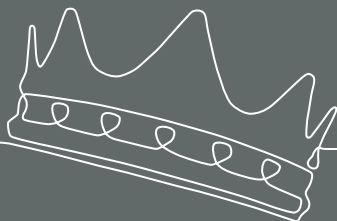


COVENANT^{EFC}

OCTOBER
2022
DEVOTIONAL
JOURNAL

*But we ought always to give thanks to God
for you, brothers beloved by the Lord,
because God chose you as the firstfruits
to be saved, through sanctification by the
Spirit and belief in the truth.*

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13



SEPTEMBER
2022
DEVOTIONAL
JOURNAL

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2 THESSALONIANS 2:13

MEMORY VERSES

2022

From 1 & 2 Thessalonians

◆ January

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit

– 1 Thessalonians 1:6 (ESV)

◆ February

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality

– 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (ESV)

◆ March

That each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honour – 1 Thessalonians 4:4 (ESV)

◆ April

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep.

– 1 Thessalonians 4:14 (ESV)

◆ May

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. – 1 Thessalonians 5:2 (ESV)

◆ June

And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (ESV)

◆ July

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (ESV)

◆ August

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

– 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (ESV)

◆ September

To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of His calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by His power. – 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (ESV)

◆ October

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

– 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

◆ November

But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. – 2 Thessalonians 3:3 (ESV)

◆ December

As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good.

– 2 Thessalonians 3:13 (ESV)

FOREWORD

BY SENIOR PASTORS

PREPARING TO MEET KING JESUS

What do times of crisis and uncertainty compel us towards? They compel us to confront our own mortality, scrutinise our foundations and evaluate our purpose. Most of all, they compel us to seek the face of God.

As we sought the Lord, He assured us through these verses:

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

– Matthew 16:18-19 (ESV)

In these uncertain times, we can be rested in Jesus because He has promised that He Himself will build His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail. The keys of the Kingdom of God

are the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – His incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming. And we are to proclaim it! As the Church, it is our responsibility and privilege to do so. When people believe the Good News, they are able to enter God’s Kingdom.

We are reminded of the charge that the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy as the spiritual leader of the church at Ephesus:

“I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in

season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.”
– 2 Timothy 4:1-4 (ESV)

Hence, this year’s spiritual burden is “Preparing to Meet King Jesus” — make ready God’s Kingdom people to prepare the world to meet King Jesus in eternity. The world is in darkness and pain. The task is urgent. We believe that we are now in the final hour. We have to prepare ourselves and others to meet King Jesus. This is really what the Church is all about.

How can we prepare ourselves to meet King Jesus?

A People Prepared for His Coming: Be Watchful!

In Luke 1:17, John the Baptist’s calling was to prepare the people for the first coming of our Lord. Like him, we are called to prepare the people for Christ’s second coming. We are to be watchful and persevere in prayer, so as to be ready for the coming of the Lord.

A People Prepared to Stand Firm and Take Action: Be Fruitful!

In times of great distress, those who know their God will stand firm and take action (Dan 11:32). This pandemic is a time of harvest. Many people everywhere are looking for hope. So let us stand firm in our calling as a church

We have to prepare ourselves and others to meet King Jesus. This is really what the Church is all about.

(to be disciples of *A Certain Kind* and return the Church to its disciplemaking roots through Authentic Discipleship and Intentional Disciplemaking) and take action to multiply leaders and disciplemakers for great fruitfulness.

A People Prepared in Personal Holiness: Be Faithful!

1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 remind us to guard our hearts and be faithful, for our own personal sanctification and holiness. Let’s be faithful in our personal integrity and walk with God, aligning our lives back to God in holiness and faithfulness.

This Devotional Journal is designed to help you walk daily with God and experience the transforming power of His Word and Spirit as you reflect, pray and obey the Lord in everything. May you be greatly blessed as you prepare yourselves and many others to meet King Jesus!

In Christ,
Rev Tan Kay Kiong and
Rev Tony Yeo

GUIDE TO USING THIS DEVOTIONAL JOURNAL

Step 1

PREPARE YOUR HEART IN GOD'S PRESENCE

- ◆ Select a fixed time (preferably in the morning before you begin your day) and a quiet place where you can be alone and undisturbed.
- ◆ Observe a moment of silence as you acknowledge God's presence. Centre down.
- ◆ Begin with a song of worship. Meditate on the lyrics even if you are unfamiliar with the tune. (Refer to the list of worship songs provided.)
- ◆ Ask God to open your heart to hear Him.

NEW IN 2022

You can now type in the PDF copy of the Devotional Journal using your digital device as we have allotted fillable boxes for you to journal your thoughts and prayers without space constraints.



SOMETHING TO PONDER

Examining your life is essential in your faith journey. Your redeemed life as a disciple of Christ deserves careful examining. May you take root and bear fruit in Him!

The English Standard Version (ESV) is the default Bible version translation unless otherwise specified.

Step 2

ALLOW GOD TO S.O.A.P. YOU WITH HIS WORD AND SPIRIT

- ◆ Scripture – Take your time to meditate on the Scripture passage for the day. Pause and mull over words and phrases that stand out to you.
- ◆ Observation – Jot down significant insights and reflections from the passage you have read. You may use the guiding questions provided. The “Deeper Reflection” section is to aid your contemplation of the Scripture. It is not to replace your own observation, for the Holy Spirit illuminates the Scripture to you as you seek Him earnestly.
- ◆ Application – Note down a specific and practical commitment to God's Word for you. Is there a command to obey, a sin to avoid, an example to follow, or a principle to live out? Where appropriate, share your devotional entry with someone.
- ◆ Prayer – Bring your heartfelt response to God in prayer.



PRAYER POINTERS FOR 2022

We have provided prayer pointers for Pastors and Staff every Tuesday and for one of the 3 Faith Exploits (Disciple the Generations, Singapore and the Nations) every Wednesday. Every Thursday, a prayer pointer is included for Outreach/Missions/New Life Leaders. On each Friday, there is a prayer pointer for SGI Leaders (e.g. Zone Mentors, CG Leaders and Assistant CG Leaders). A prayer pointer for Church Board Members is included every Saturday. Please pray for each group as well as any specific individuals whom God may bring to your mind.

PRAY FOR URBAN MISSIONS

“And the LORD made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes....So he brought his people out with joy, his chosen ones with singing. And he gave them the lands of nations and they took procession of the fruit of the peoples’ toil, that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD!”

PSALM 105:24, 43-45 (ESV)

URBAN MISSIONS FOCUSES ON OUTREACH MINISTRY IN

the cities in the areas of healthcare, literacy, disaster relief and the marginalised, such as orphanage work. Urban Missions brings the love of God, puts the Gospel into action and proclaims it among the people. COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on global economies and international supply chains. On top of this, the Russian-Ukraine war compounded these woes, with rising fuel costs and inflation threatening to stifle any green shoots of economic recovery. All this impacted the livelihoods of many. The Gospel is the message of hope in such challenging times. The outreach effort never ceases. Let us intercede for the cities and the communities that have been impacted.

PRAY FOR

1. Disaster Relief

- a. The displaced people and refugees of the Russia-Ukraine war. That adequate and timely support will reach these people via the ground work in Poland, Hungary, Romania and Lithuania. For the transition and adjustment of these people.
- b. The relief efforts by the Home Missions migrant workers team in the recent Bangladesh floods, where they distributed basic necessities to villages impacted by the flood waters. For ground co-ordination with partners as the relief efforts transit to the rebuilding phase.

2. Steady Readers Missions

- a. Thanksgiving that the core team completed the video recording of the phonetic lessons and test runs.
- b. Refiring of hearts and fresh anointing on our volunteers and partners after the COVID-19-induced lull.
- c. God’s mercy, safety and protection for the churches and partners as they engage the communities.

3. Orphanage Work

- a. Thanksgiving for the digital mission trip (DMT) that engaged the orphans in Pekanbaru as their spiritual uncles and aunts. With the lifting of travel restrictions, the DMTs can be augmented with short-term mission trips.
- b. That their daily necessities, in terms of food and provision for school fees, be met.
- c. That the school being built beside the Pekanbaru Orphanage will be a discipling church plant.

4. Healthcare – Village Doctors’ Training

- a. The work in Philippines to restart and gain momentum after the disruptions caused by COVID-19.
- b. For China to reopen and our partners working there to be safe.

WORSHIP SONGS

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER

LIVING HOPE

Verse 1

How great the chasm that lay between us
 How high the mountain I could not climb
 In desperation, I turned to heaven
 And spoke Your Name into the night
 Then through the darkness
 Your loving kindness
 Tore through the shadows of my soul
 The work is finished, the end is written
 Jesus Christ, my living hope

Verse 2

Who could imagine so great a mercy?
 What heart could fathom such boundless grace?
 The God of ages stepped down from glory
 To wear my sin and bear my shame
 The cross has spoken, I am forgiven
 The King of kings calls me His own
 Beautiful Savior, I'm Yours forever
 Jesus Christ, my living hope

Chorus

Hallelujah, praise the One who set me free
 Hallelujah, death has lost its grip on me
 You have broken every chain
 There's salvation in Your Name
 Jesus Christ, my living hope

Verse 3

Then came the morning that sealed the promise
 Your buried body began to breathe
 Out of the silence, the Roaring Lion
 Declared the grave has no claim on me
 Jesus, Yours is the victory, whoa!

Ending

Jesus Christ, my living hope
 Oh God, You are my living hope

Brian Johnson | Phil Wickham

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HOPE OF THE NATIONS

Verse

Jesus, hope of the nations
 Jesus, comfort for all who mourn
 You are the source of heaven's hope on earth
 Jesus, light in the darkness
 Jesus, truth in each circumstance
 You are the source of heaven's light on earth

Pre-Chorus

In history, You lived and died
 You broke the chains, You rose to life

Chorus

You are the hope, living in us
 You are the Rock, in whom we trust
 You are the light, shining for all the world to see
 You rose from the dead, conquering fear
 Our Prince of Peace, drawing us near
 Jesus our hope, living for all who will receive
 (Lord we believe)
 (Lord we believe)
 (Lord we believe)

Ending

Lord we believe
 (Jesus hope of the nations)
 Lord we believe
 (Jesus hope of the nations)
 Lord we believe
 (Jesus Lord we believe)
 Lord we believe

Brian Doerksen

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THE LION AND THE LAMB

Verse 1

He's coming on the clouds
 Kings and kingdoms will bow down
 And every chain will break
 As broken hearts declare His praise
 For who can stop the Lord Almighty

Chorus

Our God is the Lion
 The Lion of Judah
 He's roaring with power
 And fighting our battles
 And every knee will bow before Him
 Our God is the Lamb
 The Lamb that was slain
 For the sins of the world
 His blood breaks the chains
 And every knee will bow before the Lion and the Lamb
 Every knee will bow before Him

Verse 2

So open up the gates
 Make way before the King of kings
 The God who comes to save
 Is here to set the captives free
 For who can stop the Lord Almighty

Bridge

Who can stop the Lord Almighty
 Who can stop the Lord (Almighty)

Brenton Brown | Brian Johnson | Leeland Mooring

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GOD IS HERE

Intro

Oh oh oh
Oh oh oh

Verse 1

Open our eyes, Lord
We want to see You
Open our hearts, Lord
We want to know You
Open our ears, Lord
We need to hear You
Jesus be revealed
Jesus be revealed

Chorus

God is here, God is here
God is here, He is able
We draw near to see Jesus face to face
God is here, God is here
God is here, He is faithful
We draw near to see Jesus
Oh, Jesus be revealed

Verse 2

Open the gates, Lord
Reveal Your glory
Open the nations
Establish Your Kingdom
Open the Heavens
Pour out Your Spirit
Jesus be revealed
Jesus be revealed

Bridge

Holy
We cry holy
Hallelujah, God is here
Holy
We cry holy
Hallelujah, God is here
(Repeat)

Darlene Zschech | Israel Houghton | Phil Wickham
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GOD IS GREAT

Verse 1

All creation cries to You
Worshipping in Spirit and in truth
Glory to the Faithful One
Jesus Christ God's Son

Verse 2

All creation gives You praise
You alone are truly great
You alone are God who reigns
For eternity

Chorus

God is great and His praise
Fills the earth fills the heavens
And Your Name will be praised
Through all the world

God is great sing His praise
All the earth all the heavens
'Cause we're living for the glory
Of Your Name
(The glory of Your Name)

Verse 3

All to You O God we bring
Jesus teach us how to live
Let Your fire burn in us
That all may hear and all may see

Bridge

Holy is the Lord
The whole earth sings
The whole earth sings

Ending

'Cause we're living for the glory
Of Your Name
The glory of Your Name

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IN JESUS' NAME

Verse 1

God is fighting for us
 God is on our side
 He has overcome
 Yes He has overcome
 We will not be shaken
 We will not be moved
 Jesus You are here (oh)

Verse 2

Carrying our burdens
 Covering our shame
 He has overcome
 Yes He has overcome
 We will not be shaken
 We will not be moved
 Jesus You are here

Chorus 1

I will live, I will not die
 The resurrection power of Christ alive in me
 And I am free in Jesus' Name

Chorus 2

I will live, I will not die
 I will declare and lift You high
 Christ revealed and I am healed in Jesus' Name

Bridge

God is fighting for us
 Pushing back the darkness
 Lighting up the Kingdom
 That cannot be shaken
 In the Name of Jesus
 Enemy's defeated
 And we will shout it out
 Shout it out

Ending

In Jesus' Name
 In Jesus' Name
 In Jesus' Name oh

Darlene Zschech | Israel Houghton
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HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD

Verse 1

The splendour of the King
Clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice
All the earth rejoice
He wraps Himself in light
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
Trembles at His voice

Chorus

How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, all will see
How great, how great is our God

Verse 2

Age to age He stands
And time is in His hands
Beginning and the end
Beginning and the end
The Godhead, three in one
Father, Spirit, Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb

Bridge

Name above all names
Worthy of all praise
My heart will sing “How great is our God!”

Chris Tomlin | Ed Cash | Jesse Reeves

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YOU ALONE

Verse

You are the peace that guards my heart
My help in time of need
You are the hope that leads me on
And brings me to my knees
For there I find You waiting
And there I find release
So with all my heart I'll worship
And unto You I'll sing

Chorus

For You alone deserve all glory
For You alone deserve all praise
Father we worship and adore You
Father we long to see Your face
For You alone deserve all glory
For You alone deserve all praise
Father we love You
And we worship You this day

Don Harris

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SAT
01

Divine Sovereignty in End Times

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8

OBSERVATION

How does Paul show the idea of the sovereignty of God in the passage?

APPLICATION

How does the sovereignty of God help me in living in the end times?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: To rest in God's sovereignty in living with end times challenges
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IF THE WORD OF GOD IS TRUE – THAT “IN THE LAST DAYS difficult times will come” (2 Tim 3:1), and “difficult” in the moral and spiritual sense, things and times in the world will become worse and worse, and not better, in spite of its great and fast progress in science and technology. Advanced science and technology can only make humanity better on the outside, but not the inside – the heart. Ironically, advanced science and technology can bring about a greater moral and spiritual corruption of the heart. The world will be in this deteriorating state despite the life-transforming Gospel being “spread rapidly” and “glorified” (2 Thess 3:1). But we ought to be like Isaiah: “I saw the Lord sitting on a throne” (Isa 6:1) – a clear and strong vision of the sovereignty of God.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the thrice repeated word “reveal” is used in relation to “the man of lawlessness” (vv.3, 6, 8). Most significantly, the verb is in the passive voice in all three occurrences: “is revealed” (v.3) and “will be revealed” (vv.6, 8). We must not miss the theology of the **Divine Passive** here. It is not the antichrist “will reveal” himself. The divine passive means he “is revealed” and “will be revealed” by God Himself. The antichrist has no say over his appearing in the world. Words concerning time are used to underline **Divine Timing**: “**unless** the apostasy **comes first**” (v.3), “so that **in his time**” (v.6) and “**only...until** he is taken away” (v.7).

The narrative of the antichrist is full of the sovereignty of God.

SUN
02

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 1

Grit:

Refusing to give up when life gets hard.

Memory Verse

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."
- Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

* Bottom Line

Hold on because God is with you.*

* Bible Story

Genesis 37, 39-40 - Joseph Sold by His Brothers

* Activity

Snakes and Ladders

Props: Snakes and ladders board game

Play the board game together as a family. Invite everyone to share their experiences after the game and discuss the following:

- How did you feel when you slid down ladders in the game?
- Have you had the same experience at school or the workplace? If so, how did you overcome it?

Say, "In the story of Joseph in Genesis, he faced several obstacles before he could finally find success. During difficult times, Joseph did not give up and put his faith in God. Indeed, God was with him all the time. In the game of snakes and ladders, we fall several times before getting to the finishing point. Trust that God is with us during the difficult times! We will get to the finishing point in God's time and space!"

* Talk About It

- What kind of situations do we need strength to push through?
- What difficult times have you faced in the past?
- How are you reminded that God is with you?
- How does Joseph's story encourage you?
- How can you use your experiences to encourage others?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in which you persevered and overcame hardships through your faith in God and with the help of trusted friends. How did God help you? What did you learn from this experience?

* Prayer

Pray for a strong mind and heart that puts God first when we face difficult times. Pray for opportunities to share our experiences with others, so that they will see God's glory through our stories.

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BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD10W1>



MON
03

The Definitive End of Evil

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about evil in this text?

APPLICATION

What does Christ bringing evil to nothing at His Second Coming mean for me in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

O Sovereign God, from You, through You and to You are all things. You have made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.¹ Evil does not exist outside of Your sovereignty. And You alone can and will bring a complete end to evil, but only in the day of the Lord. So, I rest in Your sovereignty as I walk with You in the midst of evil.



Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

QUITE CERTAINLY, PAUL TAUGHT THE THESSALONIANS

about the coming “man of lawlessness (*anomia*)” and his forerunner, “the mystery of lawlessness (*anomia*) already at work” (v.7), by expounding the Daniel 11 prophecy (Dan 11:21-45) in the context of Daniel 10 to 12. The Scriptures that Paul used was the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), from which he got the term “lawlessness” (*anomia*) to describe the antichrist – particularly from Daniel 12:10.² At “the end time”, “many” of God’s faithful people “will be purged, purified and refined” through tribulation (Dan 12:9-10a, NASB), and “the lawless ones (*anomoî*) act lawlessly (*anomeō*)”. And the lawless ones (*anomoî*) will not understand” (Dan 12:10b, NETS³).

Jesus has predicted eschatologically: “lawlessness (*anomia*) will be increased, the love of many will grow cold” (Matt 24:12). This is a manifestation of “the mystery of lawlessness already at work”. Jesus links “lawlessness” with “love”. In Scripture, “love is the fulfilment of the law”, which is “summed up” as “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” and “love does no wrong to a neighbour” (Rom 13:9-10). And it all boils down to how human beings treat fellow human beings. Lawlessness is lovelessness. A major form of loveless lawlessness is social injustice.

The “man of lawlessness” is the epitome of evil. So, evil will only continue to increase intensively and extensively. We are to patiently endure the increasing evil with two anchoring truths and not lose heart. **Only Jesus can** put evil to a total end: “whom the Lord Jesus will kill...and bring to nothing” (v.8). And evil **will end only** at “the appearance of His coming” (v.8).

¹ Proverbs 16:4

² G. K. Beale, 1-2 Thessalonians, *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series* (IVP Academic, 2003), 206

³ NETS: A New English Translation of the Septuagint

TUE
04

Satan and Work of Deception

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10a

OBSERVATION

What does Paul tell us about the antichrist in this passage?

APPLICATION

How can I detect and discern signs and wonders that are false?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To be able to discern falsehood with the truth
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN 2 THESSALONIANS 2, PAUL'S EMPHASIS ON DECEPTION

is clear. He begins with a strong exhortation, “Let no one **deceive** you in any way” (2 Thess 2:3). Mark the absolute terms that Paul uses: “no one” and “any way”. We must be consciously alert to not being deceived at all. Behind the antichrist is “the activity of Satan with all power and **false** signs and wonders...with all wicked **deception**” (v.9-10a). And unbelievers “believe what is **false**” under “a strong **delusion**” from God (2 Thess 2:11).

As Satan's instrument, the antichrist will have the supernatural “power” to perform “signs and wonders” (v.9). Knowing what human beings can be easily drawn to, Satan uses that as an effective key to deception: supernatural power, signs and wonders. The signs and wonders are not illusions performed by magicians. They are supernatural, marvellous, tangible and believable. The signs and wonders are “false” – “probably not in the sense that they will be fakes, but in the sense that they will deceive rather than enlighten”⁴. While this “will happen exclusively in the future” when the antichrist appears “to deceive the church on a massive scale”⁵, it “has already begun to take place”⁶ as “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” (2 Thess 2:7). There are those who call Jesus “Lord”, but are not His true disciples; and they can “prophesy”, “cast out demons” and “perform many miracles” in Jesus' name (Matt 7:22-23). In other words, they look so Christian. And Jesus has this one word for us: “Beware” (Matt 7:15).

⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Thessalonians, The Bible Speaks Today* (IVP, 1991), 172

⁵ G. K. Beale, 221

⁶ G. K. Beale, 220

WED
05

Unbelievers and Work of Deception

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 8-12

OBSERVATION

How does Paul describe the spiritual condition of unbelievers?

APPLICATION

How does the rather unpromising spiritual condition of unbelievers affect my reaching out to them with the Gospel?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for the Nations: That God will in His mercy remove their spiritual blindness
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

CERTAIN UNBELIEVERS ARE DESCRIBED BY PAUL AS “THOSE who are perishing” (v.10). Their spiritual condition is further variedly depicted as “refused to love the truth” (v.10), “believe what is false” (v.11), “did not believe the truth” and “had pleasure in unrighteousness” (v.12). Unbelief and unrighteousness go together.

Paul shows how these unbelievers reach this point of “perishing”. It begins with the **great refusal**. They are “perishing” **“because they refused** to love the truth and so be saved” (v.10). The “truth” that leads to salvation (“and so be saved”) – the Gospel – is presented to them, but they reject it. Why? Because they hate the truth – the contrast of “love the truth”. They “refused to love the truth” because they “had pleasure in unrighteousness” (v.12). They “love the darkness” and “hate the Light” (Jn 3:19-20).

The great refusal opens itself up to the **great deception**. When the antichrist appears, he will “exalt himself against every so-called god or object of worship...proclaiming himself to be God” (vv.3-4). The antichrist “by the activity of Satan” will display his supernatural “power” by performing “false signs and wonders” (v.9) to convincingly show that he is God. Those who “refused to love the truth” will be taken in by the spectacular satanic deception to worship this false God (v.10). John’s version of the antichrist in Revelation is the Beast, who demands worship (Rev 13:4, 8, 12, 15). At the heart of worship is allegiance. There is no neutrality. We love the truth or hate the truth. We worship the true God or other gods.

THU
06

God and Work of Deception

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12

OBSERVATION

What do you learn about God in this passage?

APPLICATION

How does the reality of God sending certain unbelievers a strong delusion to reinforce deception affect my reaching out to them with the Gospel?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: To not lose heart in outreach amidst poor response from unbelievers
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE GREAT REFUSAL OPENS THE DOOR TO THE GREAT

deception: Satan's deception through the antichrist's "false signs and wonders" is "for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth" (vv.9-10). The great refusal actually receives a double dosage of the great deception. The additional dose comes from God, which comes as the **great judgment**: "Therefore **God sends** them a **strong delusion**" (v.11a). And it is for a specific purpose: "so that they may **believe what is false**" (v.11b). They believe "the lie" (v.11b, NIV) and this "lie" is "the denial of the fundamental truth that God is God, together with the blatant assertion by Antichrist that he is God"⁷. This divine specific purpose (v.11b) has its final purpose: "in order that all may be **condemned**" (v.12a).

The God "who desires **all** people to be saved" (1 Tim 2:3-4), "not wishing for **any** to perish" (2 Pet 3:9), is the same God who in judgment "sends" those who insist and persist in unbelief and unrighteousness "a strong delusion" to deepen the deception, and in His wrath "gave them over" to deeper depravity (Rom 1:18, 24, 26, 28). There is no greater divine judgment than this divine abandonment, leaving sinners to rot by their own sin.

The great deception (v.9-10a) is the result of "refused to love the truth" (v.10b). And the great judgment (v.11-12a) is the result of "did not believe the truth" (v.12b). So, ultimately, when these unbelievers are "perishing" (v.10) and "condemned" (v.12), the responsibility lies on them. It is their choice.

⁷ John R. W. Stott, 172

FRI
07

Beware of Being Led Astray

SCRIPTURE Matthew 24:3-11, 23-25

OBSERVATION

What is Jesus' emphasis in His answer to the disciples' question about the sign of His coming and the end times?

APPLICATION

How can I keep myself from being led astray by false teachers and false teaching?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To be protected from being led astray by false teachings
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

WHEN JESUS' DISCIPLES ASKED HIM ABOUT THE SIGN OF

His coming and the end times (v.3), He did not immediately answer their question directly. The first thing that Jesus said in answering their question was a solemn warning: "Beware that no one leads you astray" (v.4, NRSV). This first thing is the most important thing. And the first word in this most important thing is: "Beware" – "See to it" (NASB), "Take heed (KJV) and "Watch out" (NIV). What Jesus wants us to pay most attention to is "Let no one lead you astray". And He mentioned the great danger of being led astray four times (vv.4, 5, 11, 24). We must not miss Jesus' strong emphasis. And it is "false messiahs" and "false prophets" who will lead God's people astray (vv.5, 11, 24) – from the truth, and no longer walking with God (cf. Jn 6:66). Mark the word "many": "many false prophets" "will lead many astray" and "many will fall away" from the faith (vv.5, 10, 11).

How does false teaching work on believers? "Like the proverbial 'frog in the kettle' that is unable, because of its cold-blooded nature, to sense the gradual increases in water temperature until it is too late (and it is boiled), God's people sometimes fail to perceive subtle shifts away from God's truth. When the spiritual heat of false teaching or deception comes, we sometimes do not readily recognise it because of our spiritual cold-heartedness"⁸, spiritual blindness and biblical illiteracy. "Are we like the frog that is beginning to boil?"⁹ The scary thing is we don't know that we are.

⁸ G. K. Beale, 224

⁹ G. K. Beale, 224

SAT
08

A Love of the Truth

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

OBSERVATION

What is the meaning of “love of the truth” (v.10)?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to have a love of the truth?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: To grow deep in love of the truth
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN THE NARRATIVE OF THE ANTICHRIST IN 2 THESSALONIANS 2

is the battle between “the truth” and falsehood and deception – the contradiction and counterfeit of the truth (2 Thess 2:3, 9-12). The truth is the Gospel, for people are to believe the truth “so as to be saved” (v.10). And “the gospel of God” is “the word of God” (1 Thess 2:9, 13). Indeed, the whole Bible is “the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1-3).

Unbelievers are “perishing” (v.10) and “condemned” (v.12) because they “refused to love the truth” (v.10) and “did not believe the truth” (v.12). When unbelievers “refused to love the truth”, it means they “did not accept a love for the truth”¹⁰ and they “had not only not ‘welcomed’...this truth, but had no liking for it, no desire to possess it”¹¹. The expression “love of the truth” is found only here in the whole New Testament. “The fuller expression of ‘love of the truth’ goes beyond the idea of accepting the Gospel on an intellectual level as something that is factually true or accurate, moving deeply to a passionate, emotional attachment to the Gospel: one is personally and fully devoted to this truth.”¹²

It is theologically assumed that when a person “accepts a love for the truth” and is “saved”, this love for the truth should **continue** in his or her life in following Jesus. Do we have “a love for the truth” – the Word of God? Are we “moving deeply to a passionate, emotional attachment” to the Word of God, and “personally and fully devoted to” it?

¹⁰ Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians, The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Eerdmans, 2009), 294, footnote 85

¹¹ Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Apollos, 2002), 323 – citing George Milligan

¹² Jeffrey A. D. Weima, 1-2 Thessalonians, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Baker Academic, 2014), 541-42

SUN
09

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 2

Grit:

Refusing to give up when life gets hard.

Memory Verse

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."
- Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

* Bottom Line

Hold on because there's a bigger story.*

BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD10W2>

* Bible Story

Genesis 41-45 - Joseph Forgives His Brothers



* Activity

The Bigger Picture

Props: A 100-piece jigsaw puzzle or equivalent

Complete the jigsaw puzzle together as a family. After the activity, discuss the following:

- How did you feel after completing the puzzle?
- What difficulties did you face while trying to put the puzzle together?

Say, "The jigsaw puzzle shows our limited knowledge of the bigger picture which God has planned for us. We do not understand why bad things happen, but we continue to fix each piece of the puzzle together with faith. God knows what the final picture looks like. Joseph continued his faith journey with God even though it was hard. God showed him the sweetest thing at the end of this journey - forgiveness and reunion with his beloved family. When we walk faithfully with God, we will also experience the goodness and joy of following God."

* Talk About It

- Was there a situation in the past where something turned out better than you expected?
- How does it feel to know that God is writing a bigger story in your life, just like what God did for Joseph?
- Why is it so hard sometimes to believe that God has a bigger story in store for us?

Parents: Share with your family members about an experience in which you persevered and saw the bigger picture which God planned for you. How did God help you in this experience? What did you learn from it?

* Prayer

Ask God to grow our faith! Pray that we will put our trust in God in all situations.

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MON
10

Thanksgiving to God in Warfare

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4; 2:13-14

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Paul's thanksgivings to God?

APPLICATION

What areas of my life do I need to give thanks to God for?

PRAYER

O God Most High, who accomplishes all things for me, when my soul is among lions, when my soul is bowed down, I still worship You, "Be exalted above the heavens, O God; let Your glory be above all the earth". Strengthen my heart that it may be steadfast in Your unfailing love and great faithfulness.¹³

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL'S TWO THANKSGIVINGS TO GOD IN 2 THESSALONIANS

– "We ought always to give thanks to God for you" (v.3), and "we should always give thanks to God for you" (2 Thess 2:13) – frame his pastoral word to the Thessalonians in their two major discipleship challenges, even the two major battlefronts in spiritual warfare: affliction (2 Thess 1:3-10) and deception (2 Thess 2:1-14). Paul gives thanks to God in the heat of spiritual warfare. Mark Paul's emphatic "we should always".

We give thanks to God for our **perseverance in God in enduring affliction**: "for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring", which is part of the Thessalonians' abundant growth in love and faith (2 Thess 1:3-4). We have an active part to play in perseverance, as "**your** steadfastness and faith" indicates. However, ultimately, it is the divine power at work in us: "**being strengthened** with all power, according to His glorious might, **for** all endurance and patience" (Col 1:11). Recognise how gloriously mighty is that divine power working in us! So, in and for our perseverance we give thanks to God.

We give thanks to God for the **assurance in God in encountering deception**: "God chose you" and "God called you" (2 Thess 2:13, 14). Being chosen and called by God, we are assuredly protected against the end times great deception. But still we must be vigilant: "Let no one deceive you" (2 Thess 2:3).

Thanksgiving to God is worshipful acknowledgment of His sovereignty over everything. In thanksgiving to God, we stand in security and victory in His sovereignty.

¹³ Psalm 57:2, 4-7, 10-11

TUE
11

A Theological Portrait of Salvation

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

OBSERVATION

What characterises our salvation in Christ?

APPLICATION

Which aspect of our salvation in Christ is of particular relevance to me?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: To be sanctified by the Spirit in walking in the truth
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

SPIRITUAL STABILITY IS CRITICAL IN THE FACE OF THE great onslaught of deception. It is spiritual maturity that establishes spiritual stability (Eph 4:13-14). The Thessalonians were spiritually stable, because they were “growing abundantly” in faith, love and hope (1 Thess 1:3 - 2 Thess 1:3-4). And their stability was anchored in the salvation of God, for which Paul gives thanks to God (vv.13-14).

Our salvation in Christ did not begin at our conversion. It **began** “before the foundation of the world” when “God chose” us “to be saved” (v.13; Eph 1:4). Jesus says, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you” (Jn 15:16). So, when we made the decision to accept Christ as our Saviour, we were not making the choice. It was God’s choice of us in eternity past being realised – by God Himself. For us “to be saved” God must choose us and seek us, because we will never seek God of our own (Rom 3:11). God has to take the initiative of grace toward us. The moment when we accepted Christ was the moment God “called” us (v.14). God’s eternal choice became His historical call.¹⁴

The **end** of our salvation is we “share in the glory” of Christ (v.14, NIV), which is conformity to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29-30). This glorification with Christ is achieved “through the sanctification by the Spirit” indwelling us (v.13), who “are being transformed into” Christ’s image “from glory to glory” (2 Cor 3:18). This is the divine agenda in all that we do and in all that happens to us – good or bad.

¹⁴ John R. W. Stott, 176

WED
12

The Trinitarian Presence of God

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

OBSERVATION

What can you learn about the Trinity in our salvation in this passage?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to relate with the Triune God?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for the Nations: That God will shine in their hearts the light of the Gospel
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

OUR SALVATION IS THE WORK OF THE TRIUNE GOD: “GOD chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by **the Spirit**” (v.13), “**God** called you through the Gospel to share in the glory of our **Lord Jesus Christ**” (v.14).

The work of the Triune God in us is personal. Each of the three persons of the Godhead is personally committed and involved in it together as a Triune God. And it is in a relationship with us. Our relationship and fellowship with God ought to be **consciously trinitarian**. It is rather common to hear this prayer: “Father, we thank You that You loved us and died on the cross for our sins.” This reflects either a theological confusion or a lack of consciousness of who we are addressing in that prayer. God the Father did not die for our sins!

The presence of God with us and in us is trinitarian. The trinitarian presence of God in us is a **mysterious dynamic presence**. The Holy Spirit indwelling us is “the Spirit of God” – “the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead” and “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom 8:9, 11). But it is not that there are three Spirits. For there is “one Spirit” as there is “one Lord” and “one God and Father of all” (Eph 4:4-6) – Trinitarian! Paul prays that “**the Father**” will grant the church “to be strengthened with power through **His Spirit** in the inner man so that **Christ** may dwell in your hearts” (Eph 3:14, 16-17a). This is a trinitarian prayer for the Triune God’s empowering presence.

THU
13

Divine Encouragement and Divine Empowerment

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, 16-17

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians (vv.16-17)?

APPLICATION

What does the God-given "eternal encouragement and good hope" mean to me in my discipleship journey?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: That God will empower and encourage them in their discipleship journey
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL PRAYS FOR THE THESSALONIANS FOR DIVINE encouragement and divine empowerment as they endure affliction and encounter deception: That God will "encourage your hearts and strengthen you" (v.17, NIV). Paul's prayer is anchored in God's promises. In the salvation of God that Paul gives thanks for is God fulfilling His promises of His choice and calling of us, with the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work in us in our discipleship journey that will end in sharing in Christ's glory at His coming (vv.13-14). "God's promises are the only ground of our assurance that God will answer our prayers. Prayer is not a way of inducing God to do what He has said He will not do; it is the God-appointed way of enabling Him to do what He has promised to do and enabling us to inherit His promises. God's promises and our prayers must not be separated."¹⁵

God "has given" us "eternal encouragement and good hope" (v.16, NIV), and so, we ask God to "encourage and strengthen" us inwardly "in every good work and word" (v.17) – "the outward and public evidence of the inward strength"¹⁶. We need encouragement when we are discouraged. We need hope when we are in "hope against hope" situations (Rom 4:18). God "has given" us "eternal encouragement and good hope" in the Scriptures: "**whatever was written in earlier times** was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the [eternal] **encouragement of the Scriptures** we might have [good] **hope**" (Rom 15:4). And standing in His Word, we pray to the God "who gives perseverance and encouragement" (Rom 15:5).

¹⁵ John R. W. Stott, 179

¹⁶ John R. W. Stott, 180

FRI
14

Stand Firm and Hold Fast

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

OBSERVATION

What does it mean to “stand firm and hold fast to the traditions”?

APPLICATION

How will I be able to stand firm and hold fast to the truth?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To stand firm and hold fast to the truth
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN OUR DISCIPLESHIP JOURNEY, WE ARE TO EXPECT THE inevitable and inescapable ideological or circumstantial “rain...floods...wind...that beat against” us to come, where our foundation in life is tested: Is it built on rock or on sand (Matt 7:24-27)? It all has to do with the Word of God: Are we living by the Word or not?

In the crucible of affliction and the combat against deception, the Thessalonians are exhorted by Paul to “stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught” (v.15). The “traditions” were the apostolic traditions – the apostles’ original teachings, which consist of the truth they received from the Lord through revelation. “Tradition” (*paradosis*) means “truth which, having been received, must be faithfully handed down”¹⁷. The apostolic traditions are “the foundation of Christian faith and life”¹⁸ (cf. Eph 2:20), taught in the early church by “spoken word or letter”, which are now preserved in the New Testament.

To “stand firm” is to be steadfast and continue in a certain state.¹⁹ We need to “stand firm” when we are being greatly shaken, be it physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually. To “hold fast” is “to retain in the hand”²⁰ and “keep a strong grip on the teaching” (NLT). To “hold fast” is to not let ourselves be pulled away forcefully or subtly. Facing storms that may rage for a long time, we are to keep standing our ground, planting our feet firmly on it, and keep clinging on “to something solid and secure, clutching hold of it for dear life”²¹. That “something solid and secure” is “the traditions” – the Word of God.

¹⁷ John R. W. Stott, 178

¹⁸ John R. W. Stott, 178

¹⁹ Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains, Second Edition, Volume 1* (UBS, 1988, 1989), 13,30

²⁰ Johannes P. Louw & Eugene A. Nida, 18,6

²¹ John R. W. Stott, 178

SAT
15

Stable Inside the Divine Sandwich

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of verse 15 being sandwiched by verses 13 to 14 and verses 16 to 17?

APPLICATION

How do the salvation of God and the eternal encouragement and good hope that God has given me help me to stand firm and hold fast to the truth?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: To find security in God's enveloping love
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE THESSALONIANS WERE FIRST “TAUGHT” “THE traditions” – “the truth” (2 Thess 2:10, 12, 13), in order to be able to “stand firm and hold fast” in their discipleship challenges. Otherwise, there is nothing for them to “stand firm and hold fast” to. Likewise for us, to live by the Word of God, we must first learn with diligence, know and understand with wisdom, the Scriptures. Standing firm and holding fast constitute the human part that we play. But there is the divine part – the much more important part – that we must not be ignorant of or ignore. Significantly, the **human part** (v.15) is sandwiched by the **divine part** (vv.13-14, 16-17). The divine sandwiching is not just a literary sandwich, but a theological sandwich.

It is in the salvation of God, being chosen and called by God (vv.13-14) – and thus, safe and secure in God's hand – that we stand fast and hold fast to the truth. And as we stand fast and hold fast, the sanctifying and transforming work of the Holy Spirit is taking place (v.13), empowering us and renewing our minds and inner beings (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 4:16), building our character into Christlikeness, the glory of Christ (v.14; 2 Cor 3:18). And we also stand firm and hold fast in the “eternal encouragement and good hope” that God “has given” us, in which we pray for divine encouragement and empowerment (vv.16-17). Above all, enveloping our standing fast and holding fast is the divine love sandwich: “loved by the Lord” (v.13), and Christ and God “who loved us” (v.16).

SUN
16

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 3

Grit:

Refusing to give up when life gets hard.

Memory Verse

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."
- Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

* Bottom Line

Hold on even when you don't know what to do.*

* Bible Story

Exodus 2:1-10 - Moses Is Born

* Activity

Let's Talk About It

Props: Situation cards

 BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD10W3>



Sam feels extremely stressed and keeps thinking he will not do well in the upcoming math exam.	On the day of the project presentation, Jane's partner falls ill and she is anxious about presenting alone.	John has to submit an essay tomorrow but his computer stopped working. He lost the original copy of the essay.
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Discuss with your family members about the possible solutions for the situations above.

- Have you experienced any of these situations before? If so, how did you overcome them?
- What actions will you take to solve the problems?

Say, "Moses was born during difficult times. His mother and Miriam must have felt helpless, but God was there. He led Moses' mother to the Princess of Egypt and Moses was kept safe until it was time for him to help his people. We can ask God for help, even if we are in the most helpless situations. God may send the right people to us or talk to us! We do not need to despair! Our hope is in God!"

* Talk About It

- How do you feel when you're not sure what to do?
- Who do you usually turn to for help when you face problems?
- How can you rely on God for help?

Parents: Share with your family members about a situation in which you felt helpless and God turned it around. How did God show his love to you? What did you do to demonstrate your trust in God?

* Prayer

Give thanks to God for He is the one in full control. Pray that we will trust Him in both good and bad times.

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MON
17

The Centrality of the Word

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:1, 4, 6, 10, 12, 16

OBSERVATION

What is the recurring idea in these verses in 2 Thessalonians 3?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to make the Word of God central in my life?

PRAYER

O Lord, heaven and earth will pass away, but Your words will not pass away.²² The very essence of Your words is truth; and every one of Your righteous laws stands forever.²³ Help me to pay close attention to the Scriptures as a light on my path, and strengthen me to stand firm and hold fast to Your Word, no matter how my world is shaken and collapsed.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL DEVOTES TWO-THIRDS OF 2 THESSALONIANS

(chapters 1 and 2) to the theme of Christ's Second Coming: "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven" (1:7), "when He comes on that day" (1:10), "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:1), "the day of the Lord" (2:2), "the appearance of His coming" (2:8). Before the Lord returns, His followers will face two ongoing discipleship challenges: affliction (chapter 1) and deception (chapter 2). In suffering affliction, we stand and rest with "steadfastness and faith" in the eschatological "righteous judgment of God" (1:4-8) and in the future sharing of Christ's glory (1:10, 12). Christ will not return, unless the "man of lawlessness" appears "to deceive the church on a massive scale"²⁴ that will lead to "the apostasy" (2:3; cf. 1 Tim 4:1). But the antichrist is now being restrained from appearing; and meanwhile, "the mystery of lawlessness" – every form of deception – "is already at work" (2:6-7). So, we are now living in an "ambiguous situation, in which evil is both operative and held in check"²⁵.

How then are we to live in this "ambiguous situation"? Paul "sees the present period before the parousia of Christ as the era of the word"²⁶. Thus, Paul's emphasis in 2 Thessalonians 3 is the centrality of the Word²⁷, as indicated by "the word of the Lord" (v.1), the apostolic "command" (vv.4, 6, 10, 12), "tradition" (v.6) and "what we say" (v.14). Indeed, we "do well to pay attention" to "Scripture" "as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the Day dawns" (2 Pet 1:19-20).

²² Matthew 24:35

²³ Psalm 119:160

²⁴ G. K. Beale, 221

²⁵ John R. W. Stott, 181

²⁶ John R. W. Stott, 183 (emphasis mine)

²⁷ John R. W. Stott, 181

TUE
18

Outward Growth of God's Word

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:1

OBSERVATION

What does Paul's prayer request to the Thessalonians tell us about evangelism and missions?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in my perspective and practice with regards to prayer and outreach?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: That God's Word will spread rapidly in their ministry
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL ASKS THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH TO "PRAY FOR US"

(v.1; also 1 Thess 5:25). The verb "pray" is a present imperative, which means to "keep on praying"²⁸. This implies that perseverance and patient waiting on God to answer is required (cf. Eph 6:18). It is as Jesus teaches us, that we "ought always to pray and not lose heart" (Lk 18:1). In the daily challenges in parenting our special needs son, God answers our prayer for help and deliverance one challenge at a time, while we wait on Him to answer our prayer for full deliverance. Until then, it is God answers our prayer today, and the challenges come again the next day, and we pray again.

The present period before Christ's Second Coming is "the era of the word"²⁹ in two senses: the church must spread the Word throughout the world (2 Thess 3:1-2) and the church must keep the Word and shine in the world (2 Thess 3:3-15). Paul's prayer request to the Thessalonians is: "the word of the Lord may spread rapidly" (2 Thess 3:1, NRSV). The request "echoes the words of Psalm 147:15"³⁰: "His word runs swiftly." **The Word of God itself** "runs swiftly" – a character of God's Word. And since it is a prayer to God, it is **God Himself who** will "spread rapidly" His Word. It is a divine work – although there is the human part in proclaiming the Word. This prayer request in evangelism and missions reflects Paul's **dependence on God** – that God must act, and his **confidence in God** – that ultimately, it is God who acts.

²⁸ John R. W. Stott, 184

²⁹ John R. W. Stott, 183

³⁰ Gene L. Green, 335

WED
19

Inward Growth of God's Word

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Colossians 3:16

OBSERVATION

What characterises a Christian community according to Colossians 3:16?

APPLICATION

How can I make the Word of Christ dwell in me richly?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for the Nations: That God will draw them to Jesus, the Bread of Life
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

IN 2 THESSALONIANS 3, PAUL EMPHASISES THE CENTRALITY of the Word of God in eschatological discipleship (v.1, 2 Thess 3:4, 6, 10, 12, 16). The Word of God must have its outward growth – to “spread rapidly” throughout the world (v.1), and its inward growth in the life of the church. Church growth constitutes both: “Each is incomplete and unbalanced without the other. Both also demand time – world evangelisation on the one hand and church formation on the other.”³¹

The inward growth of the Word is to happen in individual believers and as a community. It begins with “the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col 3:16a). The “word of Christ” is “the Gospel about and centred on Christ”³², which is not just the New Testament, but also the Old Testament, which to Jesus is “everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms” (Lk 24:44). The Word is to “dwell” in us – to “take up permanent residence” in our lives as the centre and “constant reference”³³. The Word of Christ is to “dwell” in us “richly”. It means the Word in us is not “superficial or passing...but a deep and penetrating contemplation” by which the Word’s “transforming power” works within us.³⁴ (cf. Jas 1:25).

Out of the Word of Christ – “in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 1:3) – dwelling in us richly will be a worshipping community “teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” (Col 3:16b). Mark the words “one another”. Do we see this Word-richness in our small group meetings?

³¹ John R. W. Stott, 184

³² David W. Pao, Colossians & Philemon, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2012), 247

³³ Douglas J. Moo, The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon, *The Pillar New Testament Commentaries* (Apollos, 2008), 286

³⁴ Douglas J. Moo, 286

THU
20

The Glorification of God's Word

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Acts 13:14, 44-50

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about the Word of the Lord in these texts?

APPLICATION

How is the Word of God glorified in me?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: That the Word of God will be glorified in their lives
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL ASKS THE THESSALONIANS TO PRAY FOR HIM THAT “the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere” (v.1, NRSV). What Paul seeks from God is what he had experienced at Pisidian Antioch on one sabbath when “almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord”: “when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region” (Acts 13:44, 48-49). It is noteworthy that this happened amidst strong opposition to the Gospel (Acts 13:45, 50). The Word of God is glorified when it is well received, “as happened to” the Thessalonians (v.1). For the Thessalonians, the Word of God was glorified when the Gospel was preached to them “in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” and they “received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess 1:4, 6). Mark the mighty presence of “the Holy Spirit” in this glorification of the Word of God.

We learn from Acts and Paul’s letters that in city after city Paul met with great opposition in proclaiming the Gospel. And it is “from the depths of these experiences”³⁵ that Paul made this prayer request. Paul did not ask for God to stop the opposition, for suffering for Christ was part of his calling (Acts 9:15-16). And Paul knew that God can and will glorify His Word even amidst great opposition. Who can triumphantly oppose God and His glory?

³⁵ Gene L. Green, 335

FRI
21

Divine Deliverance from Evil People

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2; Romans 15:30-31; 2 Timothy 3:10-11

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God's deliverance in these passages?

APPLICATION

What areas in my life do I need to pray for God's deliverance?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To be protected and delivered from stumbling in their faith
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL ASKS THE THESSALONIANS TO PRAY FOR HIM THAT HE

“may be delivered from wicked and evil men” (v.2). Who were these “wicked and evil” people? The word for “wicked” is *atopos*, which means “out of place”³⁶. These people were not those outside the church who opposed the faith, but “those who profess belief and are part of the church community but are ‘out of place’ because they are not genuine saints”³⁷. That they were “not genuine saints” is indicated by “for not all have faith” (v.2). They appeared to “have faith”, but in reality, they did not. A spiritual warfare phenomenon evident in the New Testament letters is that, often the enemies of the faith were inside the church (2 Pet 2; Jude; Acts 20:29-30). Surely, it cannot be that this phenomenon is not present in today's churches.

It was from the depths of his experiences of frequent great opposition to the Gospel that Paul made his prayer request for divine deliverance (v.2; cf. Rom 15:30-31).³⁸ Consider the track record of God's deliverance in suffering in Paul's discipleship journey. When Paul was “crushed and overwhelmed beyond our ability to endure, and we thought we would never live through it” (2 Cor 1:8, NLT), he set his hope on God that, as He had delivered him before, “He will deliver us again” (2 Cor 1:10). Toward the end of his life, Paul's testimony was: In the “persecutions I endured... from them **all** the Lord rescued me” (2 Tim 3:11). For Paul, his Lord “will rescue me from **every** evil attack” (2 Tim 4:18, NIV).

³⁶ G. K. Beale, 239

³⁷ G. K. Beale, 239

³⁸ Gene L. Green, 335

SAT
22

Total Picture of Divine Deliverance

SCRIPTURE Daniel 3:1-7, 13-18

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about God's deliverance?

APPLICATION

What changes do I need to make in my understanding of God's deliverance from troubles?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: That God will be their refuge and strength in times of trouble
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

NEBUCHADNEZZAR, KING OF BABYLON, “THE KING OF KINGS”

(Dan 2:37), was the most powerful human being in the known world then. One day, King Nebuchadnezzar “made an image of gold” (v.1) and demanded all his subjects in the Babylonian empire – “all the nations and peoples of every language” (v.4, NIV) – “to fall down and worship the golden image” (v.5), and “whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace” (v.6).

Three Jewish young men – Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – refused to obey the king to worship his golden image. But Nebuchadnezzar gave them a chance to change their minds as he boasted before them, “What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?” (v.15). The three young men stood firm in their decision with two discipleship attitudes.

We are confident in God that He can deliver us: “our God whom we serve is **able** to deliver us...and He **will** deliver us” (v.17). But this confidence in God must be accompanied by this divine possibility: “But if He **does not**” (v.18a). This divine possibility calls for a higher level of faith in God: **We are committed to God even if He does not deliver us** – “we are not going to serve your gods” (v.18b). This discipleship confidence and commitment is anchored in **God's covenant commitment** to us, reflected in **“our God”** (v.17). “Our God” is an expression of covenant relationship with God, characterised by keeping of the covenant (Deut 4:13; 7:9): God's commitment to us and our commitment to Him.

SUN
23

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 4

Grit:

Refusing to give up when life gets hard.

Memory Verse

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."
- Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

* Bottom Line

Hold on because God knows what you're going through.*

* Bible Story

Exodus 3-6:12, 7-12:42 - Burning Bush and the 10 Plagues

* Activity

God's Promises

Props: Straws, paint and A4-sized drawing board paper

Provide each family member with a piece of paper and ask them to drip some paint on it. Then get everyone to use a straw to blow on the paint to create paint tracks in random directions on the paper.

After the activity, discuss the following:

- How would you describe the picture you created?
- Did you face any discomfort while making the paint tracks?

Say, "Every paint track on your picture represents an experience. Some tracks are straight and some are crooked. They seem to be going nowhere. But our God is all-knowing. He knows where our experiences are going and what will happen. Even when all experiences are entangled and messy, our God can use them and create a beautiful picture. We don't give up. We rely on God's direction to charge forward. God will deliver us!"

* Talk About It

- How do you think Moses felt when God spoke to him through the burning bush?
- How did you feel when you went through a difficult time in your life?
- Have you ever felt like it would be easier to just give up?
- How can you be sure that God knows what you're going through?

Parents: Share with your family members about an incident in which you depended on God to solve a problem. What challenges did you face? How did you overcome the odds?

* Prayer

Pray for a God-relying heart to believe that He knows everything about us. Pray that He will deliver us from any situation that might harm us.

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Adapted by JoshuaWong/CEFC/October 2022



BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD10W4>



MON
24

Divine Faithfulness and Human Faithlessness

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:1-3a

OBSERVATION

Why does Paul mention the faithfulness of God (v.3a) right after sharing his prayer requests (vv.1-2)?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to follow a faithful God?

PRAYER

Hear my prayer, O God, give ear to my pleas for mercy! Answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness! Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no man living is righteous. I confess my sins to You, and I know, and I give You thanks, that You are faithful and righteous to forgive and cleanse me of all my sins by the blood of Your Son.³⁹

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL ASKS THE THESSALONIANS TO PRAY FOR HIM THAT “the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, as happened among you” (v.1). The “as happened among you” is implied in Paul’s second prayer request, that he “may be delivered from wicked and evil men” (v.2). Paul’s second prayer request “may include more than Paul’s request for his own mission; it may imply something for the readers themselves as they pray for him”⁴⁰. The “wicked [out of place⁴¹] and evil men” were not those outside the church who opposed the faith, but “those who profess belief and are part of the church community but are ‘out of place’ because they are not genuine saints”⁴². These people appeared to “have faith”, but in reality, they did not (v.2). And such people whom Paul encountered were also found present in the church in Thessalonica – “as happened among you” (implied). In other words, Paul is saying to the Thessalonians: “pray that we may be delivered from ‘out of place’ and evil men [just as you need deliverance from such people], for not everyone has faith.”⁴³

In this context, Paul mentions “But the Lord is faithful” (v.3a) immediately after verses 1 to 2 – as a contrast to human faithlessness (v.2). It does happen that when “great” and well-known Christian leaders fall, those who follow them are disappointed and leave the faith. Why leave the faithful God because of human faithlessness? It’s incongruent! This reveals that they are not following the faithful God but fallible human leaders. If they are, they will remain faithful to the faithful God.

³⁹ Psalm 143:1-2; 1 John 1:7, 9

⁴⁰ G. K. Beale, 243

⁴¹ See *Devotional Journal* 2022, October 21 entry

⁴² G. K. Beale, 239

⁴³ G. K. Beale, 244

TUE
25

God's Faithfulness and Our Faithfulness

SCRIPTURE Psalm 22:1-5

OBSERVATION

How is divine faithfulness and human faithfulness portrayed in this passage?

APPLICATION

What do I do in times when I feel that God has abandoned me?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for pastors and staff: That their faithfulness to God will be established by God's faithfulness
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THERE IS A CRITICAL POINT THAT GOD LEADS US TO IN OUR discipleship journey. It is the breaking through to the ultimate reality. Breaking through to the ultimate reality is a point in my life when I am left with nothing except the Ultimate Reality, God – and that alone is all that matters to me. And the way to that discipleship critical point can be times when we cry out, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” (v.1a).

Why does the Psalmist ask “Why?”? The Psalmist knows that God forsakes His people when they forsake Him (2 Chron 15:2). But in his case, he honestly believes that he is faithful to God and this is indeed true in God's eyes. And so, he asks God “Why?” He is perplexed. In his painful groaning he pleads with God for “deliverance”, but there is none (v.1b). And “by day” and “by night” he cries to God, but “You do not answer” (v.2). This mysterious divine abandonment is no contradiction to the divine assurance, “I will not fail you or forsake you” (Deut 31:8; Josh 1:5). Otherwise, God shows Himself to be unfaithful.

What do we do when we are in such dark and difficult times? Remain faithful to God. We cannot be more faithful than God, can we? The Psalmist anchors himself in God's track record of faithfulness: God will deliver when we trust in Him and we will not be disappointed (vv.4-5). No matter what, “I am with you” (Josh 1:5) is always there, albeit it is a “You do not answer” divine presence.

WED
26

The Centrality of God's Faithfulness

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5; Lamentations 3:22-23

OBSERVATION

What is the significance of Paul mentioning “the Lord is faithful” (v.3) in between what he writes in verses 1 to 2 and verses 4 to 5?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to be able to say “The Lord is faithful” with conviction and confidence?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for the Nations: That God will save them in His faithfulness and righteousness
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

CENTRAL IN PAUL'S ASKING THE THESSALONIANS TO PRAY

for him (vv.1-2), his encouragement to them (v.4) and his prayer for them (v.5) is “the Lord is faithful” (v.3). “The Lord is faithful” here is a theological statement of truth about the Lord that Paul is making. They are not mere words, that can be hollow and empty. Paul says these words with conviction and confidence, out of his own experience of God's faithfulness in his life.

I started writing for this Devotional Journal (DJ) in 2013, after being assigned by the church leadership. Along the way, a practical question was asked, “Will it be sustainable?” I believe that if this is to be sustained, it will be God who sustains it. Shortly after I started writing, God gave me a promise for this task, which I take as assigned by Him: “I am the LORD your God who upholds your right hand, who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you’” (Isa 41:13). The words, “Do not fear, I will help you”, are always so assuring and reassuring. The writing has not been easy. In those times when I said, “Lord, it is not easy to write on this text”, God saw me through...somehow, somehow and somehow. It has been a faith journey. This is my 10th year writing for the DJ and God has never failed to keep His promise. God's faithfulness has built in me the confidence to say to Him, “Lord, I trust in You. I know and I thank You, that You will surely help me, as You have promised me.”

THU
27

God's Faithfulness in Warfare Suffering

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:3

OBSERVATION

How do you understand what Paul says in verse 3 in the context of the Thessalonians' persecutions and afflictions (2 Thess 1:4)?

APPLICATION

How will I respond to spiritual warfare suffering?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Outreach/Missions/New Life leaders: That God will strengthen and protect them from the evil one
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

“THE LORD IS FAITHFUL, WHO WILL STRENGTHEN AND protect you against the evil one” (v.3) is a promise of God. Embedded in this promise is an attribute of God – “the Lord is faithful”, and a promised action of God – “He will strengthen and protect you”. God will “strengthen and protect” us because He is “faithful”.

The Thessalonians were enduring persecutions and afflictions with steadfastness and faith (2 Thess 1:4). It was in this context that Paul points them to “the Lord is faithful”. “The Lord is faithful” ought to be our focus and anchor in whatever form of suffering that we are undergoing. Paul and the Thessalonians recognised that “the evil one” was behind their persecutions and afflictions. God has promised us that He will “strengthen and protect you from the evil one”. God will “strengthen” us in our inner being with His power (cf. Eph 3:16) in the midst of our trials, so that we will not fall into unfaithfulness to God. And God will “protect” us – “watch over” us “as shepherds guard their sheep”⁴⁴.

The result of this divine strengthening and protection is the evil one “will in no way triumph over”⁴⁵ us. The divine protection hardly means God will keep us from suffering. It is in our suffering, God “will shield” us “from the ultimate shame of succumbing to the wiles of the adversary”⁴⁶. In this divine strengthening and protection, we can be like Job. No matter how great our suffering is, we still hold fast to our integrity with endurance and not charge God with wrong, but worship Him instead (Job 1:21-22; 2:3; Jas 5:11).

⁴⁴ Gene L. Green, 338

⁴⁵ Gene L. Green, 338

⁴⁶ Gene L. Green, 338

FRI
28

God's Faithfulness and Our Confidence

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:3-4

OBSERVATION

What significant observations can you make about Paul's "confidence" in the Thessalonians' discipleship?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to have confidence in the Lord?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for SGI leaders: To grow in confidence in the Lord in life and ministry
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

PAUL EXPRESSES HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE THESSALONIANS, "the church as a whole"⁴⁷ – "we have confidence about you" – that they are faithful to God in obeying "the things that we command" (v.4). Paul was confident about their present faithfulness – "you are doing" and their faithfulness in the future – "and will continue to do" (v.4, NIV).

Paul's "confidence" was not in himself, but "in the Lord" (v.4) – because "the Lord is faithful" to His commitment to those whom He has chosen and called in love (2 Thess 2:13-14) by strengthening and protecting them from "the evil one's attempt to destroy their souls"⁴⁸ (v.3). Mark this theocentric cause-effect parallelism: "the Lord is **faithful**" and "**confidence** in the Lord". Paul had this "confidence in the Lord" in his ministry because he understood that Christian ministry is fundamentally "the work **of the Lord**" and his "labour" was "**in the Lord**" (1 Cor 15:58). Ministry "in the Lord" is we "toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within" us (Col 1:29). And out of this is our "confidence in the Lord".

Like Paul, we, too, can have this "confidence in the Lord" in our ministry of influencing lives for Christ. Let us take one step back. We can, by God's grace, have "confidence in the Lord" about our own faithfulness to God. Paul could say, "The Lord considered me faithful" (1 Tim 1:12). And what about God's confidence in us? It was with confidence in Job that God asked Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him..." (Job 1:8).

⁴⁷ John R. W. Stott, 190

⁴⁸ G. K. Beale, 246

SAT
29

God's Love and Christ's Steadfastness

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

OBSERVATION

How do you understand Paul's prayer in verse 5?

APPLICATION

What does it mean for me to have my heart directed into the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ?

PRAYER

Write a prayer to God as your response from your meditation on and application of the Scriptures.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for Church Board: That God will direct their hearts into God's love and Christ's steadfastness
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

THE THESSALONIANS WERE ENDURING PERSECUTIONS AND afflictions with steadfastness and faith while waiting for the Lord to return in His glory (2 Thess 1). They were to counter false teachings concerning Christ's Second Coming by standing firm in the truth (2 Thess 2). And in this discipleship context, Paul appropriately prays for them: "May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ" (v.5a).

"Heart" speaks "not as the seat of emotions but of the whole person"⁴⁹. We need God to "direct" – "to make straight" – our hearts, because "apart from Christ's influence" our hearts "wander in diverse directions after things that are not always healthy and holy"; and thus, God must "make them straight" such that they are directed in a single-minded, focused way toward a specific goal or purpose"⁵⁰.

The "love of God" is the love that both characterises God and is experienced from God.⁵¹ God loves us means He is committed to us with our best and highest interests at heart. And this does not mean all things will go smoothly in our lives. When God directs our hearts into His love, our hearts are in God's love and we are secure in His love. Nothing can separate us from God's love (Rom 8:38-39). The "steadfastness of Christ" is "the kind of perseverance found in Christ"⁵². Paul's prayer means Christ imparts to us His own perseverance⁵³, "the kind of perseverance He displayed in a life destined for the cross"⁵⁴. When our hearts are in Christ's perseverance as we endure trials, Christ's perseverance is in our perseverance.

⁴⁹ Gary S. Shogren, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2012), 317

⁵⁰ Jeffrey A. D. Weimar, 597

⁵¹ Gordon D. Fee, 322

⁵² Gordon D. Fee, 323

⁵³ F. F. Bruce, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Nelson, 1982), 202

⁵⁴ Gordon D. Fee, 323

SUN
30

Sunday Journal

SCRIPTURE

OBSERVATION

APPLICATION

PRAYER

THE PAST WEEK

Review

◆ What was my high point and my low point for the week?

◆ What gave me life and what drained me?

◆ How was the Spirit of God at work?

THE PAST WEEK

Reflect

- ◆ What is one key thing that God said to me this week in light of what has happened?

Respond

- ◆ What is one thing I need to do in light of what God is saying? Commit in prayer.

Family Devotional

Week 5

Grit:

Refusing to give up when life gets hard.

Memory Verse

"So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up."
- Galatians 6:9 (NLT)

* Bottom Line

Hold on because God is still in control.*

* Bible Story

Exodus 13:17-14:31 - Israelites Go Through the Red Sea

* Activity

Prayer Loops

Props: Strips of paper, pens and scotch tape

Give each family member a few strips of paper and a pen. Ask them to write down on each strip one thing that God is in control of in their lives, such as current problems, friends, family, pets, feelings and so on. Then get everyone to loop each strip inside of the next strip and secure it with tape to form a chain. Let everyone share what each loop means to them.

Say, "Every loop shows God's message for us to hold on to Him and as a family. He is in control of everything. God parted the red sea and led the Israelites out of Egypt. Nothing is too big or too small for God! All we have to do is to pray and have faith in Our God!"

* Talk About It

- What does it mean to trust God?
- When is it easy or hard to trust God?
- What can we do to train ourselves to trust God no matter what?

Parents: Share with your family members about what it means to depend on God. Share an example in your life to show God's faithfulness in your life.

* Prayer

Thank God for all the challenges we have faced, so that we can learn to rely on Him with all our hearts! Ask God to strengthen our trust in Him.

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BIBLE STORY VIDEO
<https://cefc.ch/22FD10W5>



MON
31

Apostolic Authority That Demands Obedience

SCRIPTURE 2 Thessalonians 3:6

OBSERVATION

What do Paul's words in the verse tell us about him?

APPLICATION

How do I submit to apostolic authority?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, the True Shepherd, I bring our church leaders before Your throne of grace. Strengthen them to walk with You faithfully and grow in knowing and understanding You, and become shepherds after Your heart, who feed Your people on the knowledge and understanding of God.⁵⁵ Grant them to be gentle and humble in heart like You⁵⁶ as they lead with spiritual authority from You.

Prayer Pointers

- ◆ Give thanks and praise
- ◆ Pray for leaders
- ◆ Pray for significant people
- ◆ Pray for those in need
- ◆ Pray for self

DEEPER REFLECTION

A KEY EMPHASIS IN 2 THESSALONIANS 3 IS PAUL'S APOSTOLIC

authority, shown in “we command” (2 Thess 3:4, 6, 12), “we would give you this command” (2 Thess 3:10), “if anyone does not obey what we say” shall suffer consequences (2 Thess 3:14). The apostolic commands demand obedience. This apostolic authority is unique in salvation history at Christ's First Coming, when the Church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone” (Eph 2:19-20).

Paul exercised his apostolic authority “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v.6). Here, Paul claimed that his authority in teaching and commanding the churches is the authority of the Lord Jesus Himself. His commands are the Lord's commands. To disobey his commands is to disobey the Lord. And we submit to apostolic authority today by submitting to the New Testament, which preserves the apostles' “God-breathed” writings (cf. 2 Tim 3:16).

“There is nobody in the church who has an authority which even remotely resembles that of the apostles of Christ; nor has there been since the last apostle died.”⁵⁷ The church leaders in the immediate post-apostolic church “knew that the apostles had no successors and that they lacked their authority”⁵⁸. Ignatius, Bishop of Syrian Antioch, said when he was condemned to death: “I do not give you orders like Peter and Paul. They were apostles; I am a convict.”⁵⁹ But there are very authoritarian leaders in today's churches, who consider those who do not follow their leadership as being disobedient to God. Strong leaders who are hard on people may just become this kind of leader.

⁵⁵ Jeremiah 9:23-24; 3:15

⁵⁶ Matthew 11:29

⁵⁷ John R. W. Stott, 196

⁵⁸ John R. W. Stott, 196

⁵⁹ John R. W. Stott, 196

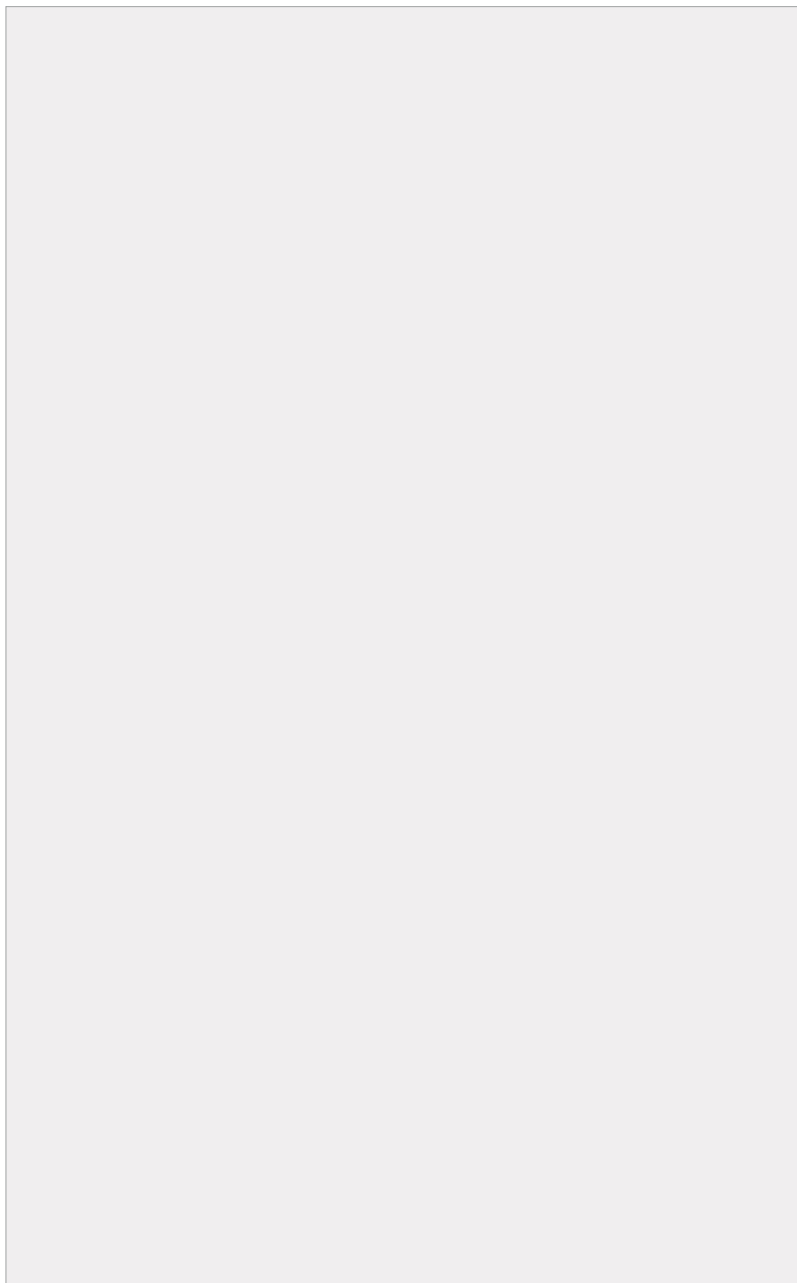
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