

2/7/21 - 1 Thes. 2:13-16 - "Salvation & Suffering"

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[0 : 00] We're going to continue in 1 Thessalonians, though, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2. We're going to start in verse 13, and today's sermon title is Salvation and Suffering.

And look with me as I read in 1 Thessalonians chapter 2, starting in verse 13. It says, This is the word of the Lord.

When we say those words, this is the word of the Lord, I believe that after today you will understand exactly what we mean by that and why it is important to remind us of that very phrase.

Because there's often various numerous books that exist out there that often captivate our interest and our attention. Some top ones that are on our bookshelf at our family are Lord of the Rings or The Hobbit by J.R. Tolkien.

Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, C.S. Lewis. I don't know, something always captivated my attention of The Catcher in the Rye. That was like required reading in English back in grade school.

[2 : 04] I thought that was a good one. My wife will attest to Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. She is a fan of that. My kids, they like Steam Train, Dream Train by Sherry Dusky Rinker.

And another good one is Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown and Pictures by Clement Hurd. I know that because my kids say, read the title and the parts at the bottom.

And I have read that book so many times I could probably rehearse it. All of these books contain messages and different things that kind of appeal to our emotions.

For our kids, Steam Train, Dream Train. For my wife, Pride and Prejudice. Simple love story. But the Bible, on the other hand, when we say this is the Word of the Lord, the Bible is incomparable to any other message.

It is literally God's Word. Through the Word of God, we are revealed who God is. His plan of redemption and salvation.

[3 : 14] It is by no means just another book, but it was inspired by the Holy Spirit. And it is inerrant without error in every way.

It is God's special revelation of Himself to us today. But we have a problem. It is the world.

The world hates the message of the Bible. The world hates the message of the Bible. The Bible actually attests to that.

There is no friendship with the world. James 4.4 says, Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. So the world was never created.

And it was never, it never came to be that they would appeal to the message of the Bible, the message of God's Word. But in fact, it would naturally rebel from God's Word.

[4 : 14] And in light of that reality, those who believe in the message of the Bible often incur great affliction, which often puts our faith to the test, when you stand upon the truth of God's Word.

So let's look upon God's Word today and see exactly what Paul was getting at as being the source of their faith. And also the reaction, the thing that is attached with that.

Because not only do we find salvation in God's, through God's Word, we also find suffering attached to God's Word. And it should be expected. Even if it's not desired, it should be expected.

But I want to have a word of prayer before we break this up. There's going to be two sections today. But let's turn to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank you for your Word.

Let us not hold that as a light phrase or a light reality. Father, that this is something supernatural that we have. That this is a divinely inspired message of you communicating to us.

[5 : 24] As we turn to these pages, upon the situation that Paul was in, upon the words that Paul proclaimed to this church, we pray that the same power that was at work within his proclamation, which has been recorded and written in this Word, we pray that that power infiltrates our beings.

That the Holy Spirit is indeed here now, working with the same power and authority that it was from the moment that you spoke the world into existence.

Father, help us today to understand your Word. We praise in Jesus' name. Amen. The first section today is titled, No Ordinary Message.

As we saw in verse 13, it says, And we also thank God constantly for this. Paul continues to reveal his heart and his care for this young church plant in Thessalonica.

This is often sort of tied with what he's already established in chapter 1 in verse 2, where it says, We give thanks to God always for you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers.

[6 : 43] And similar to last week, we saw that Paul essentially is a steward of that church. And while he is a steward of that church, he is also a steward of God's great possession, known as the church.

And that care was found within an illustration of that of a father to a child, of a mother to a child. And as Paul is closing at this point, sort of a thematic bracket of this passage, he is also pushing the audience forward to something.

Because as passage says, And we also thank God constantly for this. He's now calling into detail the cause for his thanksgiving, which wasn't elaborated previously too much.

He referenced it, but wasn't elaborated. This is the source of his thanksgiving. They received the proclaimed word of God. Verse 13 says, You received the word of God, which you heard from us.

[7 : 50] Remember back to chapter one. Paul foreshadowed this, where he says in chapter one, verse three, Remembering before our God and Father, your work of faith, your labor of love, and steadfastness of hope for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Something was going on in this church. And it completely baffles all physical realms of what we see and what we can ever comprehend in this life.

God was powerfully communicating to this young church. He was powerfully communicating to this church. Through the vessel of man's lips, he was communicating.

And that became evident within their hearts for those who received it. And which later became tested through suffering. We'll get to that in just a moment.

We see in verse 13, the mention of God's words. It says that you received the word of God, which you heard from us. And you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is.

[9 : 03] The word of God. You can see that that repeated word in this passage is actually important. Paul is bringing emphasis upon the word of God and the origin of it.

And he says, accepted not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God. Paul was a mouthpiece speaking God's divine inspired word.

God was communicating to this early church. Now, Paul was given specific apostolic authority at this time to speak divine revelation at this point in redemptive history.

And it's also recorded all throughout the Bible of prophets and of even the Old Testament. 3,800 times the Bible declares these words, that God said something, or thus says the Lord.

3,800 times the Bible declares. Paul recognized that the things he was writing and recording for these churches, the letters to his churches, were the Lord's commandments.

[10 : 14] They were inspired. And they were also acknowledged by the believers. And we see that here in verse 13 in chapter 2. We see Peter proclaim the certainty of the scriptures and the necessity of heeding the unalterable and certain word of God in 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 16.

And John too recognized that his teaching was from God. To reject his teaching was to reject God. Words of man.

Isn't that interesting? Didn't we just talk about, just a couple weeks ago, of the words of man?

Words of man are often flattering to get a following.

They often pull at our enticing, enticing our emotions at different times to lure us and kind of grab hold of our emotions and often seek our own self-glorification or maybe life enhancement, things like that.

Man's words often divert our attention away from things like suffering and into this life enhancement. I mean, it would have to. In order to get a following, there'd have to be some benefit to it.

[11 : 39] And the benefit to God's word is that of eternal life. And the word of God, Paul's message of the gospel, was a life-altering message.

It wasn't just a life-improvement plan. It was actually a life-surrendering plan to the point of being martyred upside down on a cross for what you believed from him preaching.

Because at the center of such a message was Christ crucified. Man was never amplified. This is why Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and folly to the Gentiles.

In other words, it doesn't make sense to the religious. It doesn't make sense to the lost. It just doesn't make sense according to what we perceive in our humanity.

The gospel just doesn't make sense. This is a life-altering message. It wasn't long ago where I was, at various times, I kind of look to kind of tune in with other churches around the area.

[12:52] And this is not a time to necessarily throw other churches under the rug. I'm not going to mention any names or things like that, but I just like to see what's going on with brothers and sisters around the area and what's going on.

And upon one place I tuned in, the pastor got up to the pulpit, and I don't know where his Bible was, actually.

He didn't carry it up with him, and he didn't open anything. It was just a table. It had nothing. And he said, I hope this sermon is something you'll find enjoyable.

I hope, he said. When did the Word of God have anything to do with us? When? When did it ever have anything to do with becoming enjoyable to hear and to be entertained by?

And at what point do we wander so far from the sufficiency of God's Word to think that I'm up here like a little monkey trying to entertain a group of people as a gesture?

[14:07] When was the Word of God ever up for man's opinion in the first place of actually being enjoyable, as this was stated? Now this message, proclaimed, had nothing to do with Paul.

This message has nothing to do with me. It has nothing to do if we enjoy it or not. It's God's Word. This was evident in the days of Paul here by the self-denial of these Thessalonian believers.

We see that this Word of God was at work in you believers. You see, the Gospel contends for itself. It's not up for our opinion, church. It is the power of God confined within the message and equally the work of God in its proclamation. We see that in Romans 9, if you've studied Romans at all, that the Word of God goes out and it ignites faith whom God chooses.

And we can only then expect that it is also a work of God in all of its effects, that it changes us from the inside out, from our very core of our being to our message, to why we live this life, why we do what we do.

[15:31] It changes our motives. And this is of which Paul contended. Considering the fact that what was spoken here in this church is now what is written, how could we ever stray from the authority and sufficiency of God's written Word?

I want you to think about that for a moment because man is still giving divinely inspired messages today as if this book indeed is not closed, as if God was holding out during this time of redemptive history and speaking in different ways of divine revelation.

It's false. It's false. Consider the authority of God's Word proclaimed in this instance and now that we have it written, the authority and sufficiency written in God's Word to guide us, to convict us.

It's not up for opinion. This is something that you can't argue with. It is true. And we submit to it. The Word of God is sure.

It's steadfast. It is an anchor. It is transcendent through all times and applicable to all time periods, through all generations. While we think that we're in some unique situation of political distress and turmoil, this is nothing that God did not foresee happening.

[17:06] And His Word can address it just like His Word will be able to address 20 years from now. God only knows what it's going to look like 20 years from now or what my kids are going to have to go through or their children's children or their children's children's children.

All of it is transcendent in application and effectiveness. Within our written Word is the testimony of reliable witnesses, particularly that of Jesus Christ, but also others.

Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Nehemiah, all the Old Testament, and John and Paul in the New Testament. They affirmed the authority and verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

Within our written Word is power. This is what the Word of God is. Power through the Holy Spirit as it is a message from the Holy Spirit which pierces our souls.

It's not a bunch of opinions and it's not up for my opinion. These witnesses throughout Scripture attest that this book is closed. There is no secret revelation still to be revealed.

[18 : 18] There's no revelations. It's one singular revelation. The book of Revelation. And so just as the reception of Paul's proclaimed verbal word was received, we too receive his written word with the same apostolic authority that he was giving to these churches and instruction therefrom.

It's not from man. It is from God. And this today has nothing to do with me. This has everything to do with God. In this church, the reception to receive the Word of God is a prerequisite of the work of God.

In order to be doing the work of God, you first must receive the Word of God. And that is not seeking some mystical revelation from self-titled apostle or prophet these days.

It comes from what's written in the pages of this Scripture. Scripture. It's found within the Word. The reception of the Word of God is the prerequisite of doing the Word of God.

The Word provides life. The Word provides truth. And as in verse 13, it was through the faith of these believers that ignited the mighty work of God from within them and through them.

[19 : 44] This reminds me of Isaiah 55, 11, where it reads, So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth.

It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

This is good news because if you're not in Jesus Christ today, yeah, the world can kind of give you some enticing things that might make sense and might make life a little bit less of a burden at times. It may pick you up with a nice joyful song in the morning or things like that, a nice hoot and holler.

But this is truth. This is good news because your life can be an absolute mess.

You could be an absolute wreck in this life. And God is still qualifying you for the hope of the gospel.

[20 : 47] It comes to you and it changes you. It has nothing to do with cleaning yourself up. The gospel cleans us up. God's word breaks through our walls and ignites within us.

The word of God never goes out and returns without the harvest it intended to gather. It knows exactly what it's doing because it was inspired by the Holy Spirit and speaking to each and every one of us within this room and on the live stream.

Is God gathering you to himself this morning if you're not a Christian? For you to leave your sin at the foot of the cross and be free in Christ to know truth, to know life.

If that's you this morning, I encourage you to respond to that urge to come to him. I think it's very encouraging in verse 14.

It provides a corporate and regional sense in the mix of salvation. That the life-changing power of God is placing us in a community and identifying us as replicated examples of what it means to be a Christian.

[22 : 05] Remember that Paul was there in this church body for just a couple weeks before the Jews kind of kicked him out of there and persecuted him greatly, threatened his life.

And so he didn't have all this time to say, okay, so when this happens, you got to do this and put on the full armor of God and go through all of this, everything that he wrote to the Philippians, Ephesians, and everything.

He didn't have that time. But he's saying something supernatural was occurring within the midst of this body. And what was going on in this body was actually going on in this body that is miles away in Judea.

And it was a whole different people group. You have Gentiles in Thessalonica, you have Jews in Judea. And the way they're responding to the gospel is replicated in examples.

They didn't have Snapchat to say, hey, this is how you're a Christian. You got to do this and that.

They didn't have the forms of communication that we had. But Paul, being a witness of the church there and the church over here, he can say that you guys are looking the same.

[23 : 15] You're being imitators of one another and you don't even know it. You guys are truly touched by the gospel. And it is clearly evidence in how you have responded and how your life is devoted to the work of God.

And so we are sealed. We are signed and sealed within a community that looks like one another. There's other examples of what it means to be a Christian or a like-minded Christian.

And this is good news then. And it's good news for us now. Because just like Youngstown Metro, being here at this location, meeting assembled here, we're not alone.

We're united by our common faith with other churches that are in Jesus Christ. We're not any more alone than the Thessalonians were alone.

We are a very, very big family. And it's a great honor for me to have an opportunity to maintain those good relationships with other like-minded churches in our region. Because we don't compete against one another.

[24 : 19] We labor together as an army that God is building as we're all focusing and being shepherded in our smaller capacities. But one day we'll be revealed together, united in heaven in eternity under Jesus Christ's lordship.

And we will labor forward together for that name's sake. So what we're seeing in this passage is obviously something being demonstrated, a work of faith in this.

This comes at a cost though. Because just as the sermon title is salvation and suffering, there's another component that we can't neglect.

You can ignore it all you want, but you are probably going to be up for a rude awakening when suffering does come. And we should not be surprised when it does come.

and we experience sufferings of various kinds in this life. Section 2 is titled No Ordinary Affliction.

[25 : 27] No Ordinary Affliction. Verse 14 says, and it continues, For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets and drove us out and despised God and opposed all mankind by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved.

So as always to fill up the measure of their sins, but wrath has come upon them at last. What we see here is Paul concluding a flow of thought here in chapter 2, verse 16.

And he says, he brings in this regional aspect of not only their imitative faith, but also the imitativeness of their suffering, that they've been, they're replicating the same suffering, enduring the same things that have been endured among the churches looking back, even back to the prophets of old.

Imitation up to this point has sort of been a one-sided coin. We haven't really gotten the details of necessarily the details of the affliction of this church.

We've seen that, you know, we're, our mimicking relationship is a certain, a certain quality of character. It's our message being different, our motives.

[26 : 59] It's all the good stuff. But now we see the flip side of that coin that yes, while we're changed by the power of God through the word of God, by the power of God that's found within the word, we see that there's something profound.

There's a profound reality that to be an imitator of the character of Paul, you're also an imitator of his sufferings, just as Paul lived and died for Christ.

How about that for a countercultural message today, church? It's not up for our opinion. This is the word of God. This is what it says.

Salvation through Christ has united a diverse group of people. Galatians 3.28 talks about no Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male or female, that we're all one in Jesus Christ.

It is united a plethora of race, cultural, distinguishing factors, gender, everything. It doesn't matter. You're one in Christ.

[28 : 07] This is about salvation. And so if we're one in Christ, we're also one in our suffering. We shouldn't be surprised when the world comes against us in making us suffer and afflict us and oppose the message of the gospel.

If Christ has united us in salvation, he has also united us in suffering. suffering. This is huge considering their context.

Paul was saying there was another gospel movement throughout the region and it was consisting of gospel suffering. They were suffering for what they believed.

The Jewish religious establishment of Paul's day would go to great lengths to impede the spread of the gospel. You see that in verse 15. And as Paul describes this impediment, he is describing unbelieving Jews.

He's not being anti-Semitism or he's not hinting at like a hatred for Jews in this passage as some people allude to. He's saying that they're simply unbelievers.

[29 : 15] They can come in all shapes and sizes just like you can come to Jesus Christ in all shapes and sizes. You can also oppose Jesus Christ in all shapes and sizes. For Judea, it came from the Jews.

From Thessalonica, it came from the Jews. And Gentiles is a stumbling block for the Jews. Folly to the Gentiles. It just doesn't make sense. But this is the universal reality of the attitude and actions of

those who don't believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

For those who do not receive and accept this gospel, we see something imperative and it is countercultural and needs to be better taught and stewarded through the pulpits of Christ's church. And that is the end result of unbelief. You will experience God's wrath. religion. This was not contingent upon their race, nationality, or gender.

It was contingent upon their rejection of the word of God. And this is a hard reality. A reality which some legislations in some states are actually deeming as hate speech and trying to remove any book that has such a message within, happening in a state near you.

[30 : 36] these Thessalonians were suffering by the hands of their own people. In that, they were experiencing the same sufferings as the Judean Christians, primarily Jewish Christians, of the Old Testament prophets, New Testament prophets, and even the apocalyptic suffering of the church that is to come.

A deep conviction of how you perceive the authority of God's written word will often be closely met with a robust theology of suffering.

Let me explain that because if you are not convinced in the word of God, if this is just a story that, you know, it made you feel good on that one Sunday, you came to an altar call, you got baptized, all cleaned up, and packaged back into the pew, and your life was just on this mountaintop, and that's all it was to you.

You just went back to the same lifestyle, the same sin, there was no turning from any type of vices or sin within your life, you just returned, you just got cleaned up, you felt good, and then you went back to how things were.

This isn't how the gospel works, we see that the work of God within this congregation changed them from the inside out, and they responded in a certain way that replicated other churches, even replicated Paul.

[32 : 06] So, if we're not convinced of the word of God, how can we ever be convinced our suffering for it is in vain? Now, why would we suffer greatly for something that just made us feel good?

And yeah, I guess I'll denounce my faith because it just, I'd rather not hang from this cross upside down, it doesn't seem like it will feel very good. No, you don't need to beat me up like that, you don't need to use that type of force on me, I'm not a Christian after all, it was a sham, no, man, I'm not going to suffer in those ways, right?

A deep conviction of how you perceive the authority of God's word, if this does have authority over your life and has truly changed you, it will be closely met with a robust theology of suffering. suffering is perceived as strange, right? Especially within prosperity gospel teaching or maybe a word of faith, you'll basically quickly get a forecast of doom and gloom over your life if you experience any ounce of suffering, that there's something wrong with you because you're experiencing suffering.

suffering. However, Jesus Christ, in his word, in the authority of his word, promised that his followers would suffer. So we should understand that suffering authenticates the validity of the gospel, that when we do suffer, it's actually validating the very words of which we believe in the gospel.

[33 : 45] The response from the world's impediment of the gospel and the response of the recipients being changed from the inside out actually proved the validity of its message.

It is a message that the world rejects anyone who receives it, anyone who receives it. And those who receive reject the world.

There's a mutual rejection going on and nobody, there's no friendship between the two. To be a friend of the world is to be an enemy with God. The world rejects the gospel just like the gospel rejects the world.

A life-giving message such as the gospel should bring people running, right? The hope that it has in it, the truth that it has. People want truth, right?

People want to know what's true. Well, the gospel actually says they don't. People want to do things their own way. I saw it in the book of Judges, doing what's right in your own eyes.

[34 : 58] We would think that people would come running to a message like this. Why would the world despise it? The world despises the life-giving message of the gospel because in order for it to be received, the world must be reckoned with the fact that they are dead apart from Christ.

Think about that for a moment. The world despises the life-giving message of the gospel because in order for it to be received, the world must be reckoned with the fact that apart from Christ, they are dead, lost, hopeless, apart from anything of their own doing.

lost. This is countercultural indeed. The reality of biblical Christianity is that it cannot exist apart from suffering.

To be a Christian, it means you are called to suffer. Christ is never a means to an easier life now, but rather, he is the means to eternal life later.

The hope of the gospel or inheritance that lay waiting ahead. So if you are a Christian, the world will despise you. They're not going to like you. If you signed up to be a Christian for the affirmation of the world to boast your praises and who you are, you're not following Jesus according to the Bible.

[36 : 23] It's just not biblical Christianity. The world will despise you. So you stand for what is true, not for what people think. This should not be a surprise.

But our ease of Christian living, it seems, seems to have desensitized us to the biblical call and command for the church to have a robust theology of what it means to endure suffering.

This should not be uncommon, church. And I believe that as you see the headlines in the news, as you see what's going on in third world countries, and the oppression that's coming off upon the church of Jesus Christ, we may experience it, but we should not be surprised in it.

And we should be encouraged that we are suffering as imitators of the suffering churches in Judea, and it's something that we will stand upon, whether they chain us up and beat us or take our own lives.

It is a truth that we will suffer for. The coffee bar is suffering right now. And in that, in that reality, church, we are not only united in the faith of our forefathers, but the suffering of our forefathers.

[37 : 43] Jesus Christ being the supreme example of suffering and sacrifice and surrender of his will to the Lord's will, supreme example of the prophets of old, even the Thessalonians.

Read the account of Acts, where Stephen was stoned, where he gave this huge dissertation of the gospel, one of the most fantastic gospel explanations in Acts, and afterwards was later stoned to death.

The world did not want to hear it. I know you came to church for a little bit of hope. Let's try to give us a little bit of hope here. There comes a cost in stewarding the gospel.

That is a stark reality, and there's actually hope in that. I'm not going to try to kind of sand the edges of the gospel down for you so you feel good today. I'm going to tell you what it says.

Because as we observe the hostility within the headlines of the news, as the door of our house might be banging in persecution. We might have friends that are other Christians.

[38 : 57] I don't know what their churches are teaching or things like that, but they might have all this doom and gloom looming over them as a Christian Eeyore as they're coming out, and it's just like, oh, did you see the news today?

They're taking the rights of our Bible, and they legalized this, and they're taking this away, and oh, it's just so bad. And amid the doom and gloom of our conversations with maybe other evangelical Christians, why should we ever be surprised in this?

Have we become comfortable in our Western society? Any gospel that is a friend with the world is an enemy of God, and in turn is actually no gospel at all.

There's no good news in that. It reminds me of the instance of a TV show that they were five weeks into filming on HGTV where their twin brothers named David and Jason Benham.

Five weeks into filming this reality TV show when HGTV decided to pull the plug on the house-flipping series. There's a liberal watchdog website that said that these brothers had spoken out in favor of traditional marriage, and that their father was a pro-life activist.

[40 : 21] There was a social media campaign to pressure HGTV to cancel the show, and it worked. The brothers refused to give into political correctness and responded, quote, if our faith costs us a television show, then so be it, unquote.

And just as Daniel refused to bend his knee to the false gods of his day, these brothers are standing for what they believe. Have you counted the cost of your faith?

Have you counted the cost of your faith? Will you be willing to double down on the costs when met in the face of the world's hatred for the gospel you believe?

Will you double down on that when the pressure weighs in upon you? Well, there is hope. You want hope? The hope is Jesus Christ. The hope is the promise of eternity. The hope is that these

moments of suffering and affliction are only temporary.

This life is not supposed to last forever. This is a Christian temporary home. We are merely passing through. Our life is but a vapor, right? It's a moment in time.

[41 : 34] It's here today, gone tomorrow. So we can get so caught up in the world's affirmation. Maybe what our friends might think about us. Maybe what the world might do and say to us because we are Christians.

Might we live for the approval of God alone? And it will never be friends with the world and we're, it's okay. It's okay. There's great cost in stewarding the gospel.

And there's also a second issue at hand as we close of rejecting the gospel. And if you are not in Christ today, I want your ears to be perked like they haven't been perked before.

If you're on the live stream, I'd love for you to comment on the video if this is you. But there is great cost in rejecting the gospel.

I want you to think, have you truly counted the cost of your inaction or rejection of the truth of Jesus Christ? Because God rules over our lives as our creator and our king.

[42 : 43] And we were born completely apart from him, which was not a part of God's design as he intended. But Adam's sins separate all mankind from God.

Through Adam's sin and the fall from that, you are guilty of sin. And are dead apart from him.

But God provided a solution to solve this divide. And it has nothing to do with your efforts, your merits, being a good person. But rather the solution was God sending Jesus Christ, his only son, to die on behalf of us.

To die for our sin. And when we have faith in Jesus Christ, sacrifice for us. We are brought into new life. And this is the process that begins deep within our souls that began within these Gentiles of Thessalonica.

Jesus Christ died for you. He died for you and he beckons you to come to him through your faith. Won't you come to him this morning and enter into God's original design to be united with him as our creator and king once again?

[43 : 56] Let's pray. Rabbi Rockefeller Glenn on voll his he could please Peniel increase He to says he and see kok has to have Harris as but He has to have got wait He worked with up has a