

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 122, Accept No Counterfeits. Well, that's an interesting title Sharon. Why'd you choose that?

Sharon:

Well, today's chapter, chapter two of 2 Thessalonians is mostly a warning chapter. Paul is concerned that the Thessalonians might be led astray by false teachers, especially regarding the return of Jesus. He spends quite a bit of time telling this church what is not true, so they won't be fooled. A counterfeit, according to the Cambridge English Dictionary, is something that is made to look like the original of something else, usually for dishonest or illegal purposes. We're gonna read about counterfeit people in chapter two of 2 Thessalonians, but before we do, have you ever had to deal with someone pretending to be who they weren't, Nicole?

Nicole:

Yes. And you know, it truly blindsided me to discover who they truly were. You know, it makes it hard to trust people when some people are so good at being false.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

You know, it makes you wonder. They're so good that it's hard to know if they even believe that what they're trying to pretend to be is who they are.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

Like, I think you actually believe that, it's intense, you know?

Sharon:

It's intense. It is. Yeah.

Nicole:

So how about you?

Sharon:

Well, I was thinking of a really scary encounter I had with a guy who was not what he claimed to be in Germany many years ago. So, this is a long time ago. He was not a good man. We'll leave it at that. And our church had tried, especially me, very hard to help his family due to his neglect. This did not make him happy with me or with the church. So one day he shows up at our apartment, 'cause we all lived in apartments, in Germany. Ray wasn't home, so I certainly didn't let him in. I stepped out into the stairwell and said hi. And he said, Hey, I just need you to do me a favor. Would you do me a favor? I would be so grateful. I'm like, oh, he's being nice.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

Okay. So he said, we're leaving soon for the States and I don't have time to mail this box, and you've been so nice to my wife. Would you mind mailing this package for me? And I thought, oh, a chance to be kind. He likes me now.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

Right. So I take the package and I said, sure. I will. You know, and thinking, Oh Lord, maybe he's changed. Right?

Nicole:

This is an easy way to help. I can mail this.

Sharon:

Yeah. So then I noticed he put my return address, you know, and then he had it, you know, to where he was gonna be.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

And the Lord prompted me. I know it was the Lord because of what you're about to hear. I thought, what if there's something in this package that shouldn't be in this package?

Nicole:

Oh, my goodness.

Sharon:

And my return address is on it with my name.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

So I said, I think I need to look, Lord, I feel really guilty opening somebody else's package. But he did put it in my care.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

So I opened it up and I'm feeling through all his stuff, including underwear. And I found a gun.

Nicole:

Oh my goodness.

Sharon:

A Persian Gulf War gun.

Nicole:

Wow.

Sharon:

Yeah. So I took my hands off it. I called the police, the military police. And I said, so somebody asked me to mail a package for them and there's a gun in the package and could you come over here please?

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

So they came over and they said, it is really good you opened that because it would not have gotten through the X-ray machine.

Nicole:

Okay.

Sharon:

And it's your name on it.

Nicole:

Oh, wow. Good glory. That could have been so bad.

Sharon:

I know, it could have been really, really, really bad for me.

Nicole:

Oh my word, Sharon.

Sharon:

So for years I used to say, 'cause then of course he got in big trouble, if I'm ever found murdered, and I'd tell people his name.

Nicole:

Check with him first.

Sharon:

Go after him. Right. Yeah. It's been years now. So, 'cause I was shaken like a little leaf.

Nicole:

Oh, that's so frightening.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

Like, what was he intending to do? Like what was his thought for giving that to you, you know? Obviously not for-

Sharon:

Well, probably, I think what his thought was, if I get it through, I can sell this for a lot of money because it's a war souvenir.

Nicole:

Oh, sure.

Sharon:

And if it doesn't go through, I know exactly who I'd like to get in trouble for it.

Nicole:

Right. Have her take the fall.

Sharon:

So people aren't always what they seem.

Nicole:

Oh, my goodness.

Sharon:

And although he initially wasn't a bad guy, when he was so nice to me, I was willing to believe him again.

Nicole:

I know.

Sharon:

Because I like to believe that people are good.

Nicole:

Yep.

Sharon:

Even bad guys can be good. He wasn't good.

Nicole:

No.

Sharon:

No. Alright. Well, let's look at this tricky chapter, shall we? Yes. Nicole, why don't you start and we will read back and forth.

Nicole:

All right. So starting verse one of chapter two. "Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him."

Sharon:

"Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don't believe them. Even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us."

Nicole:

"Don't be fooled by what they say, for that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God. And the man of lawlessness is revealed, the one who brings destruction."

Sharon:

"He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call God and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God claiming that he himself is God."

Nicole:

"Don't you remember what I told you about all this when I was with you?"

Sharon:

"And you know what is holding him back for he can be revealed only when his time comes."

Nicole:

"For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way."

Sharon:

"Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed. But the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by the splendor of his coming"

Nicole:

"This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles."

Sharon:

"He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them."

Nicole:

"So God will cause them to be greatly deceived and they will believe these lies."

Sharon:

"Then they will be condemned for enjoying evil rather than believing the truth."

Nicole:

"As for us, we can't help but thank God for you dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are always thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation. A salvation that came through the Spirit, who makes you holy. And through your belief in the truth."

Sharon:

"He called you to salvation when he told you the good news. Now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Nicole:

"With all these things in mind dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we pass on to you both in person and by letter."

Sharon:

"Now, may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us, and by his grace, gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope,"

Nicole:

"Comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say."

Sharon:

Oh my goodness. He always, I mean, this is the middle of the letter. This is chapter two. And here he is giving them comfort. And it almost sounds like a conclusion. But he's just concluding the hard part again.

Nicole:

He's a wonderful encourager and a wonderful writer, counselor. He's fantastic.

Sharon:

He is.

Nicole:

We would do well to take some more of his style, you know?

Sharon:

Oh, my goodness. Yeah.

Nicole:

The encouragement in between the hard.

Sharon:

Right in between, he inserts all these good things.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

Yeah. But when we go verse by verse to figure this out, Nicole, I wanna make a side note now to our listeners. So, okay, listeners, this passage that is so hard to understand is why Nicole and I believe so strongly that we can read the Bible on our own and get insight. But we also need to rely on wise teachers and scholars for interpretation and understanding some of these hard passages, 'cause quite frankly, the man of lawlessness and the antichrist is a hard passage for me. We need the body of Christ. Being a believer alone goes against the design God established for his church. We're supposed to work together. And when I am confused about a scripture passage, I am so glad I have pastors to whom I can turn, who have studied these passages in far greater depth. Podcasts, Bible studies are great, but we all still need to belong to a local body of believers, just like the Thessalonians did in their local church. All that to say, our limited understanding, what we're about to share with you all of these verses, is not enough. We hope that if a verse stands out to you and makes you curious, that you will research it further and ask your own pastor for help. Let's be thankful for these shepherds who help us with the hard parts. The ones that have studied the originals in Greek and Hebrew, which we have not done.

Nicole:

Yes. Not yet.

Sharon:

So here we go, Nicole.

Nicole:

Here we go. I know. This is tough.

Sharon:

Seeking to understand God's word to us in 2 Thessalonians chapter two. But just kind of giving this caveat here, we're just Sharon and Nicole. If something we say doesn't set right, well, you're probably right.

Nicole:

Because we're trying to learn it too.

Sharon:

Go talk to your pastors.

Nicole:

Yes. That's when you ask a pastor.

Sharon:

The only part that is sacred here is when we read God's word.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

The rest is us doing our best with our limited knowledge to understand it.

Nicole:

Absolutely.

Sharon:

So give us some grace here.

Nicole:

Lots of grace, like Paul did. So much grace.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

We'll take it all.

Sharon:

Okay. Nicole, you get to start with verse one this time.

Nicole:

Yes. This is a gentle introduction to this passage. So he says, "Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him". So, Paul's heart, man, his heart for truth here, he starts out caring. He reminds them, you know. Dear brothers and sisters, [they] are dear to him. But he wants to clear up the confusion for them because his heart really is for God's truth.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

So he is like, okay, let's clarify some things here, about God. So I like that. He's, you know, he is kind and encouraging, but truth, let's clear some things up.

Sharon:

Absolutely. And clearly they'd had something happen, somebody had come to them and told them some things that weren't true.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

And they might have even pretended to be Paul. There's a part where it says, letters supposedly from me.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

You know, so they've been, they've had a counterfeit show up to say some things.

Nicole:

Something definitely got messy, enough to get back to his attention and have to address it specifically.

Sharon:

Right. Exactly. So verse two says, "Don't be so easily shaken and alarmed by those who say," (so here's what they said,) "that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don't believe them. Even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation or a letter supposedly from us."

Nicole:

Wow.

Sharon:

That must have driven Paul crazy.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

But the letter was from you. No, it wasn't.

Nicole:

No.

Sharon:

'Cause the day of the Lord is not here.

Nicole:

Wow.

Sharon:

Shoot. I mean, we get that now with people that clone Facebook accounts.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

And pretend they're somebody else. Guess what? There's nothing new under the sun.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

It happened back then too. People pretending to be who they were not.

Nicole:

And that would feel really scary to have that, like, Oh no, I didn't say that. Like Paul's letters were very important to them, so for them to say, oh, we had a letter from you saying this, that must have really hurt his heart. Like, Oh, no!

Sharon:

Oh, my goodness.

Nicole:

Like this, this is heavy. they were trying really hard to convince you of this.

Sharon:

Yes. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Okay. So, well, we can't be naive ourselves either. We can't get shaken and alarmed by, you know, the way I see current events, the world will end within the next two years.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

And people say that.

Nicole:

Oh, people say that all the time. There's always a doomsday.

Sharon:

Yeah. And they've saying it for 2000 years.

Nicole:

Right, right.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. So not every person who thinks they have end times figured out actually does.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

Okay. So we need to be cautious. And that's for them, who were being actually led astray. But we can be led astray too. You know, there are scary things happening right now in our world.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

There are things that make me think, Oh, maybe the end times are close. That's okay. We're supposed to always think they're close.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

But we're not supposed to pinpoint it. Even the Son of Man, Jesus, when he lived on earth, did not know.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

And we're not gonna know. It's coming like a thief in the night, which we read about in the 1 Thessalonians.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

So let's not get shaken and alarmed. 'cause fear is not from God.

Nicole:

No, it's not. Oh. So verse three continues with more of that. "Don't be fooled by what they say, for that day will not come until there's a great rebellion against God. And the man of law lawlessness is revealed, the one who brings destruction." Whew. So don't be fooled by what they say. I think we also long to have control and have that insider's glimpse of what's gonna happen, don't we?

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

And so we're so drawn to, oh, well this person says this and connected this Bible verse. So maybe, maybe he is coming in three weeks. So I think we all just want to know.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

But don't be fooled by what they say. I mean he does, but he does give us some signs it seems to be aware of.

Sharon:

Yes, he does.

Nicole:

So he's not just like, chill out. What will be will be what happens. He's like, okay, this is what's---, there's gonna be rebellion against God it seems. A man of lawlessness is gonna be revealed who's going to bring destruction. So as he says before, don't scoff at prophecies.

Sharon:

Right.

Nicole:

But be wise, don't be fooled by every person saying they're Paul.

Sharon:

Exactly. Exactly. And the man of lawlessness, Paul knows, has not yet shown up.

Nicole:

Right. So we say, Okay.

Sharon:

Yeah. So verse four explains this man of lawlessness, that he's also antichrist, people call him that as well. It says in verse four, "He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call God and every object of worship". So he is gonna defy all gods, "gods" out there, and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God.

Nicole:

Oh, wow.

Sharon:

So here's some prophecy.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

So many people look for the time when on Temple Mount, a Jewish temple will be built again.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Right now it hasn't been. And they think, and again, I'm not walking down that road. God can come whenever he wants.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

I'm not gonna---, but they think, and I see why from this verse that the temple will have to be rebuilt in order for the antichrist to sit in it.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

Claiming to be God.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

So it is a sign, and we don't understand it yet, but I believe that just like Isaiah 53 didn't make a whole lot of sense until Jesus was the Lamb that was slain.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

Some of these things will make perfect sense at the time we need to know them.

Nicole:

Yep.

Sharon:

So we need to study them.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

'Cause that time is coming.

Nicole:

Right. No, that's true. I think sometimes it's kinda like reading a horoscope or something like, oh, well this could, you could kind of like put things into prophecy. Like, oh, well this seems to fit.

Sharon:

Right. Right.

Nicole:

And unless you're actually in it, then you say, okay. Like when Jesus came, oh, now Isaiah makes sense.

Sharon:

Right.

Nicole:

It fits perfectly.

Sharon:

Right.

Nicole:

I wouldn't have put that together. I couldn't have put it together.

Sharon:

Exactly. Exactly. Yeah.

Nicole:

So in verse five, he says, "Don't you remember that I told you about all this when I was with you?" So he is reminding them, Hey, we've talked about this. Like, I was there with you. I said these words, I was in there with, you know, in person. So hold fast to those. Don't forget, but hold fast to what you know, you know when you hear these false words and these false teachers. What do you know? You know the truth. You've heard it, don't forget.

Sharon:

Exactly. So if Paul told them one thing and then they get a supposed letter from Paul that says something totally different. Which is maybe why they wrote him and said, oh, did you write this letter? Because---

Nicole:

Yeah. It's different than what you said when you were here.

Sharon:

Exactly. So anyways, who knows? It would be interesting to ask them in heaven.

Nicole:

We will.

Sharon:

Okay. Verse six. "And you know what is holding him back for he can be revealed only when his time comes." So that's interesting. What is holding the antichrist back?

Nicole:

I know.

Sharon:

Charles Swindoll, a pastor that I trust, in my Charles Swindoll's Study Bible, posits that perhaps the Holy Spirit is what is holding him back. And as long as the church is here before the rapture and the Holy Spirit's dwelling within all of us,

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

He's held back.

Nicole:

Wow.

Sharon:

But when we're raptured and the Holy Spirit isn't present in people.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

Although some will come to know the Lord again at that time. But when that's gone, there'll be no more restraint.

Nicole:

Wow.

Sharon:

So that was interesting.

Nicole:

Something to think about. Yeah.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

And that helps bring back that power that God puts within us. Like we have God living in us.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

Wow!

Sharon:

So what happens if we're raptured and all that power is now removed from the earth. Then everything held back is gone.

Nicole:

Wow.

Sharon:

So that is a possibility.

Nicole:

Something to think about. So where am I? Verse, okay, so this one. "For this lawlessness is already at work secretly, and it will remain secret until the one who is holding it back steps out of the way." Wow. So it could be the Holy Spirit. We don't know.

Sharon:

We don't know.

Nicole:

That's interesting. So, you know, it feels like there is so much going on around us. Like I feel like we get glimpses of this. You know, in the seen and the unseen world, sometimes you just hear a news story and are like, Ooh, that just, there's something more going on in that.

Sharon:

Right.

Nicole:

This sounds like end times, this kind of reflects this verse. Huh. And it's all to make us more aware.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

And to keep us close to God. Okay. God, I see something going on. What's happening? Walk with me through this. Give me wisdom.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

In how to live in these end times.

Sharon:

Exactly so, exactly so. Verse eight, "Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed." (But, this is my favorite part.) "But the Lord Jesus will slay him with a breath of his mouth."

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Bam.

Nicole:

Just his breath.

Sharon:

I know.

Nicole:

Just his breath. Just, you're gone.

Sharon:

Yeah. A little breath.

Nicole:

I love that.

Sharon:

And destroy him by the splendor of is coming. Oh. For crying out loud. This is just so cool. And this would, I'm using the word fun in a really odd sense here. This would be fun if I'm being persecuted severely someday by some evil person.

Nicole:

Oh sure.

Sharon:

If I just think of Jesus' breath going puff, and think you're only being allowed to do this because the time has not yet come. But he could destroy you with his breath.

Nicole:

Wow.

Sharon:

And it makes me think of Jacob. When Jacob was wrestling with God all night and it looked like Jacob was gonna win. God's letting him think he's so tough. And then God takes one finger and goes plink on his hip and Jacob collapses.

Nicole:

There is goes, I know.

Sharon:

So we think we're so cool.

Nicole:

I know.

Sharon:

But, no.

Nicole:

It's like when he talked to Job, like, who are you, Oh man?

Sharon:

Exactly.

Nicole:

Like, I made you.

Sharon:

Yeah. It's like a little ant with his little dukes up fighting a human.

Nicole:

I know. You're like, awe.

Sharon:

And the human just goes, step.

Nicole:

Right

Sharon:

There goes the ant. Right.

Nicole:

Oh my goodness.

Sharon:

So fun.

Nicole:

That's a good verse.

Sharon:

Oh man. Okay.

Nicole:

So this man will come to do with the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. So it's pretty clear he's not from God. He's coming from Satan with counterfeit power. But apparently he'll be fairly convincing.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

You know, this reminds me of when Moses was talking to Pharaoh.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

You know, and the signs. And he would do a sign from God and so would the priest. And it was like, okay. Well they up to a certain point though.

Sharon:

Right.

Nicole:

Satan's power is only so good. There was a point in all of those signs and wonders where they could not copy it anymore.

Sharon:

That's right.

Nicole:

So it's just like, okay. Yeah. So this guy's gonna come and he is gonna have power, but it's counterfeit and he can only do so much. We have to remember that he is only allowed to be this person of lawlessness, this antichrist because God is allowing it.

Sharon:

Absolutely. One breath and he'll be gone.

Nicole:

Yep. And that breath comes and he's done. So let's take heart in that.

Sharon:

Absolutely.

Nicole:

Satan's power is limited and we serve the One with the mighty breath.

Sharon:

I've never heard it said that way before. It's so true though. We serve the One with the mighty breath.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

Oh, that's so cool. That'd be a fun study, the breath of God.

Nicole:

I know. It does quite a bit. Gave us life. And spoke the word. Yeah.

Sharon:

Oh, that's fun, ok, well sure.

Nicole:

Another podcast.

Sharon:

I know. Back to verse 10. Okay. "He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction." And then this is the phrase I really wanted to camp on, "because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them".

Nicole:

Oh, so hard.

Sharon:

Here we are back again.

Nicole:

Yep.

Sharon:

The truth would save them, but they're refusing to love and accept it. And the one thing God will not do is force you. The way he's made love, love can't be forced.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

So you can't, they get to choose and they refuse to choose.

Nicole:

That's so sad. So, verse 11. "So God will cause them to be greatly deceived and they will believe these lies." This is a hard verse. This is a hard verse to understand and to read. Because he is full of grace and mercy, but God will cause them to be greatly deceived. So I wonder if this is because of their unbelief. 'Cause he mentioned the verse before, they refused to love him.

Sharon:

Right. Yeah.

Nicole:

And they refused to accept the truth. So then he causes them to be deceived.

Sharon:

I think so. Yeah.

Nicole:

I don't think it was a, You're deceived and that, you know, I think.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. They had their chance.

Nicole:

He offered it to everyone. Yeah.

Sharon:

But there comes a point. Yeah, yeah.

Nicole:

And so now they're part of the plan. So I don't know. I think of this, as resting in his mercy and knowing that he loves those, he loves all of us so much more than we can understand. And if our heart is for the lost, God loves them even more than we do. And I'm just gonna trust that he's gonna sort it all out.

Sharon:

Yep. And he is.

Nicole:

In his mercy he knows what's best and he knows what he's doing. So.

Sharon:

He does. He does. Yeah. And they had a chance to accept the truth that would save them.

Nicole:

Right. He did offer that to them.

Sharon:

He did. Yeah. Verse 12, "Then they will be condemned for enjoying evil rather than believing the truth." You know, following God, we don't do it 'cause it's easy-peasy.

Nicole:
Right.

Sharon:
We do it 'cause it's true.

Nicole:
Yeah.

Sharon:
There is a God. He made you, he made me. He died for us. There is a place called heaven and a place called hell.

Nicole:
Right.

Sharon:
So we need to believe the truth. Even when it's not easy 'cause it's true.

Nicole:
Right. And it's worth it. So, verse 13, "As for us, we can't help but thank God for you dear brothers and sisters, loved by the Lord. We are always thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation. A salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and through your belief in the truth". Oh, I love this verse. What a beautiful break in the middle of a lot of really heavy prophecy, heavy things, to encourage and love on them again. He's so thoughtful. You know, he shows them hope in this hard letter. And I love that he calls out that you're loved by God.

Sharon:
Isn't that neat?

Nicole:
Just, oh, thanks God.

Sharon:
Sprinkled throughout, isn't it?

Nicole:
Yes.

Sharon:
He never gets too far away from that.

Nicole:

No, you were loved by God. So I just, thinks thats the best.

Sharon:

It's beautiful. Verse 14, "He called you to salvation when we told you the good news. Now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ". Oh, Jesus said that, I want you in heaven with me sharing my glory.

Nicole:

Oh wow.

Sharon:

What in the world does that mean? I have no idea.

Nicole:

I know.

Sharon:

But it sounds glorious.

Nicole:

It sounds good. I'll take it.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

"With all these things in mind dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we have passed on you, both in person and by letter." It's like he's just saying, hold on you guys.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

Hold on. A strong grip, like grabbing it like it's your lifeline. Like you're in the water and you're holding onto that rope for dear life. Hold on. To the truth you know.

Sharon:

Yep. I love it. Verse 16, "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace, gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope," (This is half of the blessing, you get to finish it, but I love how he describes God the Father. He loved us by his grace. He gives us eternal comfort. He gives us a wonderful hope. That's our God.

Nicole:

What beautiful gifts. And the other half of that blessing, "comfort you, strengthen you in every good thing you do and say." Oh, so beautiful. Don't we need both more of both of those, more comfort and more strength, you know? Especially in what we say and what we do.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

In every good thing you do and say, he gives us comfort and strength.

Sharon:

It's so nice.

Nicole:

We couldn't ask for a better gift.

Sharon:

No. We couldn't.

Nicole:

He's so generous.

Sharon:

Yeah. And again, this is not the end of the letter.

Nicole:

I know, it's like a little side note.

Sharon:

He's just like, and can I bless you again?

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

I'll give you another blessing. I should do that more. I don't sprinkle blessings in my conversations.

Nicole:

No. In the hard talks, I definitely don't, it's just slog through at the end. Like, okay, are we good? We're good. But to stop with these little blessings and encouragement. Oh. So good.

Sharon:

Yeah. It just shows that the heart of Paul is love. So, love. Okay. What was my favorite verse and why? This was hard. There were so many cool ones. But I chose verse eight. And verse eight says, "Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed, but the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth".

Nicole:

That is a fun one.

Sharon:

I couldn't resist. I just, and destroy him by the splendor was coming. I just love the imagery in this. And the reminder, no matter how big I think God is, he's bigger.

Nicole:

I know.

Sharon:

I love it.

Nicole:

It's so cool.

Sharon:

That was mine. Which one did you choose?

Nicole:

I really liked verse 12, nope, 13. It's the one that he just stops in the middle of all the hard stuff and goes, ah, I can't thank God enough for you. And that you're loved by God. And we're always thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation. So again, that little encouragement, like they were the first believers in this new way.

Sharon:

That's true. We're not the first.

Nicole:

No.

Sharon:

We're 2000 years later.

Nicole:

We're old believers.

Sharon:

They were the first.

Nicole:

But they were among the first. Like he kind of reminds them of the special position, the special gift it was to receive this, but also like, Hey, it's okay, you're working through this. This is a new way to live in Christ. I just thought that was so beautiful.

Sharon:

Oh, it was.

Nicole:

Makes you holy. I know. It's such a good verse.

Sharon:

It is.

Nicole:

I like that one.

Sharon:

What did you learn about God from this passage?

Nicole:

Ooh. His power, Sharon. His power and control. He allows all of this big stuff that's coming, this man of lawlessness, this destruction. It's only and all because of his power in allowing it to happen.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

He's in total control.

Sharon:

And he can stop it with a mighty breath.

Nicole:

Yep. And when he's done with it, he's done with it. So I just love his, his power is really exciting to read about.

Sharon:

So, so cool. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I had that too. That he'll allow evil to prosper, but only for a season. He wins.

Nicole:

Yep.

Sharon:

You know, and then he promises eternal comfort, as well. So it's hard now, but it won't always be hard. That verse in Psalms, 'weeping may endure for the night' and Oh, the night might seem long.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

'But joy comes in the morning.'

Nicole:

Absolutely. And his complete knowledge of it too. Is that omniscience, does that mean all knowledge?

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

Is that omniscience?

Sharon:

Yeah. He knows it all.

Nicole:

He knows everything. He knows the very end. So again, he's got it.

Sharon:

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And when he's looking at the whole picture, he's like, oh, I see how it ends here. Trust me on this one.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

This looks so long now. Wait till you've been in, heaven for 3000 years.

Nicole:

Right. That will not seem so bad.

Sharon:

That one year of awfulness won't seem so bad.

Nicole:

I know. It's beautiful.

Sharon:

So, okay, so what did we learn about living wisely in troubled times? What did you learn about living wisely?

Nicole:

He says it a couple times and I think it's really good to acknowledge. Hold on. Stand firm. And what am I holding onto? What am I standing firm in? God's word, you know, and his love and his grace to us. Everything else is sinking sand. I just hold onto his word.

Sharon:

So true. So true. Yep. I, the same basically, but expect troubled times.

Nicole:

Yeah. That's a good one.

Sharon:

This is all through the Bible. Expect troubled times. I just feel like almost every book in the Bible has something that either assumes trouble will happen. Shares trouble that is happening or tells you to expect trouble will happen.

Nicole:

And yet sometimes we're still surprised by it.

Sharon:

I know. Funny.

Nicole:

God knew that we would be a little---. stubborn in this.

Sharon:

Yeah. Well we were made before the fall for not this. So I think we're always a little uncomfortable with this because it's not really what we were made for. We were made for something so different, Nicole.

Nicole:

That's so true.

Sharon:

So when trouble comes, it just feels like that shouldn't be happening.

Nicole:

Yeah.

Sharon:

Well, initially it wouldn't have.

Nicole:

That wasn't the plan. We weren't made to be broken.

Sharon:

No.

Nicole:

We were made perfect.

Sharon:

No, so interesting.

Nicole:

Yeah, it is.

Sharon:

Yeah. So, and then also remember the truth that the trouble times won't last.

Nicole:

Yes. I like that part.

Sharon:

So, you know, expect troubles. Remember that they won't last. Those are my things.

Nicole:

That's so good.

Sharon:

Well, let us pray as we end this very difficult chapter where Nicole and Sharon are like The man of lawlessness, help.

Nicole:

We're not really sure what's happening, but go and study it. Talk to someone who knows.

Sharon:

Right. Oh, heavenly Father. How I thank you. How I thank you that we don't need a seminary degree to come to your word. How I thank you for good pastors, for good teachers that Nicole and I can go to when we're stuck and we're just not sure. Lord, I thank you for mystery. I thank you that even though I still don't completely understand those passages, I know so much that I do understand about you, Lord, that I can trust you with the things that are confusing. Oh Lord, all of your word is good. Help us not to run away from the hard passages, but to press in. To at least have them in our brain for the time and the

season when they'll make sense to us. Thank you. Father, thank you for your love, your comfort. Thank you for the promise that it ends well. And thank you for your mighty breath. In Jesus name, Amen.

Nicole:

Amen. We hope you enjoyed hearing from us try to figure out these difficult verses. Our goal is to just be us with you, doing our best to study and ponder God's amazing word. We'd love to hear from you. What did you think of this chapter and this episode? Write us at SweetSelah.org/podcast or at Sharon@SweetSelah.org. Donations can be given at SweetSelah.org/donations and consider becoming a podcast partner. We send a newsy little email once a month with pictures and chatter about our lives. We'd love for you to join this podcast partner family. Just donate any amount and write podcast partner in the comments. And do come back next week for our last look at the letters to the Thessalonians. Episode 123 is called Good Work. We're looking forward to that one. Until then, watch out for counterfeits and stay close to Jesus, the genuine Son of God and Messiah, our Savior.

Speaker 1:

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