

Great Hardship, Greater Joy

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter number 3. Now, it's been a couple weeks that we've been in this book of the Bible. Two weeks ago, Pastor Trent took us through the last portion of chapter number 2, where Paul very clearly says, listen, I love you so much. He's writing to these Thessalonians, and they were dear to him. He cared about them, and he considered them his glory and joy. Those were the words that he uses there at the end of chapter 2 to describe how he felt about them and how much he loved them and how his heart just yearned for them to walk with Jesus, to know Jesus, so that when Christ came back, they would stand before Jesus, and they would be his glory, his joy. He says, man, I just live for people knowing Jesus. And that's a commitment that we must make to live for the spiritual well-being of others. It's not an easy thing, but it's an important thing because God has given us this ministry of reconciliation to see others come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior, to see them grow in the faith, to see them mature and be perfected. And isn't it true that the best things in life and the most meaningful things in life are often the most difficult? You found that out?

It's kind of like, think about some of the things that are very meaningful. You know, our marriages, marriages, marriage is difficult, but it's worth it. Parenting, difficult, but it's worth it. Living for Christ, sometimes difficult, but worth it. There are many things that are difficult, but they're worth it, and that's what's going on here. Because sometimes in the middle of doing all the things that are required to achieve the goal, to achieve the end, right? If we want to honor the Lord with our lives, there's a lot of things that we do that may not necessarily feel fun in the moment, but they're important and they matter. But in that moment, when we're kind of under all of the burden of life and the difficulties that we face, we can question, is it worth it? Is the difficulty that I'm going through worth the goal? And sometimes, honestly, we lose sight of that. And that's why we see, even we've seen in our own lives, where maybe we've given up, maybe we've not given the effort that was needed.

We've kind of slacked off and decided, you know what, it's, I'm not sure if it's worth the sacrifice to go through with this thing. And what we find here is Paul has a concern. He's concerned that those Thessalonian believers, that they would go through with the thing. And the thing was living for Jesus and remaining faithful to Jesus in the middle of just a pressure cooker. That was their town. It was a pressure cooker of opposition and persecution. And he said, and he's going to talk about his own struggle to see them mature and to see them grow. There were burdens that he bore. And in all of that, we find that there is great hardship. Here's your title. It's real simple tonight. There is great hardship. But in that hardship, and at the end of that hardship, there is a greater joy. And that's where he's going to refocus us tonight. And so let's do this. Can we pray? And then we will read the first five verses of chapter number three, and we'll begin working through our outline together.

Father, we come to you this evening. And Lord, thank you for your word. Thank you for the message that has already been preached. We thank you for the prayers that have been made. Thank you for the songs that have been sung. Lord, we pray that all that is done here tonight would honor you. And as we come to 1 Thessalonians chapter three, Lord, I pray that you'd help us. I don't know the needs and the hearts of each person in this room, Lord, but you do. You know the weights and the burdens and the hardness, the hardship, the difficulty that we all face. And Lord, I pray that you would encourage tonight, that you would strengthen and help us to know that it truly is worth it to walk with you, to follow you, to keep showing up, to stay in the fight. Lord, we pray all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Let's read there in verse number one. 1 Thessalonians chapter number three, in verse number one, the scripture says this, Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone, and sent Timotheus, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions. For yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know, for this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain. Now, there's a lot going in there. There's a lot of backstory that we need to kind of catch up on as we're looking at the different difficulties that were faced, the different hardships that were faced. Here's your first blank. First blank is this, opposition is expected. Opposition is expected. And this refers to what was happening with the

[5 : 21] Thessalonians. That's the next blank there at the end, the Thessalonians. He's going to outline a number of different problems that were being faced, and they had expected opposition. If you recall, in Thessalonica, in their city, they heard the gospel over the course of, you know, a short time.

Paul preached three Sabbaths in the synagogue. Perhaps there was a short time after that that he was ministering among Gentile people. But very quickly, they heard the gospel, many people turned to Christ, and then Paul was kicked out of town. And an incredible amount of persecution arose.

This is the verses we read in Acts chapter number 17, where the Jews got jealous of Paul's successful ministry and hired some thugs to assault the house of Jason. And they're like, where are these people? We're going to find them, and we're going to get rid of them.

They didn't find Paul, thankfully, because they were out for blood. I mean, honestly, they were going after him. But they brought some of these believers to the civic leaders and said, these people are treasonous. They said, these people are proclaiming that there's another king, one Jesus. They don't obey the laws of Caesar, the decrees of Caesar. And that's the environment that they're in. And Paul's concern is, you are a new believer in that environment. Are you going to stand strong? And he was gone so quickly that he had no idea what happens, right? He had to move on to Berea, which was a neighboring city. Actually, on the back of your outline, we got a little upgrade tonight. We got maps, full-color maps. Look at that. It's amazing. Berea, he moved on to Berea and ministered in Berea. And in that city, those same people that were out for blood in Thessalonica, they followed him to Berea and got him kicked out of that city too. And then he ends up all the way down towards the bottom of your map where the orange line ends at Athens. From Thessalonica to Athens, by the way, the crow flies, according to Google Maps, that's about 186 miles. It's like 186.7 miles or something. That's a long way, especially when you're traveling by foot, maybe ship, maybe a donkey, but he is on the run for his life and he doesn't know what's happening with these people. Can we read back in verse number one again? He says, when we could no longer forbear. He's like, I just have to know what's happening with you because you are in that pressure cooker. You are struggling and we told you about this, but even though they knew about it, there was a very real possibility that they might have kind of caved underneath that pressure. There's a very real possibility that the tempter tempted them. Did you notice that down in verse number, when you get down to verse number, oh goodness, where'd it go? In verse number five, for this cause, when I could no longer forbear,

I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you and our labor be in vain. These were believers that were tried, they were tested, they were tempted, and with every temptation, there's an opportunity to give in, right? And so he's like, I just got to know what's happening because they have opposition. It was expected, but it was difficult. You know, one thing that really sticks out to me as I was studying this was Paul realized, and he wrote, that we are in a very real battle, right? He talks about the tempter tempting. That's what the tempter does. That's Satan. That's the devil. That's his whole game plan. He wants to get you off track, giving into his lies. He tempts. This was the same tempter, the same opponent that in the previous verses, in chapter two, verse number 18, had hindered Paul. Did you notice that? He says, we would have come unto you, even I, Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us. He's like, we're in this battle, and the enemy is all out opposing your faith, opposing your walk with the

[9 : 22] Lord, and I just want to know what's going on with you. That was the opposition that those believers were facing. They were threatened with treason. This is an example of, I read of the type of temptation that Satan offers. At the height of Roman persecution, it's said that a Christian who was being brought to a trial or like an inquisition type thing where it's like, okay, it's said that you're a Christian. You need to recant. They said that all the person would have to do was to offer a pinch of salt to an idol, and they could be released from what was going to be done to them, from the consequences of them being a Christian. You can't tell me that's not a temptation to be relieved from pain and from the thought of, man, what's going to happen to me? What's going to happen to my family if I hold to the name of Christ? The tempter tempted, and Paul's like, I got to know what is going on with you. I got to know what's happening with you. There's great hardship, not only as believers, right, just as being believers, we are in a spiritual battle. There's great hardship there, but there's also great hardship because serving people, here's your next blank, serving people requires sacrifice, and we see that with Timothy, because what does Paul do when he is wanting to know? He's like, I've got to know what's happening with you. Are you standing fast? He says,

I'm going to send Timothy. I'm going to send Timothy to go to you and to minister to you. He is identified as their brother, a fellow believer. He's identified as a minister, one who had devoted his life to serving people. That's Timothy. Now, think with me again. Think about this map for a second. If you are Timothy, right, and down there in verse number one, it says, wherefore, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone in St. Timotheus. If you're down in Athens, and you've got to travel all that way back up to Thessalonica, number one, that's a long journey, is it not? I mean, if you're walking it, and it's probably more than 180 something miles, that's a good 10 to 12 day trip. Traveling in the ancient world, can I remind you, it was not an easy thing. There's not always clear roads. There's some trade routes, but there's often bandits. You have to, you're not going to stop at, you know, Wawa or Quick Trip or anything. Like, you're not picking up snacks along the way. Whatever you have, you either carry or you're relying upon the hospitality of random strangers along the way on this trip. Maybe you have an animal. Probably not. Maybe you're going by ship. But even if you're going by ship, these are not cruise ships. They're commercial ships.

And passengers would often pay to just get on the boat. And you're above deck facing whatever, whatever weather, whatever storms, anything that comes your way, you're on deck facing that.

And so he goes back. But think with me for a second. Where's he going? He's going back into enemy territory. Right? He's going back to the very place that Paul had to run from to preserve his own life.

He's going back to the place where the Christians are being attacked and they're being accused of treason. He's going back into enemy territory. He's a minister devoting his life to serving people, but he was also a fellow laborer. He was one that knew how to labor in prayer. He knew how to labor in the word. He knew how to establish believers. That was his mission. Did you notice that in verse number two? We sent Timotheus, our brother and minister of God and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ to establish you and to comfort you concerning your faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions for yourselves. Know that we are appointed therein too. That's a big job, is it not?

[13 : 20] To go back to a group of young Christians and to help them stand firm. That was a lot of meetings. That was a lot of late nights. That was a lot of counseling. That was a lot of talking. That was a lot of encouraging. That was a lot of teaching. That was a job. And Timothy's going back into enemy territory to help them. Serving people requires sacrifice. The third thing, real love is hard.

Real love is hard. And I think we see that in the life of Paul. We see that in the way that he writes about this time where he's worried. I don't know if worry is the right word. We'll use it for the moment. He's worried. He's concerned. He's thinking about these believers that he loves dearly. And he's like, I just got to know what's going on with you. I can't bear the thought of not knowing. I can't, like, I've got to do something so that I know that you're doing well. Think about the things that it says about Paul from his heart. When you look with me down to verse number five, he says, for this cause when I could no longer forbear. Let's pause there for a second. What does it mean to no longer forbear? It means that you want to know how somebody's doing, and you can't get a hold of them. You can't text them. You don't know if they made it home. You don't know if they're in a wreck on the side of the road. You just don't know what's going on with them. Isn't that one of the worst things? Just not knowing, like just unanswered questions. I know my mother-in-law, one of her things is she stayed up till all the kids got home. Every night, you know, they're out working late or they're doing whatever. She stayed up until they all got home, right? Because you just wanted to know that they're okay. And Paul's like, I just want to know that you're okay. I just want to know that you're doing well. Let's continue reading. He says,

I sent to know your faith. When he sent Timothy, did you notice what it said in verse one? He said, we thought it good to be left alone at Athens. Now that might not sound like a whole lot, but Paul in Athens faced one of the most difficult times in his ministry because he's in this city all alone.

And he's typically traveling with the crew, Paul and Silas, Paul and Timothy, Paul and Timothy and Silas, right? They're all going together to different places and ministering, but he comes to this place and he is alone. He has sent one of his dearest friends to go into, to find out what's happening with them. I don't know if you've had the experience of having somebody that you work with that you just enjoy working together. You ever had somebody you work with and you just click and it's like, you know, you're partners, you're in this thing together. We love working together. And you know, when that person, maybe they go on vacation, they're not in the office or they're not beside you doing the job.

It's like, man, things just don't feel right because they're not there. The relationship that Paul and Timothy had was that and more, right? Paul had, I had, had strengthened Timothy and helped him. And he was like a son in the faith. And he's like, I let Timothy go to go serve you, man. I really need him here with me. I really like him here with me, but you know what? He needs to go help you right now. He had sent him to know their faith and look down. Let's skip down. He says, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you in our labor be in vain. Think about that question for a second. Was it all a waste? All that he suffered in Thessalonica, going and preaching and running for his life and then running to Berea and then running further on. Was it our labor in vain?

[16 : 56] Was our ministry for nothing? Did we come into the city and people got saved and things were happening, but then it all died out? He doesn't know. That's the hardship of really caring about people.

That's the hardship of loving somebody like, like your own family. Those are the words. Do you remember the words that Paul used in chapter two when he talks about how he related to the Thessalonians? He says he was like a father. He was like a mother. He was like a brother. He was, he loved them and he cared about them. He took people who were strangers and treated them like his family.

And that's why he's just so tore up about what's going on with them. He was not one that was like, all right, well, I guess I can't do anything. So time to move on, go somewhere else. It's like, I just got to know what's going on with you. I just got to know that you're okay. And so everybody in this story, everyone in this passage is facing hardship. Let me give you one more on that separation that Paul experienced. When you go back up to chapter two, verse number 17, it says, but we brethren being taken from you in a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. There's a lot of words there.

But it really all boils down to this. I didn't want to leave you, but I got ripped away from you. And my heart is still with you. And I really just want to come see you. And I really just want to come and help you. He's deeply concerned. In other places in scripture, Paul talks about that the care of the churches that came upon him, he felt a way and responsibility that people he administered to would do well. So lots of suffering, lots of suffering. We know that suffering is going to come.

We know that suffering is promised in scripture. There's a number of times in here where he said, we told you about this. We warned you about this. Now there's a question. Would they stand?

[18 : 55] Would they stand in the suffering that they faced? Would they stand in the hardship that they experienced? And there's really the question for us tonight is, are you going to stand? Am I going to stand with the hardships that we will face? And the hardships that we will face to not only to follow Christ, but to minister to others? There are hardships in both of those. And there's unique hardships to both of those. But before we go to the next portion, can we have maybe a little bit of a reality check? I was studying this and thinking about for a while. And I'm like, man, they went through so much stuff. And I was like, hold up a second. I ain't hardly gone through anything compared to this.

I mean, let's be honest for a second. They really suffered. They really were harmed. Paul was beaten. I mean, they suffered real suffering. Now that's not to discount the difficulty and the discomfort.

And there's many things that we do face, right? That's a very real thing, especially in a world that is always increasing in its opposition to truth, right? We have a world that's always increasing in the way that it opposes truth. We do face difficulty. We do face pressures. But reality check for a second. Man, have we gotten a little down on ourselves and maybe in the mully grubs and it's like, oh man, everything's so terrible. When we all look and say, we have got it, we've really got it going on in a lot of ways. We've got a lot of good things. I mean, I don't know about you, but I wasn't sneaking in here to come and gather with the believers. Like, I'm not looking over my shoulder that someone's going to come and grab me and go take me to court or something like that. That's just not the reality that we live in. That was the reality that they lived in. And their testimony is this. Even though it was really hard, even though it was really difficult, there was great joy within it. Now we turn to the encouraging part of the message. Let's continue on in verse number six.

There is greater joy. There's greater joy. And this is pretty amazing. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that you have good remembrance of us always desiring greatly to see us as we also to see you. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith. Look at that testimony.

He says, I was in Athens. And as you track that through scripture, it seems like Timothy didn't catch up to Paul until he got to Corinth. Athens, there was a lot that happened in Athens. That was a difficult place to minister. But Timothy catches up to Paul and he says, listen, they are standing in faith. They love the Lord. They love you. And they want to see you too. Now, I don't know about you, but those last two notes about, you know, Paul. I just imagine this. Timothy come in and he's like, Paul, it's good to see you. Let me tell you about the Thessalonians. They love Jesus. They're staying strong in their faith and they love you and they want to see you too. Why does that matter? Why does that matter? Almost sounds a little self-serving, doesn't it? Like Paul's like, okay, who am I? It really matters if they love Jesus. But think about it. It would have been absolutely, and I think this shows some of the humanness of the people in scripture that sometimes we forget. Imagine the heartbreak if Timothy walked in and said, all right, Paul, they, you know, they love Jesus, but they're done with you. They think you're a coward. They think you went on the run and they're like, you know, that Paul guy, he got us started, but he kind of went, ran down the road and, you know, we're just kind of like, we're not really that into Paul anymore. We're done with you. Imagine the blow that would have been to Paul. But Timothy comes back and he's like, man, there's Christian brotherhood here. There's love. There's encouragement. There's faith. And he is stabilized in that. Here's your next blank. Seeing others follow Jesus stabilizes us. He writes about his comfort. He says, when I heard about your faith, when I heard about your love, it comforted me in my afflictions, right?

[23 : 06] Because Paul was still struggling. He's still going through all kinds of things. And there was much more to come. When you look down to verse number seven, that's where he says, therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith. Verse number eight, this is another one of those windows into Paul's heart. He says, for now we live if you stand fast in the Lord. He's like, it makes all the difference to me to see you standing for the Lord. I don't know if you've experienced this, but you've probably known people and you've probably seen people who maybe at one point they were walking, you know, they'd gotten saved. They're walking forward by faith, but they start shaking and they start wobbling. It's like, are they going to continue on? Are they going to love Jesus? Are they going to stay in church? Are they going to, you know, continue growing?

It's like, you don't know what's going to happen with them. And when they take that step of like, no, I do believe this. I am following Jesus. I do love the Lord. There's not much that's more encouraging than that. There's not much more encouraging to see somebody consistently walking with Jesus.

us. Second, your next blank, seeing others follow Jesus, it just explodes joy into our hearts. Now it's, it's a problem that sometimes we don't look and see the faith of those around us and it, we don't allow it to encourage us. But when you're in that type of pressure cooker that they were in and how there was, I mean, everything that the enemy had was being thrown at them in that moment, he saw their faith. Well, didn't see, heard their faith through Timothy. And he says, I just can't even tell you how much I want to thank God for that. Let's read that. This, these next few verses, I encourage you to take them and chew on them and think about the joy that he had. Look with me when you get down to verse number eight, excuse me, verse number nine. For what thanks can we render to God again for you for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

Did you notice what he said there? He really asks a rhetorical question. He says, for what thanks can we render to God? How can I thank God for what I've heard? How can I thank God? And what is he saying?

For the joy wherewith we joy. That's kind of wild. He has joy as a noun and joy as a verb. He says, we've got so much, there's just so much joy in my heart and I'm rejoicing, I'm joying. And it's like, I can't even thank God. I don't even have the words to say to say, thank you, Lord, for how he had worked in their lives. When we invest our lives in others and we see them follow Christ and we see fruit being produced in their lives, that is a joyful thing. Hey, and if you've not seen that, would you ask God to allow you to see that in someone's life where you've had a part in planting the seeds of the gospel, of watering, of encouraging, of helping? Because that is an incredible joy that we can experience in this life, no matter what type of situation that we're in. Now, one last question before we close out. Can joy be greater than hardship? Can joy be greater than hardship? Because that's a real question. Because when you're in the middle of it and when you're underneath the weight and you're underneath the burdens of whether we're talking about just the normal things of life, we're talking about real opposition for the gospel, we're talking about physical weakness, like there's incredible weights that can come upon our lives. Can joy be greater than hardship?

[26 : 56] Let's look at 2 Corinthians chapter 4 for just a few moments. Would you turn there with me? And we'll end here tonight. In 2 Corinthians 4, there's a wonderful passage that puts all these things in perspective.

I think this is the key to the whole thing. It's really all about perspective, right? Because Paul's desire was that when those Thessalonian Christians, when they stood before the Lord, when He returned, that they would stand in holiness, that they would stand in righteousness, that they would stand with fruit on their account. Like that's what drove him, was seeing people one day stand before the Lord, being believers. It's all about getting the right perspective. Let's go to verse number 16 in chapter number 4. And I have 1 Corinthians open. Let me turn over there.

In verse number 14, look at what it says. Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also by Jesus and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God. For which cause, and this is where we really get into the change of perspective. For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. Consider those words for a second. It acknowledges the reality that the outward man, it does perish. It is weak. It is tried. It is burdened. It is like our bodies, they are dying, right? The outward man, it does perish. But look at what it says. Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. It says even though we are weighed down, and even though we are burdened, what God is doing on the inside, what God is doing in the new man, He is renewing us day by day. Look at verse 17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Consider those words. He says what's happening right now is what?

Two words, light affliction. Now that sounds real calloused and a little irritating when you're in the middle and you're feeling crushed and burdened and weighed down. It's like, how can this possibly be light affliction? But what he's saying is you need to compare it correctly. We're not supposed to compare affliction to no affliction. That's the wrong comparison to make. He says we're supposed to compare this affliction to eternal glory. We're supposed to compare the weakness and the difficulty we face now to the reward in eternity of following and serving Christ and investing in the lives of others. That's the comparison that we're supposed to make. Basically says, listen, live your life in light of eternity. I think that's a blank on your outline there. Look at that. It's a matter of seeing our lives in light of eternity. That's the key. That's the difference that that's the difference in this whole thing. Why do we go on? Because in eternity, it's all going to matter in one second, one second eternity. It's going to make everything so worth it beyond worth it. It's going to be like, it's going to be one of those things. You ever go through something that where it's like, man, this is really difficult. You get to the other side of it and then you realize, you know, that wasn't so bad. You know, that wasn't as bad as I thought or I thought it was going to be really bad or it was bad, but you know, this other thing is really worse. It's like we realize that there's some things that we think are really bad, but they're not really that bad. He says one second eternity is going to make any difficulty. And that's really hard to say. It's really hard to believe that one second eternity is going to make every difficulty seem like basically nothing. That's what he says. Live our lives in the eternal perspective. Let me give you two thoughts as we close out. It might be that you, right now, you're just trying to stay afloat. And there's two words that I'd like to encourage you to fill in.

Keep showing up. Keep showing up. Why do I say that? Those Thessalonians, what did they do? They're living their lives. They hear about Jesus. Things get really bad. When things got really bad, what did they do? They kept living for Jesus. And that made an incredible difference to the Apostle Paul.

[31 : 30] You might be saying, well, okay, this is all good for preachers and Sunday school teachers and deacons and people who do foundations to, you know, that they would invest in the lives of others. But, you know, I'm just me and I'm just trying to live for Jesus day in and day out.

I want to encourage you to think about this. You being here tonight, that does encourage someone's faith. You serving in the whatever capacity here at this church, that encourages somebody's faith.

You showing up week in and week out and being a part of what God's doing, that encourages people's faith. You staying faithful to Jesus, that makes a difference. And that speaks volumes to people around you. Don't ever overlook that fact. You living for Jesus, it matters a whole lot. Keep on going. And here's the second thing. Second thing. Are you getting weary in well-doing? Are you getting weary in giving of yourselves? It might be that you have little disciples called your children that you're like, man, I'm just, I get tired as I'm dealing with these little people all the time, or maybe they're bigger people called teenagers. And it's like, they're real hard. You know, this is one of those things where I think I'm keeping the background. I'm like, okay, these, these little people problems, I think one day I'm going to look back and be like, man, this is child's play. There's, there's some bigger people problems. It might be that you are, there's somebody that's on your heart. That's, that's wayward. That's a, that's away from the Lord. And you're just like, man,

I'm, I'm about, I don't know what else I can say. I don't know how else I can help them or encourage them. I'm just done. Friend, don't give up because it is worth it. Those are your last two blanks.

It is worth it. It is worth it to invest our lives for the good of others and for their faith. Would you bow with me as we close out? Father, we come to you and we thank you for your word. Lord, I pray you'd help us as we walk with you, that we would see our lives in the perspective of eternity. Lord, it's, I'm so thankful that you give us your truth. Without your truth, we wouldn't have anything to stand on and we wouldn't have anything to, to as a reference point of what matters, how we can go through the difficulties of this life. Lord, forgive us for where we are. Sometimes, Lord, I'm a complainer and you know, Lord, there's weights, but they're not much like compared to what many saints throughout history have experienced. Lord, I want to follow you. God, I pray that within the heart of each person here tonight, that there would be a firm commitment that they would stand upon your truth. They would stand fast. They would walk with you knowing that their lives do encourage others and that their investment in others, their work, their labor for the Lord, it is not wasted.

[34 : 18] I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.