

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE WEEK 44

### • PERSEVERANCE

# Perseverance

## PERSEVERANCE IN FAITH

Focal Verses • 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13–17

### Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **EXPLAIN** the basis of Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians; **REFLECT** on an experience where we stood or should have stood fast; and **DETERMINE** to comfort others or stand fast personally.

### In Focus

Aaron and his wife Regina saw that there was still much work to be done at their church in the heart of an inner city. When they first

joined the community 25 years ago, they were a young married couple and part of a church plant Pastor Jenkins had assembled. Nearly a third of the congregation was unemployed, the high school dropout rate was the highest in the city, and the crime rate was the highest in a generation. Yet, Pastor Jenkins encouraged Aaron and Regina to work with Robbie, who owned a construction company, to build the community in every conceivable way.



Over the years, with Aaron and Regina's financial investment, the church helped renovate many homes for congregation members, funded an after-school tutoring program, and



provided jobs for many in the community.

Aaron was having lunch with an elder from a prominent church in their upscale neighborhood. The elder questioned why Aaron and Regina chose to be members of an inner-city church. Aaron felt the questions about his church attacked his integrity, but he decided to pray and ask God for wisdom.

One day, as Aaron studied the Scriptures, he ran across Luke 5:30–32. He 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 struggling churches—churches that genuinely need the Physician, God. That day, Aaron and Regina recommitted to walking in their calling—to continue to feed God’s

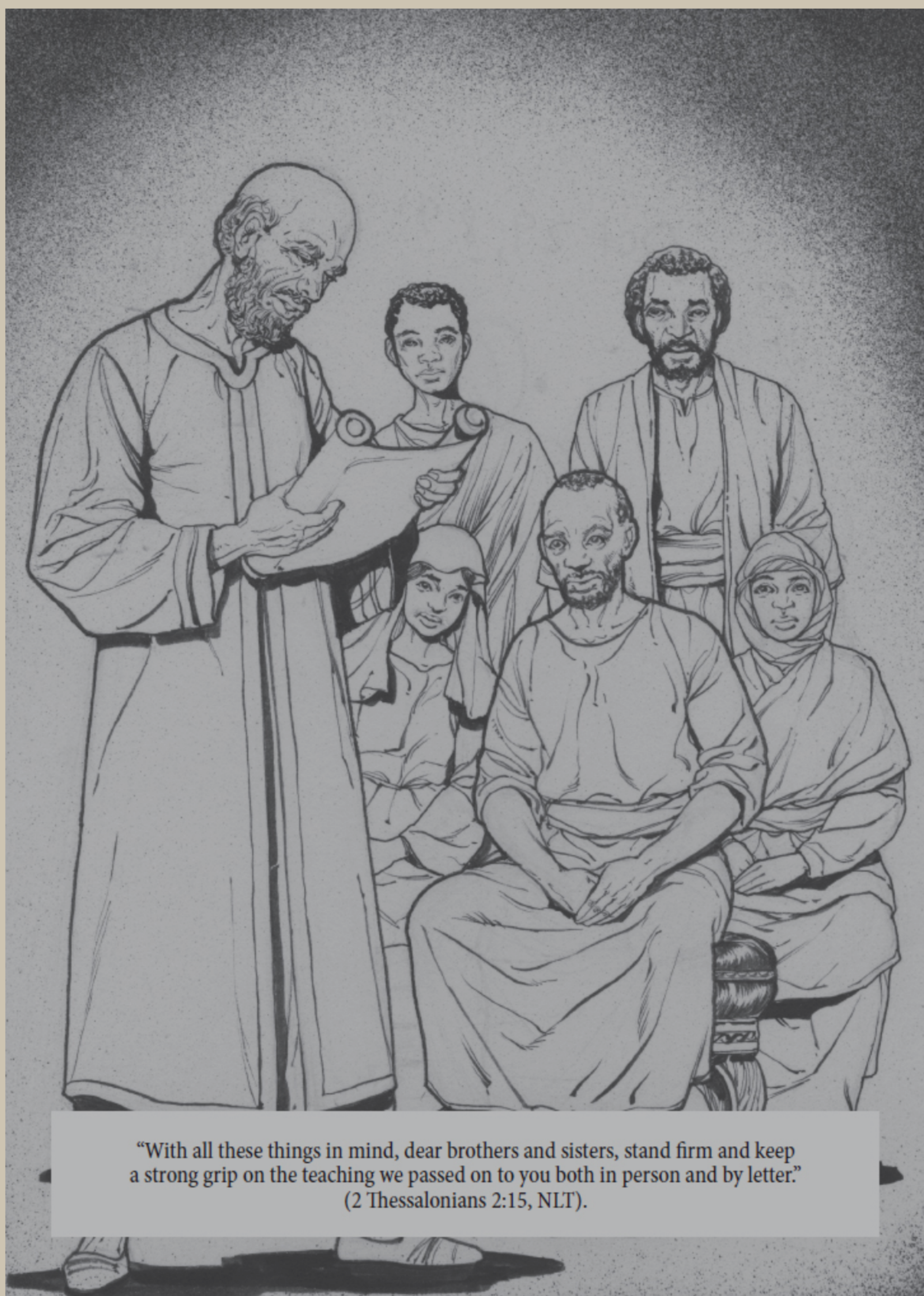
sheep in the vineyard where God had placed them.

*Aaron and Regina learned that God had called them to make a needed and lasting difference in a lost and dying world—in an inner city venue. In today’s lesson, God is calling for commitment to His agenda—saving lost souls and helping to build His kingdom. What gives you strength to preserve in sharing the message of Jesus Christ to all the world?*

### Keep in Mind

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15, KJV).





“With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you both in person and by letter.”  
(2 Thessalonians 2:15, NLT).



**KJV 2 Thessalonians 2:13** But we are bound to give thanks alway 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.



**NLT** **2 Thessalonians 2:13** As for us, we can't help but thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are always thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation—a salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and through your belief in the truth.

**14** He called you to salvation when we told you the Good News; now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**15** With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you both in person and by letter.

**16** Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope,

**17** comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.

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## **The People, Places, and Times**

**Faith and Perseverance.** 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 during 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.

Even while 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 2:14–26). Therefore, genuine faith and perseverance are not the result of having faith in ourselves, but of trusting in a God who is true to His Word and has promised a final reward in heaven (1 John 5:13).

In addition, perseverance during trials and tribulations is an outward witness to a lost and dying world that God can be trusted despite dire circumstances. Believers can have faith in what God promises. Perseverance and faith in almighty God build up the church and character in the believer



who fights the good fight of faith (Romans 5:3–4).

## Background

Paul, Silas, and Timothy founded the church at Thessalonica on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 17:1–10), 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 spread and caused some to quit their jobs and become idle. Idleness bred the sinful conduct of busybodies, who were minding other people's business. Therefore, Paul wrote this



second letter to 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 the conduct of becoming children of a Holy God, set apart from sin.

### At-A-Glance

1. Paul Encouraged and Affirmed the Thessalonians' Salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14)
2. Paul Encouraged the Thessalonians to Stand Firm in the Faith (vv. 15–17)

## In Depth

### **1. Paul Encouraged and Affirmed the Thessalonians' Salvation (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14)**

Paul affirmed to these struggling Thessalonians that they were loved by almighty God, Himself. This great salvation that they had received had nothing to do with their merit but was because of God's favor. It was a gift from God. They, as we, could



not earn it, but had to accept it as a gift. Paul reminded them that from the beginning, God chose them to be a part of His family, and through His Holy Spirit, God made them and makes all believers like Christ (Romans 8:29). In other words, believers' salvation is not because they have been so good or so kind. It is because a loving God had compassion and mercy on them and chose them to be His heirs. Therefore, believers can never boast about their salvation because everyone has to receive the forgiveness of sin through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour (John 3:16). No person took Jesus' life, but as Jesus said, "I [Jesus] lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18).

In verse 14 of today's passage, 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 use them 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 and 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.



## **2. Paul Encouraged the Thessalonians to Stand Firm in the Faith (vv. 15–17)**

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 trouble. 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 busybodies (meddling in 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 a 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 to get back to work.

Believers are to always refer back 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 (error-free) 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.

In verses 16 and 17, Paul ended this part of his letter by reminding the Thessalonians that it was God who loved them and gave them "everlasting comfort" with His special



favor (“grace”) and hope through salvation by believing in Jesus Christ. According to John 10:28, Jesus said, “And I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” This means that Jesus protects believers from harm forever and ever. All believers can expect to suffer here on Earth. Yet we have the assurance from God Himself that Satan cannot harm our souls or take away our eternal life. Jesus paid the price in full when He died on the Cross.

Paul then prayed that this same God would both comfort the Thessalonians’ hearts during their struggles as well as give them strength in everything that they do and say.

We should also be reminded that it is the almighty God who granted us the favor of His wonderful salvation, and He and only He can comfort our hearts during the many struggles that we must



face. We must recognize and appreciate that persecution is a part of our Christian reality. However, we are not alone in our struggles. As King David said, “The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble” (Psalm 9:9). Therefore, “From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD’s name is to be praised” (Psalm 113:3). He alone can help believers to stand firm in the faith. We should, therefore, definitely commit to Him.

## **Search the Scriptures**

1. Who chose the Thessalonians to be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:13)?
2. How were the Thessalonians sanctified, that is, set apart from sin and made holy (v. 13)?
3. How did God call the Thessalonians to salvation (v. 14)?
4. In verse 15, what was Paul’s message to the Thessalonians?

**5. Paul prayed that who would comfort their hearts and establish them in every good word and work (vv. 16–17)?**

## **Discuss the Meaning**

**1. What does it mean to “stand firm” in the faith?**

**2. How does one stand firm in the faith?**

**3. What tools can believers use to help them stand firm in the faith?**

## **Liberating Lesson**

**In this time of economic, mental, and spiritual failures and uncertainties, the church is called upon by God to commit to standing firm in her faith. Biblical principles are being challenged in many venues in terms of abortion, gay rights, marriage between one woman and one man, stem-cell research, etc. Many are looking to the church for answers to the many**



problems that are plaguing our society; they are looking for the church to be that light upon a hill, giving hope and showing them God's way. In essence, many are looking to the church for leadership.

The church stands on a firm foundation when it stands on the Word of God. In these trying times, are you standing on His Word? Are you an example of Christ in your home, community, workplace, and so on? Are you committed to God's agenda?

## **Application for Activation**

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

## **Follow the Spirit**



**What God wants me to do:**

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## **Remember Your Thoughts**

**Special insights I have learned:**

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## **More Light on the Text**

**2 Thessalonians 2:13–17**

**13 But we are bound to give thanks alway 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, the founders of the church at Thessalonica) were “bound” (Gk. *opheilo*, of-I-lo), 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” (Gk. *haireomai*, hahee-REH-om-ahee) these believers to become a part of His family and had used Paul, Silas, and Timothy to bring them the Good News. In other words, He chose to save the Thessalonians. The word “salvation” in the Greek is *soteria* (so-tay-REE-ah), which means “rescue, deliverance, preservation, saving.” God chose to rescue these Thessalonians from the power of sin and the penalty of sin, which is death (eternal separation from a holy God). It is also God at work, through His Holy Spirit, who used “sanctification” (Gk. *hagiasmos*, hag-ee-as-MOS), meaning “consecration, purification,” to make



the Thessalonians holy as He is holy. Their salvation had been all about God doing a work in them; God transforming them from sinners to believers by His power. One of His attributes is He is omnipotent, or all-powerful. He used that power to bring the Thessalonians into His fold.

**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” (Gk. *kaleo*, kal-EH-o), 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 in the Lord Jesus Christ, and were delivered from sin and from eternal, or everlasting, damnation (John 3:16). Their salvation brought “glory” (Gk. *doxa*, DOX-ah), 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.

**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 Greek is *stekō* (**STAY**-ko), meaning “to stand firm, to persevere, to persist” in the faith. They were to hold to the traditions which they had been taught when they first believed. The word “hold” in Greek is *krateō* (krat-**EH**-o), 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 and that his 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 to know what the Bible 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 conclusions. Instead, we should read the Scriptures surrounding the text. For example, look at the entire chapter and 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. Also consider the people, places, and times



of that Scripture. What was happening at the time? All these things bring clarity to the meaning.

Second Timothy 2:15 tells us, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” This passage tells us to study so that “we can build our lives on God’s Word and build His Word into our lives” (Life Application Study Bible, 2434). Thus, when false teachers come along teaching contrary to the Bible, we can prove or disprove what they say by going back to the source—we can go back to the fundamentals of the faith as the apostle Paul told the Thessalonians to do.

**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 Greek is *aionios* (ahee-O-nee-os), which means “eternal, forever, without beginning and end.” The Greek word for “consolation” is *paraklesis* (par-AK-lay-sis), 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” (Gk. *elpis*, el-PECE), which means “joyful and confident expectation.” When God



saved them, He gave them confidence and an expectation that would last forever. He gave this to them “through grace.” The word “grace” in Greek is *charis* (KHAR-ece), 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 in 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 Greek (*parakaleo*, par-ak-al-EH-o) means "to encourage and strengthen by consolation." The Greek word for "hearts" is *kardia* (kar-DEE-ah), 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 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, "It is a faithful saying: For if we are 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" (2 Timothy 2:11–12).



**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, making us 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.**

### **Sources:**

**Henry, Matthew. *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Edited by Leslie F. Church. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1961. 1884–85.**

***Life Application Study Bible (New Living Translation)*. 2nd ed. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2004.**

**Youngblood, Ronald F., gen. ed. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1995. 969–70.**



## Say It Correctly

Sanctification.  
sank-tuh-fuh-KAY-shuhn

## Daily Bible Readings

### DAY 302

Acts 21:1–40

Psalm 130

### DAY 303

Acts 22:1–30; 23:1–11

Psalm 131

### DAY 304

Acts 23:12–35; 24:1–27

Psalm 132

### DAY 305

Acts 25:1–27; 26:1–32

Psalm 133

### DAY 306

Acts 27:1–44

Psalm 134

### DAY 307

Acts 28:1–31

Psalm 135

### DAY 308

Romans 1:1–32; 2:1–16

Psalm 136