

Thessalonians Series Continued

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Preacher: Nate Killian - Guest Speaker

[0 : 00] We're going to start with a word of prayer this morning. So if anyone has prayer requests, let me know.

! They're back in their house. Pray for that.

Pray for the firefighters. Anything else? Any prayer requests? Anna Jean, okay. Anna Jean is doing well.

They moved her to the hospital here, which is the rehabilitation section. So that's good.

Yes? Yes? Yes? talking about Tim, right? Okay. Okay, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Heavenly Father, we have so many things to be thankful for. So far, the fires have been getting more and more under control.

[1 : 45] We pray for those firefighters that are out there, dangerous work, and they're doing all they can to protect the individuals in the various communities. So pray for them. Pray for their family.

And Lord, we want to pray for some of the people in our congregation. I'll start out with Jessica's father, Tim. Most of us know Tim. He has been a pastor here for a number of years, has had heart problems in the Philippines, came home, apparently underwent putting a stent in, but things seem to be going well. We ask you to continue to give the doctors advice to help them out along the way. We pray for Anna Jean. Anna Jean is going through rehabilitation after major surgery. We pray for her that everything will go well. And let's see, who else? Oh, yeah, Adele.

Well, pardon? For Marty, yeah. Marty is having knee surgery tomorrow. Now, we ask that you guide the hand of the surgeons to help clean out the infection and have him back driving his trucks again. And Lord, we just want to pray for our country. It seems like we're almost equally divided and people can't talk anymore with each other. We ask you to calm the nerves, get people to be able to talk with one another again so that we can be united as a country. Thank you, Lord, for all your blessings. In Jesus' name, amen.

Okay. The scripture today is from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians. It is 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, and apparently it's the whole thing.

Therefore, when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone. And we sent Timothy, our brother and God's co-worker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith that no one be moved by these afflictions. For you yourselves know that we are destined for this. For when we were with you, we kept telling you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction, just as it has come to pass, and just as you know. For this reason, when I could not bear it, no longer I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain. But now that Timothy has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remembered us kindly and longed to see us as we long to see you. For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, we have been confronted about you or comforted about you through your faith. For now we live, if you are standing fast in the Lord.

[5 : 27] For what thanksgiving can we return to God for you? For all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God. As we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see your face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all as we do for you so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[10:30] Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[14:00] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

And so, just got a message last night from one of our volunteers, who, an American guy, who, his wife is from China, and together they had met a new student, a Chinese student at Talk Time, just this last week.

And she took her, the wife took the student to a Chinese fellowship that met yesterday. And she had already had some idea, and she had known about it from others, but it was just very apparent that she was ready.

And so, the Lord used this lady who volunteers at Talk Time to lead this student to Christ just yesterday. And now, the goal is, okay, how can we help her get established and built up before she returns?

[16:23] And so, anyhow, there's just a little blip it. Be praying for these students. Some of them we receive, and they're in country for close to a year.

Others, it's two or three or four years. They transfer sometimes to a local university from Edmonds College, sometimes another part of the country. Some of them just return back home.

And so, it's many needs there, but please be, as you think of the ministry there. And if you're interested at all in getting more specific updates, I do send out a monthly update online via email.

I just sent one out, and a couple times a year, paper type stuff. So, if you're not already getting those and you'd like to, come see me. I'd love to add you to that list. But, yeah, so thank you.

I wanted to share that with you and then dive into the Word together. One thing, I did want to say this. One aspect of this ministry that we have with these students is the follow-up.

[17:26] And that is to say, as they return to their home countries, our desire is to follow up with them, if we can, personal visits.

We did go to Thailand in August. That was a mixed trip with some things that we needed to take care of, having lived there. But also, we were able to meet with several students that we had known and gotten to know through the ministry in Seattle.

They'd gone back to Thailand. We're able to follow up with them. Sometimes that follow-up is just virtual, online video chats and whatnot. The difficult part, though, is following up with students, some students who are returning to closed countries, returning to places where contact, consistent connection is very difficult at best at times, and the communication.

And they're returning to a place, especially those that have become believers while they've been here, and yet they're the only ones in their family. And so they're going back, and they don't have a community of faith.

And I'm left wondering, as I'm praying for them and thinking about them and not always able to contact them, how are they doing in the faith? How are they still following after Jesus?

[18:47] What kind of struggles are they facing? And really, the connection here, as we come to 1 Thessalonians 3 that Bill read for us earlier, is that I think, as we look at this passage, that we can see that Paul was feeling something like this as he was reflecting on the situation for the believers in this city of Thessalonica and his separation from them.

The separation was different, however. However, these weren't people that moved on to a different location, but rather they stayed, and the Apostle Paul moved on to a different location, right?

If you remember the history in the book of Acts, it's chapter 17. We won't go there, but you can read it. It's the first 9 or 10 verses of Acts 17, describes Paul's time in this city in Thessalonica, and how when he went, and of course there was persecution, those that didn't like what he was preaching concerning Jesus, being the Christ, the Messiah, some of the Jews that were there became jealous, stirred up a mob, tried to find him, couldn't find him, but they drug out some of these other believers and accused them before the officials, and at this point, the believers are saying, Paul, you've got to leave.

You know, this is too dangerous. You've got work to do, and so they sent him off, and he goes from Thessalonica to Berea, and then on to Athens, and eventually in Corinth, which it sounds like, as we put this together, this is where he's writing now this letter to the Thessalonians.

And all this while, Paul's concerned about this church here. How was their faith? He was there only about three weeks, and now they're facing these afflictions, this persecution, these trials.

[20 : 39] How are they doing in all of this? And as we look at this passage, as we read over earlier, and we're going to return and read a little more here as well again, we can see that faith really is prominent in these verses.

If you look at that word and where it shows up in the book of Thessalonians, I think it's five times in these 13 verses of chapter 3 that some version of the word faith pops up.

And so it's really thematic here, and I just want us to be clear at the outset when we're talking about this because it's so central, their faith, and he's wondering how their faith is doing.

He's concerned. Are they still believing? Just what is the content? What's the object of their faith, right? I think most of us probably are familiar with this and know this, but I want us to think about it just for a moment.

As we look throughout the entire letter, we see things like they had faith toward God, that they believed in the gospel of God or the gospel of Christ.

[21 : 45] It's mentioned two or three times. That they were believing, receiving the word, the message of God that Paul had brought to them. And this, of course, included the fact that Jesus died and rose from the dead.

Paul spells that out very clearly in chapter 4. In other words, this good news about Jesus, that he is the Savior, and according to the record in Acts, why people were getting so upset is because they were proclaiming that not Caesar, but Jesus is the true king who deserves worship.

And so, in a word, the people were placing their faith in this person of Jesus Christ and saying, He is now our king.

He's the Savior. We are following Him. This is the faith. And Paul's wondering, are they still believing this? We already saw in chapter 17 that these, or in Acts 17, as I reviewed that, think about that.

that these believers were already facing trouble when Paul was there because of their newfound faith. And then, a couple times already, as you've been going through 1 Thessalonians recently, I'm sure you'll remember these in chapter 1 and in chapter 2.

[23 : 06] Chapter 1, verse 6, Paul mentions there, And then again, in chapter 2, and verse 14, Paul remembers there, for you, brothers and sisters, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews.

And so, and, not only that, we're not there yet, but later in chapter 4, Paul references those who have fallen asleep through Jesus, or in Jesus.

It's verse 14 in chapter 4, possibly a reference to believers who had even died because of the persecution that was taking place in this city because of their faith in Jesus.

And so, we see from all of this, putting all these pieces together, that the believers in Thessalonica, they're no strangers to suffering for the gospel.

And so, we can understand then, when we come back to chapter 3, why Paul writes what he did. In verse 1, he says, when we could no longer endure it.

[24 : 31] Another version says, we couldn't stand it any longer. We've got to find out. All this that you're facing, how is your faith in Jesus?

Are you still trusting the Lord? So, let's read again verses 1 through 5, in 1 Thessalonians 3.

Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens.

We sent Timothy, our brother, and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you for the benefit of your faith, so that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions.

For you yourselves know that we've been destined for this. For even when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we're going to suffer affliction, and so it happened, as you know. For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be for nothing.

And so I want us to consider here this whole mission that Paul sends Timothy on, right? He's there with him. He says, okay, I don't like losing you, Timothy, even for a short amount of time.

[25 : 39] I could use your help here in Athens, but I'm going to send you back because I've got to know how they're doing. We're going to look at that, but I want us to consider a couple key truths here about suffering as believers in Christ that we can draw out of this passage.

Verse 3, Paul says, for you yourselves know that we've been destined for this. That language has this idea that suffering for the believer is not optional.

It's a guarantee. It's not a question of, well, will it happen to me as a follower of Jesus, but rather, how will I respond when it does happen?

It's a paraphrase of this verse reads this way. Verse 3, not that the trouble should come as any surprise to you. You've always known that we were in for this kind of thing.

It's part of our calling. And certainly, we see that theme throughout the New Testament, right? We can go back to the Gospels and the night before Jesus was betrayed, he's warning his disciples, the 12 apostles there, well, 11, Judas had skipped out already, but he's warning the apostles.

[27 : 06] He says, hey, if the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you're not of this world, but I chose you out of this world because of this, the world hates you.

If they persecuted me, they will persecute you as well. If you want to look at that passage in more depth, that's right in John chapter 15. And what's interesting, and we're going to come back to this, but it's also right in the context of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit.

Hold on to that because we're going to come back to that here in a few minutes. But it goes on from there. Jesus warning the apostles when Paul was called and he came to Christ in Acts chapter 9.

This is actually the Lord speaking to Ananias, right? Who would be the one to go and help Paul right away. He says, for I will show him how much he must suffer in behalf of my name.

Right? And then he says to Timothy, Paul writes to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 1, Therefore, don't be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me, his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.

[28 : 25] So at this point, we might think, okay, all right, Jesus had his apostles and then he calls Paul as well as an apostle and those guys, that's a special calling, right?

And then Timothy, I mean, not an apostle, but still, well, this is, he's working directly with the apostle Paul and sure, Timothy's got to suffer because he's right there. He's got the connection.

Maybe, maybe that's it. Maybe that this, this promise of suffering for the gospel, maybe it's limited to them, but then it widens a little bit as we look at other passages in the New Testament.

Consider Philippians chapter 1, verse 29 and 30. For it's been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer on his behalf, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me and now bear, now here to be in me, excuse me.

Or how about Acts 14 when Paul's going back through and wanting to strengthen, it says, strengthen the souls of the disciples. He's gone and there's been people coming to Christ and he's going back through at this point in Acts 14.

[29 : 33] He's appointing elders in these different local assemblies and he says, he's strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying, it's through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of God.

Acts 14, 22. And then if we could just summarize it all here, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, Paul writes, Indeed, all who want to live in a godly way in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, right?

It doesn't seem like this is a maybe, but rather it is a guarantee that for the believer, this is the normal experience in your life as a follower of Jesus.

That's not something we often use or talk about when we share the gospel with people, right? Hey, Jesus loves you.

He died for you. Come and trust in him. Oh, and by the way, it's going to be hard. You're going to suffer. But the reality is that it does happen.

[30 : 44] We see it here. We see it throughout the course of history, church history, that these believers in Thessalonica throughout the New Testament, throughout history, they were destined for this.

In other words, their suffering, and this is such a key truth, I think, that can encourage us when we experience similar things, that their suffering was appointed by God.

It wasn't something outside of his control. Oh, wow. Those Christians in Thessalonica, that's really going rough for them.

I didn't see this one coming. Right? That's not God's response. He knows that the language that's used here that they were destined for this has that idea that, yeah, this is a divine appointment here.

That we're not promised a life as followers of Jesus. We're not promised a life without affliction. That the the so-called prosperity gospel teaching, right?

[31 : 52] Which is not the gospel of the New Testament. And that basically says that God just wants you to live your best life right now and not have any pain and all of these terrors.

That's not truth when we compare it to the teachings of Scripture. Scripture. Similarly, the teaching that some have that if a believer is suffering, well, that's an indication that for some reason you've done something that God is angry with you or God is not satisfied.

You just don't have enough faith. Right? And you've done something that has upset God and now this is the consequence or punishment.

That's also contrary to the teaching of Scripture. Affliction, troubles, trials. When these type of things come, be assured, be encouraged that God still very much loves you.

That you are still very much His beloved Son and daughter in Christ. Right? And that He wants to use these different circumstances for His glory and your good.

[33 : 13] God This is comforting to keep in mind when we're facing similar troubles as followers of Jesus. And we can expand this a little bit too.

Here specifically and a lot of those passages which we looked at or I referenced are talking about suffering for the gospel. Persecution because I believe in and then living my life following after Jesus Christ.

I'm standing on the word of God. Right? There's other type of suffering we experience that are general to all humanity. Right? There's things that happen that are just because we live in a fallen world and we live in this body of flesh that's still dying and we face all kinds of other stuff.

Right? So we can expand in our thinking because you might be saying you're thinking well I don't know if I'm really suffering suffering for the gospel. Well there's other types of suffering as well and the same is true as well for those things that God it's not a indication of some divine disappointment with you but rather that God's desire is that he would use it in such a way to shape and form and mold you into more the person of his son and that you can trust him through it.

We're going to see that in a minute here. Another key idea about suffering though as we go back to this passage that while it is something that we're destined for that God appoints in the life of believers it is at the same time a reality that the enemy is active in the persecution of believers.

[34 : 58] Isn't this what Paul says here in verse 5 for this reason I could endure it no longer I also sent to find out about your faith for fear that the tempter might have tempted you and our labor would be for nothing.

Even though God is on the throne we just sang about that he is in control these things are happening in the lives of the Christians here these things are happening in the lives of churches and believers across our world yet today Satan wants to take and twist and manipulate and use those things for evil purposes.

One commentator said it this way in a time of persecution or of trial of any kind right so that's where we lump in there all those other types of sufferings that Satan endeavors to tempt people to swerve from the truth to abandon their faith to say God I've had enough with you to somehow deny him in order to avoid whatever that suffering is.

Afflictions of other kinds Satan often tempts the sufferer to complain maybe to say God you're just too harsh or you're playing favorites this is too much and somehow say this is not enough I can't go through this anymore I'm done with this whole Jesus thing.

This is the enemy's desire and scheme when we're experiencing those things and this is what Paul's concerned about as he's writing them he's hoping that the Thessalonians wouldn't be disturbed right did you catch that word back in verse 3 that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions no one would be unsettled or shaken the word here is really a fun one it's literally in a figurative sense it means just that like oh boy this is too much and we're disturbed we're shaken we're unsettled there's trouble you know this turmoil out here is causing turmoil in here in a literal sense this word is used to describe the wagging of a dog's tail which I thought was sort of a funny image just as a dog's well at least for my dog our dog he wags his tail when he's happy and excited but this is more of a hey there's trouble and there's this going back and forth right and Paul says I hope that these troubles and afflictions that you're facing aren't causing you within to be just

wagging back and forth and having this disturbed sense of what's going on he's fearful that the believers there would be unsettled in their faith and no longer trusting God in the midst of their troubles so this is his purpose then right in sending

[38 : 09] Timothy says Timothy you gotta go find out strengthen and encourage them in their faith find out about their faith whether it's still strong opposed to this wagging unsettled motion his desires that they would be established and strengthened that Timothy would encourage them bring comfort to come alongside them to remind them hey even in the midst of this Jesus is still good God still loves you the promises that you have in Christ of eternal life and his coming again those are still true don't let this shake you to the core I think that regardless of the reason that when we suffer whether it is persecution because we are living our lives for Jesus

Christ which I know is Jessica and I were talking about this some as I was thinking through this passage and I think that's a question that came to my mind as I'm reading this I'm like I can preach this and I see the truths but God I don't really I'm not facing that like not definitely not like the Thessalonians were right I'm not having people throw rocks at me or run me out of town because I'm believing in Jesus and so you know my thoughts went a couple ways in that it's like am I not doing it enough then like should I be persecuted but at the same time the New Testament never you know we're not encouraged to go out and search for persecution and suffering right yeah so so maybe you're not there either maybe you're not experiencing maybe you are maybe it's a different type of suffering just the woes of this life that come to all of us at different times and if you're not experiencing it right now chances are you have or sorry to say you will right and so regardless of the reason of what's going on there are times we can be left with the same questions we can start to hear the tempter's voice louder than we hear the word of

God and we can say God where are you in this can I trust you right now so how how do we as believers respond to the suffering can we trust God during afflictions how does the good news of Jesus the gospel help us in these situations well this is where the second part of this chapter comes in and just the this is why I know somebody commented like we're doing the whole chapter well yeah because I couldn't leave us hanging I'm feeling like oh well let's see what Timothy finds out right come back for part two I'm not gonna be here next no I know but the point is there's good news here we see this building up through verse five of what's going to happen and then verse six Timothy's come back but now that Timothy has come to us from you has brought us good news of your faith and love that you always think kindly of us longing to see us just as we also long to see you for this reason brothers in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith for now we really live if you stand firm in the Lord for what thanks can we give to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice because of you before our God as we keep praying most earnestly!

night and day that we may come see your faces and may complete what's lacking in your faith wow talk about a great report right Timothy's come back and he says Paul you won't believe it you send me there to encourage them see how they're doing remind them their their faith and love it's going strong they are trusting the Lord through this not only this they're well it says here they always think kindly of us I mean can you imagine the Apostle Paul he's gone there he's three weeks hey guys here's the gospel they believe some skirmish while he's there then he has to leave and now they're facing even more of that and Paul's left wondering maybe they're blaming me maybe they're wishing I never came and shared with them about the good news of Jesus maybe some of them are angry with me because I did leave when I did and

[43 : 14] I've sort of abandoned them right he even uses some of that language at the end of chapter 2 where he says the brothers having orphaned been orphaned from you by absence for sure well not in person but not in spirit we want to come and see you that's in chapter 2 17 so maybe some of them are just like that Paul guy can't believe what he got us into here and yet Timothy comes back and says no they they still like you and they still love and are following Jesus and so here they are not wagging back and forth not disturbed but as it says in verse 8 they're standing firm in the Lord and because that Paul says oh now I'm really I really live right some exaggeration on his part he's still undergoing suffering he's still facing it but he's saying so what this group of people who are experiencing that man they have encouraged me and so contrast with the fear of their being disturbed their standing firm

Paul rejoices so all of this I think points to our lives as well that in the midst of that there's an example here there's an encouragement here there's a reminder that in the midst of those things

that we can continue to trust God that when we suffer as believers Jesus is still trustworthy even if we're suffering for the gospel or whatever those type of afflictions we're experiencing and there is this reality too I mentioned it before that we are never alone in the sense of one there's a community of believers and it fits with this but also that the Holy Spirit who is within us is strengthening us to face those different things that we are facing in this life right

I mentioned it before back in the gospels in John where Jesus talks about the world hating the disciples and right in that context he says I'm going to send you another the helper the Holy Spirit and he shows up again though look at 1 Thessalonians 1 we read this already but 1 6 you also became imitators of us and Lord having received the word during great affliction with what the joy of the Holy Spirit this is not a hey Christians they're in Thessalonians you face this and you better just tough it out and hope you can make it happen and that you just have the gumption to get through this I know it's tough but come on you can do it really it's the message of the gospel that this Jesus who saved you is now in his by the Spirit living in you and empowering you and strengthening you as you depend and trust in him to walk through this trial that doesn't make it like a cake walk right it still is difficult but we're not alone he hasn't abandoned us and he's given us one another and the importance just like

Timothy went to them the importance that we have of one another when we see suffering to call on one another and say how are you doing how's your faith let's talk about it where are you struggling where are you doubting where are you discouraged can we can I just listen can I pray with you can I come alongside you can I help remind you of the promises of God in the midst of that because chances are I'm going to need that too at some point and I'm going to need you to come alongside and encourage and remind and pray for me so this reality is that in this way the gospel as far as the gospel being evident in our lives that is to say yes publicly proclaiming the gospel sharing that truth with others but also living the gospel seeing the power of

God's grace and Jesus at work in us sometimes I would I would wager to say that it's most powerfully evident when we experience trouble in this life that people can you know life is going great oh sure you know yeah but but life is this struggle and yet we still have this joy that seems like why should this person they shouldn't be happy right now why are they they still have love and they're giving to others and they're still what is going on see Jesus is most at display to others in the world around us when we are trusting him through the troubles that we experience the good news of Jesus is not limited to when life is good right but rather maybe most brightly it shines through us when life is not going well in fact

[49 : 06] I think it's interesting I don't know completely what to make of this but verse six says Timothy has come to us from you it has brought us good news of your faith and love the word that's used there good news is the same word that's used good news gospel the gospel of Jesus Christ it's the same euangelion the Greek word right which I think is interesting and I think!

used in such a way not referring to the gospel of Jesus so Paul says here this is good news the gospel is still at work they're still trusting they're still loving him they're still loving one another they're still having love for God's love for the world around them and so we see that this suffering for Jesus it's always linked also to his suffering we saw that again in those verses we looked at in chapter one in chapter two that they became imitators of who of Paul and the others but more importantly they became imitators of the Lord Jesus Christ who suffered and so when we suffer as our Savior suffered we are made to trust him more deeply and become more conformed to his image that trusting Christ through suffering it's a gracious work of the Holy Spirit in us as believers it's according to God's power at work in us we trust Christ for salvation yes but also continuing throughout our life and so how do we respond to these troubles you know Paul's question there how are they doing how is your faith I got to find out how it's going like mid 1500 oh yeah now you got it okay okay hit

Pastor Todd so if you have I think the church library here probably has a copy of Fox's Book of Martyrs and you can find in there the account and read it more fully suffice to say he was England, I think, Bishop. Yeah. Anyhow, it sounds English. And he was being persecuted. His was different. The Roman Catholic Church was trying to enforce that he do certain practices. And he says, no, I'm not going to do that. And so anyhow, long story short, he gets put into prison. And this is February 9th of 1555. He's condemned as a heretic when he was really just standing for the truth of God's word and the teaching that our salvation is by God's grace alone through faith and apart from our works. And he remained in prison until June 10th when his punishment is a heretic was to be

burned at the stake, right? And so the portion that I want to read to you is just this last little bit here. It says a little before his death, some of Thomas

Hawke's friends, they asked him a favor. They came and visited him there in prison and they were afraid for their own lives as followers of Jesus as well. And they were just wondering how long faith could stand in the midst of the fire, right? And so not dissimilar to Paul's concerns over the Thessalonians here. How's your faith? You're being afflicted. What's going on? And Thomas's friends are wondering how long could it really stand? And so he agreed that he would give them some sort of sign, lift a hand or something. If in the midst of the flames, the pain was terrible, his mind was still at peace, that Jesus was still with him through even that suffering to death. And so a few days later then, when he was taken and you can look up images of this tied to a pole, fire set ablaze, he's in the center of it. And when the fire had been so long, he could no longer speak, right? And his skin had shrunk down, his fingers had been burned off. Everyone thought he was dead. It was at this point that Hawks suddenly raises his burning hands above his head and claps together three times. And to most of the people in that crowd, what is going on? But his friends that were there, that understood the gesture, they broke into shouts of praise and applause as Thomas Hawks sunk down in the fire and gave up his spirit. Now, how do we respond to troubles? I'd like to say probably you and I are not going to face a similar fate as Thomas Hawks. We're not going to face a similar fate as the Thessalonians there.

[54 : 55] I don't know. I mean, yeah, you know the state of things going on. Who knows what could be? But how we respond to the troubles and persecutions, especially those that come from living our lives for Jesus Christ, the gospel here encourages us and calls us to respond by throwing ourselves at the feet of the almighty King Jesus, fully confident in him and his power.

That we don't need to be shaken. We don't need to be disturbed. We can say, God, this is really hard, but I trust that you are at work through this. We can rely on our Savior even when we face those terrible things. And as I mentioned before, and possibly more of an encouragement for us today, is how God might be calling us to come alongside those who are suffering.

Maybe it's someone you know in the community here. Maybe it's someone, maybe it's, I'm thinking, you know, organizations like Voice of the Martyrs or others that are constantly publishing these stories of believers all across the world who are suffering.

How can we in love meet the needs of others that are experiencing that? And to be encouraged, I think, most of all, to remember this promise.

Not only the promise of salvation, but where Paul ends this chapter. In fact, I think if you look with the chapter divisions, it's every chapter in Thessalonians he ends with the coming of the Lord Jesus again. Chapter 4, there's a bigger section on it, so that's great. But every chapter ends, right? In fact, this prayer at the end of, let's just read it as we close, verses 11 through 13.

[57 : 00] Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. May the Lord cause you to increase and overflow in love for one another, for all people, just as we also do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

What greater promise can we cling to in the midst of those different things than that, this reality that Jesus is coming again. He's going to make all things right.

He's going to bring about justice and do all things well. And in the meantime, between now and then, we can continue to trust him.

Father, thank you for your word to us. Thank you for...