



2 THESSALONIANS

UNSHAKEN FAITHFUL TO THE END

SERIES GUIDE



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How to Use this Guide

Our hope is that each week you will bring this guide with you. It's a way to dive deeper into the sermon by doing a short devotional before the sermon, taking notes and reflecting during the service, and then using the questions to discuss the sermon with your community group.

It's a way to keep your group in sync, help you unlock new riches in God's word, and help you focus on what the Spirit may be calling you to do this week. We've also added some space for a prayer journal. Use this journal in your community group to remember and pray for your group throughout the week, or use it for other friends and family at Bethany.

As we study God's word, our love for Christ grows greater each day. This is just another simple tool to help you study God's word in new and God-honoring ways, as well as to connect to Scripture together with your community group.

Together Day by Day Weekday Devotional Email

If you want a devotional for each day of the week to go with the devotional in this booklet, you can sign up for our Together Day by Day email. Use the QR code below to sign up for the email and receive a devotional for each weekday.



Together Day by Day
A devotional delivered
to your email inbox each
weekday.

WEEK 1

A SURE CHURCH

2 Thessalonians 1:1-2

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 1:1-2

Devotional:

In these opening verses, Paul addresses the Thessalonian believers with a profound greeting: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This salutation isn’t merely a formality; it’s a heartfelt blessing that encapsulates the essence of the Christian life.

God’s grace is the engine that drives the Christian life. It is His unmerited, unearned favor that speaks the Good News of the Gospel to us each day reminding us that we are loved and accepted by the God of the universe. Not because we worked hard and earned it, not because we are “good enough,” and not because we are religious but because Jesus came down from heaven to earth and gave His life for us. His grace is freedom from the shackles of sin and power to live a godly life empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Peace flows from this deep grace. It is an abiding sense of well-being and contentment rooted in the confidence of our relationship with God and the hope that our future is sure in Jesus. In a world filled with chaos, uncertainty, and pain, this divine peace guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7). Let us start each day by asking God to fill us with His grace and peace, allowing them to permeate our actions, reactions, words, and deepest thoughts. Paul’s greeting is a reminder of the foundation of our faith, one that we need to be reminded of often.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for your abundant grace and peace, freely given through our Jesus. Help me to embrace these precious gifts everyday, allowing them to shape my heart and guide my life. May Your grace empower me to live in a way that honors you, and may your peace guard my heart in the challenges I face today. Amen.

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Week 1: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

Have you visited or attended any unique or interesting churches? Do you have any interesting church stories that stand out to you?

Discussion Questions

Why do you think Paul, Silas, and Timothy all jointly greet the church in Thessalonica? What does this say about the relationship they had with the Thessalonian believers?

What is the importance of Paul's greeting, "grace and peace"? Why would these specific words be important for the Thessalonian church?

How does the opening of 2 Thessalonians compare to other letters that Paul wrote and their openings? Do you see any similarities or differences?

Application Questions

Paul, Silas, and Timothy all served and ministered to the church at Thessalonica. How can we serve and work together for the good of our church in humility and collaboration? How have you seen that go wrong? How have you seen it go well?

Paul's greeting of "grace and peace" is a powerful one. In what ways do you feel like you could use more grace and more peace in your life? How can the Gospel give you both grace and peace?

We often see Paul dealing with each church he ministers to in starkly different ways. In what ways is each local church unique? Why do you think God has made local churches different?

WEEK 2

A SURE FAITH

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4

Devotional:

Parents love to show others pictures of their children, photos of growth and accomplishment in body, activity, and character. It's no surprise then that they equally love to hear others share stories also noticing and celebrating their children's growth.

As spiritual shepherds, Paul, Silas, and Timothy love to hear about the spiritual growth of those they've cared for (1:3). The church at Thessalonica were to them like children in the faith (1 Thess 2:7-12) and one of their greatest sources of celebration before Christ and others (1 Thess 1:19-20; 2 Thess 1:4).

Testimony of our spiritual growth and persecution-enduring-faith generates deep thankfulness and celebration in those who've invested in us. Just as our parents have a vested interest in the progression of our natural lives, the progression of our spiritual health deeply impacts those who've invested in our faith.

Remember who has invested in you and thank God for them. Further their investment by continuing to grow in faith towards God, love towards His people, and faithfulness in gospel witness to the world despite persecution. And as God grants you opportunity to learn of growth in others in whom you've invested, don't fail to stop and praise God for the work He's accomplishing in them.

Prayer:

Father in heaven, thank you for your kindness through the people you send to invest in us and have provided for us to invest in. The body of Christ is such a wonderful and precious family to belong to. May we be a cause for great thanksgiving for those who've invested in us. Thank you for the growth we see in others around us. Please continue your work to completion as we press on following Jesus together until He returns.

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Week 2: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

What is someone or something that you will always be thankful for (even if it doesn't seem important)? Why did you pick that person or thing?

Discussion Questions

Why is Paul thankful for the Thessalonian believers? What specific characteristics is he praising in verse 3?

In verse 4, Paul “boasts” about the church for their steadfastness in persecution. What does this tell you about the early church’s experience with suffering and persecution? How do you think persecution shaped the identity and faith of early Christians?

Do you think it’s right to “boast” about others? Paul clearly makes this a positive aspect of their faith. How can boasting about positive aspects of others be an encouragement to both you and them?

Application Questions

Why is it so important that our love for “one another” be “increasing”? Why is love for others so important in churches?

How are we called to live in the face of suffering and persecution? How can you increase your “steadfastness and faith” even in the midst of hard times?

How can you encourage others in their Christian walk? Is there someone you’ve seen do something worthy of praise recently? How about your spouse, others from your family, or your children? Why is it so important that we recognize and identify when others are living in Christ-like ways?

WEEK 3

A SURE JUSTICE

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Devotional:

If you've spent time driving in big cities, you know the frustration of dodging non-yielding motorists while trying to exit from the interstate. In one large city, a frontage road has two yield signs to remind drivers that the cars exiting from the freeway have the right of way to any lane on the frontage road. Technically, this means you could exit from the interstate and take out any car that fails to yield! Unfortunately, such vindication brings just as much damage to your own car as it does to the other driver.

When we suffer (referring now to our day-to-day life, not just traffic congestion), we often seek retribution for the wrongs we've endured. But like cars on the exit ramp, our own attempts at justice only bring about more damage. This truth is why Paul's letter to the Thessalonians continues to be so encouraging for those in the midst of suffering even today. He too had suffered for his commitment to Christ, and while he acknowledged the pain the church had experienced, the greatest comfort he could offer was God's future justification and judgment.

The Bible promises "relief to those afflicted" (v7), and righteous judgment for those who reject Jesus and afflict His children. Our feeble attempts will bring greater harm, while God's justice brings about His glory and deeper worship. Today, when tempted to repay in our own terms, choose to trust in God's justice and perfect timing.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and for giving us the strength to endure these light and momentary afflictions. Give us a vision for eternity that truly believes your justice will be perfect in your timing. Help us to do good to those who persecute us, to love like Christ, and to display your glory in our words and deeds today.

[illegible]

Week 3: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

What is the best piece of feedback (or compliment) you have ever received?

Discussion Questions

What is the “evidence of the righteous judgement of God”?

What do you think Paul is referring to with this phrase?

What insights into God’s justice does this passage give us?

Where does Paul say our “relief” will eventually come from in this world? What do we have to look forward to?

Verse 9 says that unbelievers will “suffer the punishment of eternal destruction.” What impact do these verses have on the way you view evangelism and sharing the gospel? Does knowing the end shape how you think about the choices you have made in your own life?

Application Questions

How is God’s justice different from the justice of the world? In what ways do you see our human concept at odds with God’s divine version of justice?

How can trusting in God’s justice bring comfort in your life?

What might not trusting in His justice lead you to do? Have you seen other Christians or non-Christians snared by a desire for justice that they took into their own hands or heart?

In light of God’s promise of retribution and relief, how can you cultivate trust in God’s justice rather than seeking to take it into your own hands? Are there times that you “don’t like” God’s mercy? Why or why not?

WEEK 4

A SURE RESOLVE

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

Devotional:

Paul tells these dear believers that he is always praying for them. His prayer is that they would be worthy of the calling. That's a stark thing to say to a people facing bitter persecution. But I think it's Paul's subtle way of reminding them that Jesus is indeed worthy of every tear, every drop of blood, and every painful moment they were experiencing.

The second part of his prayer is that they would “fulfill every resolve for good.” This phrase sounds odd in English, but is clearer in the original. Paul was praying that their faith would come to its natural conclusion and fullest expression. His prayer was that their faith would be genuine, and if so, he knew it would result in them attaining maturity and ultimately showing the character of Jesus in their life and witness. As I look at my life I often ask, how far am I from being like Jesus? In what ways do I think like Him, talk like Him, and love like Him?

Finally, Paul ends by saying, “in His power.” This is a reminder of the tension that exists in our Christian walk, similar to Philippians 2:13 where it is clear that we are to work hard in our faith, but ultimately realize everything we are, accomplish, or become is found solely in the power of God working in us.

Prayer:

God make me more like Jesus. Show me the ways in which I don't think like Him, act like him, or love like Him. I know one day when I see Him I will be like Him. But God in the here and now help me to rely on your power to make me more like Him each day. Amen.

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Week 4: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

What is the thing you are most proud to have achieved (in your own mind, not necessarily what others would say)?

Discussion Questions

What do you think it means to be made “worthy of His calling”? Why would that be something that Paul would actively pray for these believers?

What is the relationship between our efforts and God’s power in good works? How does a passage like Philippians 2:12-13 factor into your thinking on this subject? What does it mean to “fulfill every resolve”?

How can Jesus be glorified in us and we in Him (vs 12)? What does this reflected glorification tell us about our relationship with Jesus?

Application Questions

Is it helpful to work hard to be worthy of God’s calling? Are there ways in which it might be helpful to think about your life in these terms? Are there ways in which it might not be helpful, or even be distracting?

Are there good goals and purposes that you are struggling to rely on God’s power for rather than trying to achieve them in your own strength? Why or why not? Are there specific behaviors, practices, or practical steps you can take to help you rely more on God’s power?

Are there ways in which your life may not be reflecting the purpose of glorifying Jesus? What do you think might be helping or hurting you in seeking Christ’s glory? In what ways can you be an encouragement to others in their own journey to glorify Christ?

WEEK 5

A SURE REBELLION

2 Thessalonians 2:1-7

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Week 5

2 Thessalonians 2:1-7

Devotional:

Imagine the following extraordinary scenarios. You are working in your kitchen or at your desk and a bright light hits you and a voice speaks to you out of thin air. It tells you that the day of the Lord has come. Then a month later, you read something amazing online.

An epistle has been found that for various lexical and syntactical reasons seems to match the vocabulary and style of Paul to a tee. And this long lost letter says things that sound exactly like Paul, except for one thing. This long lost epistle declares that the day of the Lord has come. How would you respond to these experiences?

Well, Paul tells us in this passage what we should do. Reject them as forgeries! There is no day of the Lord without the coming of the rebellion and lawless leader that are described in this passage.

You may not be struggling over the false teaching that the Thessalonians did. But the remedy is the same for the lies we do face in our day. When we take scripture as our ultimate authority and refuse to let anything but scripture be supreme in our interpretation of scripture, then we can face the most incredible of experiences and arguments without blinking. We can stand firm in the faith that has been handed down through the ages.

Prayer:

Lord, give us the faith to always take you at your word. Give us patience to wait when we are confronted with questions that we can't yet answer. Give us courage to hold on to the gospel truths that can't be denied. Give us the humility to submit to the Bible. Help us not to sit in judgment upon your words as if they were the mere words of men. Amen.

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Week 5: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

What day of your life would you like to relive? Why would you choose that day?

Discussion Questions

IPaul addresses the Thessalonians' concerns about the coming of Jesus. What do you think this reveals about the early church's understanding of eschatology? Paul states the day of the Lord has not come. What must come first?

Paul speaks of the "man of lawlessness." What are the characteristics and actions described about this person? How does Paul's description help us understand this future person? What does it mean that he is the "son of destruction"? What are some of actions that this man does, according to Paul?

What do you think Paul means by the "mystery of lawlessness," and who or what might be restraining it? What does Paul mean by saying that the one restraining it will be "out of the way"?

Application Questions

How can we follow Paul's advice to "not be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed"? What might that look like in your life and especially in your spirit and heart? What bedrock beliefs can you think of that can be a bulwark against hard or uncertain times in your life?

Paul spends some time discussing how to stand against false teaching in verses 2-3. What practical steps can you take to grow in your ability to discern truth from falsehood? How can you be a stabilizing influence to others who may be less mature or more easily shaken by false teaching?

How can we take comfort in the truth that there is something restraining the "mystery of lawlessness"? Are you ever tempted to despair in the pain, suffering, and sinfulness of the world?

WEEK 6

A SURE WARNING

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

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Week 6

2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

Devotional:

Satan is described in the Bible as the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4), the ruler of this world (Jn 12:31), and the prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2). How does Satan rule this world? With deceptive lies and luring falsehoods. Satan's strategy is to blind unbelievers from knowing the truth. He seeks to use cunning tactics and worldly philosophy to keep unbelievers imprisoned in their unbelief. Satan's deceptive schemes will culminate in "the coming of the lawless one" (2 Thess 2:9).

During the tribulation period, the man of lawlessness – the counterfeit Christ – will be empowered by Satan to perform "false signs and wonders" in order to deceive and destroy those who would accept them. The miracles of the true Christ were meant to point people to the truth of the gospel, but the miracles of the counterfeit Christ will be used to trick and deceive people away from the gospel.

Paul states that those who "do not believe the truth" (2 Thess 2:12) will be susceptible to Satan's trickery, but those who "love the truth" (2 Thess 2:10) will be saved. Paul is warning us of Satan's active work to deceive, delude, and defraud. What is the only antidote to Satan's deception? A love for the truth. This is not merely a knowledge of the truth, but a genuine love for the Lord Jesus Christ that stems from a transformed heart. Do you have a love for the truth?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the incarnate Truth – Christ Jesus. Thank you for delivering us out of the kingdom of darkness and granting us redemption and forgiveness. May we turn to your Word alone for our source of truth and live our lives with a zeal for Christ. Protect us from the schemes of the evil one and give us the strength to endure faithfully in Christ. Amen.

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Week 6: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

What's a funny misconception or idea that you believed when you were younger? Or a word you thought meant something else?

Discussion Questions

What does verse 8 tell us about the power and authority of Jesus? What do you think Jesus meant when He said "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt 28:18)? How do you picture the end of verse 8 happening? (Epic answers only)

In verses 9-10 Paul tells us that the lawless one will have his own "power and false signs and wonders." What do you think that will look like? What do you think the difference is between Satan's power, signs, and wonders, and God's? How are the purposes of each different?

What do you think is God's purpose in sending "them a strong delusion"? How might we make sense of God's plan in this truth? In what ways does this mirror Jesus's words about His parables (Mark 4:11-12)?

Application Questions

How does knowing about Jesus's ultimate victory affect your spiritual walk and relationship with Him? Does it bring confidence and comfort? Do you feel a divide between your thoughts, worries, and fears and the victory of Jesus?

Paul's description of the signs and wonders of Satan is in the future, but in what ways do you see Satan deceiving people even today? What can protect believers from these deceptions that Satan seeks to snare us with?

If you were alive during the reign of the lawless one, how might you know his deception? In what ways is the Kingdom of God so radically different from the kingdom that Satan seeks to create today?

Week 7

A SURE CALLING

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

Devotional:

To “stand firm” means to be unwavering in our faith, so deeply rooted in the truth of God’s word that nothing can shake us. One of Jesus’s most famous parables is in Matthew 7:24-27. He told of two men, one who built his house on the sand and one who built his house on the rock. In both cases Jesus tell us that the “rains came.” Whether we choose to build our lives on God’s word or not, we will have times of trials and hardship. But the key difference between the two was the outcome.

One had built on the solid foundation of God’s word and so his house, or “life,” was strong. The other built on the shifting sands of the world’s thinking and the outcome was that his house “fell, and great was its fall.” Paul is encouraging these believers and us to build our lives on the solid rock of God’s word on the words of Jesus.

Paul tells us to listen to the diligent teaching of God’s word by our teachers and leaders. He is not recommending that we hold to religious traditions, but rather that we stand firm on the truth of God’s word despite the storms that are raging in our lives — storms such as false teachers, surety about the future, and persecution of the world. The truth of God’s word and the deep theology found in it are the bulwark to every storm, the shield to every “fiery dart,” and the sure anchor for our souls.

Prayer:

Father, I want to hold fast to your word. I want to build my life on the rock of your truth. Help me to live out its principles each day and to cherish its truth even in the midst of a world that hates me because of it.

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Week 7: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

What's a tradition you would start if you could, no matter how weird?

Discussion Questions

Why should we “always give thanks to God for” other believers?

Why is it such an incredible thing that anyone comes to salvation?

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process?

What is the difference between the process of justification and sanctification? In what ways are they the same?

Paul urges the believers to “stand firm and hold to the traditions” that he taught them. What traditions do you think he has in mind here? How does Paul’s idea of “traditions” differ from the way many churches talk about tradition?

Application Questions

Why do you think Christians are often quick to separate from fellowship from each other when Paul says we should give thanks to God for each other? What causes these divisions among Christians? (See James 4:1-6)

How might your understanding — or lack of understanding — of justification and sanctification affect your spiritual life? Why is it so important to understand, discuss, and study theology? Why do some believers seem to shy away from a deep study of theology?

What are some of the bedrock beliefs of Christians in any century? How can you “stand firm and hold” to those beliefs in the midst of a culture that is at war with those beliefs? In what ways can we help each other to stand firm?

WEEK 8

A SURE COMFORT

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Devotional:

I reflect back on when my junior high coach told me that I was the worst of my brothers to play football at our school (three of my brothers preceded me). Discouragement happens. Well, with some encouragement from my high school coaches, I went on to play on an undefeated state championship team. When discouragement does happen, who is the one who encourages and comforts you the most?

The Apostle Paul in this strong benediction prays for the Thessalonians and also provides a prayer that we can pray that gives us great comfort and encouragement. First, Paul points us to the source of true encouragement, “our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father.” People can encourage, but Paul points us to the perfect source of encouragement, God himself. He then reminds us that we are loved by God. The hymn “How Deep The Father’s Love for Us” comes to mind.

How deep the Father’s love for us,
How vast beyond all measure!
That He should give His only Son,
To make a wretch His treasure

By God’s grace we have “eternal encouragement and good hope.” Our encouragement to others is temporal, but God’s is eternal. This “good hope” provides zero doubt in God’s gracious provision for our eternal comfort and joy. May this encouragement spur us on to love and good works.

Prayer:

Father, I am a wretch who needed your deep love to step in and save me. Thank you for the precious and beautiful gift of your Son. Thank you for walking with me in every situation, circumstance, and problem. You are truly the great encourager.

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Week 8: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

Think back to Christmases and birthdays growing up. What were some gifts you were hoping to get that stand out in your memory? Did you get them?

Discussion Questions

What do you think Paul means when he says, “eternal comfort”? How is that different from temporal or worldly comfort, and why is it important to understand the difference as believers?

Paul states that our “good hope” comes through grace. What is the relationship between a positive future expectation (“good hope”) and grace? How would you describe a “good hope”? In what ways might it differ from secular or worldly concepts of hope?

What does it look like when a person has an established heart? What characteristics will be true about them? What two characteristics does Paul specifically mention?

Application Questions

What has God’s comfort looked like throughout your life? Can you share a story where you experienced the comfort of God? What has made God’s comfort “eternal” for you personally?

What things are you tempted to put your hope in besides the hope that comes through the Father? How can you know what you are placing your hope in? What characteristics are there for the person whose hope is in God vs. the person who places their hope in something else?

Do you feel like a person who is established in the hope, comfort, and encouragement that comes from God? Do you feel like a Christian who is strong and steadfast in your faith? Do you see that strength flowing out in your actions and your words? Why or why not?

WEEK 9

A SURE LORD

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Devotional:

Not everyone in this world is a safe person. There are deeply wicked people living among us. This is a hard lesson for young children to learn, but it is a critical one. While most parents do their best to protect children from evil, at some point, all children will breach the limits of our ability to protect them. Ultimate security fully depends on having a sovereign protector that transcends human boundaries.

Paul and his companions knew how dangerous this world is. They knew what it was to face persecutions (2 Thess 3:2). They could have worried themselves sick about their spiritual children in the faith, but they also knew the steadfast Shepherd they could trust to be the ultimate protector of His sheep (3:3). That's why the strong faith of these young believers in pagan Thessalonica served as a great comfort to Paul, because he could confidently trust they were genuinely relying on the truest source of security available (3:4).

This world is filled with scary things, from evil people to evil spirits. But we don't need to live in fear. It's an important lesson for those young in life and young in faith, but it's equally important to remember as parents and spiritual leaders. God is faithful and will guard His own against the evil one (3:3). No one is able to snatch His sheep from His ultimate care (John 10:28-29). In Christ, we are entirely safe, and in Him, the wicked will meet their end (Jn 17:15; Rom 8:37-39; 2 Tim 4:18; 2 Pet 2:9).

Prayer:

Father, help us to live with confidence in your faithfulness. May we be courageous and inspire our children in life and in the faith to live boldly. May we proclaim Christ without fear in godly love and wisdom as we prayerfully engage with the world and endure the consequences, knowing that you will protect your own.

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Week 9: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

If your life were made into a movie, whom would you choose to play yourself? What genre would best fit your life story? Who would you want to direct it?

Discussion Questions

Why do you think Paul emphasized the importance of prayer in the process of spreading the truth of the Gospel? How is the Lord honored by the spreading of the Gospel?

Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray that he be delivered from “wicked and evil men.” Whom might he be referring to? What kind of prayer might this look like if you were to pray it personally? In what ways can we fight against those who try to stop the spread of the Gospel, while still loving and caring for unbelievers?

There are several ways to interpret Paul’s statement about “the steadfastness of Christ” (sometimes translated as “perseverance of Christ” or “patient endurance of Christ”). What are different ways to look at this concept? Which one do you think makes the most sense in the context of this passage? What is the connection between this concept and the love of God?

Application Questions

In what specific ways can you support and pray for the spread of the gospel in our community, nation, and world? Do you believe that prayer is emphasized in your life (especially in connection to sharing the Gospel)? Why or why not?

How do you handle setbacks when you seek to share the Gospel? How do you view those who actively hinder you or others from sharing?

Considering Paul’s prayer in verse 5, “direct your hearts to the love of God,” how can you cultivate a deeper awareness and understanding of God’s love in your life? Is that something you struggle with? (EX: “I know God loves me, but I don’t feel like he does.”)

WEEK 10

A SURE COMMAND

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

Devotional:

Before the fall, Adam was commissioned to ‘work and keep’ the garden (Gen 2:15). Thus, work is inherently good, ordained by God. Work shows us God’s design and continuing authority over our lives. How we work either reflects Him or reflects ourselves.

This word translated as ‘idleness’ gives the idea of not just laziness, but a heart of unruliness, lack of submission to authority, and busyness (ironically) with unprofitable things that cause harm to fellow believers. These were people taking advantage of others’ generosity and sacrifice, expecting handouts when they were capable of work themselves. These were people not submitting themselves to the care and correction of the church, but still wanting its benefits. They were their own authority, happy to receive when it benefited them, but not ever thinking of giving themselves. Paul’s final command in verse 13 exhorts believers to ‘do their work quietly and to earn their own living.’ Here we are challenged with questions like: Is my life an unnecessary burden on other believers? Do I think more about what others are or are not doing with their jobs than what I am doing? Is my attitude towards work filled with complaining and discontent? Am I unable to be content unless I find work that I am passionate about?

Christ calls us today to be devoted to Him with our work, so let us be filled with a heart that lives in this way: “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.” - Colossians 3:23-24.

Prayer:

Father, let us seek to please you today by how we work. By the grace provided in the Gospel, give us your Spirit’s power to work with a purified heart full of zeal to love Christ with our work.

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Blank lined paper for writing.

Week 10: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

If you could take a break from “real work” to master a fun hobby, what would it be? Or, if you could turn any hobby into a job, what would it be?

Discussion Questions

Paul tells believers to “keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness.” What do you think this looks like in practice? How can we balance this command with the love and care we are called to give other believers?

In verses 7-8 Paul used himself and the team with him as examples of hard work. Why did Paul think it was important to model this type of hard work? How does that fit with other commands in scripture to love, serve, and care for others? How can we model these principles for others as Paul did for the Thessalonians?

Do you think there is a connection between being idle and being a busybody? Is there a danger in being bored and not having enough to do? How does Paul’s harsh words in verse 10, “let him not eat,” also harmonize with God’s first purpose for man in Genesis 2:15?

Application Questions

Are there areas in your life where you might be prone to idleness? What do you think might be leading to that? Are there some practical strategies that can help you work harder in those areas?

How can we balance working hard to provide for ourselves and others while maintaining a humility to rely on others when we truly need to? Do you find it hard to maintain the balance?

How should we respond to those we feel might be a disruption to the church community? (Those who “walk in idleness”). What are some wise principles we can follow to love and confront others in our community who may be disruptive?

WEEK 11

A SURE OBEDIENCE

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 3:13-15

Devotional:

We get weary in our work at times and want to give up, but we can stay the course if we understand that we're working for our Lord and ultimately for His eyes only (Ephesians 6:7). He sees and knows all we do, and He values why we do it. Knowing that God cares about our work gives meaning to all our actions, even those no one else notices or appreciates. I can't tell you how many times I've worked hard on something and no one noticed! But there is a powerful comfort in knowing that God always notices. On the other hand, people do notice when others don't work. Paul's message to the church was quite simple: Don't be lazy — WORK! Work together. Work in the church. Serve together. Encourage one another.

Imagine a church where everyone works, and works heartily. Imagine a church where everyone serves, and gives it their all. Imagine a church where everyone encourages, and sharpens one another. Sounds like heaven, huh? The church is a picture of what heaven will look like, and feel like. Why not jump in and experience the joy of serving and working heartily for God and His church on this side of heaven?

Believer, Paul's letter to the church of Thessalonica, given divinely from God Himself, still stands and is still relevant to our part within our church. Have a sure obedience today by working heartily for Christ and His church by serving, encouraging, loving, and stirring one another up for love and good deeds.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, may my work bring glory to you today. May I work heartily and not grow weary. Help me long to hear you say, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." May my work stimulate others to become more deeply involved in your church, and may I have a sure obedience to your word.

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Blank lined paper for writing.

Week 11: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

If you could instantly become an expert in one random, obscure skill, what would it be and why? (Ex: master of folding fitted sheets).

Discussion Questions

What are some common reasons that we may feel weary in doing good? Do you think there is a difference between “burn out” and the weariness that Paul is describing here?

Paul tells them to “take note of that person.” Is there a component here of judgment that might take place? How does that harmonize with Jesus’s command to “judge not?” Look at 1 Corinthians 5:12. Does this passage help to clarify the two?

Does Paul’s instruction to “have nothing to do” with the person who does not obey strike you as harsh? How does that connect with his later instruction to “warn him as a brother”? Is there a connection here to the process of church discipline found in other passages (Ex: 1 Cor 5)?

Application Questions

Do you think that weariness carries a spiritual component? What would be your advice to someone who tells you they are feeling weary in doing good? How might we be steadfast and immovable in our work and ministry?

Why do you think Church discipline is important in the local church? What might happen to a church that isn’t serious about dealing with Christians who do not obey clear biblical commands? How can you personally and lovingly help those struggling in sin?

In what ways can you help to provide accountability and support for your local church? Do you see yourself taking part in your local church in a way that harmonizes with Paul’s commands in this passage? Why or why not?

WEEK 12

A SURE PRESENCE

2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

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Devotional

2 Thessalonians 3:16-18

Devotional:

Paul ends his very doctrinal and instructional letter the way he began it. He pleads for the Lord to give this church a full measure of grace and peace. Grace and peace filling the hearts of God's people unleashes the Gospel to display God's beautiful glory. The unsaved are first drawn by grace and peace before they take an interest in the truth. We are right to acknowledge the hazard of false doctrine and sloppy moral standards taking root in Jesus' church. But we are also right to see the peril of a church that lacks grace and peace. How might we know if we are deficient in grace and peace in our own lives? Here are some evidences that awaken us to our need for more:

1. We quickly believe negative reports about others.
2. We frequently interrupt others, especially during an argument.
3. We lose our patience with staff of restaurants, airlines, or stores.
4. We expect people to conform to our desires and ways.
5. We feel little concern when we discover our accusations are unfounded.
6. We talk negatively about other people with no genuinely loving purpose in view.
7. We do not pray for those who mistreat us.
8. We find our thoughts floating toward present frustrations and future fears.
9. We back away from deep commitment to our own church family.

How much spiritual influence flows from a people who simply are full of God's grace and peace!

Prayer:

Lord of peace, give us time to sit at your feet today. Impart your grace and peace to us as we wait upon you.

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Week 12: Discussion Questions

Icebreaker

If you could wave a magic wand and have peace in any situation, with any person, or in any place “at all times,” what would it be and why? (Ex: a stressful co-worker, family get-together, or the DMV)

Discussion Questions

How does the nature of the peace that Jesus offers differ from the world’s definition of peace? How might the “Lord of Peace” give a peace that lasts “at all times in every way”?

Why do you think Paul emphasized the authenticity of his letters? What does this tell us about the importance of authenticity and personal connection in Christian ministry? Can you think of other ways Paul emphasized personal ministry (See 1 Thess 2:8)?

How does grace function as a foundation for Christian living? In what ways does understanding and experiencing grace impact a believer’s daily life and interactions with others? Why do you think Paul began and ended this letter with “grace and peace”?

Application Questions

Does Paul’s prayer for peace “at all times in every way” feel bold, impossible, or seem naive? What might hold someone back from experiencing a peace like that? What would it look like to claim a promise of that magnitude?

Does Paul’s personal ministry of authenticity, integrity, and personal nature resonate with you? Have you seen or experienced ministry that was done like this in your life? How can you serve and minister to others in a personal way?

Are there areas where you struggle to live out the reality of God’s grace in your life? Are there ways in which you struggle to share that same grace with others? Do you feel a daily sense of God’s grace and the power of the Gospel? If not, what do you think might be a barrier to that?



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