



TRANSFORMED

DEVOTIONS CONNECTING TEENS TO CHRIST

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.

1 Thessalonians 3:7-10

Really Living

That quote was made popular by the critically acclaimed film, *The Shawshank Redemption*. The movie's protagonist, Andy Dufresne, was wrongfully imprisoned. The way Andy sees life, he has two options. He can either accept his circumstances, give up, and live out his days in prison—that is, get busy dying. Or, he can get busy living—be proactive, do something about his situation, and have a *real* life! Inspiring, isn't it?

People relate to that deep desire to “get busy living.” Many feel pressured to truly live, not merely exist. Maybe that describes you? You want to do something amazing with your life, or at least somewhat productive. What does a life really and truly lived look like?

Some suggest that to really live means to pursue your dreams. To really live means to live in the present. To really live means to accept yourself. To really live means when life gives you lemons you make lemonade. But what happens when life is dream-crushing, embarrassing, depressing, and leaves you with little hope?

God not only tells us what it means to really live, the gospel also gives us hope for when we feel we are merely existing, or worse, busy dying. The apostle Paul and his fellow Christians in Thessalonica were facing soul-crushing persecution. Satan was busy trying to kill their faith. Yet, during that distress Paul said, “Now we really live since you are standing firm in the Lord.”

Really living is standing firm in your identity as an infinitely loved and immensely forgiven child of God, even when life makes you feel less-than. Really living is standing firm in Scripture since God's Word declares that Jesus loves you and Christ is for you, even when others tell you that the Bible makes no sense.

For Paul, *really* living by standing firm in the Lord resulted in an earthly life filled with joy, encouragement, and gratitude to God! God gives those blessings to you, too! You might feel you are living in a prison of doubt, a prison of depression, or a prison of one difficulty after another. No matter your life circumstance, you can really live. Why? The living and true God, who raised Jesus from the dead, who keeps you firm in your faith, has given you victory over death and the gift of an eternal life! Knowing *that* is really living.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for the gift of faith in Christ that encourages me even when life is difficult. I praise you for the joy you have given to me that is based in your love; not my life's circumstances. Help me to trust that, through your Word, you continue to supply me with all I need to really live by standing firm in you, dear Lord. Amen.