



MORE RISING UP. LESS BOWING DOWN.

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2 Thessalonians | November 12, 2023

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All right. If you've got a Bible, there's a book of the New Testament. We're almost done with Second Thessalonians. Go to chapter two. And as you're finding your way there, if you're new and we've not met, my name is uh, mark, uh, some people call me Pastor Mark. Some people call me other stuff. You can either call me Mark, or Pastor Mark. I'd prefer either one of those. And, uh, I just want you to know, I I really love you and I'm really excited to teach you the word of God today. And my heart for you kind of feels like these conversations that I had with our five kids during the course of their upbringing, there were certain seasons where, uh, our five kids were in a season of opportunity, but also obstacle. And there was greatness and destiny before them. But they just needed to get through a little bit of adversity. And I had the honor at, on occasion of coming alongside and saying, I'm your dad. I love you. I'm here to help. Let me coach you through this. Let me encourage you, let me explain what might be going on and what God has for you on the other side. And I believe this is that kind of word for you. And I believe that God has a destiny for each of us. That God is good. God has a plan, God has a purpose. God has a future. And between your present and your destiny is adversity. Something's always in the way. There's always an obstacle. There's always an opportunity that needs to be dealt with. So you could get through the adversity to your destiny. And so I want you to think real personally today about your own life. This is between you and the Lord. And I hope to help right now. What would that adversity be for you? For some of you it's physical. You've got physical issues. For some of you, it would be financial or vocational. For some of you, relational, maybe with extended family or spouse or kids. For some of you it might be mental or emotional or spiritual. And sometimes the adversity isn't a bad thing. It's a good thing that's just new and complicated. 'cause sometimes change is hard. Some of you are newly married and it's a blessing. But you gotta figure out how to deal with each other. Uh, and if you figure it out, let the rest of us know. Uh, some of you, you've got a new kid, your parents, and it's a wonderful blessing, but it's like, okay, this is a series of new challenges and things we've got to learn. Some of you have got a blended family, which is beautiful, but it's complicated. You're trying to figure out how to put it together. And many of you have recently moved here from Arizona and it's a great reset, but all of a sudden life has just sort of started over and there's a lot of things to sort out. And what I want you to know is that on the other side of your adversity is your destiny. And the best thing we can do is find someone who's been through adversity and gotten to their destiny and see if we can't learn from their example and also their instruction. And that brings me to the Apostle Paul, and he's the author of the book that we are studying together. He is a man that has incredible adversity and then leaves an incredible destiny. He's one of the most significant men in the history of the world. But he faced some of the greatest challenges and obstacles to reach that state. He was a pastor and missionary, and he traveled over the course of roughly a decade, uh, walking upwards of 20 miles every single day. And he preached a message that most people hated and did not want to hear. He had no wife, he had no kids. Uh, he was itinerant. So he generally didn't have what we would consider a home or a place of comfort and rest. Uh, in addition, there were days that he was not only suffering physically, but struggling financially. He had a part-time job. And unlike me, he didn't have a wonderful wife and kids to come home to. He was alone. And oftentimes he was very alone and very much isolated, including some stints in prison. And here is his summary of his life. And think about your adversity. As

we listen to his in second Corinthians 11:23 through 29. He says, I was in stripes beyond measure. This is being whipped so that your body is just ultimately devastated. He said he was in prisons. Lemme just say this, the only thing worse than being in prison is being in prisons. He's been in multiple prisons. He has a lot of issues with the government. They have a lot of issues with him. He said in deaths, often multiple times, he thought that he was going to die five times. I received the 40 stripes minus one. This is the flogging that they gave to the Lord Jesus. They said that 40 lashes would kill a man. He said, they lashed me 39 times on five different occasions, three times I was beaten with rods once I was stoned. And for those of you who voted for marijuana, that's not what he's talking about. Um, this is where if you declare yourself to be God, so they're like, huh, stay with me. I know it's hard to focus. Uh, so stoning in that day was if you declared yourself to be God, they would throw rocks at you, uh, to put you to death. Three times I was shipwrecked, meaning his boat crash. And he was a drifted sea. How many of you, after one shipwreck, you would be posts sailing, right? But he's obeying God. And the point is this, the point is not are you winning or losing. The question is, are you obeying or disobeying? He was obeying. He says, A night and a day, I have been in the deep. He spent a whole night just hanging on to some piece of, uh, uh, of, of remaining ship after a shipwreck, a drifted sea in perils of waters, robbers my own countrymen. Um, he says, the Gentiles in the city, in the wilderness, in the sea, among false brethren, in weariness and toil, sleepless hunger, thirst, cold and nakedness. I don't know what your adversity is, but he just went varsity. Amen. So what he's saying is, there was nowhere safe for me to be in the wilderness in the city with others or alone. My life was always in danger. There was always adversity. And then this is one thing I really appreciate about this man. He closes with my deep concern for all the churches, all of his adversity was out of love for the church of Jesus Christ. And he had massive adversity, tremendous adversity, the kind of adversity that would cause a normal person to simply break and never recover. But he just continued part of his travels, brought him in the Book of Acts to a town called Thessalonika. It was an ancient city, part of the Roman Empire. And there he showed up at a synagogue, which was a meeting of Jewish people who were awaiting for the coming of the Messiah based upon the Old Testament teachings. He himself was a Jew and a scholar and a rabbi. So he taught them that Jesus was the fulfillment of their Jewish beliefs and hopes and scriptures. There was a revival, many of these Jewish people in this synagogue, they became followers of Jesus Christ. While in response to the um, work of God, there was anti work. Anytime God has a revival, Satan has a riot. And so there was a riot that came up against Paul. They threatened to kill him and close the church and there were death threats against the people. So Paul literally had to flee, otherwise the Christians would've been harmed. Well, now the pastor is away from the people, but they've got a lot of questions for him. So they write him letters and he responds answering their questions. That's how we get First Thessalonians and Second Thessalonians. He's undergone adversity. There's so much adversity he can't be with them. They're undergoing adversity. So he writes to them about how to overcome their adversity to get to their destiny. Let me read a summary of what he says in First Thessalonians. And then second Thessalonians, here are the things that they are enduring, suffered, and been shamefully treated. Much conflict, labor and toil suffered, drove us out. Satan hindered us. We could bear it no longer distress and affliction. He talks about being grieved,

faint-hearted and weak. In Second Thessalonians, he talks about quote, persecutions, affliction, suffering, afflicted, rebellion, lawlessness, Satan, wicked deception, unrighteousness, wicked and evil men and the evil one. So here's what I'm saying. He as their leader had adversity. They as the people had adversity, he was going through it. They were going through it, and he teaches them. And he is going to teach us, and he's going to teach you. That brings me to two Thessalonians chapter two, verse 13. What do you do when you have adversity and you want to get to your destiny? Well, you gotta get through your adversity. And he talks about how God loves you, cares for you, helps you, and has hope for you. Here's what he says, but we ought always to give thanks to God for you brothers, beloved by the Lord. He starts with thanksgiving. And sometimes when we're in adversity, that's the best place to start. It doesn't mean that you don't deal with the things that are difficult, but you're grateful for the things that God is doing amidst the difficulty. Because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved through sanctification by the spirit and belief in the truth to this. He called you through our gospel so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then brothers, stand firm, right? Don't give up. Don't give in and hold the the traditions that you are taught by us, either by our spoken word or our letter. He's talking about either my sermons or the books that I've written. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace. Comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work. And word. Lemme just unpack this for you. Number one, start with quote, God who chose you to be saved. He called you through our gospel. Before we can deal with any problem in our life, we need to deal with the first problem. And that is that we start disconnected from God. If you're here and you don't know Jesus Christ, I don't know what you're dealing with, but the first priority is that you would come to know Jesus Christ. Then he can help you with everything else you're dealing with. And the biggest problem we have is because of sin. We're disconnected from God. Once we get reconnected to God, then God helps us with everything else. Don't deal with any of your problems till you've dealt with your first problem. Do you know God through Jesus Christ? And he says, we are saved, and I wanna talk about this a little bit, but he says, we're saved through what he calls the gospel. Let me explain this to you. Gospel literally means good news. In the ancient world, they didn't have the technology that we do. So if a king had a good announcement or pronouncement to give, he would send out messengers or heralds to declare, I have good news from the king. Well, Jesus Christ is the king of kings, and the gospel is the good news of our king in his kingdom and the good news, all sinners or the gospel, all sinners on Jesus Christ. Couple of things I want you to know about Jesus. And if you don't know him, I want you to know him. And he already knows you. And the reason perhaps he's brought you here is so that you could get to know him. Jesus makes some astonishing claims. He says that he came down from heaven. No one says that. He says that he's the only God, he's the only founder of any major world religion who ever declared himself to be God. He also said openly and publicly that he had no sin of any sort or kind. These are unprecedented claims by any kind of leader, especially those who are religious and spiritual. They then said, well, you either need to stop saying that you're God from heaven who's without sin and uh, and that you alone are the way, the truth and the life, or we're going to kill you. He said, yeah, I know you well. And, and he explained, you're going to, you're going to put me to death. And then three days later, I will

rise and I will prove that everything I have said about myself is in fact true. And Jesus proved it all. You need to know that Jesus is God. Come down from heaven, lived without sin, died for our sin, rose to save you and to save me and to save us. And that Jesus Christ alone is the way, the truth and the life, just like he said. And no one gets to the Father, but through him. He says, start with that. Do you know that? Do you believe that? Do you believe in Jesus? Do you belong to Jesus? If not, this is the day that you're supposed to become a Christian. This is the day that you're supposed to take your first step in that journey with Jesus Christ. And he says, if you take that step or if you've taken that step, you are saved. And the question is saved from what to what. There's a lot that the Bible says, but first and foremost, through Jesus Christ, you're saved from Satan to God. If you look at this world in which we live, it seems like it's being run by Satan himself. Do you know why? It's being run by Satan himself? You're seeing clearly the Bible says that he is the God of this world, and we are saved from Satan to God. There is this cosmic war that you and I are born into between good and evil between God and Satan. And because we are sinners by nature and choice, we're born on Satan's side of that fight. We need to be born again into the side of the fight with Jesus Christ. In addition, we're saved from sin to forgiveness. Some of you have burdens and guilt and shame. Some of you are haunted by things you've said and done or things you've failed to say or do. If we have a functioning conscience and we're honest with ourselves, there are things that we're just not proud of. The Bible calls those things sin. We just know that we know that. We know that what we've said and done was wrong. And the question is, how do you overcome that? Well, you need to be forgiven. You need God to forgive you. And Jesus Christ died and rose so that you could be forgiven. I want that burden off of you. I want that guilt lifted from you. I want that shame and condemnation removed from you. I'll be honest with you, um, there are some things in my past that I am very much not proud of. But I know that I have been forgiven by God. I know that He doesn't hold a record against me. I know that he has removed that from me. And as a result, I'm free to live a new life, a life of forgiveness. And I want that for you. In addition, he has saved us from wrath to grace. As sinners sided with Satan in this great battle against God, we deserve the wrath of God. Now, let me say this. The wrath of God is slowly being poured out in the day in which we live. All of the poverty and wars and injustice and evil and crimes and tyranny and oppression, all of that is just the beginning of the wrath of God. Not that God is doing those things, but He's not stopping those things from being done. God's allowing us to just sort of do what we want. And then ultimately, all of this passive wrath of God where everybody gets to do whatever they want, it results in the active wrath of God where you die and you stand before God and he gives you an eternal sentencing and judgment for all that you have done that was wrong in his sight. The opposite of that is grace. And the grace of God that he talks about here, and he mentions it by name, is that Jesus Christ took our place and he endured the wrath of God for us. This is why we love Jesus so much. See, you need to know that. Uh, just because I'm preaching doesn't mean I'm better than you. In fact is I'm probably worse than most of you. And if you Google me, you'll agree. Um, and the idea is this, that wrath is getting what we deserve. Grace is getting what we don't deserve. And since Jesus went to the cross and died for my sin and your sin and our sin, he took the wrath so that we could receive the grace. Now, I know that God loves me, that God is for me, not against me, that God will never leave me nor

forsake me. That God's heart is a father's heart toward me as his son. And I want that same for you. And then once you die, you are saved from hell to heaven. You're saved from hell to heaven. This world is a despicable and dark and damnable place, but this is only the beginning for those who are in hell. These are the good old days. This is as close to heaven as they ever got. For those of us who belong to the Lord Jesus, we can't wait to be with Jesus Christ in heaven forever. We just can't wait. A bad day in heaven is still a really great day. Even in heaven. They're looking at Paradise Valley going, that is not true. Uh, that's a dump. Okay? Uh, and lastly, I want you to know this. When you're saved by Jesus Christ, you're saved from you to God. I don't know about you. I have, I've been honest about my life and I've only found one consistent variable in every awful season. And that, that I was involved, I've come to the conclusion that maybe I'm the biggest problem in my life. Some of the worst people have come and gone, but I just tend to stick in there and I tend to be my own worst enemy at on occasion. How many of you God needs to save you from you? You've run your plan. It ain't working. You took matters into your own hand. And it didn't make it any better. God didn't just save me from Satan. Sin death held the wrath of God. God saved me from me. If I would've done exactly what I was planning on doing, I wouldn't be faithfully married 31 years. I wouldn't have five kids that I love with all my heart. I wouldn't have great daughter-in-laws and son-in-law, and two grandsons and a great church family. And wake up every day in the best season of my life. I would be I'll just tell you that that's the truth. IIII can assure you, I would be a bitter, broken, angry, selfish cheerless man. And Jesus Christ saved me from me. And he wants to save you from you. And here's what I've learned walking with Jesus since I was 19 in college. His plan is very different than mine. This is not the life that I wanted or chose, but it's far better than the one that I was even hoping for. Because Jesus takes better care of me than I take care of me. And Jesus knows what's better for me, then I know what's best for me. So he talks about you're saved through the gospel. What you're saved from and to. And then let me tell you what you're saved by. You're saved by God. This is so significant. He says here, chose is his language that God has picked you. Other scriptures would say that you've been elected or predestined. And some people have a problem with this. Don't. I don't know about you if somebody picks me. I think you should just own that and feel good about that. God's like, I like you. I wanna be with you. You're like, no, rethink your whole position. Right? Uh, so here's how Jesus Christ says it. You did not choose me, but I chose you. Let me give you how I see it as a father. So we've got five kids and uh, how many of you have got a lot of kids? Okay? Do you have one that is determined to run away and never be found again? They're the wanderer. Do you have any of you have that wandering free range child? You do? Okay. I hope you didn't drop 'em in kids' ministry. Uh, you know, so, uh, so what happened? We had one of our kids where wherever we were going, that's not where they were going. It was one of, it was one of my sons, uh, I won't say which one, but he knows in his heart. Um, and so, and, and sometimes he would just run and he was fast. Other times he just kind of got, he's just going to check stuff out. So I'll never forget, we were at a state fair, massive crowds of people everywhere. And he's a little guy. He is short. And so he can't see us and I can't see him 'cause I'm short too. So we're both at a strategic disadvantage. And he just, he sees something at the state fair. I don't even know what it was. He just wandered off, just gone. And I turned around. I'm like, oh no, he's gone. And I know, here's what I

know about this kid. He is not coming back, right? He's not coming back and he's not looking for me. So guess what? I gotta, I gotta go looking for him. I was like, Hey, grace, uh, you know, we're, we're still at 80%. You know, I gotta, sorry, I'm gonna go try and see if we can get us up to a hundred percent. You know, I wanna leave with the same percentage of children from the fair that we went to the fair with is my hope. So I'm frantic and I'm calling out and I'm looking for this kid. This kid is not responding. This kid isn't looking for me. This kid doesn't even know that they're in trouble. And then I see them finally frantically. I walk over and I grab their hand and I looked at him. I said, Hey, little buddy, stick close to dad. He's like, oh, okay. Okay. Welcome back. Hey, that's how you became a Christian. Okay? Some of you're with the rebellious kids. You're like, I'm gonna run for it. Your dad's like, I'm gonna find you. Some of you were just the wandering kids and you just sort of, God lost. The Bible actually says that some of you were or are lost. The question is, well, how do you get found? Well, the child doesn't find the father. The father finds the child. 'cause the the father's not lost. The child is. So the, the point is this, if you're a Christian, it's 'cause the father came and said, Hey, stick close to dad. I'm gonna walk you home. And if you're here right now and you're not yet a Christian, let me say this, that maybe the father has been pursuing you. Maybe he's been looking for you. Maybe you've run away or wandered away or you're lost. And maybe the reason you're in church, maybe the reason that somebody invited you, maybe the reason you're tuning in online, maybe the reason why you're listening about Jesus is the Father has reached his hand down and he's in that process of taking your hand so that he could walk with you for the rest of your life. That's what it means. That God has chosen you. It's like a father adopts a child, says, you know what, I'm gonna pick you. And there's a debate within Christianity. I won't belabor the point. And somebody say, well, do we choose God or does God choose us? Yes. Yes. Yeah. Just like in marriage, did Grace choose me or did I choose grace? Yes. That's why it's not a hostage situation, it's a marriage. Okay, but guess, guess what? I chose Grace first and then she chose me. So we have a relationship. God chose you and then you choose him. But the only reason that you would choose him is 'cause he's already chosen you. How about this one? Uh, once you've become a Christian, keep maturing as quote, sanctification. The word that he uses comes quote by the spirit and belief in the truth. What he says is, once you know that God has chosen you and he's saved you, he's adopted you, you're his child, he's your father. Now you enter into a process called sanctification. It's a big word. It means a process of changing and improving. A Christian isn't perfect, but they are in a process that ends in perfection. And this is what happens. As soon as you become a Christian, everybody wants to shoot you that you're not perfect. Oh, you said that you did that. I thought you were a Christian. I am. The first thing we declare is that we're sinners. Like, so if I blow it, I'm not a hypocrite. I told you exactly what I'm doing. Right? Right. If I said I was Jesus and sinned, well then yeah, I would be a hypocrite. And so as a, as a sinner, what you say is, you know what? I, I am not perfect, but I'm in a process. And when God is done with me in eternity, I will be perfect. So Christianity is a growth process and it means committing to the process. This is like physical therapy or sobriety. You get up every day and you work on it and you make progress. Number three, find God's quote, love, comfort, hope and grace. In your church family, he's writing a letter to a church family. Let me just explain my heart. You are a church family. We want this to feel like an extended family so that

we can be God's family. I've got my wife, we've got our kids, they've got their spouses, they got their grandkids. That's our immediate and extended family. And you all are our church family, okay? And we love you. We enjoy you. We appreciate you. Um, we are glad to see you. And when we get together as God's people, as they got together, as God's people, this letter was read publicly. And it was encouraging how the people in the church family would treat one another. Love. That means that our relationship with God and each other should be emotional, relational. You know, they ask Jesus, what's the most important thing to know? He says, love, love God. And people just, if you do those two things, you'll probably figure everything else out. I wanna thank you for being a loving church family. I wanna thank you for being a loving church family. In addition, he talks about comfort. And uh, comfort is for those that are going through a hard season of loss or adversity or opposition. And I want you to know that Jesus Christ has great comfort for you. Um, it talks about Jesus' emotions in the Bible there's about 60 different scriptures that talk about his emotions. The emotion of Jesus that is mentioned more than any other is compassion. Compassion. I don't know about you. I really appreciate that. Sometimes we could see God like a boss or a, a military, uh, commander or a performance review or a, or a report card. Compassion. Compassion. What that means is whatever you're going through, because God became a man, he's been through it. And so he can relate to you and he can comfort you. So if you're like, I'm lonely, Jesus was lonely. So if you're like, physically I'm struggling, Jesus suffered physically. Some of you're like, financially I'm really in ruin. He was poor. My family has disowned me. His did him for a season. I'm feeling spiritual demonic attack. He did. I'm having legal problems. He did. Religious people drive me crazy. Welcome to the team. Whatever you're going through, Jesus has comfort for you. And the Bible has this fantastic line that we can comfort others with the comfort we've received. So as Jesus is ministered to you, you meet someone who's going through what you are going through. And now you can walk with them and comfort them. And this is the beauty of being a church family. You can find people that have been through what you're going through and they can walk with you through it. That's what it means to comfort. And then he talks also about hope. And hope is so crucial. And I fear that what we've lost in our world today is any sense of hope. I don't think that most people are looking into the future's thinking. I think things are gonna get better. And if we're just patient, I'm sure it's all gonna turn around. How many of you looking at the election, looking at wars, rumors of wars, the economy, the culture? You're like, this is not hopeful. Here's the hope for the believer that the unbeliever doesn't have. Whatever you're going through, our God, Jesus Christ has already gone through it and he's triumphed over it. He's returned to heaven and now he rules and reigns over it. And what that means is that my hope is not here. My hope is him, Jesus, can you get me through this life? And then will you reward me at the end of this life? Yes. That's the hope. And then grace, and let me just say this. He uses this word grace. Grace is this word that our world really doesn't know anything about. Is our world today a grace centered grace-filled place? No, there's no grace. It seems like everyone is just waiting for you to say or do something wrong so that they can critique and hammer you. It seems like everyone is taking and no one is giving. It seems like everyone is self-consumed and no one cares about others. The God of the Bible is not like that. And God's people are not to be like that. I was thinking about it in this way. Um, so there was a couple of trees

that I fairly mature. I had them brought on property and planted this last year and set up a watering system and also watered them by hand to make sure that they got proper water. 'cause I really love trees. And fall is my favorite season. And I really like the change of colors. Well, I was gone for a few weeks. It was during that real drought part of the summer and the watering system failed. So no water got to my trees. Guess what happened to my trees? They started to die. First thing they did, dropped all their leaves. And so what I've been doing is watering my trees, watering my trees, watering my trees, and I'm not sure if they're gonna live or die. I'm gonna have to wait and see, just like my tree needs water. You need grace. People only survive on a steady diet of grace. God giving to you, God caring for you, God forgiving you, God being patient with you. And let me say this, God has an infinite source of grace for you. And some of you, it's been a drought season. You're like, I haven't gotten a lot of grace. Well, you're gonna need a lot of grace to make up for it. And I just want to say this to those of you who are more religious. Because what can happen to religious people is um, they take themselves seriously. Uh, but they really don't take the word of God seriously. And what they'll do is they don't put grace on people. They put expectations, demands, performance, fear, control. Some of you need to put grace on your spouse. Just give 'em a break. Quit pushing, start praying. Let God deal with them. Some of you with your own children, you just need to put grace on them. You need to stop punishing them and pushing them. You need to start blessing them and encouraging them. And so what we wanna be, we wanna be a people of grace. And here's the great lie of grace. The great lie of grace is if you put grace on people, they'll just sin more. No, they won't. 'cause if they get grace, then they're gonna love Jesus and be filled with the Holy Spirit. And they're gonna hate sin and they're gonna grow. Just like putting water on a tree helps it root and fruit. Putting grace on a person helps them root and fruit in the word of God and the will of God. And he says there's grace for you. And let me just say this as well. Some of you, God has grace for you, but you just don't want it. Like, I don't deserve it. I'll tell you something, you don't. That's why it's grace. Well, I I did something terrible. That's why you need the grace. Well, I didn't do what I was supposed to do. That's why there's grace. God has grace for you. He, he, he loves you. He cares for you. He wants to nourish you. He wants to encourage you. He wants to bless you. He wants you to have roots and fruits. That's what he wants for you. Number four, embrace every quote, good work and word that God has for you. Whatever you're going through, whatever season you're in, God has meaningful, valuable, purposeful things for you to do. This is called ministry. And ministry is not something that just belongs to the pastor. It belongs to every believer. And so I like to say that God works for you, in you and through you. Lemme explain this. So God works for you. Jesus lived without sin, died for our sin. Rose is our savior. Return to heaven. He's the way, the truth and the life. He's our savior. That's God's work for us. God's work in us. It begins this sanctification change process to quote Paul again. Now we have the Holy Spirit. And what this comes with is, uh, new nature, new desires, new appetite, new mind. So I'll tell you what this looked like for me as a brand new Christian. All of a sudden I'm like, I want to go to church. Never wanted to do that before. They're like, Hey, would you like to study the Bible? Absolutely. Why? I have no idea. That just sounds good. We have a prayer meeting. I would like to pray. I literally went to my first prayer meeting. They're like, Hey Mark, can you open us in prayer? No. They're like, why? I was like, I don't know how

to pray. That's why I'm here. I've never prayed before. You guys do it. And I'm gonna watch. Okay, I don't know what I'm doing, but I wanna figure it out. All of a sudden. Next thing I know, I'm in church and it's like I've committed a crime. You know, my hands are raised. I'm like, what is going on? You know, and I'm singing and I can't sing. I I have a terrible singing voice. Um, so I just wanna thank the band for being loud. And so, um, but all of a sudden what I realized was is I, I like Jesus and I like the Bible and I like prayer and I like worship. You know why? God changed things in me. God changed things in me. So God doesn't work for you. God doesn't work in you. And then God doesn't work through you. That the spirit of God is working through you. And he says he does. So in two ways. A ministry of works and a ministry of words. Some of you are better with your hands. Some of us are better with our mouths. Some of you who are better with your hands, it's a ministry of works. How many of you you like to serve? Like where can I serve? What can I do? You like to help? You're the person who, um, you like to give you like being generous. You're like, man, if I can do something for somebody, I find great joy in that. And for some of you, it's just the ministry of presence. This is what I like to talk about. Um, when it comes to the ministry of presence, our God didn't just stay in heaven and send us a book. He came down to be present. And then when he went up, he sent the Holy Spirit down so that now God is always present with his people. And sometimes the ministry of work includes just being present. How many of you, if somebody loves you and they're there, that's what you need. Sometimes there's something to do and you can serve or you can help or you can give. Sometimes there's nothing to do. But just being present means at least they're not alone. And for some of you, the ministry is words. He says, every good work and word. How many of you your ministry is primarily words. You like to pray for people. There are people in this church that if you ask them, uh, if they will pray for you, you just made their whole year. They like to pray for people. There are people who like to encourage. There are people who like to bless. There are people who like to teach. There are people who like to counsel. They minister with their words. And one of the greatest things you can do is just share the word of God. Just speak the word of God over someone. Number five, no matter how much, uh, the world pressures you to bow down, he says, just remember Saint Keep standing firm. The, uh, pressure of the world to bow down. It comes primarily I think through opposition, temptation and false teaching. Lemme explain this. There's gonna be pressure or opposition for you to bow down. You're gonna go to public university and they're like, don't tell us about Jesus. Bow down. You go to public school or say, or government school. Hey, don't quote the Bible verse, bow down, don't stand up. Bow down. You're gonna go to work. You're gonna hold to your convictions and there's gonna be opposition. Hey, don't stand up. Bow down. Just, just do what everybody else does. I can't do that. My king is Jesus and I only bow for him. I only bow for him. Sometimes. Uh, the the pressure to bow down is also just temptation. There's certain things in all of our life that are weaknesses. We've all got different weaknesses and we're vulnerable there. And when those temptations come, that that sin, that temptation is just like, just bow down. Like, no, no. I'm gonna stand up and I'm gonna worship Jesus and I'm not going to give in to that temptation. And sometimes the bowing down versus the standing up comes down to our, are you going to clinging to false teaching or true teaching? There's always a group of Christians, they're fake Christians, but they will say, well, you know, we have a new interpretation of the

Bible. And what you can do is you can bow down and still be true to the Bible. No, you can't. You only bow down to the Lord. You can't bow down to the world. Amen. And so he says, stand firm. And some of you are feeling this right now. You're getting pressure from your boss. You're getting pressure from your teacher, you're getting pressure from your family. You're getting pressure from your friends. And some of you, you are married to a non-Christian. As a non-Christian, you've become a Christian. You're getting pressure from your spouse. And that pressure is just bow down. Just anytime someone says, Hey, I disagree with Jesus, please agree with me. Say, no, I gotta stand up. I gotta stand up because ultimately I worship Jesus and I can't worship anyone or anything else. And then he says, lemme just say this too. 'cause here's what happens every, every day in our life, there are people, and then between you and people is the word of God. And certain people will say, uh, hey, don't quote that book because that book wants me to change. And those people will say, how about if you change that book? Any of you feeling this in your life? The question is, well, are they gonna change by obeying God's word? Or you going to repent not of your sin, but of God's word? And then change what God said? This is the difference between bowing down and standing up. The issue of standing up is saying, I can't change what God said. I agree with it. And I would invite you to agree with it as well. Bowing down is I will not say what God said in an effort to keep you happy, which makes him unhappy. And then lastly, your destiny is quote, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So keep walking with him. What he says is this, as a believer, you've gotta keep a long view of things right? Like, where am I going? What is the end? What he says, well, you're gonna be revealed in glory with Jesus Christ. What this means is, friend, either Jesus is going to return or you're going to die. Okay? Now, Jesus may return soon, I don't know either he's going to return or you're going to die. Let's say that you die before Jesus returns. You're gonna go into something called an intermediate state where your soul lives in the presence of Jesus and your body goes into the ground that's temporary. One day when Jesus does return, your body and soul are going to be supernaturally, uh, miraculously rejoined. And you're gonna rise from the dead like Jesus. And there's gonna be, um, a new eternal healed version of you. And then what's going to happen is this, you're going into one of two destinies. You're either going to heaven or you're going to hell. And that decision won't be made on that day. That decision will be made today. That's right. Today you decide, where will I be forever? Will I be in heaven with Jesus? Will I be in hell in torment? And when he talks about the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, what he is doing, he's inviting us to believe in Jesus and to belong to Jesus. And like Jesus rose from the dead so we can rise from the dead. And as Jesus rose in glory, so you can rise in glory. That's what we would want for you. But that's your decision to make. Will you receive Jesus? Will you reject Jesus? And then I'll close with this section, first Thessalonians three, one through five. Finally, brothers pray for us that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored as is happening, as happened among you, right? A Bible teacher's always like pray for more Bible teaching, that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not all have faith, but the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you that you are, uh, that you are doing, and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ. Just a few things in closing. And as you're thinking through where you're at and what you're going

through and where your life is at, my question to you would be, which of these things is God, the Holy Spirit really highlighting for you? And this, maybe there's one here that you're like, that is my application point, am my takeaway. Number one, he says, pray for us. And he's talking about leaders in the church. And so since Paul asked for prayer, I will ask for prayer. Uh, we've got our online ministry of real faith and our local church here of Trinity. And I would say just pray for the leaders in both organizations because right now we wanna find God's will both have absolutely exploded. God's grace is all over it. The question is, okay, Lord, this is your ministry. These are your people. This is your word. How can we be good stewards of what is yours? 'cause we're not owners, we're managers. In addition for me personally, um, when you think of me, if you pray for me, just thank God I'm in the best season of my whole life. These are the good old days. I don't wanna miss a moment. I don't wanna miss a moment with my wife, our kids, our grandkids. This, I don't wanna miss a moment with you. I don't wanna miss a moment with our men each week as I'm seeing God save and deliver and strengthen and raise up an army of men to bless women and children. I don't wanna miss any of it. I don't wanna miss any of it. Then he says, pray that the word of the Lord, the scriptures may speed ahead and be honored as has happened among you. First thing he says is, Hey, as a church, you guys like learning the Bible. And I really appreciate that. I'm really glad I get to say that. Hey, if you're new, we're a church that really enjoys the Bible. Amen. We're those people, we're the weirdos with the Bible. We're those people, we just own it. Are you a Bible thumper? Yep. Yep. And, and twice on Sunday. Yes, I am. Uh, we are the people who love the word of God. And, and since we live in a world of so many lies, we just like the truth. We, we, we live in a world of so much deception. We just like deliverance. We live in a world with so much darkness. We just like light. And so we, we love learning the word of God. And what he says is they were a church like you that loved learning the word of God. And he was praying that it would go forth speedily from there. That, that from the place that he was preaching, that the word of God would go forth. Um, I would just say continue to pray for that. For those who are joining us online, they're part, part of another ministry I run called Real Faith. Um, I, I don't, I don't say this to brag, but I do say this to illustrate the power of God's word when proclaimed with authority. That last year our total reach was 50 million. This year we prayed for a hundred million. This year we will reach by God's grace, 500 million people. Um, And I'm praying that next year we can get to a billion, a billion, a billion in total reach because the word of God is living and active and it's powerful. And you can be no one from nowhere with nothing. But if you send out the word of God, it can change everything. That's exactly what I believe. That's exactly what I believe. He lastly says, uh, pray for those needing to be delivered from wicked and evil men. Some of you are a little naive and gullible. There are wicked and evil men, women too, by the way. Um, my wife confirms that fact. I thank, thank you sweetheart. Two or three witnesses. We now have consensus. There are wicked men and women, and some people are wicked and evil. And some of you that are naive or gull, gullible or kind or compassionate or you're a caregiver, you wouldn't even think of using and abusing and attacking and harming and damaging and breaking people. There are some who do. There are some people that causing pain is their pleasure. They're they're broken, they're evil, they're satanic, they're demonic. And what he says is there are certain people that need to be delivered from those people. And in addition to hostages

and global conflicts and all that we're seeing in the news, my question to you would be, who do you know that needs to be delivered from a relationship with someone who is wicked and evil? And what he says is be praying for them because they may be in a position where the only deliverer could be the Lord unless the Lord gets in. Uh, there's not going to be a separation between the person who is being harmed and the one who is doing the harm. Some of you know people, family, friends, they're in business with wicked and evil people. Some of you know of marriages where one of the spouses is wicked and evil. And when I think of wicked and evil men, my father's heart with two daughters thinks of young gullible women who get into dangerous relationships with evil and wicked men. And he says, be praying for those people and be caring for those people and ask God to deliver those people. And then he closes with two things. Um, number four, remember the Lord is faithful. He will establish and guard you against the evil of one. Here's what he says. The Lord is what? Faithful. So there's two realities. He says, the first reality is there is an evil one. Satan is real, demons are real, evil is real, and so is God. And what he's saying is this, that when Satan comes against you, God is always for you. And he says that God is faithful. I don't know about you. There's so much encouragement in this. How many of us have had a relationship with somebody and they weren't faithful or they had a relationship with us and we weren't faithful? What I love about our relationship with God, he's always faithful. I've been walking with Jesus since I was 19. I'm 53 and I can just tell you this, after 34 years of actually walking with Jesus, he's faithful. Amen. He's never failed me. He's never forsaken me. There are times that I have failed him, but he's never failed me because even the Bible says, when I am faithless, he is still, he's still faithful, and he closes with this, encourage one another is what I'm going to call it. Second Thessalonians three, four through five. We have confidence in the Lord about you. See, there is confidence in the Lord for you. If you are a Christian or become a Christian, you should lead with tremendous confidence, not in yourself, in your Lord, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. There is confidence that you're going to be obedient. There is confidence that you're going to be fruitful. There is confidence that you're going to be faithful. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ and what he's talking about here. Just lastly is this, it's steadfastness, it's consistency. Yes. We live in this world where there is so much temptation to find a shortcut. I'll tell you this. After 31 years of marriage, it's steadfastness raising five children. It's steadfastness preaching through my 36th book of the Bible. It's steadfastness forgiving your enemies. It's steadfastness that it ultimately takes time and patience and endurance and forbearance to produce any fruitfulness, but he says that he has confidence that that's God's future for you. I love you. We're gonna release the live stream and I want to talk directly to the room. Thank you for joining us online.P