

# Grow and Discern Resource Sheet

Series: *Formed for the Future, Faithful for Now*

**Date:** 6/15/25 **Title:** Faithful to Jesus as We Suffer in Our Faith in Jesus **Text:** 1 Thess. 2:13-20

Dr Jarvis' message explores how Christians must remain faithful while suffering for their faith. The Thessalonians' faith was proven authentic through their perseverance during persecution, as described in Acts 17. Dr J contrasts this with what he sees as inauthentic Christianity in America today. A key point is that God works through His Word in believers, meaning that Scripture is not optional but essential for spiritual formation and godly living.

## **Key Sermon Points**

### **1. The Thessalonians Faith Amid Persecution**

Acts 17 is where Luke records Paul preaching in Thessalonica, resulting in some positive responses but also mob violence against believers. Dr Jarvis explains that the opposition arose because the gospel proclaimed Jesus as the exclusive path to salvation and as Lord (implying Caesar was not). The Thessalonians came to faith in a context of immediate suffering, illustrating Paul's teaching that 'everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.' We don't advocate pursuing persecution but it is inevitable: 'if you're faithful for Jesus, suffering will find you because the devil is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.'

### **2. Authentic Faith is Proven Through Persecution**

Referencing 1 Thess.1:2-10, Dr Jarvis explains how Paul was certain of the Thessalonians' election by God because they suffered for their faith and persevered. He states that the authenticity of someone's faith is revealed by how they live when suffering for Jesus. Dr Jarvis criticizes what he sees as inauthentic Christianity in America, describing it as 'a straight up freak show' where professing Christians attack faithful believers, abandon spouses, commit sexual sins, claim to love the gospel while hating neighbors, and depart from Christ's teachings in word and deed. "It's easy to write books about the gospel in my comfortable seminary office, the true test is persevering in love for Jesus when threatened for that faith."

### **3. God's Word Working in Believers**

Returning to 1 Thess. 2:13, Dr Jarvis emphasizes that the Thessalonians' faith was authentic because God was working in them through His Spirit and Word. He highlights the connection between God and His Word, explaining that while God reveals Himself through creation, He reveals Himself in a special way through Scripture, which is 'God-breathed.' When believers read or hear the Bible, they're engaging with God's very word, which actively works in those who believe it: 'We exegete the word... but the word exegetes us.' So then, spiritual authenticity and vitality are based on God's living Word.

### **4. God's Word is Essential**

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God's Word is not optional but essential for Christian life. Fathers: Scripture is necessary for raising godly children and being godly fathers. Fathers must love God's Word themselves, teach it faithfully to their children, and live it out before them.

Acknowledging the church's emphasis on spiritual formation, transformation into Christ's image only happens through devotion to God's Word. It is grievous when preachers and churches that think they can 'outgrow' Scripture; how could anyone consider God's Word insufficient 'for everything pertaining to eternal life and godliness.' 'Scripture alone' doesn't mean 'only scripture' for all life matters, but that for spiritual matters, God's Word provides everything needed.

## Discussion Questions

1. In what ways is our faith tested today, and how does our response to suffering or difficulty reveal the authenticity of our faith?
2. Dr. Jarvis said, "If you're faithful for Jesus, suffering will find you." How should this shape our expectations and our discipleship?
3. Why is it significant that the Thessalonians received Paul's preaching "not as a human word, but as it actually is—the word of God"? What does that mean for our daily lives?
4. What are some signs that the Word of God is **at work** in a believer's life? Can you identify areas in your life where you've seen this work clearly—or where you long to see more?
5. How do we guard against inauthentic Christianity in ourselves, our churches, and our culture? What practices and convictions can help us pursue a genuine walk with Christ?

## Meditating on Formation

1. **"Authentic faith is proven through persecution."** *Invite the Lord to deepen your trust in Him, especially in areas where it may cost you something to stay faithful.*
2. **"We exegete the Word... but the Word exegetes us."** *Sit before Scripture not only to understand it, but to allow it to search and shape your heart.*
3. **"Scripture is essential, not optional, for spiritual formation."** *Consider where the Word holds central place in your life, and where you may be tempted to look elsewhere for transformation.*