

## CHOSEN AND CALLED

**BIBLE BASIS:** II Thessalonians 2:1317

**BIBLE TRUTH:** Paul's letter to the Thessalonians provides the tools believers can use to help them stand firm in the faith.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle (II Thessalonians 2:15).

**LESSON AIM:** That your students will understand "commitment" and explain it in terms of today's theme of standing firm in the faith as believers.

### TEACHER PREPARATION

**MATERIALS NEEDED:** Quarterly Commentary, Adult Quarterly, Adult resources—charts, worksheets, and other teaching tools, Bibles (several different versions)

**OTHER MATERIALS NEEDED / TEACHER'S NOTES:**

### LESSON OVERVIEW

#### LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

To apply this lesson of how one stands firm in the faith.

#### BIBLE APPLICATION

We must each examine our own lives to identify the places where we need to shore up our stand in God's Word and enhance our commitment to God.

#### STUDENTS' RESPONSES

Students will determine to pray about those areas that represent a struggle for them, and will walk in God's will and His ways.

#### BIBLE LEARNING

Since commitment grows from a number of factors, today's lesson challenges us to

determine what is at the heart of our commitment to the Lord.

#### LESSON SCRIPTURE

II THESSALONIANS 2:1317

**13.** But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

**14.** Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**15.** Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

**16.** Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and

hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

**17.** Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

### **LIGHT ON THE WORD**

In this second letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Paul encouraged this struggling church to persevere (to remain steadfast in their efforts to follow God's edicts or commands) and to do the work that He had called them to do, even in the midst of their trials and tribulations. False teachers had given incorrect information about Jesus' second coming and this had caused some of these believers to not only quit their jobs, but to be idle and wait on what they thought was His imminent return. Therefore, Paul wrote this second letter to correct this erroneous information and to persuade the church at Thessalonica to persevere (stand fast in their calling). Because he knew that some persecutions can cause even mature believers to tremble and sometimes fail in the testing of their faith, Paul wrote to encourage this church during their persecution.

### **TEACHING THE BIBLE LESSON**

#### **LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON**

AIM: That your students will commit to doing that which represents how their faithfulness to God is anchored in God's faithfulness.

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Encouragement to the End**

Paul, Silas, and Timothy founded the church at Thessalonica on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 17:110), but the apostle Paul had to leave in a hurry because of the degree of persecution there. In Paul's first letter to the

church, he not only comforted these struggling believers, but also offered encouragement because they were still experiencing threats and other harassment for their faith in Almighty God. However, false teachings were also causing problems for this infant church because incorrect information about Jesus' second coming was being spread and was causing some to quit their jobs and become idle. Idleness bred the sinful conduct of busybodies (minding other people's business). Therefore, Paul wrote this second letter to still encourage the Thessalonians in their persecution and also to correct the false information. In addition, he wanted to instruct them to get back to work and remind them of conduct becoming children of a Holy (set apart from sin) God.

### **BIBLE LEARNING**

AIM: That your students will consider how to respond to God in order to demonstrate gratefulness for having been chosen by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

#### **I. PAUL ENCOURAGED AND AFFIRMED THE THESSALONIANS' SALVATION (II Thessalonians 2:1314)**

Even in the midst of suffering, believers can continue to do good works, which is the greatest indication that their faith in the abilities or strength of Almighty God is pure (James 2:1426). Therefore, genuine faith and perseverance are not the result of having

faith in faith, but of trusting in a God who is true to His Word and has promised a final reward in heaven (I John 5:13). In addition, perseverance in the midst of trials and tribulation, is an outward witness to a lost and dying world that God can be trusted in spite of dire circumstances.

### **Thanks Be to God (verses 13-14)**

**13.** But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

In this second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul reaffirmed that he and his companions (Silas and Timothy—founders of the church at Thessalonica) were "bound" (Greek, *opheilo*, ofNo), which means "under obligation, indebted," to always give thanks to God for these believers. They felt bound because God had from the beginning of the world "chosen" (Greek, *haireomai*, haheeREH omahee) these believers to become a part of His family and had used Paul, Silas, and Timothy to bring them the Good News.

**14.** Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul also reaffirmed to the Thessalonians that God "called" (Greek, *kaleo*, kalEHo), or "invited, named," them out of sin to salvation. He used the Good News of salvation—the Gospel—His Word to save them. They believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and were delivered from sin, and from eternal or everlasting damnation (John 3:16). Their salvation brought "glory" (Greek, *doxa*, DOXah), or "honor, praise, worship, splendor, excellence" to Almighty God. When they were saved, they, too, became a part of His kingdom that will reign forever and ever.

### **QUESTION 1**

*How were the Thessalonians sanctified, that is, set apart from sin and made holy (verse 13)?*

(Answer) The Holy Spirit saved them and sanctified them.

### **LIGHT ON THE WORD**

#### **It's All About God**

In today's passage, verse 14, Paul reiterated that God worked through Silas, Timothy, and himself to bring the Good News of salvation to the Thessalonians. Still, their salvation was all about God and His work and not about Paul and his companions, who like us are "fallible, unfaithful, untrustworthy human beings" (Life Application Study Bible, 2412). Yet, God can and does take fallible, unfaithful, untrustworthy human beings and uses them to and for His glory.

We, too, as believers should recognize that our salvation is all about God and His work of building His kingdom that will reign forever and ever; it is not about us, His messengers who bring the Good News. It is, however, important that we remain vessels that He can use—that we represent Him well. Our lives should be a positive witness to a lost and dying world. Paul was an excellent example to the Thessalonians and to believers today as well.

### **II. PAUL ENCOURAGED THE THESSALONIANS TO STAND FIRM IN THE FAITH**

(II Thessalonians 2:15-17)

Believers can have faith in what God promises. Plus, perseverance and faith in Almighty God not only build up the church, but also build character in the believer who fights the good fight of faith (Romans 5:34). In these trying times, are you standing on His Word? Are you an example for Christ in your home, community, at the workplace, etc.? Are you committed to God's agenda?

## **Standing Fast (verses 1517)**

**15.** Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

After encouraging the Thessalonians in the faith, Paul cautioned them to "stand fast, and hold the traditions, which ye have been taught." The phrase "stand fast" in the Greek is *steko* (STAYko), meaning "to stand firm, to persevere, to persist" in the faith. They were to hold to the traditions that they had been taught when they first believed. The word "hold" in Greek is *krateo* (kratEHo), meaning "to use strength, lay hold on, be master of." They were to lay hold on, seize, and retain those fundamentals of the faith that they had been first taught. They were not to grab hold of false doctrine concerning Jesus' second coming and become idle in their daily living. This false doctrine contradicted the principles that Paul had taught them— that Paul's life had embodied before them.

Because of false teachers and doctrines, it is really important that believers, even today, study God's Word in context, cross-referencing Scriptures in order to know what the Bible actually says or teaches. Sometimes, Bible study requires an appreciation for context, which means that we should not just read a given Scripture verse and draw our own conclusions. Instead, we should read the Scriptures surrounding the text; for example, look at the entire chapter; then, look at the book the chapter is contained in. Finally, we should see if our interpretation of that Scripture contradicts what the Bible teaches as a whole. Also consider the people, places, and times of that Scripture. What was happening at the time? All these things bring clarity to the meaning.

**16.** Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and

God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

Paul concluded this portion of his second letter to the Thessalonians with an earnest prayer for this struggling church, recognizing two persons of the Trinity, Jesus Christ the Savior and God, the Father. The apostle acknowledged what God had already done for him and them through His wonderful salvation and His unconditional love for them. God had given them "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." The word "everlasting" in the Greek is *aiorios* (aheeO neeos), which means "eternal, forever, without beginning and end." The Greek word for "consolation" is *paraklesis* (parAKlaysia), which means "encouragement, comfort, solace." In other words, Paul acknowledged that when God saved them through Jesus Christ, He gave them comfort that would last forever and ever. He gave believers "hope" (Greek, *elpis*, elPECE), which means "joyful and confident expectation." When God saved them, He gave them confidence and an expectation that would last forever as well. He gave this to them "through grace." The word "grace" in Greek is *charis* (KHARece), meaning "favor, reward." God gave believers, therefore, comfort and expectation or hope through His marvelous grace. He favored them; they did not earn these gifts or merit them. Therefore again, it was God blessing the Thessalonians because He loved them and considered them to be His. It was God showing them His unconditional love for them by sending His one and only Son, Jesus Christ so that they could believe on Him and be saved. Because the Thessalonians chose to commit to God through faith, He blessed them with His favor.

**17. Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.**

Paul recognized that God would comfort the Thessalonian Christians' hearts, so he prayed for that comfort. The word "comfort" in the Greek (parakaleo, parakaleō) means "to encourage and strengthen by consolation." The Greek word for "hearts" is kardia (karDEEah), meaning "the center and seat of spiritual knowledge and life." Only an omniscient (all-knowing) God truly knows the heart—the core, the foundation of our spiritual life. When we are going through dire circumstances, only Almighty God can really come near to our hearts and bring His peace that surpasses all understanding. His salvation brings peace that surpasses all understanding as well. As Paul wrote in II Timothy 2:11-12, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us." This is the confidence and hope that the Thessalonians and all believers should have.

The apostle Paul also prayed that they might be established in the ways of God. Only God can establish us in His ways—make firm in every good word and work so that He can be honored. If we as believers commit to Him, He will establish us in every good word and work, too. He will bring about His ways in us.

## **QUESTION 2**

*What was Paul's message to the Thessalonians (II Thessalonians 2:15)?*

(Answer) Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to keep in mind that they were chosen by God to experience salvation. Furthermore, he reminded them that their salvation came through the Holy Spirit which called them to a

life of holiness and truth. Finally Paul let them know that the knowledge of these things would give them strength.

## **LIGHT ON THE WORD**

### **Recognizing the Truth That Helps You Stand**

Now that Paul had built up the Thessalonians by encouraging them in the faith, he moved on to encourage them to stand firm in their faith. He wanted them to commit to faithfulness to the God who was more than enough in their times of troubles. The apostle knew that one threat to the church was false teaching or doctrine. Just as can happen today, falsehoods could cause believers to walk in a way that God does not intend for them to walk. For the Thessalonians, believing that the Second Coming was imminent had caused them to fall into the sins of idleness and being busy bodies (meddling into other people's affairs). Of course, a lost and dying world saw this idleness and confusion in the church. This was indeed a negative witness. It did not represent Holy God well. Paul, therefore, urged them to commit and hold on to the foundational truths that they had been taught from the beginning of their faith and get back to work.

Believers are to always refer to the foundational truths of God's Word to test any new doctrines that arise. If these doctrines contradict the Bible, then, they are not to be embraced. Thus, believers are to stand firm in God's truth and this truth is in His inerrant (errorfree) Word. In addition, believers are to stand firm against apathy, indifference, lack of interest in God's work, false teachings, and worldliness. These culprits can creep into our walk with God and cause us to stumble or lose our zeal for God's agenda.

## **BIBLE APPLICATION**

**AIM:** That your students will be able to develop a plan to stand firm in the assurance of God's power, and to encourage other believers to do the same.

### **Standing Firm—Facing Doubt**

One tradition that helps the believer dedicate himself or herself to God is the study of God's Word. There is such a real lack of commitment to study and apply the word of God in some Christian lives. In turbulent times, these type of Christians need to dedicate as much and as often as they can to God. Worship has become a "Sunday morning—once and I'm done experience." This lesson hopes to inspire the student to stand firm. Of course, knowledge of the Scripture is essential to that successful stand. Today's Christians would do well to sanctify some part of each day for a brief period of Bible reading. Also, commitment to midweek formal Bible study at church should be a part of every Christian's weekly endeavor.

Examine your own life and see if there are places where you need to shore up your stand in God's Word—enhance your commitment. Determine today that you will pray about those areas and will walk in God's will and His ways.

## **STUDENTS' RESPONSES**

**AIM:** That your students will reevaluate their commitment to God who has chosen and called them.

John and Mary saw that there was still much work to be done at their church, located in the heart of an inner city. They had been members in good standing for more than 25 years, had seen several pastors come and go to greener pastures, and had witnessed firsthand the

financial, personal, and spiritual struggles of the church. It was more than tempting for John and Mary to throw in the towel, too, and attend the beautiful suburban church near their home. Both had studied God's Word at a major theological institution and could have easily gone to other, more stable churches to share their knowledge of God's inerrant Word. However, one day as John studied the Scriptures, he ran across a passage in Luke's Gospel:

"But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician: but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:30-32).

John realized that God does not call all of those that He equips, through His Holy Spirit, to work at churches that appear to have it all together—thriving spiritually and physically. God needs workers in churches that are struggling—churches that truly need the Physician—God.

John felt convicted. He knew that the Lord had him and Mary still in their present church's vineyard because there were many who were spiritually sick and needed to be taught God's Word. His church and the neighborhood needed their witness. That day, John and Mary recommitted to walking in their calling—to continue to feed God's sheep in the vineyard where God had placed them.

## **PRAYER**

Dear Lord, Help us to realize that you have called us to be beacons to a world in need. Help us to face our lives as those who appreciate the power of the Holy Spirit and the call upon us to

resent You to others. Help us to be committed and faithful to You. In Jesus' name. Amen

HOW TO SAY IT:

Thessalonica. thes'uhluhNIkuh, thes'uhlohNIkah.

PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY

Read II Thessalonians 3:115 and study "God's Own Faithfulness."

DAILY HOME BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY

Chosen as God's Heritage Psalm 33:412

TUESDAY

The Confidence of Hope Hebrews 3:16

WEDNESDAY

Called to Freedom Galatians 5:714

THURSDAY

Called to God's Purpose II Timothy 2:813

FRIDAY

Finishing the Course Acts 20:1724

SATURDAY

The Danger of Deception II Thessalonians 2:112

SUNDAY

Stand Firm, Hold Fast II Thessalonians 2:1317