Good morning to all the Pine Ridge family. I am in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1 this morning where we see the work of God in a very new church. Paul was driven out of Thessalonica, but he did leave Silas and Timothy to help establish the churches there. Still, Paul’s praise of them is extraordinary given their little time to grow.

Paul starts with praise for their work of faith. A work of faith is a faith that works. We are not talking of activity. That comes in the next praise. Rather it is that work of God in our lives that transforms us from what we were into a faithful follower of Christ and that from the heart. God changed the total mindset of these people from raw and proud paganism to godliness. They displayed what we like to say, changed hearts. What Paul describes is a life changed that people all over their region recognized this extraordinary difference.

He then praises their labor of love. This may be the first time labor of love is ever used. Outside of childbirth, labor and love are not often connected. The problem is that when you have had such a change in your life people don’t appreciate it. In Greece they often hated it. The new Christians of Thessalonica had to immediately learn to love those who hated them. This takes work for mature Christians, but they displayed so that all Macedonia knew of it.

Then Paul praises their steadfastness or persistence of Hope. This is assurance with joy of the promise of God in Christ Jesus. All that God said would come true to each of them personally. Paul, who certainly knew persecutions calls their experience as “much tribulations.” We don’t know what they went through, but we do know that it did not shake their hope in the eternal.

These new Christians turned from the idols they had known all their lives to serve the living and true God will all their hearts, will and soul. Trouble couldn’t shake them because they had committed themselves to wait for Jesus.

This morning, as we have considerably less trouble, we still need to be examples of a work of faith in our lives, a labor love for our neighbors and a steadfast hope in our Lord to make sense of it all. And to do that in the “Joy of the Holy Spirit.”

In Christ Pastor EA