

[00:00:00] Just think of this. Theresa is sitting there minding her own business and she's just reading the Bible like you do. And I was aware that the church in Thessalonica was one of Paul's favorite places, but I hadn't realized how favourite it was until I read this, so. 1 Thessalonians 1:2. Lord Jesus, before I start, I just want to thank you for how you keep invading our world, how you keep invading our hearts, how you keep invading our families and how you keep speaking to us. It is the most precious thing in the planet. When those times happen, will you give me grace and the ability to communicate what you showed me and to my brothers and sisters here? Amen.

[00:00:53] 1 Thessalonians 1:2, I'm going to talk fast because I've got a lot to say. We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. We always remember before our God and Father, your work produced by faith and your labour, prompted by love and your endurance, inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is from the niv for we know, brothers and sisters, loved by God, that that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power and with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord. For you welcome the message in the midst of severe suffering, a bit like some of these pastors in India and the Christians in Cambodia. You became, in the midst of severe suffering, with joy given by the Holy Spirit. We just pray for them ministering in Cambodia and in India. We pray that there would be an excessive amount of joy, Holy Spirit, that you would fill them with joy.

[00:02:09] Amen. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Archaic. I had no idea how big that was, so I looked it up and they RECKON it was 24,000 square miles.

[00:02:23] So he says you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Archaea. That is an area of 24,000 square miles.

[00:02:37] You became a model of all the believers in Macedonia and archaic, which covered 24,000 miles. And we don't even know how big the church was. But just goes to show your influence isn't limited by your numbers, doesn't it? Because here we are, 2,000 years later, still reading about the church in Thessalonica and the way God had impacted their lives.

[00:03:08] I just think that's dead encouraging, especially when you look around today and you're like, gosh, there's a lot of people away.

[00:03:16] 1 Thessalonians 2. He says in verse 7, Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you because we loved you so much. We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well.

[00:03:33] Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship. We work night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone, while we preach the gospel of God to you.

[00:03:46] For, you know, we dealt with you, each of you, as a father deals with his own children. Ooh, heads up, dads.

[00:03:54] How does a spiritual father operate? By encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory. So all the dads here, he wants you to be encouraging, comforting. He urges you to urge your children to live lives worthy of God, who has already called them into his kingdom and glory.

[00:04:24] For what is our hope, our joy, or our crown in which we glory? In the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes.

[00:04:33] Is it not you, indeed, you are our glory and joy?

[00:04:42] For what is our hope, our joy, our crown in which we will glory? In the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes.

[00:04:50] Is it not you, indeed, you are our glory and joy.

[00:04:58] As I was reading this, Paul's letter to the church in Thessalonica, it struck me how Paul really loves them.

[00:05:08] He shared his life with them. He deeply worked and he lived with them. They'd seen all the difficulties and the challenges that Paul faced, and they were persecuted and suffered as a result of following God.

[00:05:23] And as I continued reading 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, I realized the whole thing is a total outpouring of love, affection, tenderness, compassion, celebration that they had endured hardship and suffering and they were still following Jesus with joy.

[00:05:49] I was just lost.

[00:05:53] It was just a totally different perspective to what I'd realised. This wasn't some kind of organizational strategic letter. This wasn't a place where, you know, they'd got all the ducks in a row, but it was a place he absolutely loved to bite.

[00:06:13] And he also really admired all the people that had been through hardship and difficulty and were still following Jesus a lot, like you lot.

[00:06:29] But then when I hit verse 17, I found a most surprising verse.

[00:06:37] But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time, in person, not in thought, out of our intense longing, we made every effort to see you hold on. When we were orphaned and felt separated from you for a short time.

[00:06:59] You mean the great apostle Paul felt orphaned? He felt torn away from them he felt alone, he felt abandoned, he felt heart sick because he'd not seen them.

[00:07:12] Being suddenly separated from them, to him felt like the huge loss when a child loses a parent.

[00:07:24] And I like, gosh. His love for the church in Thessalonica was really profound.

[00:07:32] Paul wrote many letters to church in Colossae, Rome, Jerusalem, Philippi, but he never talks in any of the other letters like he did to the church in Thessalonica. In no other place does he talk about feeling orphaned because he separated from them.

[00:07:51] Verse 18. For we wanted to come to you, certainly I, Paul did, again and again.

[00:07:58] But Satan blocked our way.

[00:08:06] If there's one thing we know about Paul, it was that it took a lot to stop him. So I want you to think of some of the things he faced that didn't stop Paul.

[00:08:20] Just put your hand up or shout it out.

[00:08:25] Shipwrecks, being stoned.

[00:08:31] He was imprisoned, bitten by a snake, beaten, and he was left for dead.

[00:08:42] Was he dead?

[00:08:45] Not for long, is the answer.

[00:08:48] What else? Anyone else?

[00:08:52] He also had people lying about him.

[00:08:56] He had people saying that he was only doing it for the money, which was a bit ironic as he didn't get paid when he was in Thessalonica, he had people gossiping and saying he was a false apostle, ruining his reputation.

[00:09:10] But that didn't get Paul. That didn't stop Paul getting to where he wanted to be.

[00:09:19] I'm going to go down a rabbit trail.

[00:09:23] I want to mention to you our great friends that are Jamie and Linda Watters, that are in the Dwelling Place Church in Glasgow, that was the Vineyard Church in Vineyard.

[00:09:37] I just want to say that they are being. There are lots of horrible lies being told about them in the Christian press and media.

[00:09:47] And if you hear or you come across anybody who's talking about them in that way, I want you to tell them to shut up and go and talk to Jamie and Linda in person.

[00:10:03] It isn't. That is still happening now in the Christian church. And it was other Christians that were accusing Paul of being a false apostle, of lying, of only doing it for the money. Those were Christians that were doing that.

[00:10:19] And it's still the same now. Nothing's new under the sun.

[00:10:24] We know Jamie and Linda and John Scott really well and they are people of incredible integrity and they really love God and they've taught me a lot about not being put off by difficulties and struggles, but pressing on and seeking signs and wonders, pressing on for what God wants to do. So that would be my recommendation to you. So, Father, right now we just pray for the church, for the dwelling place church in Glasgow. We thank you, Lord, for how they are seeing incredible miracles happen. And we just thank you for that and pray that your blessing and your power and your presence would be with them even more, even though they might face some difficulties. Father, we pray, Holy Spirit, that you would be there powerfully.

[00:11:20] And we pray against any plans that Satan might have to block them. And we block your plans in the name of Jesus. We want God's kingdom to be built in Glasgow. Amen.

[00:11:37] Come back from that rabbit trail.

[00:11:42] When I read this about brothers and sisters when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time in person, not in thought, I was like what he says in verse 18. He didn't let any of those things stop him. The reason.

[00:12:04] Do I cover this later on?

[00:12:09] Let me just go over my notes, because when I get nervous, sometimes I skip important things.

[00:12:26] In verse 18 he says, we wanted to come to you. Certainly I. Paul did, again and again. But Satan blocked our way. Well, giving shipwrecks, snakes. Being left for dead didn't block him. What did?

[00:12:46] The reason they couldn't be with the church was that Paul and Sinvalus Silas were in a dark, smelly, cold prison with no light in Athens, jailed for telling people about Jesus and praying for the sick.

[00:13:02] Their enemy had orchestrated these difficulties and he thought that putting them in jail would stop their influence and effectiveness.

[00:13:11] That rather backfired, didn't it?

[00:13:17] What actually happened was the various times Paul was imprisoned, him and some of his friends, he got friends to write the letters for him, wrote lots of letters on feeble bits of parchment that they sent to different people, like Philemon and Timothy. They also sent them to the big cities and the churches that were there, like Colossi, Philippi, Ephesus, Rome, come on, brain.

[00:13:52] Thessalonica, which was a huge city, actually. I didn't realize to look this up.

[00:14:01] And what they did was they smuggled those parchments out of prison and then they delivered them to the churches and then they got passed round the churches and then they buried them in such a great way that they only keep. They keep finding the original manuscripts even now.

[00:14:20] So those feeble bits of parchment lasted 2,000 years.

[00:14:28] And we still have, like Teresa Merrick pouring over 1 and 2 Thessalonians, getting convicted, getting my heart stirred by reading what Paul wrote to them.

[00:14:42] God causes all things to work for good.

[00:14:51] All things.

[00:14:54] At this point, I want you to realize there's no punctuation in any of these letters. And whoever translated 1 and 2 Thessalonians. I don't think they could read because where the chapters are and the verses are, I'm like, I don't think whoever did this could actually read because it says.

[00:15:20] And this is what got me too. For what is our hope in verse 19? For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes?

[00:15:35] Is it not you? You are our glory and joy.

[00:15:44] And when I was reading this, it really hit me.

[00:15:52] You are God's glory and joy, you are his hope, you are his joy, you are his crown in which we will glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus when he comes back.

[00:16:14] And as I read that, I had to do some serious business with God because I was like, in Covid, I think we all forgot who we are. And it was so hard.

[00:16:30] Covid, post Covid, coming out of COVID And I think I'd lost some of that love and joy and glory that Jesus sees in the church and in hope.

[00:16:46] And I thought, I've got to get my right heart right.

[00:16:51] This is how Paul felt about the church.

[00:16:58] And look how powerful it was.

[00:17:03] It might be that as I'm talking about this that you realize, oh, heck, I think I need you get that nice sinking feeling where you're like, oh, okay, right. Me and you need to have a serious conversation, don't we, Teresa? We do.

[00:17:20] Shall we start now? I think we will.

[00:17:26] And then there wasn't so much noise as sobs and tears.

[00:17:37] But it just shows you how deep Paul's relationship was with hope and how deep me and Andy's relationship is with hope. And Mark and Lydia who aren't here today, and Jan and the wider leadership team, they really love you guys.

[00:18:04] So I'm talking about how rubbish they are at dividing up the bible. So verse 19. For what is our hope, our joy or crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when He comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our joy and glory. Chapter three. Ignore that. So when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. And we sent Timothy, who is our brother and co worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ to strengthen and encourage you in your faith.

[00:18:40] What?

[00:18:41] The great apostle Paul missed them so much that he sent Timothy. Timothy, who was like a son to him. In Philippians 2:20, Paul says, I have no one like Timothy who cares for your welfare. All the others only care for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus, so he's pretty exceptional bloke. Also, Paul and Silas were in prison and Timothy wasn't. So Timothy had been visiting them in prison.

[00:19:13] So surely if anyone needed Timothy popping in to say hello every now and again, it would be Paul.

[00:19:21] But no, why did he send Timothy?

[00:19:28] Verse 3.

[00:19:30] So that no one would be unsettled by these trials, for you know quite well that we are destined for them.

[00:19:39] In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted, and

it turned out that way, as you well know.

[00:19:49] Hold on a minute.

[00:19:50] Paul's in prison, okay, we all know prisons are not that great. Now imagine what they were 2,000 years ago where you didn't even get fed. If somebody didn't bring you food, you'd die of starvation.

[00:20:06] Paul sending Timothy to them.

[00:20:09] And the reason he's sending Timothy to them is he's worried that they will be unsettled.

[00:20:18] Oh, he says, so when we could stand it no longer, we thought it best to be left by ourselves in Athens. And we sent Timothy for this reason. When I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. Verse 5. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.

[00:20:48] The reason he sent Timothy.

[00:20:52] What struck me when I read this passage was, oh, he was worried that because they'd heard about all the difficulties Paul and Silas had had, that the enemy would use it to put them off.

[00:21:09] And I thought, lord, what happens if all the saints in Hope Church who've seen the difficulties Andy and me have faced over the last 20 years?

[00:21:19] What happens if it puts them off?

[00:21:23] What if they decide not to put God first anymore? That they look at us and think, phew, I don't want to be a leader. Thank you very much. I've actually had a couple of people say that to me.

[00:21:36] It's too difficult.

[00:21:39] At the time, I think I thought, yeah, I'm not sure it's worth the cost of either.

[00:21:47] But I thought, what happens if you think I don't want to be a leader? I think it's too difficult. It costs too much.

[00:21:55] What if it puts you off giving your yes to God with whatever he's asking you to do?

[00:22:03] What if it influences your choices?

[00:22:07] One of the big transitions, I think, that happens when you move from being an orphan to a son or daughter is when I was an orphan, I expected God to give me a directional word over everything. Do you know what I mean? But when I made that transition and became a Daughter. I realized I'm in a lot of places where I have a genuine choice.

[00:22:33] And they're good. Both of them are good choices. Theresa, you can do this or you can do that. What do you want to do?

[00:22:41] He did that with me. When we moved to Glasgow, I had a genuine choice whether to

leave Newcastle or not. And he was giving me a genuine choice. He showed me what the results would be of those two choices. And that made me convinced to come to Glasgow.

[00:22:58] But it still was a genuine choice. What if that influences your choices subtly? Shall I do that or shall I do that? That's a bit harder. Perhaps I'll do that.

[00:23:15] But the other thing that really struck him is he said, this means our labors have been in vain.

[00:23:21] All the sweat and tears I haven't had to shed blood, Jesus did that for me.

[00:23:27] But all the sweat and tears were for nothing.

[00:23:32] So bear in mind this is Teresa's normal time with God, just spending time with, hanging out with him.

[00:23:40] And I find myself facing this. And it made me realize on the inside, I was like, oh, Lord, I'm the same about Hope Church.

[00:23:55] I've had a couple of people say that to me, oh, don't want to be a leader. It's too hard.

[00:24:01] But I'm like, but you guys are our Joy and crown.

[00:24:10] You're our prize. Do you know what I mean? We've invested in Hope Church. And not just you guys. There are people who've been with us for a while and we've imparted into them and blessed them, and they have carried away with them more of Hope than I think they realize, which is really fun.

[00:24:31] I love how God's slightly subversive.

[00:24:39] And I was just. You know what the other thing I thought was?

[00:24:44] I never have. I don't think I've ever said this to Hope Church.

[00:24:49] I don't think I've ever said this.

[00:24:53] I've never said, it doesn't matter where we go, it doesn't matter what we do. It doesn't matter how amazing it is, how great it was when we went in Africa and we saw God heal a lady who had got lost vision, a peripheral vision in her eye, and they thought it might be a tumour. It got instantly restored.

[00:25:15] It doesn't matter how. And I know Andy feels the same. It's amazing being in India. And Steve will feel the same in Cambodia. Great being in Cambodia. But actually, if things aren't right at Hope, we're absolutely heartbroken.

[00:25:29] And as I was reading this, I was like, teresa, I've never had the courage to say this to Hope Church. I've never. Do you know when you know something in here but you realize you've never. It's never actually come out of your mouth here.

[00:25:44] That's what happened to me. And I was like, I need to tell them.

[00:25:51] I need to. Once I processed it all, I need to tell them. Because when I said to Andy, I've got a message. I want to preach.

[00:26:04] But can you see also how deep it is, the link between us and you and you and us.

[00:26:12] They couldn't be doing what they're doing in India if you had not generously given them the money. I'm going to post some more photos in there. Hope family page.

[00:26:23] But the kids, all the clothes you sent to the kids.

[00:26:27] Lydia did an astonishing job. I'll lose track of time.

[00:26:33] She put them all. She spent hours measuring the clothes, putting them in bags that were the right height for each child. The kids then colored all the bags in. So it meant when Pete and Andy got there, all they had to do was measure the kids, give them a bag, job done. And the kids were chuffed to bits at every single meeting they have in India. They feed everyone that comes because people have often traveled. There's one guy who traveled 12 hours on a train to get there and he'd been beaten up for being a Christian on a few occasions.

[00:27:13] And these people have often spent their money just getting there. So they feed them. So they're feeding thousands of people. Hundreds and hundreds of people get fed.

[00:27:27] Now the next bit of the letter.

[00:27:30] Timothy's report back to Paul and Silas. What's he going to find of the all said blooming it. This is too hard. We're pushing off verse six.

[00:27:46] You can all breathe. It's good. Breathe. Breathe. It's okay. It's all good. It's all good. Breathe.

[00:27:54] It's okay. But Timothy has just now come to us from you and brought us good news about your faith and love. He told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us just as we long to see you. Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution, we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live since you are standing firm in the Lord.

[00:28:27] Isn't that amazing? Here he is in Athens in a prison and he's saying now we really live since you are standing firm in the Lord.

[00:28:40] Even though he hasn't seen them. There'd probably only be a very small number of people that could visit him when he was in prison.

[00:28:48] It just goes to show how much it meant to him.

[00:28:56] And I felt. Me and Andy feel the same.

[00:28:59] We love you guys. We've shared our very lives with you. You've seen our difficulties.

[00:29:06] You loved me to bits when I went through that depression and was diagnosed with complex trauma and went through all that therapy. You just love me to bits.

[00:29:18] Somebody said to me, perhaps you shouldn't go to church until you're better.

[00:29:26] A Christian leader said this to me. I was like, what that models that you can't go to church when you're vulnerable and hurting and in a bad way and that you have to disappear off

until you can come back a squeaky clean smiley Christian. I'm like, that sends all the wrong messages. That isn't what I read about in the Bible.

[00:29:51] So thank you for that.

[00:29:53] Recently I've had all sorts of different aches and pains.

[00:29:58] You courageously keep praying for me and we keep seeing God heal me and I carry on again. Then someone else will come up, we pray for me and I toddle on again.

[00:30:07] I'm going to be like Paul, though. I'm not going to let it stop me doing what he wants me to do.

[00:30:14] While we've been here, one of the great. For these of you that have joined recently, you won't know this, but one of the things that happened which was a huge blessing to me, was I really miss my kids. But you can't treat your kid, talk to your kids about spreading the gospel all over the world and expect them to stay in Glasgow. But do you know what? God was so kind to me at one period of time, three of our four children and their families all moved back to Glasgow and were part of the church.

[00:30:47] We had Cousin Jo got married here, which was great. We have the wonderful Andy and Jess Brown and their kids who are still here.

[00:30:59] Cousin Jo is still in the city. We had Luke and Claire. They moved here from Cape Town with their.

[00:31:05] Came to have. They had two boys when they arrived and they had four when they left.

[00:31:11] God's good, you know, ridiculously generous. And now we've got Jess and Andy, Elijah, Bo and Neri.

[00:31:22] And we also had Andy's dad move here from Devon when he was 90 and we had a period of about three years. Was it Andy, four years, where we had four generations of the Merrick family all together.

[00:31:37] I mean, isn't God good? He's so good, isn't he?

[00:31:44] So thank you.

[00:31:58] You're also part of our victories.

[00:32:02] Every healing that we see, every demon we see cast out, every Person that understands, that begins to understand and make that journey from being an orphan to a son or a daughter, you're part of that journey and you've helped us go and travel and tell other people about that and spread it further afield.

[00:32:26] You're a bit like the church in Thessalonica, Archaic and Macedonia. The message spread. Well, your message is spread into Africa, Matubatuba. It's spread into India, it's spreading to Cambodia. It also spreads to all the other leaders that you meet when you're doing these things. So every conference you go to, it's getting spread there. Every person we talk to is getting spreading Kingdom, legacy. All the church leaders that come there, guess what? They're learning from me and Andy and the others. They're learning all the stuff that we've learned and

they're passing it on to their churches.

[00:33:06] And also when I stand before Jesus and he comes back with all his angels in glory, when this world is rolled up and he brings and he's there gloriously seen and every knee will bow, every tongue will conf. And we will be lost in praise, worship, adoration, glory. I hope I've got a better voice that's louder than the one I've got because I will be shouting at the top of my lungs, as will all of you.

[00:33:39] I want to see. You are, you will be. If you're not there, if you're not our crown and glory, I will be heartbroken because we are one.

[00:33:55] God's actually joined us together at really deep level.

[00:34:00] Yeah, at a really deep level. And I want to thank you for that. I want to thank you for sticking with us in the difficulties. I want to thank you for persevering as we've grappled over the years. You think about all the journey God's had us on. You know, everything from the Trinity isn't hierarchy.

[00:34:25] There is a mutual loving. It's more like a dance and mutual deferring to each other. That was one of the first things God completely fried our brains with.

[00:34:37] And from that, the difference of our identity, not being asleep slave, but being a son and a daughter. I mean, that was another huge shift. Then that automatically by default meant that we suddenly realized we'd close loads of areas of authority and opportunity to women just because of their gender. And that had to change.

[00:35:00] And there'll be more things that God shows us that are melting our brains and do you know what I mean?

[00:35:07] That's what I want. And yeah, I just wanted to say thank you.

[00:35:15] I just wanted to say thank you. And don't give up.

[00:35:21] Don't give up.

[00:35:23] Some of you had good reason to give up. But don't give up.

[00:35:28] What we're seeing for eternity, you don't always see now.

[00:35:35] But we will see it. And it'll last forever.