

## GOD'S OWN FAITHFULNESS

**Bible BASIS:** II Thessalonians 3:115

**BIBLE TRUTH:** Our ability to stay committed is grounded in God's faithfulness to us.

**MEMORY VERSE:** But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil (II Thessalonians 3:3).

**LESSON AIM:** That your students will stay committed to God even under adverse circumstances.

### 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 reflect upon our personal behaviors in light of Paul's statements.

#### BIBLE LEARNING

This lesson encourages students to keep their commitment to God even when it would be easier to do otherwise.

#### BIBLE APPLICATION

Students will analyze Paul's prayer and his prayer request in II Thessalonians 3.

#### STUDENTS' RESPONSES

Students will develop a strategy to continue "well doing" even in the face of "weariness."

#### LESSON SCRIPTURE

II THESSALONIANS 3:115

*1. Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.*

*2. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.*

*3. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.*

*4. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.*

*5. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*

*6. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.*

*7. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;*

*8. Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:*

*9. Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.*

*10. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*

*11. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.*

*12. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.*

*13. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.*

*14. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.*

*15. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.*

#### LIGHT ON THE WORD

The apostle Paul, a Roman citizen born in Tarsus, was converted after encountering God on the road to Damascus. He was transformed from persecuting believers in Christ to being a preacher of the Gospel (Acts 9:131). He traveled on three missionary journeys spreading the Gospel. Paul visited Thessalonica, preached in the city's synagogue and established the church during his second missionary journey (Acts 17:19). After less than a month, he encountered

violent harassment so he was sent away for his own safety (17:510). He wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth around A.D. 51. About six months later, he wrote this second letter.

#### TEACHING THE BIBLE LESSON

#### LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

**AIM:** That your students will thank God for His faithfulness and ask Him to help them find strength to remain committed.

#### INTRODUCTION

#### Paul Sets the Record Straight

Paul was very concerned about clearing up all misconceptions about the Second Coming. The Thessalonians misinterpreted Paul's first letter to mean Christ's return would be at any moment (I Thessalonians 4:13—5:11). In addition, the continued persecution of the church made them believe this must be the "day of the Lord." Now while waiting for the return of the Lord, they had become idle and disorderly. This second letter was to instruct the Thessalonians that "our gathering together unto (Christ)" would precede the day of the Lord—Christ's second coming (II Thessalonians 2:1). Meanwhile, they had to continue working and growing spiritually, in spite of the persecution.

#### BIBLE LEARNING

**AIM:** That your students will be encouraged to continue in well doing.

#### I. PAUL'S PRAYER REQUEST

(II Thessalonians 3:1—5)

In the New Testament, the day of the Lord (II Thessalonians 2:2) is the second coming of Christ. The Coming is unexpected (I

Thessalonians 5:2; II Peter 3:10), but certain signs must occur first (persecutions, false prophets, and sacrilege), and can be discerned by Christians (II Thessalonians 2:2f). After the

Second Coming, the cleansing of the heavens and the earth by fire is preparatory to the new heavens and the new earth (II Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1).

### **Paul's Prayer (verses 1-5)**

**1.** Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.

In today's passage, before closing this letter, the apostle Paul asked the Thessalonians to earnestly pray for him and his companions as well, as they had so faithfully done for the converts. Biblical history shows that Paul and the other apostles often suffered persecution for the Gospel's sake (Acts 19:23; II Corinthians 1:89; 11:23-28), and he recognized that they needed the saints to pray for them—to undergird them—to pray them through.

Paul discussed his many trials for the faith at a time when he was angry that false teachers had deceived another church he had helped found, the church at Corinth. He reestablished his credibility and authority by listing his many trials and tribulations (II Corinthians 11:23-28, NLT).

It is starkly apparent that Paul could witness to the Thessalonians in their times of troubles because he had experienced a great deal himself. Thus, he needed and asked for their prayers.

In addition, the Thessalonians were to pray so "that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified"—that it would spread

rapidly and be honored wherever it went (II Thessalonians 3:1). Paul recognized that Satan was always trying to hinder God's Word and His work. In the spirit world, the fight between good and evil is very real, but an all-powerful God can meet any of Satan's challenges. There was no doubt in Paul's mind that many false teachers and others were enemies to the preaching of the Gospel—they were being used by Satan to impede the spreading of the Good News, but they were no match for the power of God. The saints, therefore, can pray to be delivered from false ministers, who bring more harm than good to the preaching of the Gospel. Paul wanted the Thessalonians and us to pray to be delivered from those who have neither conscience nor honor when it comes to preaching God's Word—they are influenced by Satan. In other words, they have their own agendas. Paul wanted us to not only pray together, but we are to pray for one another as well.

**2-3.** And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

There was no doubt in Paul's mind that these false teachers and preachers were "unreasonable and wicked men" who did not have faith in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ (verse 2). In the Greek, "unreasonable" is *atopos* (A*Topos*), and means "improper, wicked, unrighteous, harmful." From knowing Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, Paul knew God to be faithful to His children. Therefore, he explained to the Thessalonians that this same faithful God would "stablish" them and also "keep you (the believers) from evil." In other words, God would help them build their hope on the firm foundation, which is

Jesus Christ. Plus it would be God Himself, through His Holy Spirit, who would keep them from the evil ones both inside and outside of the church. Satan may harm our flesh, but he cannot steal our souls. Indeed, in spite of their trials and tribulations, the Thessalonians had grounds to hope in the Lord, who is a faithful God. We also have reason to hope and not give up on God in the midst of our struggles.

4. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

Paul and his fellow laborers had "confidence" (Greek, *peitho*, ΠΙΕθο), which means "belief in, faith in, trust in," that the Thessalonians were doing all of the things that they had commanded them to do to stay on the right track in their walk with the Lord. Paul and his companions' confidence in the Thessalonians was based on their assurance or belief in the Lord, who is faithful. God would touch these struggling new believers by His Spirit, so that they would be able to comply and do what was right. With God's help, the Thessalonians would be a positive, fruitful witness for Him. Others would come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour through their witness.

5. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Then the apostle Paul made a short prayer for the Thessalonians, praying that God would direct their hearts. The word "direct" in the Greek is *kateuthuno* (katyooTHOOno), and means "to guide, to remove hindrances." In essence, Paul prayed that through the Holy Spirit, their hearts would be guided into the love of God. He knew that on their own, the Thessalonians could neither keep themselves or their hearts pure. The Holy Spirit had to work in

them. The Holy Spirit had to guide them into God's truths.

It is our love for God, with the help of the Holy Spirit, which drives us to want to obey His commands. If we lean and depend on Him, He will come into our dire situations and help us to be overcomers, too. King David said in Psalm 37:35, "Trust in the LORD, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

#### QUESTION 1

*What was the essential meaning of Paul's prayer (II Thessalonians 3:15)?*

(Answer) Paul's prayer was threefold. First, he asked the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica to pray for the work he and others were doing in spreading the Gospel. Second, Paul asked for prayer so that he and his fellow laborers would be free from the threat of those who opposed them. Finally, he offered prayer for the Thessalonians, thanking God for their faithfulness and asking God to lead them into a full understanding of His love and the patience to endure in Christ.

#### LIGHT ON THE WORD

##### The Power of Prayer

Prayer is essential in any spiritual battle. Paul prayed and requested that the believers in Thessalonica pray for them (the ministers of the Gospel) (3:1, 2). Paul and his companions were facing trials and persecution just like the believers in Thessalonica. They needed prayer and strength to remain committed to the call of God to share the Gospel. It is not always easy to

remain committed when there is so much adversity. Satan is constantly waging war against the spread of the Gospel. Therefore, we have to put on the full armor of God to protect ourselves (I Thessalonians 5:8; Ephesians 6:10-17), and encourage one another to stand firm in the faith. Paul's encouragement came based on what he heard of the faith of the believers (I Thessalonians 1:7, 8). He personally knew God to be faithful to His promises.

## II. PAUL'S WARNING AGAINST IDLENESS

### (II Thessalonians 3:6-15)

Some of the believers in Thessalonica had decided that, since Christ was coming back, there was no need to work or plan for the future. They sat back and waited for the Lord to appear. It is easy to take our salvation for granted. Notice what another of God's servants wrote: "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). Idleness can lead to sin. The believers were causing problems in the Thessalonian church as busybodies and financial burdens.

Paul warned the church not to support these idle, meddling, and lazy persons. He sets forth himself as an example to follow. Paul, by trade, was a tentmaker before he entered the ministry. While traveling on his missionary journeys, he made tents to support himself (Acts 18:3). He did not want to be financially dependent on those he ministered to. Paul put forth the premise, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (II Thessalonians 3:10). If persons are capable of working, they should not rely on the generosity of others to support them. This puts an unjust burden on the church.

Following the Right Example (verses 6-15)

6. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

The apostle Paul and his coworkers "commanded" (Greek, *paraggello*, *parangello*) or "charged, ordered" the Thessalonians, in the name of Jesus—with the authority of Jesus—to withdraw themselves from every brother and sister that walked in a "disorderly" manner, those who continued to be lazy and busybodies, looking to the church for their support when they were capable of working. In other words, he exhorted them to live out the Christian life—walk in the truths of God's inerrant Word—to be the witnesses that they should be. He wanted them to isolate for a time from those who followed idleness and did not follow the tradition of hard work. This time of isolation should make the perpetrators ashamed of their actions and their disobedience. Then they would come back into fellowship as obedient servants of God.

7-9. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us.

Paul could and did use himself and his fellow laborers as examples of how to live the Christian life; they had walked circumspectly (vigilantly, upright) before the Thessalonians. They had not engaged in idleness or in being busybodies, but had continued to do the work of the Lord with integrity (decently and in order). In other words, when they were with

the Thessalonians, Paul and his companions were never slothful or lazy. In verse 8, he wrote, "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought (nothing—without paying), but wrought with labour and travail night and day." Paul emphasized that when they were with the Thessalonians, they did not accept food from anyone without paying for it. They worked for their keep night and day. They did not want to be a burden on the church. Paul furthered explained that it was not that they did not have a right to ask for food, since they were laboring with them; but they wanted to be good examples for the Thessalonians to follow. This is an important note for all leaders in the church—we should be careful to be good examples for those who are following our leadership. They should be able to do as we do, not just do as we say.

**10-12.** For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

In their not working (even though they were able to do so), many of these Thessalonians were depending on the church to take care of their needs. Of course, this was an added burden on the church. To Paul, this and their being busybodies added up to disorderly (rebellious, unruly) conduct. Therefore Paul instructed, even commanded them, "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2

Thessalonians 3:10). In other words, they must not become leeches, sucking all of the financial blood out of the church. They should instead

mind their own business and go back to work—buy their own bread and eat it!

It is one thing when people are disabled and cannot work or cannot find a job because of economic conditions. However, it is something altogether different when people refuse to work and expect the church to take care of them. The church cannot and should not encourage and support idleness and laziness. This would drain the church of all of its economic resources. Our country has discovered that our public welfare system, as it is, promotes idleness, laziness, and destroys self-esteem. The church's role, therefore, is to not only help people find Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, but also to show them how to be all that they can be for God as they help build His kingdom.

**13.** But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

Paul understood that in prolonged battles—struggle and hardship—even believers can become "weary" (Greek, *ekkakeo*, *ekkakeo*), meaning "to be faint, utterly spiritless, worn out, exhausted," in our "well doing" (Greek, *kalopoieo*, *kakpoieo*), or our "righteous acts." In other words, believers should not give up their righteous stand—must not give up on the Lord. Because they can lose hope and faith, the apostle knew that saints need to be especially encouraged in their lingering spiritual battles. They need to be reminded that God has promised to never leave or forsake them and that He is faithful to those who promised Him. Because of their protracted persecution, the apostle Paul did not want these new Christians to give up on God. King

David stated in Psalm 34:17-19 (KJV), "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The

LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all." Sometimes Christians, in the heat of battle, need to be reminded of these kinds of Scriptures. In their prayers, they can remind themselves of the Lord's promises.

**14-15.** And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Paul also had ramifications for those who continued to live in sin and disobedience. In verse 14, he instructed that for those who did not obey their "word by this epistle"— "epistle" in the Greek is epistle (epistol AY), meaning "letter"—the Thessalonians were not to have "company with them." In the Greek, the phrase "company with" is sunanamignumi (soonanamignoomē), meaning "association with, intimacy with." In other words, the believers were to disassociate with them for a season—for a time, stay away from anyone who did not obey this letter until the offending party was ashamed of his or her actions and chose to comply. They were not to think of the disobedient person as an enemy, but they were to "admonish" (Greek, noutheteo, noutheteō), which means "to warn, caution or reprove gently, to exhort" her or him. In essence, they were to show the disobedient persons (those who would not comply) tough love.

## QUESTION 2

How did Paul's work ethic set an example for the believers (verses 79)?

(Answer) Paul reminded the saints of Thessalonica of his behavior when he was there. He was hardworking and contributed to the family of God. Paul had a position of leadership that he could have used to set himself above others. He could have demanded that others serve him. Instead, he was always mindful to contribute to the community so that the people would better understand what it meant to be part of the family of God.

## LIGHT ON THE WORD

### Making Sure to Do Our Part

Today, there are some people in the church who are constantly seeking financial support instead of working. They come month after month with stories why they need temporary help. Yet they have not gone job hunting in months or years. Moreover, some folks pry into everybody else's business but cannot take care of their own. Paul told us a reasonable way to handle them. We have to stop associating with them and cut off their resources. Only then will they be forced to take proactive steps in being responsible, seeking employment, and minding their own business. As Christians, we have to warn them of the error of their ways in hopes that they will change. The purpose is for them to be restored back into the fellowship. God has given us all gifts and talents we can use to do something useful.

Near the end of today's passage, Paul encouraged the faithful believers, "Be not weary in well doing" (verse 13). We have to stay committed in the face of adverse circumstances. There may be those among the believers who have stopped following the commands of God, but we must remain faithful. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"

(Galatians 6:9). The Lord will bestow upon us great rewards at His second coming.

### **BIBLE APPLICATION**

**AIM:** That your students will research Scriptures that show God's faithfulness to His people.

#### **Be Steadfast**

Two months after graduating from college, Robert still had not found a job. He was growing very discouraged. One day he received a letter stating that his grandfather, who had recently died, left him an inheritance worth \$250,000. But he could not receive it until he reached the age of 25. Robert thought this was great. He dreamed about what he would do with the money.

A month later, he was hired for the position of "Community Health Coordinator" at a local health clinic. His responsibilities included traveling to youth centers and churches to provide HIV/AIDS education and testing as well as drug and alcohol educational material. He really enjoyed working in the community and helping people.

After two years on the job, Robert started feeling his efforts were not paying off. The number of new HIV/AIDS cases was increasing in the neighborhood where he was working as was substance abuse. Half the time, the teens and church members he spoke to ignored him or made negative comments. His friends told him to quit trying because he could not make a difference. Robert stopped setting up so many visits to youth centers and churches. He was just waiting for the day he turned 25 to collect his inheritance.

Robert's supervisor warned him that he had to start doing his job or risk being fired. He told his

supervisor, "I don't care. In a few more months, I'm going to be a rich man." His supervisor asked him, "Do you remember what you said when I interviewed you? You told me you wanted to help save the lives of the people in this neighborhood. You have made an impact on many people that you will never know about. What about those who still need to get this information? What amount of money is worth letting these people die?" Robert immediately felt convicted and began to reevaluate his commitment.

Robert did not have an easy job educating the community about HIV/AIDS and substance abuse. The adversity he faced caused him to become idle. He was just waiting for the day he could claim his inheritance. In today's lesson, we will learn that we cannot become "weary in well doing."

### **STUDENTS' RESPONSES**

**AIM:** That your students will be strengthened in the knowledge that God has rewarded them and others for their perseverance in the midst of adversity—and God will do it again.

#### **PRAYER**

Dear Lord, Help us to be compassionate in how we relate to others in the household of faith. Help us to admonish in love, encourage in faith, and stand fast in the strength of Your Word. We ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

HOW TO SAY IT: Yahweh.           YAHweh.

Thessalonica. thes'uhluhNI kuh,

thes'uhlohNI           kah.           Thessalonian.  
thes'uhLOHneeuahnz.

#### **PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY**

Read Philippians 1:18b-29 and be prepared to discuss "Sharing God's Grace."

#### DAILY HOME BIBLE READINGS

##### MONDAY

God's Steadfast Love (Psalm 89:18)

##### TUESDAY

Ready to Die for the Lord (Acts 21:11-14)

##### WEDNESDAY

God Is Faithful (1 Corinthians 1:49)

##### THURSDAY

A Sure and Steadfast Anchor (Hebrews 6:13-20)

##### FRIDAY

Faithful Promises (Hebrews 10:19-25)

##### SATURDAY

Faithful to Forgive (1 John 1:5-10)

##### SUNDAY

God Will Strengthen and Guard (1 Thessalonians 3:1-15)