

Speaker 1:

It is time for a pause in your day. Welcome to a podcast where we press the pause button on our busy lives for a few moments, and we focus on God's word With Sharon and Nicole. We pray this is a time of refreshing for you. The Sweet Selah Moments Podcast is a cooperative production of Word Radio and Sweet Selah Ministries.

Nicole:

Welcome to the Sweet Selah Moments Podcast. This is episode 121, Growing in Faith and Love. We are starting a new book of the Bible today, although it's closely related to the one we've been studying. Paul wrote two letters to the church at Thessalonika, and it's time to look at the second letter. I did some research, Sharon, on the second letter, where he addresses some of the same issues from the first letter that had actually gotten worse. And he offers hope despite persecution. He speaks about and clarifies the coming of Jesus as there was some confusion that had arisen, and he ends with a specific challenge to the idle members in the church. I'm excited to dig into what Paul follows up on with this church and that this church that's so dear to him.

Sharon:

Oh my goodness. It really is. He loves them and he doesn't give up on them.

Nicole:

No, he doesn't.

Sharon:

And it's not like he didn't have other churches.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

Paul's like following up with the Corinthians. And he's, everybody that he saw come to know Christ. They're his spiritual babies.

Nicole:

They are.

Sharon:

You know, and so,

Nicole:

He took good care looking up after them.

Sharon:

I wonder how many hours a day he spent praying for all the churches.

Nicole:

Oh, yeah.

Sharon:

And thinking about them and writing to them, because the more churches that happened, the more responsibility he felt he had towards taking care of 'em.

Nicole:

Oh, sure. The more letters and the more prayers, like that's a full-time job is praying and writing letters.

Sharon:

I know. I'm impressed with all he does and how God's love in him expands. You know how love expands when you have another kid?

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Because when I had Katherine, I'm like, oh my goodness, I have another baby coming, but how could I possibly love this baby? Oh. But then Mary showed up and I loved Mary, you know? So same thing every time Paul got a new spiritual baby.

Nicole:

I know, his love grew for them.

Sharon:

So, it's so good.

Nicole:

That's cute.

Sharon:

Oh my. Well, it's a short little letter, the 2 Thessalonians one. So we are gonna cover it's three chapters in three weeks.

Nicole:

Yeah. Perfect.

Sharon:

We think.

Nicole:

Yeah. We'll see.

Sharon:

We're gonna start with chapter one and I really had a hard time choosing a title for this episode because Paul covers a lot of territory.

Nicole:

He does, yeah.

Sharon:

But I was struck by his compliment (he's so good at complimenting) to the church and his greeting in verse three. The compliment is we can't help, we can't help but thank God for you.

Nicole:

I love that.

Sharon:

Because your faith is flourishing and your love for one another is growing. Oh, what a beautiful encouragement that verse is. So, even though he is gonna do some more instructing he always is like, but as I'm telling you hard things don't forget. I see you. I see what you're doing right?

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

So we'll talk more about that when we look at that particular verse. But in general, as we continue to study how to live wisely in troubled times, which is our series here, making sure our faith flourishes and our love grows, are two very good ways to live wisely. So here we go. Let's dig into this letter and marvel at the backbone and courage of this little church that Paul planted, but then had to leave before he really wanted to, due to the inevitable persecution that always seems to come when Paul shows up somewhere.

Nicole:

I know. Poor Paul.

Sharon:

I know.

Nicole:

Bring in the party.

Sharon:

Yeah. So I'll start with chapter one, verse one, and we'll read back and forth. "This letter is from Paul, Silas and Timothy. We are writing to the church in Thessalonica, to you who belong to God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Nicole:

"May God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, give you grace and peace."

Sharon:

"Dear brothers and sisters, we can't help but thank God for you, because your faith is flourishing and your love for one another is growing."

Nicole:

"We proudly tell God's other churches about your endurance and faithfulness in all the persecution and hardships you are suffering."

Sharon:

"And God will use this persecution to show his justice and to make you worthy of his kingdom from which you are suffering."

Nicole:

"In his justice, he will pay back those who persecute you."

Sharon:

"And God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted. And also for us, when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven, he will come with his mighty angels."

Nicole:

"In flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don't know God. And on those who refuse to obey the good news of our Lord Jesus."

Sharon:

"They will be punished with eternal destruction forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power."

Nicole:

"When he comes on that day, he will receive glory from his holy people, praise from all who believe. And this includes you, for you have believed what we told you about him."

Sharon:

"So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do."

Nicole:

"Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honored because of the way you live, and you'll be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ."

Sharon:

There's that word, grace again.

Nicole:

So much grace.

Sharon:

Well, Okie dokie. There's some heavy stuff in this passage. Some of it's scary. Let's go verse by verse and look closely at what Paul had to say. So I'll start with verse one and read it again, and then talk about it. This letter, this is the greeting, I guess this is the way they almost always started their letters, is from Paul, Silas and Timothy. We are writing to the church in Thessalonica to you who belong to God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, I did a little background work again on Silas and Timothy, just so we know, because obviously they're with Paul right now and writing this letter. Silas is first found in Acts 15:22 in terms of, I mean, he was found when he was born.

Nicole:

Right. As we know of him.

Sharon:

But the first time we know about Silas is when he is much older than birth. He's a church leader in Jerusalem.

Nicole:

Oh, okay.

Sharon:

And when Paul took the letter to the Jerusalem church and said, you know, do we have to have Gentiles circumcised? Do we have to have Gentiles not eating meat? What are we doing with these Gentile converts? Do they have to follow all the Jewish laws?

Nicole:

Oh, great questions.

Sharon:

It's called the Council of Jerusalem. And decisions were made, and then a letter was written formally by the church leaders in Jerusalem to send back to these Gentile churches going, well, what are we supposed to do with some of these rules?

Nicole:

Right. We're not Jewish, so what do we do?

Sharon:

So Silas was one of those leaders.

Nicole:

Oh, interesting.

Sharon:

And he accompanied Paul and Barnabas with that letter back to the Gentile churches. So he was part of that. So when in Acts 15:40, Paul and Barnabas had that parting of ways.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

'Cause they didn't agree, Silas was already in place for Paul to say, well, I'll just take Silas and I'll do my second missionary journey with Silas. And Barnabas of course, took John Mark. And there were double the missionary journeys because of a fight.

Nicole:

That's amazing.

Sharon:

Ta da.

Nicole:

Silas was up and ready and running. He was ready to just jump up with Paul. Wow. That's really fascinating. I didn't know that about Silas.

Sharon:

There's good old Silas. And then, okay, who's Timothy? Well, Timothy was born in Lystra, which is Asia Minor. He had a Christian grandmother and mother and a Greek dad.

Nicole:

Oh, wow.

Sharon:

Who probably wasn't a believer because when the grandmother and mother are commended for how they taught the faith to Timothy, the dad wasn't mentioned. So, I mean, maybe he came to know Christ later, who knows? I don't know.

Nicole:

But not before the letter was written.

Sharon:

But anyways, Timothy was mentored by Paul. He was a lot younger than Paul, and he was mentored. He traveled with him and Silas at times, and obviously was with them at this juncture in time. So Timothy was a younger leader of the church, but one that was very, very dear to Paul. So.

Nicole:

That's a nice little group of men right here.

Sharon:

These three buds are all together here. And they're writing again, the second time to the Church of Thessalonica. And I love how he describes them, 'to you who belong to God, the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ'. So we belong too. So it's to us as well, because we belong to God the Father. We belong.

Nicole:

We do.

Sharon:

We're in the in crowd. The best 'in crowd'. The one that everybody's welcomed to if they would just turn and say, can I belong?

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Can I be saved? Yes, you can. Just confess your sins and come to me. So enough on verse one, which was really long. I apologize.

Nicole:

Oh. But there's so much in there. Like, who are these men? Now we know. I love it. So verse two is, "May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace". I just love that he starts most of his letters that way and then ends it with grace. Because what can we do without God's grace?

Sharon:

Nothing.

Nicole:

Nothing.

Sharon:

So can we be very grateful for God's grace? Yes. We can.

Nicole:

Yep. I don't think he can say it enough, especially where he is putting harder things in here to be, you know, corrected or addressed. He's like, Hey, grace and peace, you got this guys. Okay, here it comes.

Sharon:

Perfect, perfect, perfect. Okay. Verse three, "Dear brothers and sisters, we can't help but thank God for you because your faith is flourishing and your love for one another's growing". So flourish means to grow and develop in a particularly healthy way.

Nicole:

Oh, yeah.

Sharon:

So they're being persecuted, and yet their faith is flourishing.

Nicole:

Wow.

Sharon:

Isn't that fascinating? So usually, you know, a plant flourishes when it's planted in an ideal environment. This frightens me a little bit, Nicole, because if their faith is flourishing in persecuted times, is that actually good soil for faith to grow?

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

Evidently it is.

Nicole:

That's something to sit and think about for a while, isn't it?

Sharon:

Oh yeah.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

Yes. Like could I grow through the good times? But you know what? Faith can flourish even when we're being persecuted. And love can get better. It can grow. So in this hard time, Paul's like, and yet you're clinging to God. And because of that, in the soil of persecution, you're not only hanging in there, you are flourishing.

Nicole:

Oh, that must have been so nice to hear.

Sharon:

Oh, I'm so proud of that church.

Nicole:

Okay. We're growing the right way. Okay.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

Yeah. And then he continues with verse four of that encouragement. "We proudly tell God's other churches," (love that, God's other churches).

Sharon:

Isn't that neat? They're not Paul's.

Nicole:

They're not Paul's.

Sharon:

They're God's.

Nicole:

They're not, yep, they're God's other churches. "About your endurance and faithfulness in all the persecution and hardships you are suffering." They must have been going through a lot.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

For him to call that out. And then again, what an encouragement. And they probably really needed to hear that, that we are flourishing, we're following God, we're holding fast so well that Paul is talking about us to other churches as an example.

Sharon:

I know.

Nicole:

Whoa. When people ask, if I have younger moms that come to me and ask for advice, it's always like, what? I'm not, I don't feel like I'm at that place where I can give advice. But if someone's asking or they use you as an example, it's like, okay, I must be doing what's right. I must be doing the right things, God.

Sharon:

Yes. What an affirmation.

Nicole:

And that means so much. Yeah. It's like, okay, keep on doing what you're doing. Keep on following God.

Sharon:

Right.

Nicole:

So this is probably just what they needed to hear right now in the midst of a lot of stuff.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

That wasn't fun.

Sharon:

Yes. I love that. And I love that in that he's also acknowledging, it's not like you've got life rosy.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

I know you're enduring. I know this is hard. So.

Nicole:

It's so good.

Sharon:

So yeah. Yeah. So verse five, "And God will use this persecution to show his justice and to make you worthy of his kingdom for which you are suffering". I always like to talk about his mercy and love best, but you know what? He is just.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And if we don't remember that, we don't try hard enough to convert and show people the need to come to Christ.

Nicole:

Oh yeah.

Sharon:

You know, Nicole, if you think about it, these people that are persecuting, even the ones right now in the world that are, heaven help them. Except heaven won't, if they fall into the hands of a wrathful God after they die.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

God is just, he will not allow this kind of evil to flourish indefinitely.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

There will be a time where people will pay. And although that's sad, it's also encouraging because if God just let it go, he's saying it's okay to be cruel.

Nicole:

Oh, right.

Sharon:

Oh, no, it's not. No, it's not. And you will pay.

Nicole:

He knows it's wrong, he knows it's sin.

Sharon:

If you don't repent.

Nicole:

Yeah. And he will deal with it, so. Oh my goodness. And so verse six, "In his justice, he will pay back those who persecute you". So I think there is that comfort in that verse. It seems kind of harsh, but knowing that God is in control, he sees the whole thing. He sees the whole big picture. And that it's a relief too for them. Like sometimes when you're being wronged, it's like, do I need to stand up for myself? Do I need to pay them back revenge? Because that's our natural human instinct.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

So to be told, God's got it, he will pay them back. Like, okay, okay. I just need to endure and look to you God, not to those who are persecuting me. I don't have to worry about how to deal with them. If I look to you and endure and show love, their hearts could be changed.

Sharon:

Absolutely.

Nicole:

And if not, you're gonna deal with them, God.

Sharon:

You're gonna deal with 'em.

Nicole:

It's not mine to deal with.

Sharon:

Exactly. It's not mine to deal with. And that's what we need to remember. Jesus was like a lamb led to the slaughter, who opened not his mouth.

Nicole:

Yes. Wow.

Sharon:

At certain points in that trial. Right? And, he sure could have defended himself.

Nicole:

Oh yeah. If anyone had more rights and anyone was more perfect than Jesus.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yep. Exactly. So, God does..., it's going to be okay someday.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Nobody's getting away with it.

Nicole:

No.

Sharon:

In fact, if we're ever persecuted, we ought to look on the cruelty of those people and pity them.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And say, Jesus, bring them to repentance because it's not gonna be pretty.

Nicole:

No. His justice is not.

Sharon:

They will be paid back.

Nicole:

Yep.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Verse seven. "And after he will pay back those who persecute you, God will provide rest for you who are being persecuted. And also for us." ("Cause Paul's being persecuted too.)

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

"When the Lord Jesus appears from heaven, he will come with his mighty angels." This is the reminder that there will be a time when the strife will be over and there will be rest. That verse in Revelation where it says, "Jesus will wipe every tear from their eyes"? It's actually specifically directed to those that were persecuted and were the martyrs.

Nicole:

Oh, wow. That's so beautiful.

Sharon:

You know, he sees what they've gone through. And there'll become a time of rest. It won't always be hard. And he'll appear from heaven. Da da da dum!

Nicole:

He's coming.

Sharon:

He'll come with mighty angels, trumpets. It's gonna be really cool.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And you get to read the next part. It's like the mighty Hero.

Nicole:

I know, the second half. Come with his mighty angels. And in flaming fire. That's so cool. "Bringing judgment on those who don't know God and on those who refuse to obey the good news of our Lord Jesus." So yikes. It starts out so cool with angels and fire, and then it gets really sober.

Sharon:

Yes. It does.

Nicole:

It's really sobering there. This is so tough. You know, our hearts should break for those who don't know. And we should be so thankful that we do know.

Sharon:

Yes, yes, yes.

Nicole:

We should be rejoicing in that 'cause that this is heavy stuff. You know, he's coming to bring judgment on those who refuse to obey.

Sharon:

Yeah. And all they had to do was say yes to him.

Nicole:

I know. I know.

Sharon:

Come on.

Nicole:

Such a heavy thing.

Sharon:

Yeah. Oh my goodness. But this is why we witness.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Because we don't want anybody to face that judgment.

Nicole:

No.

Sharon:

We really don't. So, it gets worse in verse nine.

Nicole:

I know. I was gonna say, it doesn't get better yet. Hold on.

Sharon:

"They will be punished with eternal destruction. Forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power." C.S. Lewis, you know, reminds us that we choose hell.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

We're given the invitation to come. It's a non-exclusive invitation. Anyone can come. No matter what your grievous sin. God says, come, I've already taken your punishment on myself on the cross. But you have to receive it.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

If you don't take it from my hand, I can't give it to you.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

I've used this example before in talks I've given. What if my daughter, Katherine, was a single mom and she really needed a car. And Ray and I decided, oh, she doesn't have the money to get a car. Let's work really, really hard and let's get a really good secondhand car for her.

Nicole:

Nice.

Sharon:

Because we wanna give it to her. We wanna bless her. Right? And we bring it to her, and we say, and we've worked for two years to get it. I'm making this really intense here. And none of this is true, but, you know. Let's, we'll call the daughter, Kelly. So Kelly, after two years of Ray and I saving all our money and saying, here, Kelly, here is your car.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

And she says, oh, I couldn't take that. I would be so hurt. I worked really hard to get you the car. I'm so excited to give you that car. Please take the car. You need the car.

Nicole:

It's a free gift.

Sharon:

You're walking three miles to work uphill both ways. Right?

Nicole:

In a snow storm.

Sharon:

Yeah, in a snow storm. If say, she didn't take the keys, it doesn't matter that we worked all that time to get the car for our Kelly.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

It wouldn't be hers.

Nicole:

True.

Sharon:

So that's the part we have to do. We have to take the keys, as it were.

Nicole:

Yeah. And accept that free gift.

Sharon:

And if not, it's eternal destruction forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power because they refuse to enter in and be with the Lord in all his glorious power.

Nicole:

Oh, that's so tough,

Sharon:

Man!

Nicole:

That's heavy.

Sharon:

Huh. Okay.

Nicole:

Hopefully the second verse gets a little bit more peppy. "When he comes on that day (Oh, it is) He will receive glory from his holy people, praise from all who believe. And this includes you for you believed what he told you about him." Wow. Again, this is kind of like the end goal, the big picture. You know,

that all of this suffering, all of this persecution, it will be worth it. The suffering does matter. It's going for a purpose. It's going for them being sanctified.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

Them receiving glory.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

And then praise to God, you know?

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

So I just think this is such a nice way to end all of the heavy stuff.

Sharon:

The heavy stuff, which honestly it has to be there. Or we would not be spurred on to share the good news.

Nicole:

Right. We should be really like, ooh, clenched up about number eight and nine. Like, man, we don't want, tho even those who persecute us, like sometimes someone can be really awful to you, which you don't want them to burn in hell forever.

Sharon:

No. No, no.

Nicole:

You might feel like, oh good, you're gonna get yours. And you're like, okay, well actually,

Sharon:

Not that much.

Nicole:

I didn't really want to be that harsh.

Sharon:

No, not that much. And that's why Jesus spent so much time talking about hell, I think. It's a real place, we don't want, and it was designed for Satan and his angels not for people.

Nicole:

Right. When he offered that gift.

Sharon:

He so loved the world.

Nicole:

Yes. So all of them, even the persecutors and the people that are causing so much trouble,

Sharon:

Even the persecutors, if they turned.

Nicole:

Yep. If they turned.

Sharon:

Oh man. So, okay. Verse 11. "So," says Paul, "We keep on praying," (a constant theme, always prayer) "for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do". Now here's another good prayer to pray for my grandchildren when I keep on praying for them.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

That God would enable my grandchildren to live a life worthy of his call on their lives. Oh, is that not what I want for them? I look at their cute little faces and the pictures on the piano, and they're still in that pretty much pre-adolescent innocent stage. And I'm like, God has a call on your life.

Nicole:

That's so cute. Yeah.

Sharon:

I want, oh, listen to him that he could enable you to live out your purpose. May he give you the power my sweet little grandchildren to accomplish all the good things that your faith in him is gonna prompt you to do. You are gonna be told to do things, every single one of you, with your different gifts and talents. May God enable you to live that life. I mean, I pray for them daily, and I'm like all over this verse.

Nicole:

That's a great verse to pray.

Sharon:

This is what I want for them. Yeah.

Nicole:

Yeah. Oh, I like that one.

Sharon:

And for other people too, not just for my grandchildren.

Nicole:

But especially your grandchildren.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

They're just so cute. Aww, and then verse 12 says, "Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honored because of the way you live, and you'll be honored along with him. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and our Lord Jesus Christ". Wow. This is cool.

Sharon:

It is.

Nicole:

So, if they endure all of this, if they press into God, if they lean unto him, Jesus gets honored because of the way they're living.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

Which is cool. And then they will be honored along with him.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

I'd never noticed that before. That's really,

Sharon:

Isn't that neat?

Nicole:

Remarkable.

Sharon:

It is. It is.

Nicole:

And all of this is not because they're especially good or great or hustle or anything. This is all made possible because of the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

It's not our own. It's nothing that they have that we don't have. They're not special. They're sinners that were saved by grace because of Jesus.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And so are we. That word grace is so beautiful. No wonder Paul speaks it all the time.

Nicole:

I know. And it's such a beautiful reminder. We're not alone.

Sharon:

Right.

Nicole:

We're with, Jesus is with us in all of this.

Sharon:

Yes. Yes.

Nicole:

He suffered too.

Sharon:

Yes. Oh, he sure did.

Nicole:

And it says that too. Like we, we are honored along with him because he suffered just as much as they did.

Sharon:

He did.

Nicole:

More, he suffered more.

Sharon:

Yeah. He stepped into flesh and felt what we felt. God is not asking us to do anything he hasn't done even more so.

Nicole:

Yeah. That's beautiful.

Sharon:

Yeah, it is. It's--- Oh my goodness. Wow. Okay. Time for our favorite verses. What was your favorite verse and why?

Nicole:

The last one is so good. This was such a heavy, heavy chapter. And I love the last verse. "The name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be honored because of the way you live, and you'll be honored along with him." And it's all possible through the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ. So you're looking back up to verse eight and nine about people who are gonna be judged and hell, and it's just like, man, this is really heavy. So this verse too, because of the way we live.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

They're seeing this little church flourish still.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

And grow and keep on keeping on and studying the faith despite all the things they're trying to do. They're noticing because they're still persecuting. We don't know what's happening in those persecutors' hearts and those ---. The people around us.

Sharon:

That's so true.

Nicole:

We don't know. And because of the way we live, it makes such a difference.

Sharon:

It does. It does.

Nicole:

So it's such a good command for a good reminder to me like, Hey, how am I living? Am I keeping on, am I doing what I need to do? Because if my heart is burdened for those around me that don't know Christ, or that scoff at Christ or persecute me.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

What is this doing by seeing how I keep looking to him.

Sharon:

Exactly so, exactly so, and you know, with their being persecuted, logically, if they didn't really believe it, why in the world would they choose to, you know, lose finances, lose status?

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

In people's eyes?

New Speaker:

Lose safety?

Sharon:

And get whipped, you know, or whatever was happening to them. This is why, somebody a long time ago said the church was built on the blood of the martyrs.

Nicole:

Wow.

Sharon:

So many people chose a really uncomfortable life because they knew it was true.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

That you can't say they were all crazy.

Nicole:

Right. They didn't just do this on a whim. Like, well, we'll just see it out. But for so many people to choose such a hard existence.

Sharon:

Oh, yeah. Yes, and do it with joy.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

And do it with love.

Nicole:

And thankfulness.

Sharon:

That's actually the testimony, and that's the honoring, and that's the crown they get on their heads, which when they're in heaven, they're actually just gonna lay the crown back down at Jesus' feet.

Nicole:

I know.

Sharon:

But, but that's why they're honored.

Nicole:

And that's why we're all here today, because we read about their faithfulness and persecution.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

Well, if they survived all of that, no one whipped me this week, Sharon.

Sharon:

Nope. Me neither.

Nicole:

No one threw stones at me.

Sharon:

That's right.

Nicole:

No one even gave me too much of a hard time for loving Jesus. Like, wow. If they can be faithful to the end, I can be faithful.

Sharon:

Absolutely. Absolutely. Oh, so good. So good. Well, I chose verse 11. "So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do."

Nicole:

That's so good.

Sharon:

So, you know, as I was thinking about it, I don't always remember that he gives me that power. I think of God as giving me love and shelter.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

Nestling in, I'm a Selah person. I love my days where his wings cover me. Right. But I need to remember his power. When I need to be enabled to do something hard, when I'm afraid in some way of something.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

The power is available if I ask for it. It's right there. So he gives me the power to accomplish these things.

Nicole:

That's so good to remember.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

We do forget that sometimes. It's amazing.

Sharon:

Love that. We do forget it. We do. So, okay. Well, what did I learn about God from this passage? Well, huh. I learned he's just, which is actually, it's a good thing. If he, even though it's hard to hear, if he were not just, if he just scoffed at sin himself, what an awful world it would be.

Nicole:

Oh gosh. Yeah.

Sharon:

Wrong is wrong. And he punishes.

Nicole:

He calls it out. Yep.

Sharon:

Yeah. No one gets away with it. I learned that he's returning and he enables me to do life well. And there's a promise of rest coming.

Nicole:

Whew. I know.

Sharon:

How about you?

Nicole:

That's a nice promise. I gleaned from this that he wants us to finish well. You know, they started well, but to continue on in the faith and continue to hold fast. I think he wants us to finish well. He doesn't want us to get all excited for Jesus and be like the seed that sprouts up quick and then just withers and dies.

Sharon:

Yeah, yeah.

Nicole:

You know, finish well, to be that good example. And then God is so full of grace.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

I just---, it's so rich. That word is in this passage so much, and yet I still can't fully grasp how much his grace is. Yeah. For me and for us. It's beautiful.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. And the fact that it is said so often just is sort of that sweet reminder that that's who he is. Even as we're talking about his justice right now is still a time where people can repent.

Nicole:

Yes. There's still grace.

Sharon:

That's why he hasn't come back for 2000 years. Because he's not willing that any should perish, but all should come.

Nicole:

Because of grace. Oh, I love it.

Sharon:

Wow. Well, what did you learn about living wisely in troubled times?

Nicole:

Yeah. So if we're going through persecution and hard times and suffering, our God knows. He's been through all of that. Just like you had said, Jesus doesn't ask us to do anything that he hasn't done himself even more so. I just love that we're not alone. He suffered as well. God has felt all the pains, all the fears, all the persecution we have, so we can, we can trust him when he tells us what's going to happen after the persecution or through it, we can trust him. Even if we're like, how is this gonna be good? I don't see it. He's like, it's okay, I allowed this. I see the end. I suffered with you. I'm with you in it. Trust me.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

And we can trust him.

Sharon:

We can, we can. He's walked the path before us.

Nicole:

Yep.

Sharon:

Yeah. Oh, that was good. I think when I was thinking about this, I don't need comfortable times to flourish. And that's what I have to remember.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

When hard times come, that's not an excuse to like, well, guess I can't serve God anymore. Life's too hard.

Nicole:

There's no rain. I can't grow for a while.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. Exactly. I can flourish in bad times. In fact, sigh, perhaps I will flourish better when times are hard. And looking back over my life, some of the things I look back to where I grew the most, like during the Persian Gulf War, I flourished because of the hard time and I had to lean in. So.

Nicole:

Isn't that amazing?

Sharon:

None of this, Oh, I can only flourish if you're nice to me, God, and give me a happy, easy life. No.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

No, we can flourish in the hardest of times.

Nicole:

That's a good reminder.

Sharon:

Yeah. Well, let us pray.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Oh, heavenly Father, we thank you for your grace. We thank you that you are not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. We thank you that you so loved the world and you died for the worst of sinners, and you welcome all into your kingdom even if it's the last second of their lives and they never did another good thing. God, you have been so merciful in so many ways, but we also thank you for your justice. That wrong is wrong and good is good, and that you will repay. You will not allow evil to go unpunished. We honor you, God of justice, God of grace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Nicole:

Well, that was inspiring and sobering, wasn't it? I hope if we ever face harsh persecution, God will enable our faith to flourish and our love to grow right in the thick of it. Thanks for joining us for this look at this amazing church and it's testimony of faith. We'd love for you to write a review for us. Podcasts only get seen if they're reviewed and shared. That's a wonderful way for you to help us. That costs time, but not money. However, we would welcome donations as well. If God leads you to help us produce this podcast, you can donate at SweetSelah.org/podcast anytime. Write us at SweetSelah.org/podcast or email us at Sharon@SweetSelah.org. Come back next week for a look at 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. Episode 122 is called Accept No Counterfeits. We'll be learning some discernment skills next week. I'm looking forward to it. Have a great week.

Speaker 1:

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