A Church Built on Endurance

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[0:00] Now the church in general has been through a lot of tough seasons in its history.

And it was these stories that were coming to mind as I was reading and studying for this sermon and learning more about the city of Thessalonica and what these people were going through.
And from the very start of this church, persecution has been part of the culture. This was a case for many of Paul's churches that he had started.
And also this was evident in Paul's life. This was a consistent theme in his ministry. Any church that he would start was oftentimes followed by these radical Jews that would stir up the crowds, run him out of the city, and lead this church into a time of great persecution.
So this was something that was constant in Paul's life. And it's important to have that context in mind as we read through the book of 1 Thessalonians. Because it's going to affect how we interpret this text, how we apply it.
[1:31] And we can see that this is not a letter of reprimand like you see in Galatians or Corinthians. This is a letter of comfort. It's a letter of reassurance, of strengthening.

Paul was trying to strengthen this church. It was going through this difficult season right off the bat.
And I honestly just have to wonder if maybe these new believers were wondering, what have we gotten ourselves into?
Life was great before the church was started here. So I just have to wonder, were some of these believers going through seasons of doubt? And while the text does not expressly say that, I think that we see in Paul's letter that he is trying to reassure these believers of their call.
Trials have a way of refining us and exposing our weaknesses, our need for growth. But trials will only have the effect that God wants them to if they are experienced in the context of an enduring faith.
A faith that is anchored and able to withstand the test of this world because it is anchored in the one who has overcome the world. John 16, 33, when Jesus is talking to his disciples, he is telling them about the persecutions that they are going to undergo as his disciples.
[2:52] And he says this to them to reassure them. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart.

I have overcome the world. So who do we have peace in? Thank you. Jesus said, so in me you may have peace.
It is their hope in Christ that Paul will consistently point the Thessalonians back to. To another group of suffering Christians, another well-known book, James, he writes this, it says, count all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.
For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness and let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.
Now in the church at Thessalonica, we get a very tangible picture of what this looks like. We get to see what embodies an enduring faith. We get to see how tests and trials perfect and complete us.
[3:58] And we get to see the supernatural comfort that God brings to his saints that are suffering in his name. So with that in mind, if you all would, let's stand together and read the opening 10 verses of Thessalonians.

Starting in verse 1, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians, and God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace.
We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus.

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For we know, brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you. Because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.
You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.
[5:19] For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.

For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.
This is the word of the Lord, church. You all may have a seat. So immediately in verse 1, we notice Paul's greeting here. I think it's important to note that in a lot of Paul's letters, in all of his letters, he's not writing by himself.
He's always writing alongside companions in the faith, people that are following him in his missionary journey. Most of you know the story of Timothy, how he was a child in the faith to Paul, and Paul was constantly mentoring this man, Silvanus.
You may know him by another name, Silas. These were people that were accompanying him on this missionary journey, and we're going to see later, as a matter of fact, how Timothy was often used to send messages by Paul.
[6:37] Later on in Thessalonians, Paul mentions the fact that Timothy has brought back a report. He was sent back to the city to get a report on how the believers were doing.

Now, if I were Timothy and I were new to this whole missionary thing, I would be thinking, Paul, that city we just got ran out of by the angry mob, you want me to go back there by myself?
But Timothy was a faithful disciple. He was somebody that was constantly serving Paul in his ministry. So we see that Paul is well aware that the work of being a saint is not something that we are meant to do alone.
It's meant to be in the context of other believers. That's why God has given us the great gift of the church. Now, in this text today, we're going to see Paul lay out some elements of enduring faith. And the main idea of our text today is this, that true faith is enduring faith. As I said, this is a letter of encouragement.
[7:43] These are saints and believers whose faith is being tested. Their endurance is being put to the test. We see Paul lay out these four elements of enduring faith.

And the first one is this, enduring faith is a fruitful faith. Now, Paul is thankful for this church.
He doesn't pity this church. He doesn't feel sorry for them. He doesn't gripe about and slander the people who caused their affliction, which Paul experienced firsthand himself on more than one occasion.
He expresses gratitude for their faith. That is, it's remained so strong in the midst of this persecution. Now, it can be easy for us to fall into the trap of becoming bitter under persecution. To fall into the trap of trying to justify our anger and our bitterness towards these people that are causing our circumstances. I think if anyone could have done that, it would have been Paul.
[8:50] It would have been these Thessalonians. He could have very much told them, you know, you have every right to be mad about this injustice, about these oppressors and what they are doing to you.

Of course, civil unrest is okay. Let's go to the local Agora and burn our favorite marketplace in protest. Paul didn't do that though. Instead of trying to validate their feelings, he points them to something that's more edifying.
He points them back to their faith. He expresses gratitude for the great things that God is doing in their lives despite their circumstances. This points to a truth that thankfulness does not depend on our circumstances.
Thankfulness doesn't depend on our context that we find ourselves in, but in the God that we abide in. 1 Thessalonians 5, 16 through 18 says this, rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
Notice the language that Paul uses here. He says always. He says without ceasing. He says in all circumstances. This kind of consistency in our life cannot come from within us.

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[10:13] It doesn't come from within us. It comes from a divine source, from a God whose steadfast love endures forever, who is unchanging through the ages.

That's where we get this kind of steadfastness and this endurance that Paul is calling this suffering church to. But what are the fruits that Paul is noticing? What is it about their faith that is shining through so brightly?
This is more than just a, you know, keep your chin up type of attitude that Paul is pointing towards. There is something observable about their faith that not only Paul is seeing, but the surrounding world as well.
Real faith should be seen on the outside. And it's usually going to be most noticeable in times of trial, in persecution, and in suffering.
James, again, writing to another church that was in persecution, he said that faith without works is dead. So I believe a lot of the lessons that we see in those two letters, a lot of them are transferable and relatable to each other.
[11:23] But especially in times of trials, our faith should shine brightly. Anyone can be pleasant in good times. Anyone can praise God when times are going great, when the circumstances are just right.

Anyone can be a patient father when their kids are obedient and don't disobey and don't argue with each other. But true faith and a never-changing God provides the anchor for us to have unwavering joy and devotion.
So what are these works? What are these fruits that Paul is noticing? The first thing that he mentions here is works of faith. Now again, Acts 17, if you go back and read that, and I would recommend you going back and reading that as we go through this series together just to kind of get some context of what Paul did there.
It doesn't give a ton of details about his ministry there, but in our text today, in verse 9, Paul gives us a glimpse here of what these people were before Christ.
He says, how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. the work of faith here is the evidence of their conversion.
[12:41] This is something that only comes through genuine faith. Repentance does not just happen on its own. There's been a radical and noticeable transformation in these new believers, and we're going to talk more about that here in the next point.

The next fruit that Paul notices is a labor of love. If there is one thing that God wants, it is a people that serve him from the heart.
He wants a genuine love for him to be the driving force behind everything that we do as believers. Matthew 15, 8 through 9, Jesus is quoting the prophet Isaiah as an indictment against these religious elites that he is having so much trouble with, but it says, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.
In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. God wants our obedience and our works to be more than just lip service.
Even in the way we suffer, there is a genuineness to our faith that will arise if your love for God is not true. Then your faith will not endure.
[13:57] Jesus also said, if you love me, you will keep my commands. Again, this is a response to the love that we are supposed to have for him. Church, we cannot serve God and labor for him properly if our hearts are not in the right place.

Even if you have everyone else in this world fooled on the outside, God who sees the heart, he knows the truth. He knows what is going on inside of you. And if you don't truly love God, I can guarantee you, you will not be able to endure suffering for his name.
Matthew 11, 28 through 30. This has always been an interesting passage for me whenever I think about the labor of being a saint of the Lord and the persecution that many Christians go through for their profession of faith.
Jesus says this, to come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.
Jesus wasn't saying that kingdom life would be easy. He wasn't saying that there wouldn't be work involved. That's inconsistent with what we see everywhere else in scripture.

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[15:25] But what he is trying to say is that in the midst of your toils, of your labors and in your suffering, you will have rest. But rest in what? Yeah, Jesus is calling them into a relationship where rather than just pouring yourself tirelessly into a system of heartless works, you can come under the yoke of a gracious and loving master who restores and gives rest by his very presence in your life.

Now the next fruit that Paul notices is a steadfastness of hope. There is a hope in Jesus Christ that is keeping this church going.
It's a hope that transcends everything else that they are going through right now. Yes, their suffering is real, but there is a hope that is more real to them, and that is a hope that their king is returning for them.
That's a hope that we can all take grasp of, that Jesus is coming back in this suffering church. Paul says to them in verse 10, you turn from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven.
As we dive into this letter in later sermons, we're going to see that eschatology, end times, that is a theme in this book. Now I've talked to a lot of people, and whenever end times comes up, it's often a topic of dissension.
[16:59] People have different views on it. There's several different theories about how all these events are going to play out. There's some people that don't like to talk about it. It causes them great anxiety to think about what this world is going to go through.

But in the context of these suffering believers, the people that were going through so much for the name of Christ, end times, that was, it was a message of hope for them because their king was coming back.
Jesus hadn't forgotten them. Jesus wasn't going to leave them forever. Jesus is coming back. And that's the hope that they were clinging to that was transcending all of their suffering and that was leading them through.
There's a tension that we live in as Christians where we are suffering in this life, whether you are suffering for your faith or you are going through a physical trial that's just part of living in a broken world.
So we live in this tension where there's suffering, but there's also anticipation that Christ is coming back to make all things new. There is this idea that we long to serve Jesus in this life, that we long to be faithful to him, but also at the same time, the tension again, we long for him to come back so that we can lay all of our toils aside and hear him say those words that we've been longing for, well done, good and faithful servant.
[18:25] So there's a good application to take away from this point is don't let suffering make your heart bitter. Instead, we should let it fuel our desire all the more to see Jesus face to face, to see him come back, to see him make all things new.

Let it point your heart to the return of our loving Savior who's promised rest for your soul. Second element that we see here of enduring faith is that enduring faith has a sure foundation.
Notice what Paul says here in verses four and five. For we know, brothers, loved by God, that he has chosen you because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction, you know what kind of men we proved to be for your sake among you.
There's two things that Paul said here that I really want us to focus in on. He said that they are loved by God and that they are chosen by God. Those are two important truths when we look at our salvation, being loved by God and being chosen by God.
God's love for us has preceded our love for him. He loved us first. First John 410 says that in this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be a propitiation for our sins.
[20:11] Romans even goes on and says that while we were still sinners, while we were rebellious against God, that Jesus died for us. God wasn't waiting for us to get things right.

He wasn't waiting for us to have some sort of enlightenment before he sent Jesus to die on the cross for us. Going back to that famous verse, John 316, that God so loved the world that he sent his son Jesus to die for us.
That was something that God took the initiative on. He loved us first. Now, why is this important to realize? Why is it important to have a firm understanding of God's love for us when we are going through trials?

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Well, the first thing is this, that sinful people are not going to choose God on their own. Were it not for a holy God pursuing us, we would choose sin every time.
John 319, and this is the judgment. The light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.
[21:19] We are in desperate need of a God to love us first, to call us into his family. Now, this is important for those that are lost.

Now, if you were here, and maybe that's a new term for you when you hear the word lost, I just want to briefly explain what that means so that if this is you, you know that I'm talking to you. To be lost means that you have not professed faith in Christ.
It means that you have not been forgiven of your sins and been made right with God. That is what it means in a nutshell to be lost, that Jesus is not Lord of your life.
So if you are here today and you know that is you, then what I'm about to say is for you. Jesus Christ, the perfect son of God, has already died for your sins.
He has already paid the price. But that is only good news for you if you profess him as Lord of your life, if you submit to him as Lord, if you depend on his grace to be made right with God.
[22:31] That is the only way that is good news for you. So if that is you today and you have never professed faith in Jesus Christ as Lord of your life, then I want to tell you that you are living a life of rebellion and the shadow of the cross with a price for your sins was paid.

God loved us first before we loved him. Hebrews says, how can we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?
Don't neglect the salvation that has already been prepared for you. Understanding God's love. This is a second point about why it's important to understand God's love and trials.
Understanding God's love for you will allow your trials to be a sanctifying time in your life because you trust the God that is leading you through them.
At our last church, there was a young service member. He was working at Tinker Air Force Base. And I was talking to him one time just about his experience.
[23:36] He had gone through some pretty rough times. His dad had died not too long ago. And on top of that, he was going through some health concerns where he was going to be medically discharged from the army.

He was obviously having a difficult time with that going through that season. He loved being in the Air Force. And it was hard for him. But he was at our house and he was talking to us just about what he was going through.
And he said, you know, the commander of the base called me into his office one day. Now, he was not anywhere up in the ranks in the Air Force. He was pretty low on the totem pole.
So he thought, I'm in trouble. The commander of the base doesn't just call normal people into his office. So he goes to his commander, meets with him.
And the first thing his commander says to him, how are you doing? I've heard about what you were going through. I've heard about the things that have happened in your life.
[24:40] And I just wanted to check on you to see how you were doing. This guy said from that moment on, said I would be willing to pick up a rifle and follow that man anywhere.

Because of the love and the care that that commander had showed for his troops. We have a God that has already shown the greatest love for us in Christ Jesus and dying on the cross for our sins. And we can know that any trial that we are going through, God means it for our good and for his glory. Now the enemy is waiting to use your trials to lead you to doubt.
When God is wanting your trials to sanctify you. To draw you deeper into a relationship with him. The temptation is to see trials as somehow God may be removing his hand of blessing from our lives.
If times are good, then God must be really happy with us. But if times are bad, then God must somehow be against us. We cannot equate God's love with our circumstances in life.
[25:47] God has already shown the greatest love that he can for us on the cross. His love is not conditional. His love for you is directly linked to his character. It is unchanging and endures forever.

In Psalm 136, we read this in choir practice last week. But the phrase, his steadfast love endures forever, appears 26 times. Reminding us that through every trial, through every deliverance, every mighty act of the Lord that we experience, his steadfast love is ever present in our lives and it is unchanging.

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In reminding those of us today that God's love has not left you. You are still loved and treasured by God despite the circumstances that this world is inflicting on you.
Even when the enemy seeks to destroy you, your heart is guarded in Christ. From prison, Paul wrote this to the church at Philippi in Philippians 4, 6, and 7.
It says, do not be anxious about anything. So there were obviously things in the lives of these believers and in the lives of Paul that the enemy would like us to be anxious over.
[26:59] Paul says, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Let your request be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

So are you suffering? Is there a trial that you are enduring right now? There is a peace that will guard your heart and it is a supernatural peace.
That's why Paul says that it transcends all understanding. It's not something that we can conjure up in our minds. It's not something that we can produce within ourselves. That peace that transcends all understanding, it has to come from God and it comes through a right relationship with him through Jesus Christ says he will guard our minds and our hearts in Christ Jesus.
Now the next truth that Paul reminds them of as far as the love of God. Now we go into the fact that they are chosen by God. Being chosen by God is a humbling truth.
It shouldn't inflate our egos. This points to the truth that salvation is an initiative of God that we respond to. It is a grace that is offered to us.
[28:21] Now why is this a comfort to the Thessalonians? Because their salvation, their usefulness for the kingdom is dependent on something outside themselves, outside of what they are experiencing.

Have any of you ever been in a situation where you just felt completely helpless? Maybe because of the trials that you are going through, you just feel completely useless. How could God be using me in these times?
Maybe you're so emotionally beat down or physically sick. Maybe you're there right now and you are wondering, is God done with me? Paul is reminding this church, you are not a mistake.
God is not rethinking things with you. He loved you. He chose you. Your trials are not a surprise to him, but they are an opportunity for him to show his glory even more through your lives.
You want to know why trials are so refining? It's because trials, they have a way of stripping everything else away in our life that we thought that we could depend on.
[29:34] The things that we thought we could anchor ourselves in, trials completely remove that until the only thing that remains is the only thing that we need, which is God's grace. our true source of strength.

Paul was no stranger to understanding that weakness was a way of bringing God's glory about. In 2 Corinthians 12, 9 says this, but he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in weakness.
Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Believer, I want you to remember something.
And this is an important truth. As you suffer, as you go through trials of different kinds, God is not rejecting you. God is refining you. He is making his grace shine all the brighter in your life.
And that grace will be seen by others. And this is the second element or the third element of an enduring faith that we're going to go into now. Enduring faith will be seen by others. Be an example to others.
[30:43] I want to read verses 6 through 10 again to you. It says, And you became imitators of us and of the Lord.

For you received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit. So that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.
For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and in Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.
For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you. And how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his son from heaven.
And we raised from the dead Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come. A genuine faith is going to be noticed by others. And we've seen it noticed by others in the situation with the church at Thessalonica.

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[31:48] Not only has it been noticed, but it's also had an eternal impact on the lives of those that are looking in and seeing what is going on with these people. Now there's a couple of examples that Paul lays out for us here.

The first is himself. Paul talked about how they'd become imitators of him. He uses that phrase several times in his letters. And I just want to assure you, no, Paul does not have a big ego.
But he was pointing out the reality that we all need someone in our life to imitate. We need a role model. We need that person who has been following Jesus longer than us that we can look up to.
In my life, I was blessed to have my parents as those role models. I've also had other models in my life too. As I've gotten into ministry, I've known other pastors.
I've known other worship pastors that have shown me what it's like to love and lead your church well. Now yes, the Bible is our final authority, but having those people in our lives is invaluable.
[32:51] To have a tangible example of what it is that we are shooting for in Christ. Now, not everyone is a good role model. I've seen lots of people fall prey to bad role models.

They think that they're getting all this wisdom from these people, but in all actuality, they weren't trying to lead them to Christ. And this is the litmus test for if someone is a good role model or not. Is this person leading you to be more like Christ or like them?
1 Corinthians 11.1, Paul sums up his heart on that command with this, Be imitators of me as I am of Christ.
The stories of Jesus, again, they were not readily available to people at this time. They had the apostles. And what Paul is doing here is that he is inviting these believers on this same journey that he is on to pursue the likeness of Christ.
Jesus is always going to be our aim. But others are going to be our aid that he has placed in our lives to help us in our pursuit of Jesus.
[33:57] Now, the second example that we have here are the Thessalonians. When you are going through a trial that is observable by those around you, your life in the midst of those trials can be your greatest gospel presentation to those that are watching.

This is what you have been training for in your faith. This is where the rubber meets the road, per se. People are going to see, Is your faith genuine?
Now that it is being tested, where does your faith stand? For those of you who are athletes that spend weeks, months, preparing for all these games and all this training that you go through so that you can go to the game and be put through these trials, others are going to be watching you.
They're looking in. They're saying, Okay, what's this training amounted to now? Is it real? Has their training turned into skill when it's put to the test? There's a host of people watching.
If you're a younger athlete, I'm sorry if I've just made you very nervous. But they want to see if what you have is real. The world surrounding the Thessalonians, they've been observing this church in the same way.
[35:13] They know the trials that they're going through. They see how they are suffering. And they want to see, Is their faith real? Will they persevere?

Will they make it through to the other side? Will their faith in Christ stay firm? They're seeing the true worth of their faith. Now, what are they seeing?
When they look into this church, what are some of the things that they're seeing? Well, Paul laid it out pretty clearly. They received the word in much affliction, but they received it in joy.
Paul goes on to say that this news has gone out to surrounding regions. Their witness has spread faster than Paul's message. People are talking about it. People are sharing the gospel through the example of the Thessalonians.
To the point that here we are 2,000 years later, we're still reading and hearing about it. This was a powerful testimony that these people were showing to the world around them.
[36:16] Now, I also want to say this, that words are great. We should always be ready to articulate our faith to the world around us, but how we live through trials, that will be our most powerful gospel presentation to those that are watching our lives from the outside.

because it will prove if our words are genuine or if they are just words. We also need to remember that trials are how we bear the image of Christ.
Christ suffered greatly while following his father's will. And he followed it in perfect obedience, too. So those of you that have heard that obedience to God is going to equal success and ease in this life, that is not the example that Scripture lays out for us.

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Jesus was perfect, and he suffered greatly in this life. So why should we expect to fare any differently in our lives? Particularly in suffering for your faith.
In the immediate suffering for the sake of Christ, it's not going to be enjoyable. No one looks forward to trials. But because of the name that we are suffering for, if it is for your faith, it is an honor to be counted to be like Christ enough that they are willing to make you suffer for his name.
[37:38] Colossians 1.24, Paul wrote this, I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of his body, that is the church.

Paul is not saying here that Christ didn't suffer enough. He's not saying, well, Christ didn't suffer enough, so I need to suffer some more. No, that's not what he's saying at all. What Paul is saying here is that the world, the sinful world, they did not get their fill of persecution when they nailed the Son of God to the cross.
So now they are fixing their aim on his followers, on the church. Is suffering enjoyable? No, of course not. But for the sake of the one that we are suffering for, it is eternally worth it.
Now maybe your trial is not because of your faith. Not all suffering is because we are Christians. It's still a test on your faith, though. As an obedient saint, you may not always suffer because of your faith, but you can endure suffering through your faith.
And one of the ways that we do that is through the last element of enduring faith. And we've already touched on it briefly, but it is that enduring faith is a hopeful faith. Looking at verse 10 again, it says, to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.
[39:10] I gotta tell you, endurance is a lot easier when you can see the end in sight, when you know where it's all going. It makes the endurance and the trials a lot more palpable whenever you know that the end is near.

When I was in school, the fact that I knew that I was going to be done on this date, it made the coursework not easier, but seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and knowing it wasn't a train coming after me, it made it a lot more doable.
I see the twinkle in Pastor Mike's eye every time he talks about turning in his final chapter on his dissertation. He knows what I'm talking about. God has given us a glimpse of that end.
We are going to see our Savior that we have endured so much for. While he came as a suffering servant, he is going to come back as the conquering king and we will get to bask in that victory and in that glory.
Our suffering will be worth it. The promise that Jesus is returning is going to be the driving force, the overarching truth that is going to lead us through our times of trials.
[40:16] Romans 8. I want to read this last passage to you. Romans chapter 8, starting here in verse 18. It's not going to be up on the screen, so if you want to turn in your Bibles there, you can.

It says, For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.
For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.
For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
Our faith is not about hope for this life. It gives us endurance for this life. But our hope is summed up in the life that is to come and it is sealed and kept for us in Jesus Christ.
[41:39] So again, as I said earlier, we can hear those words that we all long for, well done, good and faithful servant. We've heard a lot today about what it means to have an enduring faith.

whether you are suffering because of your faith or you are enduring suffering through your faith. These elements of enduring faith, they are for all of us. All of us are going to have our faith tested at some point by trials.
We can be fruitful in the midst of suffering as long as our faith is built on the sure foundation of Jesus Christ. And when your faith is built on the right foundation, others can look in from the outside and see what you are going through and see that there is something in your life that they need.

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And you can present the gospel to them with your words and with your faithful life. The final point of application is this.
Cling to your faith in the good seasons so it will sustain you in the hard ones. Your good seasons, they are blessings from the Lord just like his provisions are in the bad seasons.
[42:53] So in the good times, equip yourselves. Grow in the faith so that when the stormy waves of this life hit you, they will break on the solid rock of Jesus Christ in your life.

Let's pray and then we will enter into a time of response. Father, we thank you that in our trials, Lord, you have given us hope beyond this life.
Lord, you have given us joy that is steadfast and sure that is not summed up in anything that we have but it is all summed up in Jesus Christ. And Lord, I pray that if there is anyone here that is suffering today, there is anyone listening that is going through a trial in their lives, whether it be for their faith or whether it be just from the suffering of living in a broken world.
Lord, I pray that their souls would find rest in Jesus Christ. Lord, that the truth that you have not forgotten them but that you are refining them would embolden them.
Lord, that they would cast all their cares and anxiety on you so that you can guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Lord, I pray for those here today that have never had that hope in Christ Jesus, that are not new creations in your son Jesus.
[44:21] Lord, they are here in the right place this morning and Lord, I pray that you would call them out of darkness into light. Lord, that they would see their need for Jesus, for the forgiveness of their sins so that they could have a right standing with you, so that they could have hope in any circumstance they face in this life and more importantly so that they could have hope for eternity in the next life.

Lord, I pray for all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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