

# The Good Report?

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Amen. All right. So this morning we're continuing our sermon series in 1 Thessalonians. We've covered most of the first two chapters so far. Today we're going to be picking it up in chapter 2, Verse 17, which will be on page 1173 of your Pew Bible. If you want to follow along in the Pew Bible, page 1173, we're going to go chapter 217 through the end of chapter 3. And what we'll be encountering in the text is something of an emotional roller coaster as the Apostle Paul shares the anxiety that he has felt over the state of the church at Thessalonica. And it's an anxiety that's driven by his deep and abiding love for the men and the women of that church. So as I've been in the text this week, I've really been moved by Paul's affection for the believers that he's writing to in this letter. So here's the plan for this morning is I'm going to start by setting the scene just a little bit, setting up the drama so that we're all on the same page, if you will, of the narrative. Then we're going to ride that narrative roller coaster together that Paul takes us on in this passage. And then finally, I'm going to share some applications from the text that I hope are going to be helpful for you. Sound good? Okay, good. Well, if it doesn't, this is what we're doing anyway. So, all right. So a couple of Sundays ago, Pastor Mike, he framed the context of this letter.

So I'm just going to give you a bit to remind you of what's happened up until this point. The Apostle Paul and Silas, who also went by Silvanus, by the way, that's how he describes himself. He went by Silvanus and Silas. I'm going to call him Silas, had visited Thessalonica while on one of Paul's missionary journeys. They had shared the gospel there over the course of several weeks, and the Lord had done just this awesome work through their evangelism. You can read about this in Acts 17 if you're interested. Luke, the author of Acts, he reports this in the chapter. He says, some of them, some of the Jews that they had shared the gospel with, were persuaded. They were persuaded that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. And Paul and Silas, or I'm sorry, and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. That's Acts 17.4. So, Paul and Silas were preaching the gospel, and God is graciously rescuing Jews and Gentiles through their evangelism, and they're starting to do the work of discipling these new believers, because that's part of the Great Commission, right? Jesus said, you make disciples, baptize them, and then teach them to obey everything that he commanded, Matthew 28, which means that new believers need to be taught, that they need to be shepherded. They need to be built up in their faith as they begin the lifelong work of following Jesus, and that is exactly what Paul and Silas had begun to do.

But, tragically, they did not get very far, because the Jews in Thessalonica, who did not accept that Jesus was the Messiah, began to oppose Paul and Silas, okay? And eventually, they worked up a crowd that formed into a mob, and this mob dragged Paul and Silas before the city council. They accused them of treason, saying that they're teaching that Jesus is the true king, not Caesar, which is kind of true, but how they're representing it, not quite. And the church, this brand new church of new believers, they end up somehow convincing the city council to let Paul and Silas go. But this is not good, right? Getting accused of treason in a major Roman city, this is starting to look pretty dangerous.

For Paul and Silas. So, the Thessalonian believers, they send Paul and Silas away under cover of night to get them out of the city. Now, the text doesn't say this, so this is my guess, okay? This is me surmising, this is not Scripture. But my guess is that the Thessalonians have to fight Paul on this a little bit, because my guess is that he wants to stay. Because Paul knows that this is not how you plant a church, right? This is not how you establish a church. Paul knows that he and Silas should be there with these new believers. They should be teaching them the Scriptures. They should be building them up in their faith. And instead, they have to flee in the middle of the night, and they've got no clear plan on when they're going to be able to come back. So, however that

conversation went down, the Thessalonians convince Paul and Silas that they need to leave, and Paul and

[ 5 : 41 ] Silas do so. Now, if you're part of the church at Thessalonica, if you're one of those new believers, how would you feel about things at this moment? You can go ahead and put yourself in their sandals, so to speak. Paul and Silas, they had come to you. Maybe you were a Gentile. Maybe you believed in many different gods. Thessalonica was a proud Roman city of about 100,000 people, same population as Kenosha back then. This would have been a huge, huge city. And you'd been living probably under the belief in Zeus and the other Roman gods. There were also some prominent Egyptian cults in Thessalonica at this time, so maybe you're worshiping Egyptian gods. And then Paul and Silas show up on the scene, and they tell you, no. The fickle, harsh, unloving gods that you worship, they are not real.

They are false gods. Let us tell you about the one true God who came in humility and died the death that you deserve. Or maybe you were a Jew who had been waiting for so long for the Messiah to come, and Paul tells you the Messiah has come. His name is Jesus Christ. He's the one that you have been waiting for, and he shows this to you from the Scriptures. So, Paul and Silas are teaching you, you believe with great joy, the Holy Spirit. He opens up your eyes to see how your sin has separated you from a holy God, and he has made a way through Christ for your sins to be forgiven. You experience the love of God for the first time. You're starting to learn from the Scriptures. You're eager to learn about your Savior. And then one day, there's a riot. And it's a riot to falsely condemn these men that you have grown in this short time to love and to trust. And you watch them get dragged before the city council and accused of treason. So, your church decides that night, we've got to get them out. This is not safe.

Paul and Silas, we love you so much. We are so grateful for you, but you're going to end up dead if you stay. And we know that the Lord has more gospel work for you to do. There's more people like us that need the gospel. You have more work to do. You've got to go.

And so, the next morning, you wake up, and the men who have been functioning as your pastors are gone. And you're a brand new believer.

So, what's going through your mind at that point? Are you doubting? Are you questioning God's goodness? I mean, why would He allow this to happen? Those questions might be going through your mind. And also, by the way, you do not live in the most tolerant city. You just watched Paul and Silas drag before a city council for preaching Christ. You know what's at stake if you share the gospel and you live out your new faith. So, this is a very difficult position to be in if you are a new Christian. And what about Paul for that moment, for that matter? What's he thinking after all this, being separated from this church that he loves? Well, Paul actually, he shares much of his thoughts with us in the passage today. So, let's take a look starting in chapter 2, verse 17.

[ 10 : 11 ] Paul writes, But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time in person, not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face because we wanted to come to you.

I, Paul, again and again, he says, we were torn away from you. They all remember that night when Paul and Silas had to leave so quickly. And the word that Paul uses, the Greek word, it's the word that you would use to describe a child being separated from their parents. Literally, we were orphaned from you, which maybe reads a little bit different than you might expect, especially since earlier in chapter 1, Paul had actually referred to himself as their mother. He says, But we were gentle among you like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

And then in chapter 2, verses 11 through 12, Paul says, For you know how like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God.

So, you would expect Paul to talk about them, the church, being orphaned from him as this spiritual parent, but he actually describes it in the opposite way. He says that we were orphaned from you, which I think gives us a look into the intensity of affection that Paul feels about this church.

His anxiety over them is less like a parent being separated from their child and more like the child's feeling of losing their parent, that sense of being lost, that hopelessness. There's a direness in how Paul describes how he feels about being taken away from these brothers and sisters in Christ.

[ 12 : 16 ] But Paul makes clear that this is temporary. He says, We were orphaned from you for a short time in person and not in heart, that we were taken from you, but our hearts are still with you, right? My affections for you have not gone anywhere, which is why we've tried again and again to

come to you. He says, With great desire to see you face to face because we wanted to come to you. I, Paul, again and again, you could just hear that desperation in his words that they've been wanting so badly to get back to the Thessalonians. It's like he's saying, If you're wondering why we haven't made it back from you, it is not from lack of trying. Like, we so want to be back with you. Which begs the question of why. Why haven't you come back yet?

If we mean so much to you, you would have come back by now, right? And that's probably what Paul is fearing that they might be thinking. So Paul explains, and he uses four little words. He says, But Satan hindered us. We tried coming to you again and again, but Satan hindered us.

So let's pause for a moment and let's acknowledge something. We want to be careful about over-blaming Satan for spiritual opposition in our lives. Paul, throughout this letter, he spends very little time mentioning or discussing Satan compared to the other things that he prioritizes. He doesn't go into all the details about Satan's activity. He's not morbidly fascinated with Satan, demons, and spiritual warfare. And if you're not careful, you can end up wasting a lot of time becoming obsessed with those spiritual realities. But they're still spiritual realities, right?

So Paul, he makes clear that their repeated attempts to visit the Thessalonians, those attempts were thwarted by Satan, that Satan himself prevented their return. And we don't know exactly what that looks like, but the fact remains that Satan hates Christians. He hates God, and he will do whatever he can to prevent God's kingdom from growing. So Satan is a real enemy, and we do well to acknowledge that.

But he is not stronger than our God. And all that he does is under God's authoritative hand. And so Paul's focus, it turns very quickly back to his brothers and sisters in Christ, back to his Lord Jesus, after he explains that Satan is hindering him from coming to them, from returning to them.

[15:47] He says, For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming?

Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy. You, brothers and sisters of Thessalonica, when Jesus Christ returns in his glory, Do you know what our greatest boast before Christ is going to be? It's going to be you. Which is an incredible statement from the Apostle Paul. The depth of affection that he feels for this church is amazing.

And because of that affection, eventually it got to a point where Paul just, he couldn't take it anymore. It says, Therefore, when we could bear it no longer, we sent Timothy.

The suspense was killing him. He's going, I just, I gotta know. I just gotta know how they're doing. Are they staying strong? Are they enduring the persecution that I know that they're going to face?

[17:04] Are there, God forbid, are there false teachers that are starting to creep in and make them question things? And he goes, Timothy, you've, you gotta go to Thessalonica.

Brother, you, you gotta go. We gotta send somebody to build them up and to strengthen them. Which is exactly what they do. So, chapter 3, verse 2, Paul writes, And I think he means all Christians in that we are destined for this.

which echoes 2 Timothy 3, 12, which Paul also wrote, which says that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

And that was exactly his message to the Thessalonians. He says, 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.

So, Paul doesn't need to be there in person in order to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that this young church is facing persecution for sharing the gospel.

[18:42] In their short time with these believers, one of the things that Paul and Silas knew that they needed to hear over and over again was, You're going to take heat for this.

If you commit to Christ, you are going to take heat for this. This is what you're signing up for. So, the Thessalonians, they went into this eyes wide open.

But, knowing that you're going to face something and then actually facing it, those are different things. Right?

And Paul doesn't want a single believer's faith to be shaken by what they're experiencing as they take heat for following Jesus.

He wants everybody to make it through. And until he knows what's going on with them, his own heart is fearful by his own admission. So, he says again in chapter 3, verse 5, he says, For this reason, when I could 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.

[ 20 : 00 ] So, here once again, Paul, he acknowledges Satan's power. Right? This time, his power to tempt Christians away from Christ. He knows that Satan can use persecution to the point that Paul admits that he is fearful that his labor amidst the Thessalonian church had been in vain.

Paul is afraid, in other words, that Satan's temptations, that they may have exposed a terrifying possibility, a terrifying possibility, which is that their faith was not actually genuine.

Maybe when push comes to shove, maybe the Thessalonians weren't true believers in Christ. So, Paul's fear is that the Thessalonians are like the seed that's sown on the rocky ground in Jesus' parable of the sower.

If you remember that parable, there's a farmer and he scatters seed. And some seed gets eaten by the birds and some of it falls on shallow soil where the sun scorches it.

Some falls among thorns and gets choked. And some falls on good soil where it produces a huge crop, a harvest. And Paul's fear is that the Thessalonians turn out to be the seed scorched by the sun.

[ 21 : 30 ] In Matthew 13, 21, Jesus says, As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy.

Yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while. And then what? When tribulation or persecution arises, on account of the word, immediately it falls away.

So the question is, is that what the Thessalonian church is? Are they the seed that is sown on rocky ground?

And the answer that Timothy finally brings back to Paul is no. They are not the seed that is sown on rocky ground because the Thessalonians' faith is strong.

Look at chapter 3, verse 6. But now, Timothy has come to us from you, and commentators say this is like, this just happened, right? This probably just happened.

[ 22 : 44 ] Timothy just got back. Um, where am I? Oh, here I am. Okay, sorry. I'm just so excited for Paul and what he's doing. But Timothy now has come to us from you and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us as we long to see you.

And Paul, he is just overjoyed at this news. The Thessalonians' faith and their love remain strong. Their affections for Paul and his fellow apostles, those affections are still burning.

If I was Paul, I would say, huzzah! That would be my response. This is the best news. It is better news than the Brewers beating the Cubs last night in the playoffs.

It's even better than that. As I was studying this part of the passage this week, my mind kept going to A Christmas Carol where Ebenezer Scrooge, he rejoices over his own salvation.

He says, I'm as light as a feather. I'm as happy as an angel. I'm as merry as a schoolboy. Except that Paul's joy, it's not over his own salvation.

[ 23 : 58 ] His joy is over the good news of someone else's faith. The faith of his brothers and sisters back in Thessalonica.

This is a man, he is just bursting at the seams with Timothy's good report. And here's what that joy does for Paul and Silas and Timothy.

If you look at verse 7, it says, For this reason, brothers, in all our distress and affliction, in all of the anxiety and the persecution that they are facing, we have been comforted about you through your faith.

Knowing that the Thessalonians are standing strong brings them comfort. It brings them comfort.

For now we live, Paul says, if you are standing fast in the Lord. So as Paul and Silas and Timothy, as they face their own opposition to the gospel, the faithfulness of the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica spurs them on.

[ 25 : 16 ] It comforts them. It brings them new life. Because faithfulness is contagious. Amen?

And I want to have a contagious faith like that. Don't you want your devotion to Christ to inspire your brothers and sisters like that?

Yeah. So with Paul's heart filled to the brim at the good report from Timothy, he turns his focus very appropriately to the living God.

In verse 9, he says, For what thanksgiving for what thanksgiving can we return to God for you? For all the joy that we feel for your sake before God as we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith.

at the end of the day, God is the one who gets the glory for the Thessalonians' faithfulness.  
[ 26 : 33 ] Which is why this good report ultimately results in Paul feeling this overwhelming sense of gratitude to the Lord. And Paul, he also recognizes that the journey of faith is not yet over.

Right? He still aches to go and see the Thessalonians in person. Even though they have this good report from Timothy, he says he wants to get back to them so that he can supply what is lacking in their faith.

And that's because the Thessalonians, they still need to be strengthened. They still need to be taught. As faithful as they've been, there's more work to do in building them up and maturing them as disciples.

So Paul has still got every intention of getting back to them and he knows that he needs the Lord's help in order to do so. Because Satan has hindered him, right?

Satan has hindered him from returning to the Thessalonians. So his response is to pray. He says, we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you.

[ 27 : 47 ] That is the constant desire of this man's soul. He's been praying, he will continue to pray and his desire for them, it runs so deep that he actually overflows into a written prayer right then and there, like he just can't help himself.

Which takes us to the final verses in this passage, verses 11 through 13. 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. Paul knows that his return to the Thessalonians and their continued faithfulness and growing love in his own heart towards them that all of that is under God's hand.

Okay, he needs the Lord to reach out with his transforming grace and establish the Thessalonians in holiness and as a matter of fact, if they don't make it back as planned, if the Lord is at work in the hearts of these young believers then they actually have all that they need, that everything is going to be okay.

His grace will be sufficient until Christ calls them home or he returns. So now that we've experienced the drama of Timothy's good report back to Paul, I'm going to close with four applications that I hope will be helpful as you think through how this relates to your life right now.

[ 29 : 53 ] So first, faithfulness is rooted in love for one another. Faithfulness is rooted in love for one another.

As I studied this passage this week, I felt convicted more than once about how strong Paul's affections are for his brothers and sisters in Thessalonica.

You can hear it in his kind of gushing eagerness that he, with the phrases that he uses. We were torn away from you in person, not in heart.

We endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face. You are our glory and our joy.

You can just hear the affection spilling out. You can also hear it in his anxiety over the state of their faith as he's been waiting for Timothy to come back with the news.

[ 30 : 56 ] We heard it before. When we could bear it no longer, he uses that phrase twice. When I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you in our labor would be in vain.

And what it shows us is that Paul just loves this church. That he just, he loves these people.

He doesn't just love the idea of them. he loves these people. He wanted Timothy to go to them, to strengthen them so that no one, not a single one of you, would be moved by these afflictions.

So as I read these verses I had to ask myself, do I feel that way about others in my church? And if I don't, does it bother me that I don't?

Do I want to love the people in our church like Paul loved the Thessalonians? Is that how you want to love your brothers and sisters?

[ 32 : 19 ] Do you regularly think about the faith of those in our church and how they're standing and how they are navigating the trials of life and keeping their eyes on Jesus?

Are you asking your brothers and sisters with a heart full of care, not of gossip, but a heart full of care, how is your walk with the Lord? How can I be praying for you right now?

So if you are feeling some conviction this morning about a lack of care in your heart for your church family, I would invite you to press into that this week to ask the Holy Spirit to help expose the root

that might be there of a lack of love and ask questions like am I simply too preoccupied with myself and my circumstances and my calendar?

Is Jesus not functioning as the controlling center of my life right now such that the well-being of other people's faith is just not even something that's showing up on my radar?

Ask the Lord for help in that. Which brings me to my second application. Faithfulness is rooted in prayer.

[ 33 : 50 ] Faithfulness is rooted in prayer. In this passage we see a lot of opposition. Right? We see Paul and Silas torn away from the Thessalonian church against their will. Satan is actively preventing Paul and Silas from returning.

There's fear and anxiety gripping Paul's heart as he worries about the faith of his brothers and sisters. and what does all of this culminate in at the end of our passage?

It all leads up to a prayer. It all leads up to a prayer of gratitude for what God has done.

And a prayer of request asking God to work in both circumstances and in hearts. Paul is absolutely confident in the power of prayer.

And you can tell by how he talks about prayer. He says we pray most earnestly night and day.

Right? This is a man who is totally devoted to going before the throne of grace and pleading with his God to act because he knows who is sovereign over all of this.

[ 35 : 00 ] He knows who holds all of the power. And so we need to pray and ask God not only to act in our circumstances but to act in our hearts as well and in the hearts of others.

So if you feel totally lost at the encouragement to pray and you're not sure exactly how to pursue that, there is a phenomenal book I want to recommend to you.

I love books, good books that point me to Jesus. A Praying Life by Paul Miller. I'm not awesome like Mike and I don't have like 15 copies to give out like he sometimes does.

So I'm just going to drop that. A Praying Life by Paul Miller. I've read it like twice in the past three years. I am not a natural prayer. It's an area of ministry that I really want to grow in and that book has been a significant help to me in learning how to pray, how to talk to the Lord, how to go before the throne.

So A Praying Life by Paul Miller. It's fantastic. Here's another simple thing that you can do in prayer if you feel kind of lost in there, is just go to the Psalms. Just go to the Psalms and use those to pray.

[ 36 : 16 ] They read like prayers, right? Because that's what they are. The Psalms are prayers. And they will give you a language of prayer that is so helpful to help you know what to pray for your brothers and sisters.

Go to the Psalms. And then you can also obviously use the Lord's Prayer. Use it to guide you. It starts with, we all know it, our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name.

And then you can pray from that, Father in Heaven, I want to treasure you above all else this morning. I want to honor your name. I've got a lot that is competing for my heart.

Help me to see you and your glory today. And then you just go and you pray through those phrases of the Lord's Prayer. So I hope that helps you.

Application number three. Faithfulness embraces persecution. faithfulness embraces persecution.

[ 37 : 26 ] This one is hard for me as I'm sure that it is for many of you. Pastor Mike talked about this last week. In our Western culture, if there's anything that we dislike, it is awkwardness.

That is like the worst thing that we can imagine is relational awkwardness to the point that we will sometimes do whatever we can to avoid making things awkward.

And Jesus has a way of making things awkward, right? Because of the claims that are made in the gospel. And I can be guilty of that as well, of prioritizing, avoiding awkwardness.

I am guilty of that. we can use excuses to justify our silence. We can think I'm going to mess it up.

I'm not going to present the gospel right. I don't have these ten thorough arguments for the existence of God in my back pocket, and so I really got to wait until I master that, or I've got to master historical arguments for the resurrection, and we feel unqualified, and so we just never say anything.

That can be a temptation for a lot of us, or maybe we think I'm not an introvert, that's not really my thing, I'm just going to leave that to other Christians.

[ 38 : 53 ] They can handle the evangelism. But what's often really going on with that is that we're just being fearful, that we're just afraid of how people are going to respond.

And the Thessalonians, they stand as a little bit of a loving rebuke to us this morning, one that I've felt this week while I was in this passage. Because the affliction that Paul is talking about, it's affliction that's the result of them sharing the gospel so faithfully.

That's why they're experiencing affliction. If you look back in 1 verse 8, he says, for not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone everywhere so that we need not say anything.

Which is amazing. These brand new Christians, they're not even a year old. They've become this center of evangelism. They're multiplying Christians right there in Thessalonica.

So, when the Thessalonians came to Christ, they accepted the fact that they were going to be slandered and they were going to be persecuted for their faith.

[ 40 : 20 ] And it did not stop them from sharing the gospel. So, as we pray, remember faithfulness is rooted in prayer, one of the things that we need to be regularly asking the Lord for is opportunity and courage.

Lord, would you give me the opportunity to sow gospel seeds today? Would you give me the opportunity to share the gospel today?

And would you grant me the courage that I need in order to do so? So, that can be a scary prayer to pray.

But that leads me to my final point, which is this. Faithfulness is rooted in Christ. Faithfulness is rooted in Christ.

The Thessalonians were bold in their faith and they endured persecution not because they had greater willpower or because they were more extroverted than we are.

[ 41 : 31 ] they were bold and endured because they were firmly rooted in their love for Christ. They were bold because, as Paul says, they had received the word of God as God's word.

In chapter 1, Paul says of them, your faith in God has gone forth everywhere. That their evangelism was so effective, not because they had memorized all these great arguments for defending their faith, but because of their faith in God.

And that faith in God emboldened them and strengthened them even when they were taking heat for representing Jesus. So, if you're feeling any conviction this morning, whether it be over maybe a lack of love for others in your church or about your prayer life or hesitancy to evangelize, the answer to that conviction is not to sit in shame.

Right? The answer to that conviction is not to sit in shame. The answer is to look at your Savior.

The answer is to go to your God and to stand fast in Him.

It's to pray like Paul did and ask the Lord to make you increase and abound in love and holiness and continue asking Him for that.

[ 43 : 12 ] We should strive to live with a faith like the Thessalonians and recognize that that kind of faith is ultimately a gift from our God.

And that doesn't mean that we do this whole let go and let God theology. We go to our God asking Him for strength and then we act. Right?

We stand in the Lord like Paul says and the standing that we do is real and the Lord Himself sustains that standing.

We have faith in His grace of forgiveness and we have faith in the grace of His transforming power. Both of those things are true.

So be encouraged brothers and sisters because the God who sustained the Thessalonians is the same God who sustains you.

[ 44 : 14 ] Keep standing fast. Keep encouraging your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and let's not do that alone.

Let's do that together as a family. Amen? Amen. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we ask that You would strengthen us, the people of Christ the King Church, that You would embolden us, that You would help us not to shrink back from declaring the good news of Jesus Christ.

Would it register deeply in our hearts that what every lost person needs the most above everything else is to have their sins forgiven and be born again and to know You as their Savior and Lord, to be in relationship with You, Lord God.

That's what every person needs the most. Christ, and Father, You have graciously provided a way through the death and resurrection of Your Son. You have made a path of salvation.

Help us to grow in sharing that good news. We thank You for the faithfulness of the Thessalonians so many years ago, for the witness that they still are for us through this letter and Your Word.

[ 45 : 43 ] Thank You for the beauty of the Scriptures. We are so grateful that we get to read these Scriptures that have been breathed out by Your Spirit. That is an amazing thing.

Would You encourage us, Father, with the reality that You are ultimately the one who changes hearts, that You are the one who brings the dead to life, that You are the one who causes lost sinners to be born again.

And may that confidence in You make us more and more faithful in our witness. We ask You to work in our hearts, O Lord.

Would You give us a passion for the gospel that pushes past the awkwardness and the fear of shame? And I know that that is something that I need in myself, Lord.

And you are the God who is able to give that. Thank you for Your patience with us and for Your mercy. It's in Jesus' name that we pray.

[ 46 : 55 ] Amen. Amen. Amen.