

Perseverance

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[0:00] A reading from 2 Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 3 to 10. We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.

Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering. God is just. He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled and to us as well.

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

[1:32] This includes you because you believed our testimony to you. There's not a lot of stories about people who gave up.

Movie producers and authors don't tell the story of the guy who walked in, walked on at Notre Dame and after ten practices gave up because it was too hard.

But that's far more common than the guy who kept on and finally made it on the team. Giving up is common. Persevering is uncommon.

Because giving up is easy and persevering is hard. The Bible tells us that one area that we must persevere in or be lost forever is in this area of faith and believing.

We will be saved if we hold on to the confidence that we had at the beginning. We will be saved if we hold fast the word. He who overcomes will inherit eternal life.

[2:42] Giving up is not an option if we are going to see heaven. You must persevere. But why?

That's really an important question. Why should you suffer to finish? Why should you keep going when it's so hard and when it's so easy to give up?

Well, if a man or a woman wants to be in the Ironman triathlon, he's going to need to have a really big why.

A big reason. If he doesn't have a good reason, if it's just so that he looks good when he walks on the beach, it's not going to cut it when the training gets difficult.

It won't work. And if you're going to persevere in your faith through persecution, through trials and hardship, then you're going to have to have a really big why.

[3:43] And Paul gives us that why in 2 Thessalonians in verses 4 and 5 of chapter 1. And we have three points tonight about perseverance.

Perseverance through persecution and trials. And the first and the last are longer, and the second is shorter. And the first one is, what is it?

What is perseverance? Well, the easy answer is that perseverance is growing in faith and increasing in love in the face of hardship.

It's growing in love, increasing in faith in the face of hardship. And that's why Paul begins verse 4 with the word therefore. Therefore, he is referring back to verse 3 of what we talked about last week.

And last week we saw that there's a big sign over these first opening verses that says God at work. God is at work in these Thessalonian Christians. And you can see it.

[4:44] And he's thanking God for them. And the way that you could see that God is at work is by their growing faith and their increasing love. And so when Paul says therefore, when he begins that

way, he's showing us what perseverance really is.

So Paul begins, therefore, in light of the Thessalonians' growing love and faith, he can boast about their perseverance. Well, why can he boast about their perseverance?

Well, because that's what their perseverance is. Their perseverance is growing love and increasing faith in the face of hardship. And so they were persevering and they were loving each other.

That's how they were doing it. They were persevering as they devoted themselves one to another. And they did it more and more to each other. And so as they trusted God more, as their faith grew in the face of persecution, they were persevering.

And as they learned to live with God as their father, and they learned to take his word in and rely on it, that's how they were persevering. And this clues us into a reality, into the reality of what kind of perseverance God works into people and into their lives.

[6:08] It's not a static perseverance. It's not a standing still. It's a forward-moving endurance. And so that's the endurance of an Ironman triathlete.

So to run with endurance means to always be moving forward. It's not good enough just to be standing still. That is not enduring. It's not persevering. It's not good enough just to be not going backwards.

You have to be moving forward. And so if you're running, or you're walking, or if you're crawling, you're making movement forward. And so to endure in an Ironman is to keep moving down the road, on the bicycle, in the water, through the pain.

And that's the kind of perseverance that God was working in these Thessalonians. It wasn't just that they were standing still. It wasn't just that they were staying in the same condition. They were growing.

They were increasing. They were progressing. And they were moving forward in the face of a stiff wind. You see, God plants His trees in hard places.

[7:21] He plants you in hard places. He doesn't plant His people in greenhouses. He plants us out in the world where the soil is hard, where it is rocky.

He plants us in a world that hates Him, and it hates us. It hates the gardener, and it hates his plants. But that's where He puts us. And that's where He makes us bear fruit.

And sometimes we wish, don't we, that we were in the greenhouse. That we were out of this world. If only I could be alone, and not have to put up with these people.

Then I could really start to make some progress. If I could just get a new job, a different job, away from these hardships, then I could grow.

If I could just feel better. If my body would just feel better, then I really could make some progress. But that isn't how God does things. God makes His roses bloom in the winter.

[8:23] So here we are in the winter, and He makes us blossom in the face of difficulty, in the face of a cold wind. He doesn't rescue us from these things.

He will on the last day. He doesn't rescue us from them now. He's using them to grow us. And so the Thessalonians, they had to face persecution.

They had to face persecution. They had to face the hostility of a government that didn't approve of them, that didn't like them. And they had to face hostility from their family, and they had to struggle to live in a city where false religion was part and parcel of life.

It was just a natural part of living as you participated in paganism. And so remember what we said a couple weeks ago. The heart of Thessalonica, of this city, it was turned towards Rome.

They needed Rome. They depended on Rome, and they desperately wanted to stay in Rome's good graces. They were a free city. They had lots of benefits, but it was only good as long as they stayed in good with Rome.

[9:31] And so Thessalonica didn't take the idea of another Lord very kindly. And they didn't take kindly to the Christians preaching a different faith.

So it was hard. They faced all kinds of persecution. That was the hard soil that the church of Thessalonica was growing in. And that was the soil that they were persevering in.

But it's different than our soil, isn't it? We don't face government persecution. We might someday. It might come.

But for us, it's easy to talk about persecution because, you know what, that's not a problem for us, to be honest. The trial, the danger that we face is assimilation into this world.

The world doesn't try to step on us. It just tries to grow so many weeds around us that we choke. It wants to overrun us with those weeds.

[10 : 34] And the church in America isn't dying because of persecution. The church in America is dying because of prosperity. And that's the trial we face.

It isn't the full frontal assault of attack and violence. It's rather the knife in the back when you least expect it. And brothers and sisters, it's the toxic soil of money and prosperity and pleasure that we have to persevere and that we have to overcome or we will be lost.

It is in this soil of a prosperous country that we have to progress in. But it isn't only that big trial that all of us face just because we live in this country.

It's all the smaller trials of pain, of bodily pain, of mental pain, of job loss, of family difficulties that we each face individually that's different for each one of us that we have to persevere in if we're going to see heaven.

So then are you making progress where you're at? Are you making progress in the face of difficulties? Are you walking if you can't run? And if you can't walk, are you crawling?

[11 : 49] Are you making some progress? Is God becoming more and more your treasure? That's the question. Because this world is offering us money.

So is God becoming our treasure? Are you finding grace to obey in the middle of pain? Are God's people becoming more precious to you?

Are you trusting God more in the difficulties and temptations of life than take heart? God is at work. And He who began a good work in you will be faithful.

And He will complete it on the day of our salvation. He'll carry it out into completion. Well, that's what perseverance is. It's growing in faith. It's increasing in love in the hard soil of this world.

Now, secondly, that's what it is. The second point is what it does. What perseverance and persecution and trials, what that does. So look at verse 4.

[12 : 50] Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith and all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. So why does Paul boast about them?

Why does he boast about their perseverance? It's obviously not to feed their pride. He doesn't want to do that. He does it to encourage the other churches. He does it so they can see and know and be encouraged by it.

And so from that we learn what perseverance does. It encourages, it's an encouragement to other Christians. Now remember how Paul in 1st and 2nd Corinthians, he boasted about the Macedonian churches and their generosity.

Well, why did he do that? Well, he wanted to encourage the Corinthians in their generosity. Paul knew that the example of one Christian, the example of one church, has a profound influence on other churches, on other Christians.

Christians. So no man is an island and no Christian is an island. If you are a Christian, then you are a part of the body of Christ and you are woven together.

[14 : 07] And so your lives have a profound influence on each other, on one another. And so your endurance, your endurance in pain, when you're hurting, it has a profound influence on your brothers and sisters, on all the Christians who see it.

And that should be a special encouragement to you if you are suffering. And there are some of you who are suffering. And so if you're physically suffering, then hear me. And if you're bearing hard trials right now, then hear me.

There is a strong temptation in times like that, in times like you're going through, there's a strong temptation to think that you are useless.

So there you are in your pain. And Satan will whisper in your ear, what's the point? What's the point of going to church?

What's the point of going to prayer meeting? You can't do anything for those people. You can't do what you used to do. You're too broken. You're too broken.

[15 : 21] You can't go on. You're no good to them. And that is a lie. It is a lie straight from the pit and it will carry you out of the church and Satan will have you all by yourself and you'll be no good to them and they'll be no good to you.

The truth is you're a member of Christ's body and Christ has no useless body parts. So you aren't useless.

Just by being here when the doors are open, you encourage your brothers and sisters. That's why the Hebrew, the book of Hebrews says, let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.

Encouraging one another in meeting together, he puts them together. because when you're hurting, just being here is an encouragement to your brothers and sisters.

It reminds us of how important Christianity is, how important Jesus Christ is. It reminds us of what is really important and it shows us the beauty and sufficiency of Jesus Christ that you are here despite your pain.

[16 : 29] And so we say, if Jesus can help them, I know he can help me. And if Jesus is worth that to them, he should be worth that to me. And so my hurting brothers and sisters, if you endure, if you carry on, then you will be a blessing to God's people.

And your pain won't be in vain. It will be to the glory of God. It will be for the good of your brothers and sisters. It encourages your fellow Christians.

That's what perseverance does. So don't think you're broken just because you're going through hard times. Look at this as an opportunity. This is a special, unique opportunity to do good to God's people that you can never do if things were going perfectly well for you.

So we've seen what perseverance is. It's growing and it's increasing in love and in faith in the face of hardship. We've seen what it does. It encourages fellow Christians.

Now thirdly, what it proves. What perseverance proves. Now in Greek, verses 4 and 5 are actually one sentence.

[17 : 43] In the NIV, it's broken up into separate paragraphs. And so, it goes something like this. In the middle of verse 4, we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

Evidence of God's righteous judgment. so that you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering. And so you see at the beginning of verse 5, there's this word evidence.

This endurance in trials, this perseverance in the face of difficulty, it's evidence of something. It's proof positive. Well, what does it proof of? Well, he says there's these two related things.

It's proof of God's righteous judgment. And it's secondly, proof that you are worthy of the kingdom of God. That you'll be declared worthy of the kingdom of God.

And so first, it proves God's righteous judgment. What exactly does that mean? What is that talking about? What is God's righteous judgment?

[18 : 50] Why is this that God's judgment is right? Well, the context tells us that God's righteous judgment is His once for all judgment of mankind at the end.

When He will vindicate the righteous and He will punish the wicked. That's what we're talking about. And you see that in verses 6 and 7. God is just.

He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled. And to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven and blazing fire with His powerful angels.

So that's the judgment we're talking about. That's the righteous judgment that Paul is speaking of.

So how is your endurance, how is your perseverance in the face of difficulties, proof, evidence, proof positive that God is a righteous judge, that God will bring judgment to this earth?

How does the suffering of the righteous prove that God will in Jesus Christ one day judge the world in righteousness? Well, the argument goes something like this.

[20 : 04] So if God's people who are righteous, if they are suffering, and they are suffering at the hands of the unrighteous, then obviously this world is unfair.

And obviously things are not right. And obviously it proves that future judgment is coming.

Judgment awaits.

Today we often hear, we often hear argue that if God was just, then people wouldn't suffer like they do.

The righteous wouldn't suffer. suffer. But that isn't how the Bible argues at all. The assumption, the presupposition of the Bible is that God will judge the earth one day.

And so the argument isn't trials exist, therefore God isn't just. The argument is trials exist for God's people, and so there will be a future judgment when everything is put right.

[21 : 10] And so our suffering is not evidence that God is unjust, it's suffering that there is judgment to come. When we will be vindicated, and the wicked will be punished, when everything

will be made right, and Paul is saying it's crystal clear, you are suffering and it's evidence that God's judgment, His righteous justice, has not been revealed yet, and it will be one day.

And so that reality should bring great comfort to you. It should bring great comfort to God's people who are struggling, who face persecution, and who face unrighteousness, and who are burdened and weary by the wickedness of this world.

You see, because when we come face to face with unrighteousness, then it instigates a struggle, a trial of faith.

And so I struggle to believe that God is just when I think about child prostitution. And I struggle to believe that God is just when I see Christian pastors in Iran thrown into jail and threatened with execution.

And when I see Christian women in Africa raped. And when I see selfish businessmen build bigger and bigger mansions while thousands and thousands of children die of preventable diseases in India every day.

[22 : 40] But faith looks past those things and it looks to the end. And it's clear that judgment day is coming.

And so we're like Asaph in Psalm 73. Our trials and the prosperity of the wicked are hard for us to understand and they're hard for us to bear.

And Asaph says they have no struggles. Their bodies are healthy and strong. They are not plagued by human ills. But all day long I have been plagued.

I have been punished every morning. So how does faith see out of that maze? How does faith get out of that maze, that labyrinth?

Well he says I tried to understand all this and it was oppressive to me. Till I entered the sanctuary of God. Listen to this next part.

[23 : 41] Then I understood their final destiny. Surely you placed them on slippery ground. You cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors.

So the exaltation of the wicked and the persecution of the righteous is not evidence that God is unjust. It is proof positive that judgment is coming.

And that's what Paul said and that's how he argued in Philippians 127. Listen to this. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

Listen to this sentence. this is a sign that they will be destroyed, but you will be saved. The opposition that we face, the persecutions that we face, the unrighteousness that we see is a sign that the wicked will be destroyed and that we will be saved.

So, when you endure, when you persevere through hardship, through persecution and difficulty, it is a sign of the coming judgment.

[25 : 10] And so you should look at yourself and your situation with those glasses on. When you say this is not fair, your mind should immediately fast forward to the last day. And say, you know what?

This is a sign that someday, this is all going to be made right. So it's a sign of our salvation. It's a sign of salvation for those who stand firm, who contend for the faith, for the kingdom of God.

And so God's righteous judgment will be their doom and it will be our salvation. salvation. And this is the wonder of being in Jesus Christ.

That the last day, the great last judgment, it is good news for you. You will be there and it will be a good day. I think we look in that day and we think, my sin and it's going to be terrible being there. It's not going to be that way. You will be clothed in the righteousness of Christ and that day will be your vindication. That day will be the day that you were exalted and the wicked are put down.

[26 : 22] And it proves, if you persevere, that your salvation is at hand. And that brings us to the second thing that perseverance proves.

It proves that those who endure are worthy of the kingdom of God. That you will be declared worthy of the kingdom of God. And so think with me for a second.

What does it mean to be worthy of something? Well, it means that there's a standard to live up to. There's a certain way that you have to live in order to be worthy of it.

There's a standard to meet you have to live up to. You have to be in a certain way good enough to possess it, whatever it might be. So let's put this in a common scenario.

And this happens all the time. It's happening all the time in high schools and colleges and workplaces all across the world. So here's a cute, likable, intelligent, funny girl.

[27 : 26] She's a real catch. And she's dating a real loser. And he treats her bad, and he uses her, and he ignores her. He doesn't romance her.

So that's the situation. Now always in this situation there's another guy. We'll call this number three out here, or the second guy.

And he secretly has a crush on that girl. And he just can't believe what she puts up from that guy. She puts up with that loser boyfriend, and he says to his friends, or at least he says to himself, you know what, if I was dating her, then I would treat her like a princess.

And the sun and the moon would rise and fall on her, and her wish would be my command. See, he isn't worthy to date her, but if I was dating her, then I would be worthy. I would be the boyfriend that she deserves.

[28 : 27] And so, do you see what that lovesick young man is saying? That if you're going to date this girl, you need to meet a certain standard you have to do it right, there's a standard to meet, and if you don't meet it, you aren't worthy.

You aren't worthy ever. Now, Paul is saying sort of the same thing, that perseverance is evidence that we will be declared worthy of the kingdom of God.

You see, not all who want to be in the kingdom of God are worthy of the kingdom of God. You have to be a certain kind of person, or you're not worthy to have it.

You can't have it. And Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 10. Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

If anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, and anyone who does not take his cross and follow him is not worthy of me.

[29 : 44] Jesus says not everyone can be my disciple. Only certain people are worthy of being my disciple.

Only certain people meet the standard. Only certain people deserve to be my disciple. And so if you love your mom and dad more than me, you can't follow me. You aren't worthy of even knowing me.

You can't have me. And if you love your son or your daughter, then you're not worthy of me. You can't be my disciple. Jesus is saying if I don't have the highest place in your heart, then you're not worthy to have me.

You aren't worthy to be my disciple. I am too good for you. And so Paul here is saying the same thing. Your perseverance is evidence that on the last day, God will declare you worthy of the kingdom of God.

See, because it shows, your perseverance shows what you're living for. It shows that you're living for the kingdom of God. It shows that it has a priority in your life and that kingdom concerns have greater priority than your personal narrow concerns.

[31 : 02] And so you live for the kingdom, you suffer for the kingdom, and so God says, I will declare you worthy of the kingdom. I will allow you in. But the opposite is true as well.

If you trade the world for the kingdom, you're not worthy of the kingdom. And if you take peace and comfort and possessions over the kingdom, you can't have the kingdom. If you won't deny yourself, then you're not worthy of the kingdom of God.

And if you won't bear the shame of this world, and if you won't say no to yourself, then you can't have the kingdom. You're not good enough for it. And if you're embarrassed of Christ, on the last day, I will be ashamed of you, is what Christ says.

And if we won't be like Moses, who refused to be known as Pharaoh's son, and who decided, I'll be mistreated along with the other people of God, rather than enjoying the pleasures of Egypt, I'll give up all that.

If we do not do that, then we're not worthy of the kingdom of God. And it might sound hard, but Jesus was willing to have people not follow him.

[32 : 19] He was not willing to lower the standards for his kingdom. And so if you weren't willing to join the ranks with the folks at the end of Hebrews 11, then God won't count you worthy of the kingdom of God.

You can be worthy of the kingdom, you can be worthy of this world, but you can't be both. So we must join those who were tortured and refused to be released.

And some faced jeers and flogging while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned. They were sawed in two. They were put to death by the sword.

They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted, and mistreated. The world was not worthy of them. They were too good for the world.

The world deserved to not even know them. And so they were living for something higher. They were living for something better. And so God counted them worthy of the kingdom.

[33 : 25] And see, we can't have it both ways. We can't live for this world and have the kingdom. And we can't live for the kingdom and have this world. So our perseverance is evidence that we have made the right choice.

It's evidence of our coming vindication. But someone might say, doesn't all this make salvation and heaven contingent on something that I do?

Doesn't this make it dependent on my works? It isn't salvation by grace alone through faith alone.

And so isn't what you're saying making eternal life something we can earn by our perseverance?

And my answer is not at all. Endurance is the outworking of faith. Endurance is the evidence of faith. It isn't the replacement of faith. It's not a substitute for it.

The only way we endure is by faith. You will not endure unless you believe there is something better. And so faith is the tree that bears the fruit of endurance.

[34 : 36] And that's why the universal testimony of Scripture is that judgment is according to works. You aren't judged by your faith. God will judge you by what you do.

If your life isn't one of godly endurance and growing faith and love for him and for his people, then you will be punished. And if you live a life of love and faith bearing the fruit of repentance and endurance, then you will be rewarded.

And that isn't a conflict with justification by faith alone at all. Paul himself in the book of Romans, the book that talks so much about justification by faith, wrote, God will give to each person according to what he has done.

To those who by persistence, notice that, perseverance, by persistence in doing good, seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.

Judgment will be according to your work. Well, how then do you know if you're living worthy of the gospel? How do we know as people of God, Grace Fellowship, 21st century, living in America, how do we know if we're living worthy of the gospel?

[36 : 03] Well, does your life carry the marks of self-denial? Are you saying no to this world and no to yourself and yes to the kingdom of God? Then you can know that on that last day you'll be counted worthy.

And let me ask you, we talked about earlier, the toxic soil that we are growing in is prosperity, is money. So let me ask you, does your checkbook carry scars?

If I were to go into your checkbook, would I see gospel motivated pain there? Would I see Jesus-like suffering in your checkbook for the love of people?

You're going to lay down your money. So it's easy to think that we're living for the gospel. But what does your checkbook say? Is your treasure in heaven or on earth?

Are you overcoming the prosperity of this world? Are you being overcome by it? God's God's love?

So if you say yes to yourself and no to Jesus when it hurts, then you won't be counted worthy of the kingdom.

[37 : 23] And if you refuse to say no to your desires, then it shows that you're living for nothing higher than this world, and you'll be declared worthy of this world, and you'll be assigned a place with the world on the last great day.

But brothers and sisters here, in this passage, it's meant to be our hope. If we're persevering, this is meant to be for our hope. God is just.

Your vindication is coming. Justice is at hand. Your self-denial will soon be all worth it. And so don't give up. Don't fall back.

So are you suffering? Are you being persecuted? Are you living for the kingdom of God when everyone else around you is living for this world? Your reward is coming.

Keep walking. Keep crawling. Keep loving. Keep believing. And if you do, then on the last day, Jesus will look at you and say, well done, good and faithful servant.

[38:27] Come. Enter the joy of your master. Your life will be examined, and you will be found worthy of the kingdom. And then on that last day, you will say, you know what?

It was all of grace. I worked, but it was according to his mighty power working in me and through me. And I endured.

Oh, Christ was so patient with me. Because I failed so many times, and he was the one who was upholding me the whole time. It was all of grace. It was all a gift of God.

And that day, there will be no boasting in our perseverance and in our endurance. We will boast in Jesus Christ and him alone. Now, some of you, you have no faith, and you have no righteousness, and the world is worthy of you.

So you're living for nothing higher, and to you I say, judgment is coming. You have said over and over again that God is not worth it.

[39:45] He's asked to come in. We've offered him to you. The gospel has come to you. We've told you to repent and believe.

We've told you to obey the gospel. Christ has come to you, and you have rejected him. So he isn't worthy of your life. He isn't worthy of your life.

But I say there's a great day of reversal coming. And on that last day, God will look at you, and he will examine you the way that you've been examining him, and he will say to you, you are not worthy.

Away from me. You live for the world, now go with the world. You live for yourself, and now you'll have yourself. And with a look of infinite rejection, he will cast you away.

And that's where you stand now, if you keep going. That's where you will end up, if you keep going and keep living the way that you're living, and if you keep believing and doing what you're doing.

[40:54] But it doesn't have to end there. It doesn't have to end there. Jesus Christ, the very one that you have rejected, the one you have offended, has died to save sinners.

And he died to pay for their sins. And he died so that all who would come to him could be and would be saved. The one you offended is the one that can save you.

And the one that you have offended is the one that is standing ready to save you even now. And so if you call to him for mercy, you will have it. We saw it in Psalm 107 today.

For all those who called, you had mercy on them. And if you call on Jesus Christ, he will save you from the wrath to come. And there is a coming wrath.

And if you do, all your sins and all your worldly and all your selfish living will be forgiven.

[41:57] He will give you a new life and he will give you a new heart and he will give you endurance and perseverance to last until he comes again. And then he will say to you, well done, good and faithful servant.

repent. And that is what awaits you if you repent. And if you flee from the wrath to come to Jesus, he will save you.

And he's even at hand now. The kingdom is at hand and you can have him. You can have the king and you can have the kingdom. So don't rest until you have him.

Don't give yourself any rest until you have him. Let's pray. Our Lord and our God, we ask that you would give us grace to believe your word.

That we would have grace to submit to your word. Father, for each and every one of us, I pray that we would be full of thoughts of that last coming day when your righteous judgment will be revealed.

[43:27] And we will be found either in Christ or outside of Christ. Please give us no rest until we know that we will be in Christ on that last day.

When we will be clothed in his righteousness. And we will be declared righteous. We will be declared worthy of the kingdom of God.

God, thank you, Lord, that you give us this opportunity to live for you in this hard and difficult world. Thank you that you haven't put us in the greenhouse, but you put us in this world to show the true worth of Jesus Christ.

That you have given us grace so that we would blossom and bear fruit for you in this hard place that we are in. Father, I pray for those who are suffering.

Will you give them faith to believe your word that they can actually encourage their brothers and sisters just by being here, just by keep going on, just by keep walking, keep on walking.

[44 : 40] Lord, will you please do good to them, give them the grace of perseverance. And Father, I pray for anyone here who has rejected Jesus, who has said that you are not worthy.

Lord, I pray that you would break into their hard hearts and save them. It must be of grace. It must be your work. And so, Father, I pray that you would do it by the power of the Holy Spirit for Jesus Christ's sake.

We pray all these things in his name. Amen. Amen.