. An established. Borderline. Of where the world. Ends. And the church. Begins. This is why.

The Christian life. Is. Church. Life. I want you. To think about that. Not a lot of people. Will be happy. Because I say that. The Christian life.

[45 : 59] Is. Church. Life. It begins. In the church. And spreads. From the church. Therefore.

Into other avenues. Of life. Into our families. Into our marriages. Into our relationships. This. Rubs against the grain.

Of. You know. The whole. Family model. The. The western. Christian. Ideals. Often. Idolize. The family. Negating. The fact. That. Any. Any. Quality.

And stamp. Of. Of. Authenticity. And holiness. Within a family. Should stem. From the working. And the participation. Derived. From. The church. Into the family.

Why does this matter? You might ask. Okay. Brent. Great sentiments. But why does this even matter? The world's watching.

[46 : 57] The world is watching. And whether the world likes to admit it or not. They're also searching. We can't escape.

The microscope. Of the watching world. And the church better heed the opportunity for Christ to shine forth. So I do have a challenge.

As if I haven't challenged you enough. Is your Christian life worthy of imitation? I want you to think about that. And maybe change the course.

After today. And if your life. Think about this. If your life. Were to be imitated. Here and now. Would it define the gospel?

Or would it distort the gospel? Looking at section one. The Bible defines. And marks. The healthy Christian.

[47 : 52] As one who. Joyfully. Endures affliction. That's the work. By the work of the spirit. Without compromising. In the works of our flesh. This is faithful imitation.

Looking at section two. The Bible defines. And marks. The healthy. Christian. As one who. Is a minister. To others. There's no gospel hoarders. It's one who.

Capitalizes. Upon. And seeks. Opportunities. To teach. Others. To instruct. One. Another. Letting the word.

Sound forth. In your faith. To go out. Being disciple. Making disciples. And in section three. The Bible. Defines. And marks. The healthy Christian. As one who makes. Progress.

In sanctification. In daily separation. Of their. Fleshly. Desires. And put on. The fruits. Of the spirit. Daily church. Daily.

[48 : 49] If affliction. Is a work. That we're supposed to. Accept. In faith. A work. Of faith. Faith. Then the labor. Within that affliction.

Must be. Joy. If the work. Is to proclaim. The gospel. To herald. This message. Individually. And corporately.

Then our laboring. Within that work. Is participation. In that. Obeying the commands. Of scripture. And if the work. Work of conversion.

Is. Is given to us. We're faithfully. Participating. In that. It's our laboring. That reveals. A changed pattern. A new course. In our lives.

All sustained. By our hope. That keeps us. Laboring. Well. Keeps our eyes. Focused. On Jesus. The region.

[49 : 45] Of Achaia. Looked upon. Thessalonica. Wondering. What in the world. Is going on over there? Macedonia.

Looked upon. Thessalonica. What in the world. Is going on over there? We. May the same. Be true. For us today. To pay careful.

Attention. To our individual. Obedience. In this endeavor. And allow. That. To ignite. Our corporate. Engagements. And testimony. To reach the nations. For Jesus Christ.

All. By a work. Of faith. A labor. Of love. Steadfastness. Hope. Let's pray.