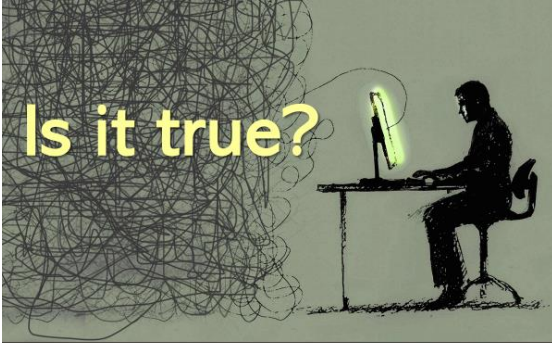


**Is it True?**  
Acts 17:10-15

June 7, 2020



Is it true?

Sooke Baptist Church, Sunday, June 7, 10am  
Facebook Live Stream and YouTube

**Coffee/Question:**  
How do you figure out if something you've been told is:

TRUE  
 FALSE

Sooke Baptist Church, Sunday, June 7, 10am  
Facebook Live Stream and YouTube

**Acts 17:10-15**

**Read v.10a.**



**Read v.10b.**

Here we see it again.

The team flees... and no sooner do they arrive in a new town, they set out to do the very thing that had caused them to have to flee from the previous town.

I remind you that Paul was not stubborn.

Nor did he have a death wish.

What influenced him was his own encounter, years earlier, with the risen Lord Jesus Christ... outside of the city of Damascus.



**Read v.11a**

A contrast is made... between the Jews of Berea and the Jews of Thessalonica.

Interestingly enough...what was contrasted was their character...as evidenced by how they responded to the news of Jesus.

After three Sabbath days of reasoning from the Scriptures, the Thessalonians Jews rejected the gospel message and started a riot in that city with the intent to kill Paul and Silas.

But this was not the response of the Bereans Jews.

**Read v.11b.**

Because the Bereans were of more noble character...

- Received
- Examined

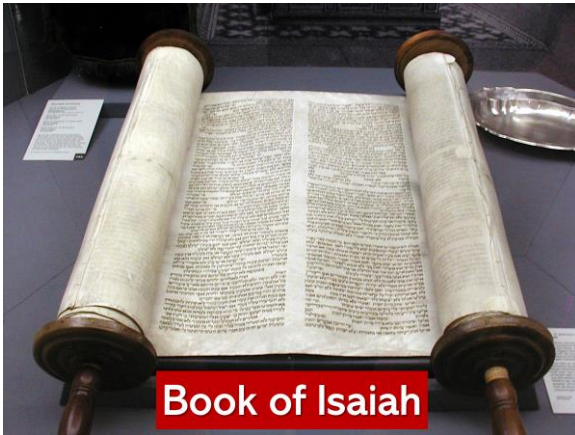
...they received the message of Jesus with great eagerness (they did not react with jealousy or close-mindedness).

...they examined the Scriptures every day to verify if what Paul said was true.

As he did everywhere, Paul reasoned with them from the OT Scriptures.

We might think that Paul carried with him a copy of the OT that is like ours – in a book form.

But this was not the case.



In that day, because the books of the OT were handwritten on scrolls, they were bulky and extremely costly.

Only a person of wealth or a synagogue would have had the resources to purchase them.

So how was Paul able to reason from the Scriptures?

Because as a rabbi he would have memorized the entire OT.

He carried the 39 books of the OT, not on a pack mule, but in his mind.

As he preached... Paul quoted Scripture from memory.

He explained and presented the evidence that Jesus was the Christ who had to suffer and rise from the dead, and the Berean after listening to him...



How did they do this?

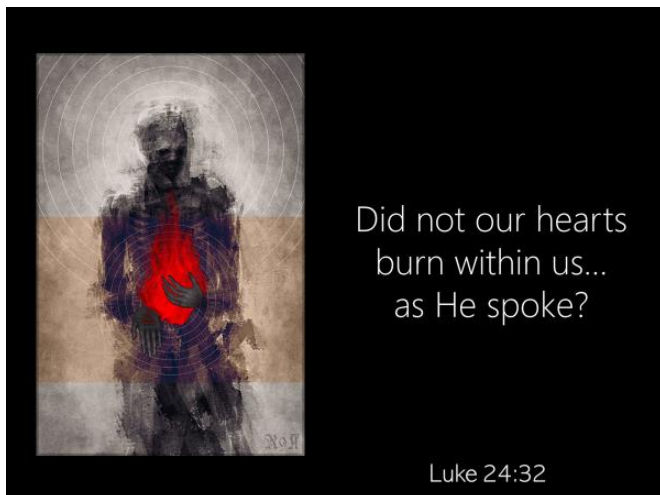
Like Paul they didn't own a personal copy of the OT.

The Scriptures they examined were the Scriptures kept in their synagogue.

They searched for the passages Paul had quoted, and then read and re-read them, discussing them and comparing them to other passages that Paul had linked together. They did so, because they were endeavoring to determine... if what Paul had told them was true...or false.

Did you notice that they did so...daily?

Why do you think that was?



I believe as they listened to Paul preach the good news of Jesus, day after day... there was “**a burning within their hearts,**” similar to that of the two disciples who had walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

As Jesus had opened the Scriptures for them, he helped them to see with clarity what had always been there... the signposts that had pointed ahead to him; the people and incidents from the past and distant past... that had foreshadowed who he would be and what he would do.

What Jesus did... on the road to Emmaus... was what the Holy Spirit did through Paul in Berea...and what he does in our day and time.

John 16:8-14

<sup>8</sup> When he comes, **he will convict the world of guilt** in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment:

<sup>9</sup> **about sin**, because people do not believe in me; <sup>10</sup> **about righteousness**, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; <sup>11</sup> and **about judgment**, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

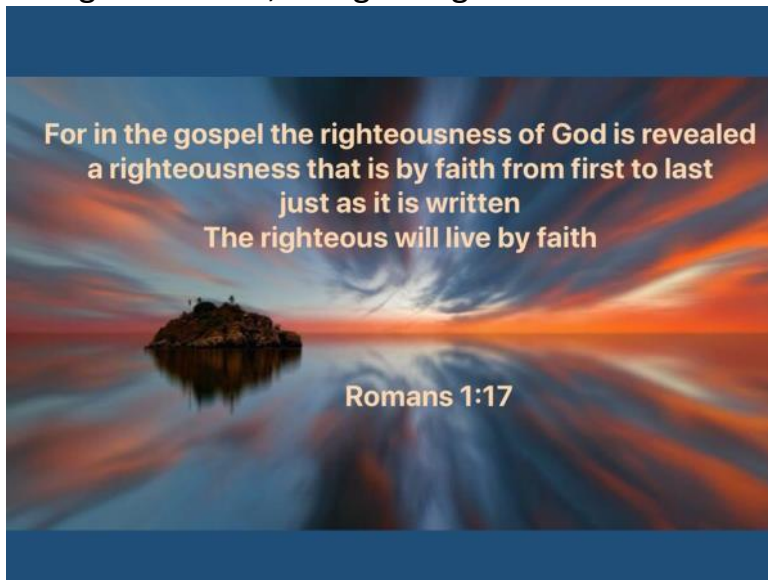
**About sin:**

The Holy Spirit convicts a person of how they have sidelined and ignored Jesus.

### **About righteousness:**

Even if it were possible, we can't earn righteousness...our best efforts fall short of what is acceptable to God.

But because Jesus died in our place and then three days later rose from the dead and then forty days later bodily ascended into heaven, God gives to those who trust in Jesus, his righteousness, as a gift of grace.



### **John 16:8-14**

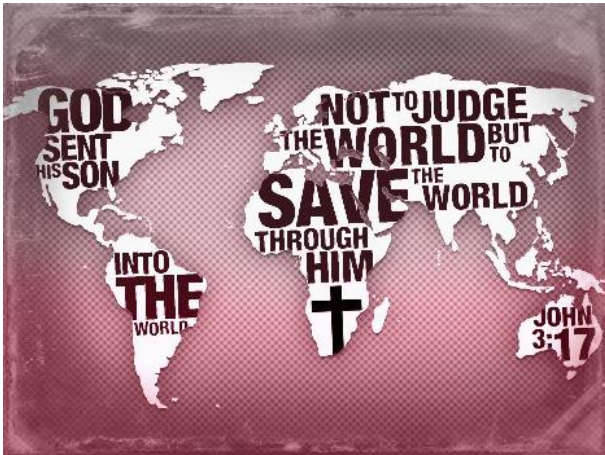
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### **About judgment:**

Because of Jesus' victory... in this present time ... an amnesty is offered by God...to the world of humanity.

The Bible tells us that the reason God does this is because he loves the world; this is why he sent Jesus into the world...



... that he might save the world through him.

It is the Holy Spirit who convinces and persuades a person to receive God's amnesty by receiving...



...Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.  
1 Thessalonians 1:10

Even though there was much more that Jesus needed to say to his disciple, he did emphasize the following...

John 16:8-14

<sup>12</sup>“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. <sup>13</sup>But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide** you into all the truth.

He will not speak on his own; **he will speak** only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. <sup>14</sup>**He will glorify me** because it is from me that he will receive what **he will make known** to you.

As Paul reasoned from the Scriptures, it was the Holy Spirit who worked through him to illumine the minds of the Bereans to see and to understand the truth of Jesus Christ.

**Read v.12.**

Those who believed and who trusted their life to Jesus, willingly placed themselves under the authority of God and his Word.



This is basic Christianity.

And it is the only posture enables the believer to thrive in this world in this present time.

**What happened next in Berea explains what I mean by this.**

**Read v.13-15.**

Why did this kind of trouble keep happening to Paul and his associates?

In Acts 14, it was the Jews from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium who travelled 110+kms to Lystra to persecute Paul and Barnabus.

Now here in Acts 17, the Jews from Thessalonica do the same.



But why?

Why did they go to the lengths to which they went?



Why make a full day's journey to another city?

If the gospel is true and not false, how are we to understand; how do we make sense of this kind of hostility?

When he was in Thessalonica, Paul had spoken to the believers about this. In his first letter to them, Paul reminded them of what he had taught them from the Scriptures and from the teaching of Jesus.

We sent Timothy...to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that no one would be **unsettled by these trials (thlipsis)**.

For you know quite well that we are **destined** for them. In fact, when we were with you, we kept telling you that we would be persecuted. And it turned out that way, as you well know.

1 Thessalonians 3:2-4

The word trial in the Greek language is thlipsis... meaning to squeeze or place under pressure or to be crushed beneath a weight. [https://www.preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians\\_31-3](https://www.preceptaustin.org/1thessalonians_31-3)  
John MacArthur writes that "thlipsis ...was used of squeezing olives... in a press in order to extract the oil ...and of squeezing grapes... to extract the juice..."

(MacArthur, J: Romans 1-8. Chicago: Moody Press)

Thlipsis in the NT does not refer to the normal pressures of everyday life...

...work

...health

...relationships – family, friends, neighbors

...expectations of others

...paying bills

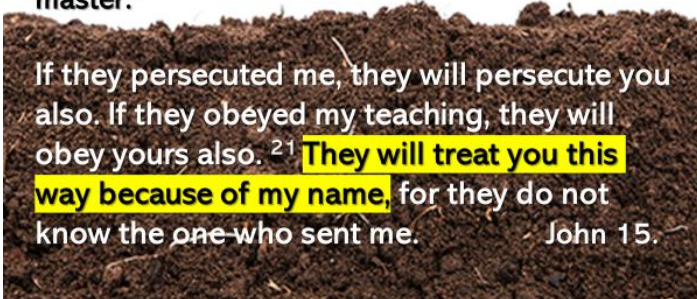
...care giving...children and parents

...death of family and loved ones

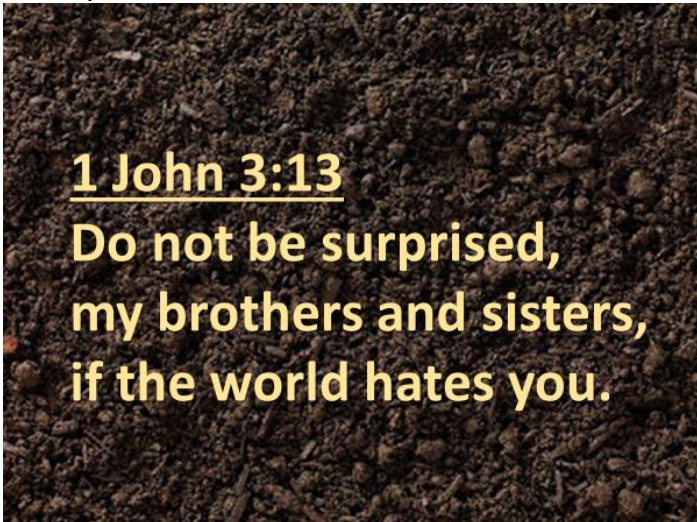
...but to the inevitable troubles.... that come upon all followers of Christ.... because of **our relationship with Jesus** and **our commitment to live under His Word.**

The night before his death Jesus spoke to his disciples about persecution.

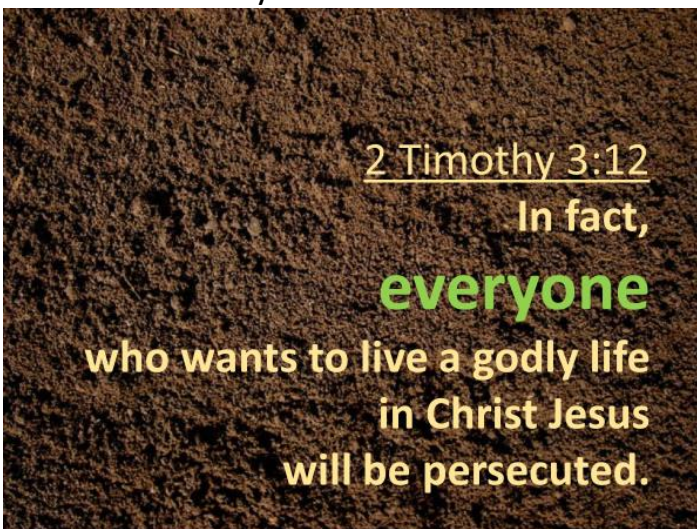
<sup>19</sup> If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. **That is why the world hates you.** <sup>20</sup> Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.'



The apostle John echoed these words in his first letter:



Paul told Timothy in his second letter to him:



Paul and Barnabus told the churches in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch:

Acts 14:22  
We must  
go through  
many hardships (thlipsis)  
to enter  
the kingdom of God.

To the church at Philippi **Paul** wrote:

Philippians 1:29  
For it has been granted to you  
on behalf of Christ  
not only to believe in him,  
but also to suffer for him...

It is normal; it is to be expected... that a follower of Jesus will be hated and persecuted; and will face hardship and suffering because they no longer belong to this world; but to God.

This ownership... is what sets the follower of Jesus apart.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20  
<sup>19</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are  
temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you,  
whom you have received from God?  
  
**You are not your own;**  
  
<sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price. Therefore  
honor God with your bodies.

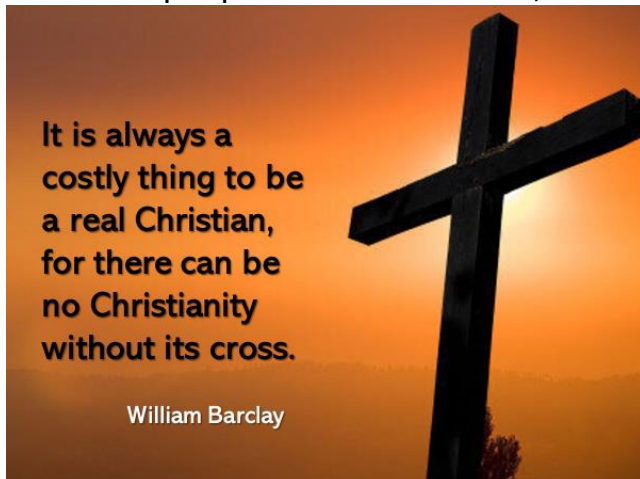
Who we are; and how we live in this present time is defined and shaped by our relationship with God.

- We are his dearly loved children.
- We joyfully obey him – not because of duty; but because of love.
- We choose him and his ways... because... his goodness has satisfied the thirst and the hunger of our soul.

We stand with Jesus because... he stood in... for us.

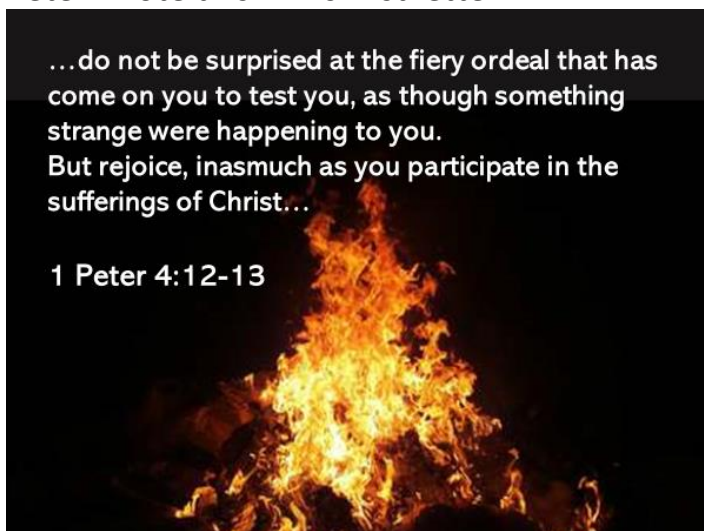
We stand under his Word because... he stood under... our sin.

The scripture is upfront in what it says to all who would follow Jesus. Jesus told people to count the cost; to be willing to take up the cross.



(Barclay, W: The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. ed. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press)

Trouble and persecution are part of the Christian life. Peter wrote this in his first letter...



In such a fiery ordeal Satan will probe for opportunities...

- to tempt the believer to question the character of God – “if God is good... strong... wise.... sovereign... how could this... have happened?”
- to drive a wedge between the believer and God.

But knowing this Paul asked this question of the church at Rome...



The answer given by the Holy Spirit through the pen of Paul is loud and clear – **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**

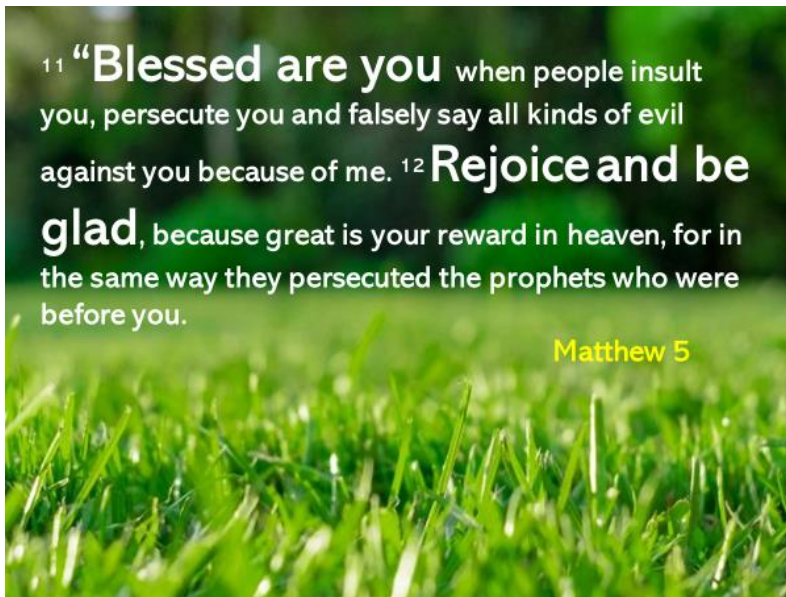
I say it again...the teaching of the Bible – is that trials and persecution are normal, not abnormal.... that troubles and persecution do not just touch a select few but is the destiny of all who follow Jesus.

If this is the case, and it is, then why would anyone choose to follow Jesus?

**Because life on this earth without God is like a ship going down.**  
**Life without God is like trying to get water from a dry well.**  
**Life without God is like being a scarecrow – it is hollow and empty.**

What then is to be the perspective of the follower of Jesus in the face of hardship?

In the beatitudes, Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus told his disciples:



Jesus didn't say ...if, he said .... when.

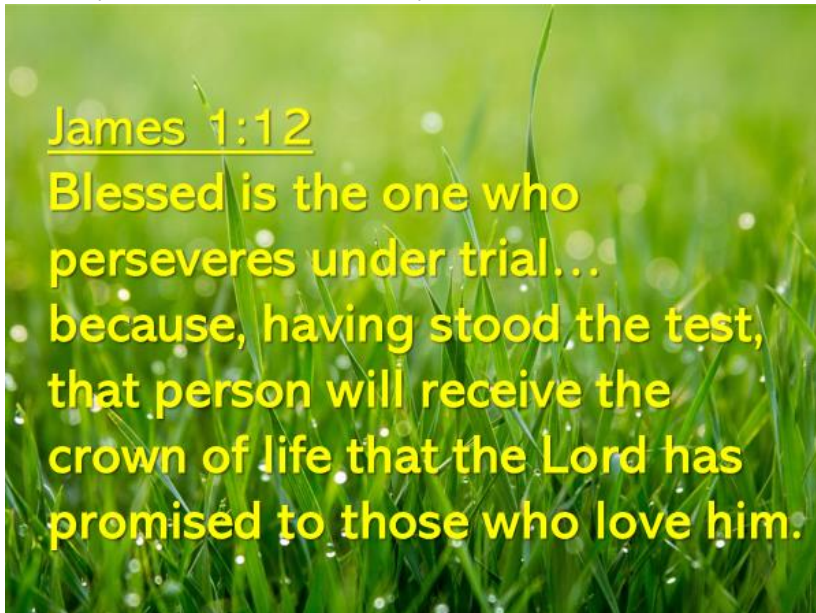
Insults and persecution that touch our life because of our association with Jesus, is not an indicator of God's disfavor, but is proof of his blessing and confirmation that we belong to him.

Is this double speak?

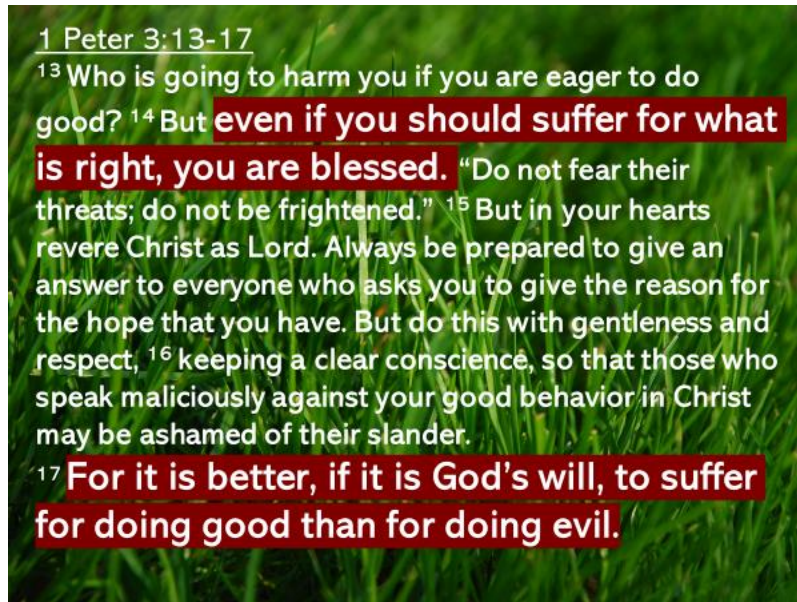
Is this mind manipulation?

The reason a believer rejoices... is because of the reward that will be theirs in heaven.

James, the brother of Jesus, wrote of this in his letter:



Peter too wrote of this:



Suffering in the believer's life is not an accident or the cause of random chance. What touches our lives passes first through the hands of our heavenly Father. Remember...it was the Father's will to crush Jesus in order to save us. It was a destiny Jesus embraced and pursued as evidenced by his affirmation: "Not my will, but yours be done."

I am not saying that the sufferings of those who follow Jesus... in any capacity.... pay the sin debt of ...anyone.

But our willingness to suffer because of Jesus.... is a means used by God:

- to expose the reality and the horror of sin,
- to reveal to a person their personal need of God, and
- to open a person's eyes to the beauty, love and great worth of Jesus our Savior, for why else would a follower of his willingly choose hardship?

To the church at Corinth, Paul explained why the believer does not lost heart in the face of troubles (thlipsis).

The Bible and the Spirit teaches us to view them with our eyes fixed on Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 4:17-18**  
**17 For our light and momentary troubles (thlipsis) are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

What God the Spirit helps us to do is place on a scale... as it were...



...our present troubles in contrast to our inheritance in Jesus Christ. And when we do, we see that our troubles are actually

**2 Corinthians 4:17-18**  
**17 For our light and momentary troubles (thlipsis) are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.**

...light and momentary...when compared to our inheritance.



When we face hardship because of Jesus, because of our commitment to live under his Word...we are to come alongside of one another.

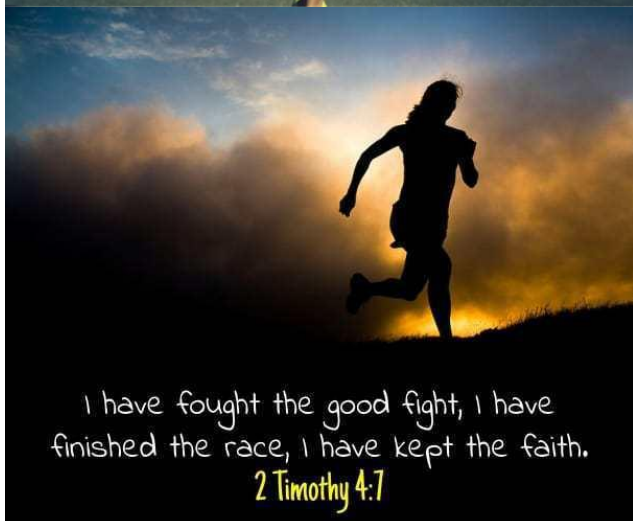
For what purpose?

**To strengthen and encourage one another in our faith** as Paul did with the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 3:2

We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, **to strengthen and encourage you in your faith...**

In what way are we to encourage one another?





austinprecept.org

Bristlecone pines are the world's oldest living trees. Several are estimated to be 3,000 to 4,000 years old. In 1957, Edmund Schulman found one he named "Methuselah." This ancient, gnarled pine is nearly 5,000 years old! It was an old tree when the Egyptians were building the pyramids.

Bristlecones grow atop the mountains of the western United States at elevations of 10,000 to 11,000 feet.

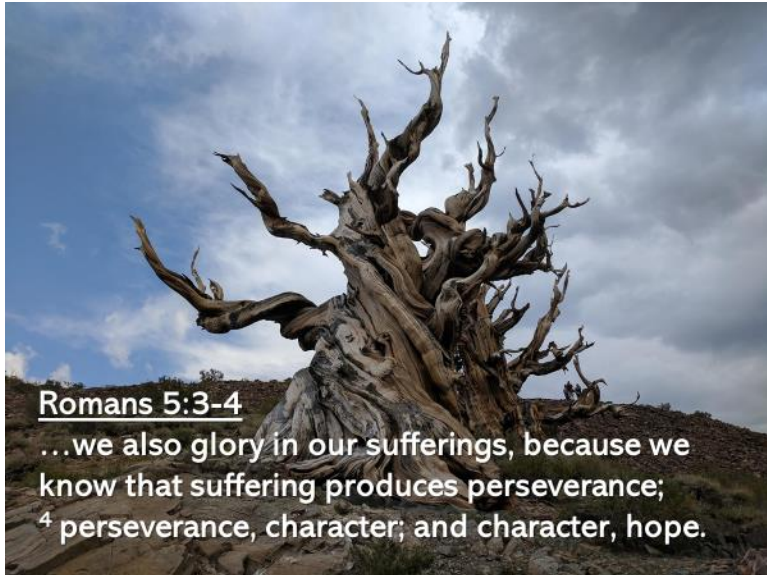
They've been able to survive some of the harshest living conditions on earth: arctic temperatures, fierce winds, thin air, and little rainfall.

Their brutal environment is actually one of the reasons they've survived for millennia.

**Hardship has produced extraordinary strength and staying power.**

A second reason we come alongside one another is **to remind one another of the ways of God...** as the Scripture teaches.

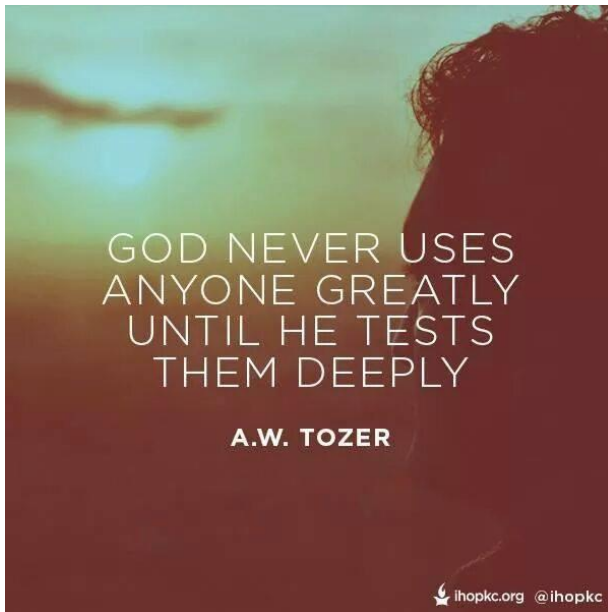
Paul wrote to the church at Rome:



**Romans 5:3-4**

...we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;  
4 perseverance, character; and character, hope.

This is how God works.



GOD NEVER USES  
ANYONE GREATLY  
UNTIL HE TESTS  
THEM DEEPLY

A.W. TOZER

lhopc.org @ihopc

He uses suffering.... to produce in us...perseverance.

And as we grow in perseverance...he is forging in us a Christ-like character.

As he transforms our person, from the inside out, we have hope...hope that we belong to him; that we are his children, his heirs.

A third way we come alongside one another is **to pray for one another.**

David Roper writes....Don't just pray for relief from affliction, but for the grace to trust God to turn a trial, a hardship, a persecution into the means to save many lives, as he did in the days of OT Joseph.

## The Blessing



## 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

**<sup>16</sup> May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.**

**A man rejects God neither because of intellectual demands nor because of the scarcity of evidence. A man rejects God because of a moral resistance that refuses to admit his need for God.**

Ravi Zacharias

quotefancy

Imagine that a visitor came to Sooke.

Try and picture him each day in the core of our city, talking with people, and presenting what he believed to be the evidence that the earth is flat, and all the implications that go along with such a viewpoint.

If you heard the visitor speak, on what basis would you believe the message he announced or on what basis would you disregard his message?

Would you decide on the basis of whether or not the visitor's message felt believable to you; or whether the visitor was personable/likeable; or whether others stood with him who believed as he did; or whether he was a good communicator?

Or would you decide on the basis of the evidence?

Was his position reasonable, verifiable?

Could it be proved?

Does it fit with reality?

Does it make sense of the world we live in?

- A ship that sails into the horizon going directly east, never veering in any way... does it drop off the edge of the earth, never to be seen again? Or does it return but from the west?
- What about a lunar eclipse? As the Earth passes between the moon and sun, the sun projects Earth's shadow onto the Moon...and it is a round shadow that crosses a round object.
- Climb a tree. If the earth were flat, your vision would extend exactly as far while standing at the base of the tree as it would when at the top of the tree. However, the farther you climb, the farther your line of sight will extend to the horizon. That's because parts of Earth that were concealed from view by its curvature are now revealed because your position has changed.
- Look at pictures of the earth from the space station. Is it flat or is it a globe?

My Irish grandfather was a pastor.

I remember him telling me the story of a person he talked to about the gospel of Jesus. This person told him they didn't believe the Bible; didn't believe that Jesus was the Son of God who gave his life to rescue humanity from sin and death.

Grandpa listened and then asked – I assume you've reached this conclusion on the basis of having read the NT and having done some kind of research, thinking, processing to have reached this conclusion.

Can you tell me what convinced you that it wasn't true?

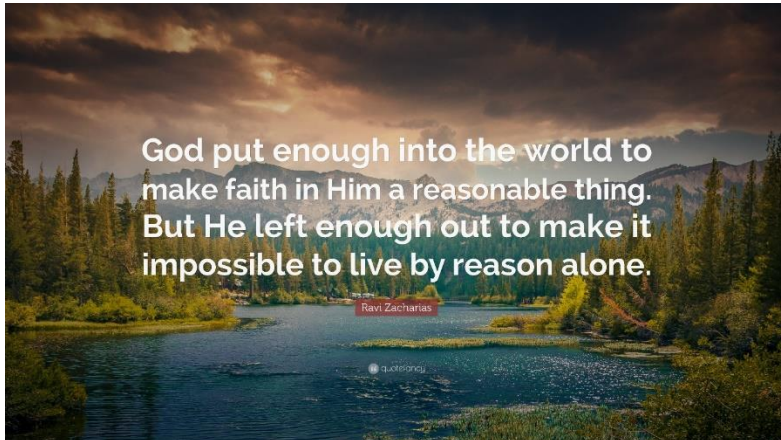
The person replied – I didn't. I've just heard others say it wasn't true.

Grandpa then responded with this question – why wouldn't you think for yourself? Why wouldn't you at the very least examine the evidence for yourself and then decide?

Paul reasoned with the Bereans from the Scriptures.

The evidence he put before them was not subjective but objective; it was verifiable.

That said, it is important to take note of something Ravi Zacharias wrote:



The scripture says in Ephesians 2:8 that we are saved by grace, through faith. It does not say we are saved by grace through reason, even though the Christian faith is reasonable.

We are saved through grace by faith.

Had the events fulfilled by Jesus been prophesied?

Was their evidence of God at work?

This explained why the Bereans received the message with great eagerness, and then examined it carefully to see if indeed what Paul said was what the Scripture said or whether he twisted, or cherry picked or manipulated the written word of God.

**I remind you that the gospel of Jesus... is timeless.**

It was applicable for the world of that day when the book of Acts was written ...and it is applicable now, for our world...and if the return of Jesus doesn't happen for another 1000 years... the gospel will still be relevant.

The gospel is not a Western faith.

It is God's salvation for the world of humanity.

The gospel is not a faith for the poor.

It is for all people regardless of their financial resources.

It is not a faith for only women or for kids.

The gospel is applicable to all people, men and women... in all walks of life... in all nations.

The gospel is news that is announced through the followers of Jesus in conjunction with God the Spirit to the world of humanity.

But this news concerns historical events regarding the person of Jesus – his birth; his early years as an exile in Egypt; his public ministry; his arrest, trial, sentencing, death and burial, his resurrection from the dead and his return to heaven, where he now ...as Revelation 1:5 says, is the ruler of the kings of the earth.

held up, or was contradictory or inconsistent or ....

**Their practice explains ours.**

**Their posture towards the Scripture also explains ours.**

**Like them, we are a people of the book – of God's book.**

**We will come back to this.**

**For this practice and posture is as life giving as it is challenging**

Because Paul reasoned from the Scriptures, because Paul claimed that Jesus completed the story of Israel that had begun centuries earlier with Abraham, because Paul announced that the hundreds of Messianic prophecies contained in the OT had been fulfilled by Jesus.... the Bereans were motivated to carefully investigate – was Paul's claims true?

The Holy Spirit, though he is not specifically mentioned, did what Jesus said he would do – through Paul and through the Scripture he taught the Bereans; he illumined their minds and hearts and enabled them to understand.

This too is very significant.

The Holy Spirit in conjunction with the written word of God guides us to live rightly.



To **argue** with a person who has renounced the use of reason is like **administering medicine to the dead.**

– *Thomas Paine*

AZ QUOTES



What did Paul preach about?

What he had preached about in Thessalonica and in Philippi and in Psidian Antioch, Lystra, Iconium and Derbe.

He preached that Jesus was the Messiah – that he had to suffer and die – that he rose from the dead – that he returned to heaven as the King of heaven and earth.

He preached that God had done in the middle of history what all Jewish people had thought would happen at the end of time.

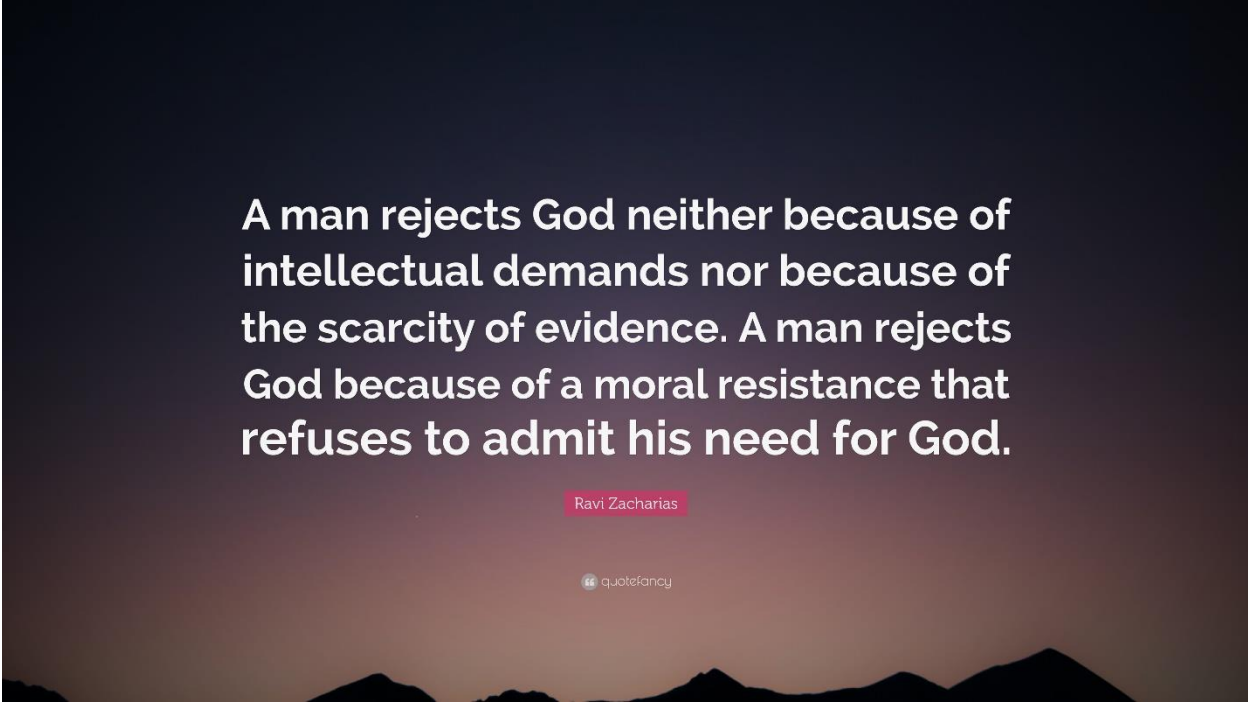
He preached that sin and death had been defeated and yet were not vanquished.

What

A person of noble character considers the gospel message and investigates it.

Just as God had opened the heart of Lydia in Philippi to respond to Paul's message; just as God had touched the hard heart of the jailor in Philippi and helped him to believe; just as God had revealed himself through his word as it was preached in Thessalonica, so that many believed, so God by his Spirit did the same in Berea – he awoke curiosity regarding the gospel in many of the Bereans.

There is in our human nature a natural enmity to the gospel that looks upon it as being foolish.



**A man rejects God neither because of intellectual demands nor because of the scarcity of evidence. A man rejects God because of a moral resistance that refuses to admit his need for God.**

Ravi Zacharias

quote fancy

The word "examining" comes from the Greek *anakrino* and means: "to investigate." The word is used in the New Testament of judicial investigations.

**v.12a – As a result, many of them believed...**

**v.13-15 – what had happened repeatedly in other cities, happened in Berea**