



# Second Baptist Church Sunday School

## Member's Guide Winter 2020-2021

## **Lesson Schedule:**

December 6<sup>th</sup> – “Thankful for the Thessalonians”

December 13<sup>th</sup> – “A Gospel Ministry Worth Modeling”

December 20<sup>th</sup> – “God Works in Surprising Ways”

December 27<sup>th</sup> – “Paul Overcomes Obstacles”

January 3<sup>rd</sup> – “Enduring Persecution”

January 10<sup>th</sup> – “God’s Will For My Life”

January 17<sup>th</sup> – “The Second Coming of Christ”

January 24<sup>th</sup> – “Life Together in the Church”

January 31<sup>st</sup> – “Trusting God’s Fairness”

February 7<sup>th</sup> – “Understanding Angels”

February 14<sup>th</sup> – “The Man of Lawlessness”

February 21<sup>st</sup> – “Chosen to Stand Firm”

February 28<sup>th</sup> – “God’s Faithfulness”

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

THANKFUL FOR THE THESSALONIANS

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

12/6/2020

## MAIN POINT

Those called by grace are changed by Him and strengthened by Him to become like Him.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is one habit or part of your daily routine that you would never change?**

**Why do you practice that habit and what are its benefits in your daily life?**

**What is one spiritual habit that has become an invaluable part of your life?**

Many of the habits that become a part of daily life are important, but none more so than the spiritual habits we adopt. From his New Testament letters, the apostle Paul shows his habit of praying for the churches he ministered to. Through these prayers, we learn what Paul considered important in a believer's life and what he valued about his relationships.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-4.

**What characteristics of Paul's prayer in verses 1-4 stand out to you?**

**How do these characteristics of Paul's prayer contrast with the ways many Christians pray today (weak, occasional, mechanical, inattentive, and so forth)?**

Immediately after his salutation in most of his letters, Paul thanked God for the people to whom he was writing. This pattern is evident here. When Paul prayed, he constantly and intentionally included these new believers. In verse 3, Paul stated the basis for his thanksgiving: the evidence of salvation they demonstrated. Paul remembered their visible deeds in the face of difficulty. Such endurance or persistence arose because of the rock-solid object they placed their hope in: our Lord Jesus Christ.

**What evidence of work produced by faith and labor produced by love will others find if they examine your life?**

**How recently have you thanked God for these traits in the lives of others?**

We may not have people writing us letters to tell us they thank God for the evidence of His work in our lives. But like the Thessalonians, we are to be people who demonstrate authentic Christianity. Good works and endurance never go out of style for Christians. Neither do faith, hope, and love. We are to seek to be the kind of people for whom others, whenever they think of us, want to thank God.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 1:5-6.

**In verse 5, what do we learn about the pattern of Paul’s gospel ministry in Thessalonica?**

**How did the Thessalonians first become imitators of, and then models for, the faith?**

**What does this tell you about their growth in Christ?**

An oral gospel witness will be more compelling when accompanied by a lifestyle witness. This was Paul’s approach to ministry—the gospel message fused with a lifestyle of gospel living. The Thessalonians had recognized Paul as a positive role model whom they intentionally imitated. They also had set about imitating the Lord, whom Paul himself sought to be like (1 Cor. 11:1).

**The Thessalonians could see that what Paul, Silas, and Timothy were preaching was true because these men lived it. Does your life confirm or contradict what you say you believe?**

**The Thessalonians grew in their faith through persecution and were even able to delight in what the Holy Spirit was doing (v. 6). What are some practical ways we can express joy and gratitude for the Spirit’s work in our lives?**

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 1:7-10.

**Think about the influence our church and its members have had in the last year. Could we say that people twenty miles away are talking about our Christian example? Ten miles? One mile?**

**What does this say about the example of our church compared to that of the Thessalonians?**

The story of the Thessalonians’ life-changing encounter now had come full circle. First, the message had gone out from them to “every place” (v. 8). Second, believers from these places had brought a report to Paul—now in Corinth—about the kind of reception Paul had received in Thessalonica. Third, Paul then wrote back to the Thessalonians

about the good things others had been saying about them. No doubt he meant this to provide them with encouragement to continue steadfastly in their faith

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Which of the qualities of the Thessalonians do you most wish to see developed in your life now? How can the group help?**

**What roles does the church play in our society? How does our church function as an imitation model? A reputation model?**

**For what do you thank God as you pray for our church?**

**For whom are you a model of Jesus Christ? What kind of model are they seeing?**

## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, ask God to give you the determination to follow Him in a close and intimate relationship. Ask Him to keep us from looking for quick formulas and give us the courage to follow the promptings of His Spirit. Pray that He will keep our hearts and minds open to change and will help us to value His will as revealed in the Bible, so that we respond in holiness to all of life.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

A GOSPEL MINISTRY WORTH MODELING

1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

12/13/2020

## MAIN POINT

Paul's gospel ministry shows us how to teach the gospel authentically, boldly, and lovingly.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Who was the best teacher you had in school? What made him/her so good?**

**On the other hand, who do you remember to be the worst and why?**

**What traits or gifts do you think a person needs to teach God's Word to others?**

We all have a couple of memorable teachers from our school years. What we remember most about those teachers isn't what they taught, but how they treated us. We are called to teach the gospel, and in today's text from 1 Thessalonians, we learn that how we share the gospel is almost as important as the gospel message itself.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-4.

The Book of Acts gives more details about how much Paul suffered and how he was outrageously treated in Philippi than it does about the great opposition he faced when he traveled on to Thessalonica. Gentiles had caused the hostility in Philippi. Paul and Silas had been stripped and beaten severely with rods (Acts 16:22). Further, even though Paul was a Roman citizen, he was thrown into the Philippian prison, with his feet put in stocks, all without an arraignment or a trial (Acts 16:24). Paul likely was still a mass of cuts and bruises when he arrived in Thessalonica. Yet Paul had spoken the gospel of God. Why did persecution not stop him? He had been emboldened by God. Divine aid, not mere human strength, enabled him to keep on teaching and preaching.

**Why is boldness a necessary trait of gospel ministry?**

**How has someone been bold in ministering to you?**

Most of us will never face the kind of hostility Paul faced—beatings, prison, and riots—since Christianity is shrugged off as irrelevant by many in contemporary society. At best, believers are thought of as nice but insignificant. At worst, we are portrayed as uncaring and condemning—or else as concealing some deep-seated flaw. We can learn from Paul to be bold and fearless in presenting truths of the gospel, aware that God wants us to have blameless hearts and blameless motives as we do so.

**Verses 3-4 give us insight into Paul’s motive for ministry and his approach to sharing the gospel. As a group, come up with a list of the things we learn about how to share the gospel from Paul’s example.**

Paul first described his teaching in terms of what it was not. It contained no error—that is, no faulty reasoning that could lead people astray. It contained no impurity—something morally objectionable. Finally, his teaching held no intent to deceive—he was not trying to trick someone in order to make a personal profit. The bottom line was that he spoke to please God. Everything Paul said and did was to honor God’s name (1 Cor. 10:31). He was really unconcerned with whether other people approved his message.

**Paul’s motive for ministry was pleasing God. What are some impure motives people may have for getting involved in ministry?**

**How do bad motives in ministry impact the spread of the gospel? What picture do they paint of Christians and the God we serve?**

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:5-8.

**What additional insight into a godly ministry approach do you learn from 1 Thessalonians 2:5-8?**

**How well do you balance truth and love in your ministry to others? Why is this balance so critical? What are the dangers of having one without the other?**

Even in the secular world, coaches and teachers who care about those they train and teach do a better job than others. Something is quite amiss with parenting that comes from the head but not the heart. In the church, how much more is this true with spiritual mentors and teachers. Paul’s ministry balanced truth (sharing the facts of Christianity) and love (involvement in people’s lives). Can teachers share the content of the gospel but remain detached from the people they are with? If they do so, they fall far short of what God desires. Paul’s ministry reflected a high standard. We are not to be content with merely communicating the facts of the faith; rather, we should let our love for others compel us to give away our very hearts to fellow believers.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:9-12.

**In verse 10, Paul used three adverbs to describe his character and behavior among the Thessalonians—devoutly, righteously,**

**blamelessly. How do you define each of these terms, and what do they look like when lived out in everyday life?**

Paul had given the Thessalonians plenty of opportunities to observe his true character during his time in Thessalonica. He knew God had seen these traits in him as well. He used three adverbs to describe his moral behavior among the believers in Thessalonica: “Devoutly” refers to “living in right relationship to God and His laws.” “Righteously” refers mainly to “living in right moral relationship with other humans”—following high ethical standards of behavior. “Blamelessly” means “not open to a charge of violating high moral standards.”

**What encourages believers to model Christian truth in their actions?**

**What do the images of being a mother (v. 7) and father (v. 11) add to this picture?**

**What do these images say about caring for your children or for “young” believers?**

On one hand, we recognize the goal for our lifestyle is the same as Paul’s goal for the Thessalonians: to walk worthy of the One who saved us. On the other hand, we see the challenge Paul puts before us as we seek to relate to other believers. We are accountable before God to live so responsibly and so blamelessly that other believers will welcome any encouragement and guidance we may have for them.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**From these verses, what does appropriate, gospel-centered evangelism look like? What would the opposite look like?**

**List the characteristics of a faithful Christian given in this passage. Which do you possess? Which do you want to develop?**

**What turns you off about the way some people present the gospel? How are you attempting to avoid these mistakes and yet maintain a strong witness?**

## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, give your group members the opportunity to pray silently for a few minutes. Challenge them to assess before God the example they set for others through their personal ministry or lack thereof. Encourage them to ask God to reveal relationships in which they are trying to please other people, rather than God Himself. Then as you close in prayer, pray that boldness and love would characterize your lives as you shine for Christ this week.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

GOD WORKS IN SURPRISING WAYS

LUKE 1:1-38

12/20/2020

## MAIN POINT

God used faithful people to achieve His purpose of redemption through Jesus.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What's your favorite "unexpected" detail in the story of Jesus' birth? In another story from Scripture?**

**Why do you think God chooses to work in ways that surprise us? What's one unexpected way God has worked in your life lately?**

The Gospel of Luke begins with an angel promising the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. As we study, we'll see a common theme develop—God's use of the unexpected to bring Jesus into the world. Scripture from Genesis to Revelation shows that God often works in unexpected ways, just as He does in our lives today.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ LUKE'S PROLOGUE IN LUKE 1:1-4.

**Why did Luke write this Gospel account, according to verses 1-4?**

Luke said he wrote his Gospel to present "an orderly account" (1:3) of God's fulfilling His promise to provide a Deliverer through whom people can be saved from their sins. The entirety of his Gospel describes Jesus as that Deliverer, the perfect human and Savior.

**Luke was a physician, a Gentile, and a companion on some of Paul's journeys. Based on these details, what might you expect to find in his Gospel?**

READ LUKE 1:5-25.

**What characteristics of Zechariah and Elizabeth made them good candidates for a special assignment from God?**

Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth lived rightly before God, obeyed the laws, and met the expectations of the Lord. Unfortunately, they were childless. Zechariah had reached an

advanced age and yet continued to serve God faithfully even though God seemingly had not answered his prayer for a child.

**What do you do when your prayers go unanswered? How is your relationship with God affected?**

**What emotions did Zechariah experience when Gabriel appeared? Put yourself in the place of the two parents. What would you think and feel as you listened to the angel?**

**How did the angel say John's birth and life would affect his parents and others?**

The nature of John's ministry was to bring God's people back to the Lord. He would serve as the forerunner of the Messiah, through whom God's kingdom would break into human history. We'll take a closer look at this in Luke 3:1-22.

**Why did Zechariah doubt the angel's word that he would have a son (v. 18)? How can you relate to his reaction? What was the angel's response?**

READ LUKE 1:26-38.

**What parallels do you see between these verses predicting Jesus' birth and the previous set of verses predicting John the Baptist's birth?**

In both stories we get an introduction to the parents, angelic prophecies, signs, statements about each child's mission, and unexpected pregnancies. We also see affirmation of God's grace at work. Elizabeth acknowledged God's favor in her life (v. 25) and the angel described Mary as "highly favored" by God. This favor wasn't based on either woman's merit, but on God's grace in their lives.

**In what ways do you sometimes take God's grace for granted? What do our day-to-day lives reveal about our appreciation for God's grace?**

**Why do you think Mary was troubled (v. 29)? What dangers did she face?**

Mary was betrothed to Joseph, which made them legally husband and wife even though the marriage wasn't finalized. Discuss what possible legal and social consequences Mary and Joseph might have faced as a result of her being pregnant out of wedlock.

**What did the angel's description of the child (vv. 31-33) mean to a Jew at the time of Jesus' birth? What does it mean to people today?**

**What attitudes are revealed by Mary's question (v. 34) and statement (v. 38)? Why did Mary refer to herself as a slave? Why do people shy away from the idea of submitting to God like a slave?**

**How did Mary's reaction to the angel's news compare with Zechariah's reaction in Luke 1:11-18? What are a few key differences between questioning God (as Zechariah did) and asking questions of Him (like Mary)?**

Zechariah didn't believe God's ability to give him and his wife a son, and he asked for a sign to prove God's words were true. Mary voiced confusion over the logistics of how she'd have a child, but she never acknowledged skepticism or doubt. These two responses show us an important distinction between questioning God and asking questions of Him.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**The angel told Mary, "Nothing is impossible with God." Present a situation in your life when God did the impossible from a human perspective. Describe the impact of that experience.**

**Why does God want us to be totally obedient to Him?**

**What is the connection between our understanding of Jesus' identity and our willingness to accept the truth of the gospel? What keeps people from submitting to the truth about Jesus?**

## PRAYER

Close your group time in prayer, asking God to strengthen our faith and our courage to obey Him. Thank Him for sending Jesus and for the salvation available through Him. Pray that God will open our eyes to Jesus' identity and His work in our lives through our study of Luke.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

PAUL OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-20

12/27/2020

## MAIN POINT

When we trust God's Word, we find the power and desire to live out what it says.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is the most encouraging thing anyone has ever said to you? Why was that so meaningful?**

**Do you think you have had a similar impact in someone else's life? If so, when?**

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:13-16.

**What difficulties were the Thessalonians facing? Read Acts 17:1-9 for insight.**

**What example did Paul set in the face of persecution? How would his example have encouraged the Thessalonians? How does it encourage you?**

Paul had told the Thessalonians about the difficult experiences of God's churches. Part of what they suffered at the hands of their fellow Jews is recorded in Acts 7-12. Both Stephen and James had been martyred in Jerusalem. All we know about what the Thessalonian Christians suffered from people of their own country is recorded in Acts 17:1-9. The city riot of Acts 17:5 easily could have overwhelmed the infant church. It did not. No doubt Paul himself had led them to become imitators of Christian believers who had been persecuted earlier.

**What does our response to suffering reveal to those who are watching?**

**What is the Christian's response?**

**Read Matthew 5:11-12. What did Jesus teach about persecution?**

**Jesus says to rejoice during persecution because your reward will be great in heaven. What does this mean for the faithful Christians here on earth?**

**If or when times of persecution arise, what encouragement can we draw from Jesus' words in this passage?**

We would never set out to suffer because we get a kick out of it. Yet when suffering comes, our response shows whom we identify with. There's a pattern of persecution and suffering that God's true people have experienced down through the ages. In Matthew 5, Jesus encouraged His disciples to remain faithful because their reward in heaven would be great—just as it was for the prophets. Through these statements, Jesus both encouraged and warned His disciples that as they pursued God, they would meet persecution. Although it's not something anyone wants to endure, it's a definite marker of a faithful life.

**What opposition to your faith are you facing or have you faced in recent years?**

**What encourages you to persevere?**

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-20.

**Describe how someone might feel if suddenly forced to flee his or her homeland. After several answers, read 1 Thessalonians 2:17-20 again.**

**What words reflect emotion in verses 17-18? Why did Paul use such terms? When is such use appropriate for us?**

**Why do you think Paul was so emotional in his writings?**

Paul used strong, emotional terms to express how much he regretted the situation that had forced him to leave Thessalonica. Further, he was sorry that circumstances had kept him away from believers for whom he felt such affection. The verb "forced to leave" is literally "orphaned." Luke detailed this situation in Acts 17:5-10, making it clear Paul was in distress when he left Thessalonica. His departure had been as heartrending as when parents and little children are torn apart.

**What did Paul consider to be the ultimate reward for his ministry?**

In verse 19, Paul asked a rhetorical question, asking his readers to think about the coming of Jesus, the time when they would all be reunited before Him. Paul looked forward to this wonderful time, and he used three terms in verse 19 to describe how the Thessalonians fit in. First, they were Paul's "hope." This means he was confident God's work in them would reach full completion. Second, they were Paul's "joy," meaning he was rejoicing that their faithfulness to Christ proved his own ministry was successful. Third, they were Paul's "crown," a Greek term that referred to a victorious athlete's wreath. Paul expected that in the presence of our Lord Jesus, he would hear "well done" (Luke 19:17; see 1 Cor. 4:1-5).

**What are some inappropriate rewards we may seek for our ministry?**

**How do we keep people as the focus of our lives and ministry efforts, as Paul did?**

Verse 20 gives the answer to Paul's question. Lest the Thessalonians believe he was thinking only of the future, he explicitly used a present tense verb: "You currently are already these things to me." Paul repeated the term "joy" from his earlier question, but—probably for variety—used "glory" instead of "crown." What could be more glorious than realizing God has worked through you to help transform another individual?

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Everyone wants to matter to someone else. Paul showed the Thessalonians they mattered to him by using deeply personal, even emotional words. Think about a time another Christian encouraged you with a kind or timely word. Write down a few sentences of reflection on what that meant to you and how you saw Christ through that person.**

**Now identify another person who you can support with your words. Consider a way you can communicate to that individual how much you value him or her, and write down your idea. Share both answers with your spouse or another person in our group this week.**

## PRAYER

Close in prayer, thanking God for the opportunity He gives us to make a difference in people's lives. Pray that the people in your group would be able to focus on following Paul's example of love in their relationships with others. Pray also for any suffering or persecution your group members may be facing at this time.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

ENDURING PERSECUTION

1 THESSALONIANS 3:1-13

1/3/2021

## MAIN POINT

God has given us the church so that we can work through difficult times in community with other believers.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**When was the last time you went out of your way to help, support, or encourage someone you love? Has someone ever done this for you?**

**When you are going through a hard time, is it helpful for you to have someone to talk to and walk through that with you? Why?**

When we become Christians, we are not automatically removed from pain and struggle in this life. That is one of the reasons God gave us the gift of the church. The New Testament frequently refers to the church as a family. This metaphor helps us see more clearly what life within the church should look like. When one of us struggles we all struggle and are able to pray for and support one another through hard seasons in life.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 3:1-5.

Paul was hindered from returning to Thessalonica by Satan himself (2:17-18). Instead of allowing the new Thessalonian church to struggle with the continued persecution on their own, he sent Timothy back to minister to them while Paul remained in Athens by himself.

**How is Timothy described? What does Paul's description tell us about Timothy's character?**

**What was Timothy sent to do?**

**Why is it important for us to know what we believe before we face persecution? How does a solid foundation give us strength to withstand trials?**

Paul sent Timothy to establish and exhort the Thessalonians. The word used for establish is an architectural term that literally means “to buttress or support walls in a building” while exhort is a personal term which means “to lead someone in the right direction.” Timothy’s mission was both instructional and personal. Paul understood the young believers’ need for discipleship. It was important to him that they be equipped and trained in the faith in order that they maintain their confidence and hope amidst severe persecution.

**Read 2 Timothy 3:12. Why do Christians face persecution?**

**How does knowing the reason for persecution and having a source of hope help us face persecution when it comes?**

**Have any of you faced persecution? Were you surprised by it? How did you respond?**

Persecution in the 1st century had very real and very serious economic and personal consequences. Many Christians in Thessalonica would have been excluded from a variety of business and social activities that provided them with much needed income. They would have likely faced strained relationships with family members, business associate, and civil authorities. Paul was not naïve to these realities and instructed them that these troubles would come. Because Jesus was no stranger to rejection and suffering, all who profess faith in His name should expect some measure of persecution in this life.

**READ 1 THESSALONIANS 3:6-10.**

**In these verses Paul responded to Timothy’s report from Thessalonica. How were they doing?**

**What about these believers comforted Paul in his own struggles against persecution?**

**How can we continue to find comfort from these 1st-century believers today?**

Paul began his letter to the Thessalonians after he heard back from Timothy. Thankfully, the Thessalonians were doing well and persevering in the faith even amongst the persecution they were facing. Timothy was able to do all Paul sent him to do, and was mutually encouraged by the Thessalonians as they recounted their thankfulness and appreciation for Paul and his ministry. They were just as eager to see Paul as he was to see them. Paul was no stranger to persecution himself (2 Corinthians 11:23-28), and the Thessalonians’ enduring faith was able to also provide Paul with a measure of comfort in his own trials.

**READ 1 THESSALONIANS 3:11-13.**

**What did Paul ask in his prayer for the Thessalonians?**

**Read Ephesians 4:1. What does it mean to walk in a manner worthy of the calling we received? Why is this important for believers dealing with tough circumstances like the Thessalonians?**

Paul showed a great concern for the Thessalonians' present and future sanctification. When Paul told the Thessalonians he was praying for them, he was sincere. So much so that he paused to write out a prayer for them expressing his hope to see them again, his love for them, and his genuine desire that they would lead lives of holiness and perseverance until the Lord returns. The topics Paul addressed in this prayer led him into the discussion in the rest of the letter.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In what ways do you see Christians facing persecution in the world today?**

**What are some practices you can implement in your life right now that will strengthen you to face persecution now or in the future?**

**Do you know someone who is facing a difficult situation currently? How could you encourage this person?**

**Is there anyone that God is leading you to go to as Timothy went to the Thessalonians?**

## PRAYER

Pray and thank God for using even the difficult things in our lives to encourage and lead us toward Christlikeness. Praise Him for the gift of the church and the blessing it provides to share life with other believers. Ask that He would use you to encourage and strengthen persecuted or hurting brothers and sisters.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

GOD'S WILL FOR MY LIFE

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

1/10/2021

## MAIN POINT

It is God's will that you belong to Him and that you grow in holiness.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Name two goals you have for your children or for someone else in your life that you love and influence.**

**What is your role in seeing those goals come about? What is the other person's role?**

**What would you say is God's will for your life right now? Is this something that just happens to you, or is it something in which you have a role?**

Many people wrestle with the question, "What is God's will for my life?" We wonder what college He wants us to attend or career path to take. We wonder who He wants us to marry or if He wants us to marry. There are many questions we have in the Christian life concerning God's will for us, but the fact is, all of those secondary questions are far less frustrating to us if we understand His answer to the primary question about His will. God's will for our lives is that we belong to Him and are changed by Him, becoming more like Him in holiness each day.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-8.

**In your own words, what is sanctification?**

**Why did Paul say that sanctification is God's will for us and not something like "evangelism" or good works?**

Sanctification is our progress in holiness. When we come to faith, we are justified in Christ. Justification means that God has declared believers "just" and righteous because of the work of Christ on the cross. Sanctification is the process of becoming holy which the Holy Spirit superintends. This is why Paul said, "you have received instruction from us on how you should live and please God—as you are doing—do this even more" (vs. 1.). We are called to increasingly walk in holiness.

**Why do you think Paul tied our sanctification to our abstaining from sexual immorality?**

Paul most likely mentioned sexual immorality here because it is one of the greatest temptations that people face. The greater the gift that God gives us, perhaps the greater the temptation to misuse it. Paul told the Thessalonians that any sexual activity outside of marriage constitutes sexual immorality. This was a radical message in Paul's day, and it has become so in our day as well.

**Why do you think so many of us give more attention to God's specific plans for us than we give to His general call to holiness in our lives?**

**What are some ways you are growing in holiness lately? Is your sanctification, or personal growth in holiness, something you should expect to take place continually? Explain.**

**How does understanding that it is God's will for you to belong to Him and to be holy impact the more specific questions you might have about His will for your life?**

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:9-12.

**What do these verses teach you about God's will for your life?**

**Reread verse 1. What phrase do you see repeated in verse 10? Why is this important in regard to God's will for your life?**

**Why is the life we lead before those outside of the faith important to God? Based on these verses, what is God's will for you at work? At home? In the community?**

Paul acknowledged and commended the Thessalonians for their exemplary treatment of other Christians. He urged them to continue this more and more. It is God's will that we love one another (Matt. 22:37-40; John 13:34-35.) However, word came to Paul that instead of working for themselves, some among them were living off the charity of wealthy Christians. To the watching Greco-Roman society, this would have been shameful and embarrassing and compromising to their witness.

To help them avoid this poor witness, Paul suggested believers live quiet lives, minding their own business and working hard. Paul was not suggesting that we remove ourselves from society or refuse to take a stand on important issues. Instead, he wanted us to understand that belonging to God and growing in holiness means that we think critically about what message our lives send to a watching world.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Would you say that the unbelievers who know you recognize that you belong to God? That you are growing in holiness? Explain.**

**What are some steps we can take as a group to help one another seek holiness?**

**How can we foster the kind of personal friendships required to help hold one another accountable to walk faithfully in God's will for our lives?**

## **PRAYER**

Thank God that He desires for all of us to come to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Ask Him to help you grow continually in holiness.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

1/17/2021

## MAIN POINT

The second coming of Jesus gives Christians hope and assurance until that day.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Where would you turn for comfort if you suddenly lost a loved one? Where would you turn if you found out you were terminally ill with only a few months or weeks to live?**

**How would you counsel a friend who experienced the death of a close friend or family member?**

**How would you comfort a friend who lost someone who was not a follower of Christ? How is this different?**

Death is universal reality of living in a fallen world. This is a cycle that will continue until Christ comes back. When death happens, we all seek some measure of comfort. Our non-believing friends do not have the comfort provided to believers. Neither the reality of heaven nor of Jesus' second coming can assure them of being reunited with loved ones. Jesus' return gives all believers assurance in the present and hope for the future.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-14.

**Paul describes Christians who have died as being "asleep." What does this imply about the Christian's death?**

**How is the grief of Christians different from the grief of non-Christians?**

Grief is a normal response to death. Notice that Paul did not tell the believers not to mourn in the face of death. Even Jesus grieved at the death of His friend Lazarus (John 10:35). Rather, Paul exhorted them not to grieve as others do. By "others," he meant "the rest of humanity." The pagan culture that thrived in Thessalonica would have offered these young Christians no hope in the death of friends. Not content for the Thessalonians to be uninformed, Paul wrote to instruct them on the Lord's return.

**How do discipleship and personal spiritual formation help us respond in a Christlike way in difficult situation like the death of a friend or family member?**

**As believers, how can our response to death and loss be a witness to the gospel?**

Paul taught that those outside Christ have no hope in the presence of death, but Christians have much to be hopeful for. Our response to death illustrates our belief about death. When brothers and sisters in Christ die, they are not gone, but “asleep.” The return of Christ gives perspective to our loss and grief and helps us to apply the gospel to a painful situation. Our grief is not without hope.

**Why did Paul stake so much on the historical fact of Jesus’ resurrection? How important is it for today’s Christians to believe Jesus literally rose from the dead?**

**What is the relationship between the resurrection and second coming of Jesus? Why do you think many people are confused about Jesus’ return?**

Paul believed in Christ’s bodily resurrection and based many truths on this certainty (1 Cor. 15:14). In this verse he staked our hope of seeing again the Christian dead at Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus’ followers in every place and in every age have confessed this truth and have it in common. In fact, to deny our Lord has conquered death is to deny the essence of the gospel message (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Paul goes on to explain that at Christ’s return, He will bring all those who have fallen asleep with Him. The gospel assures us we will see and be with our deceased brothers and sisters again.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 4:15-18.

**What five statements about the return of Christ does Paul make in verses 15-17? Of these, which impacts you the most? Which surprises you the most?**

In verses 15-17, the apostle made several prophecies that he affirmed were from the Lord Himself. Whether Jesus had taught these things during His earthly ministry or whether this was later revelation He gave directly to Paul is unknown. 1) The Christian dead are at no disadvantage to those still alive at the Lord’s return. 2) Christ’s descent will be accompanied by incredible sounds. 3) The Christian dead will rise. 4) Christians still living at Jesus’ return will be caught up alive, meet the Lord in the air, and join the resurrected Christian dead. 5) One day all believers will be fully united with each other and with the Lord forever.

**Consider verse 18. What should be our primary response to thinking about the Lord’s return?**

**How can you take seriously Paul’s exhortation to encourage with these words? Could you use these words to comfort a friend?**

**How do these verses reorient the way we grieve as Christians?**

**Would you like for Christ to return in your lifetime? Why or why not?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What grieving Christians do you know whom you could comfort through these verses? How else could you encourage them?**

**Did any part of this study challenge you to adjust your thinking about Christ's second coming? If so, which part and why?**

**When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He instructed them to pray "your kingdom come." Do you pray for Christ to return?**

## PRAYER

As you close in prayer, thank God for the hope He offers in Christ's return. Pray for those in the church who have recently lost Christian friends. Ask that God would comfort them with the expectation of His return. Thank God that He has not left us without hope.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

LIFE TOGETHER IN THE CHURCH

1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-22

1/24/2021

## MAIN POINT

As Christians, we must learn how to love one another and work with one another for the encouraging and the building up of each other.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Are you the kind of person who accepts the help or charity of others well, or the kind of person who finds it very difficult to accept help from others? Explain your answer.**

**Do you find it easier or more difficult to help others who are in dire need? Explain.**

At various points in our life, we will have the opportunity to both help others and receive help from others. In both cases, the church is an excellent place to grow as a person and help the mission of God. As Christians, we must learn how to love one another and work with one another for the encouraging and the building up of each other. As we do, God gets glory and the church grows in its influence.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:12-15.

One theme that ties together all of the exhortations in these verses is that they are all concerned with how Christians are to behave in their relationships with others, taking in to the consider the various roles or responsibilities others may have.

**Why is it important for us to let the leaders of the church know that we value them? What are specific ways we can affirm and support our leaders?**

**How would you describe your part in meeting the needs of your spiritual leaders? Do they know how much you appreciate them?**

Church members have an ongoing responsibility to respond properly to the spiritual leaders in their midst. According to Paul, we are to follow good leadership, receive

admonition, and express high regard for godly leaders. When the leaders and the people are in right relationship, how much easier it is for all the members of the congregation to be at peace with each other. Here is a great prescription for a healthy church. Ultimately peace is part of the fruit that the Spirit works in our lives (Gal. 5:22).

**What different types of people in the church does Paul draw attention to in this verse? What is our responsibility with each group?**

**What must be true about your relationships in order for you to know if the people around you fit in any of these categories?**

Paul challenged the people in the church at Thessalonica to correct those who are out of step (the “unruly”); uplift those who are discouraged and fearful (the “fainthearted”); hold on to the fragile (the “weak”); and go the long haul with those who struggle (“be patient with everyone”). To know if the people around us fit into any of these categories, we have to do life with them; we have to be in genuine, deep relationships. These types of struggles are not evident on the surface.

**What is the goal of correcting those who are out of step? What does it not look like? Why is this often so hard for us to do?**

The directives of verse 14 advised Christians how to care for the hurting. In verse 15, the focus changes to how to deal with those wanting to hurt someone else.

**Why does it please God for us to seek the best for those who are hurtful? What does this look like? What does it not look like?**

**Who benefits when we please God by forgiving others? How are they benefited?**

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-18.

One theme tying these three verses together is that each concerns the inner life of the believer within the context of their relationships with others in the church.

**Do you think about rejoicing, praying and giving thanks as something an individual does more on his or her own, or as something that he or she does in relationship with others?**

**How does practicing these things alone impact the way we practice them with others, and vice versa? How do they help us encourage and build each other up?**

READ 1 THESSALONIANS 5:19-22.

In reading these verses (and in reading much of the New Testament), we have to remember that the Christian faith was still developing. People were still making sense of things that we now take for granted. Things like an incomplete canon of Scripture and the activity of itinerant teachers created in the early church a setting conducive to

conflict. The church struggled to know which leader to follow, which prophet was true, and which was false. Disagreements over doctrine and ethics seemed inevitable. Some theological controversies impacted the entire church and affected the understanding of the gospel itself. Other disagreements were more local in their impact, affecting a single congregation.

**Do Christians struggle with any of these type of things today?  
Discuss various options as a group.**

**How might we go about “testing” as Paul commands? What is the goal of testing? How do it help encourage and build one another up?**

The word “everything” is universal; it leaves nothing free from examination by spiritual standards and understanding. Paul did not explain how to carry out this testing. But certainly the fire of the Spirit (his convicting, guidance, and illumination), the instructions from the apostles and missionaries, and the written revelation of God are the lenses through which we must scrutinize everything. The clear purpose of this testing was to hold on to the good, and to avoid every kind of evil. The good has its origin in God; evil is a distortion of that good. Evil is twisting and destructive. We must not flirt with evil. Churches that do cannot encourage and build one another up—only tear one another down.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Which of the behaviors we’ve studied today represents a strength in your interaction with others? Which is an area of weakness? How can you improve the weak area(s)?**

**What examples of genuine love have you observed in our group or church? How does diligent service through genuine love affect a community of believers?**

**What do you think are the main obstacles to a deeper sense of authentic community at church?**

## PRAYER

Praise God for His wisdom, as He designed you to live in community. Ask Him to help your group grow closer. Pray that God would show you how to better serve others and Him.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

TRUSTING GOD'S FAIRNESS

2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-12

1/31/2021

## MAIN POINT

A right understanding of God helps us see we can always trust Him to be just and fair.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Think back over a difficult time in your life. What predominant emotions did you feel during that time?**

**At the time, how did you think God felt about your situation? What did you think He was doing?**

**When you face a life crisis or struggle, is your initial reaction to turn to God for spiritual growth, or turn away from Him? Explain.**

Sadly, suffering is a staple of life. We have all felt pain, and it is easy to look around and know that we are not the only ones. What is not so obvious, though, is that even God has suffered. Isaiah told us that Christ was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Look at the cross and it is clear that the Father, Spirit, and Son all experienced suffering. Fortunately, as we will see today, God has more than sympathy for our pain. He has a solution. He has a plan to turn your suffering into glory and the power to see it come to pass.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Shortly after Paul had written and sent his first letter to this congregation of new believers, he received a report about more issues confronting them. They were facing fresh problems, and Paul—as was his custom—invested great care in replying via a written letter.

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 1:1-4.

**Re-read 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3 and compare Paul's greetings in both letters. What are the main differences between these two openings? What had happened since Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians?**

**How did persecution affect this church?**

## **What was the evidence of God's work in the Thessalonian believers' lives?**

At the outset of this letter, Paul reminded the Thessalonians that God had already worked in their lives. Further, God continued to give evidence of His presence and power. As those who received God's grace, they had already come to know He had been more than fair with them, despite their troubles. Paul was impressed with the faith of these Christians, and he noticed that their love was increasing in their dealings with one another. Further confirmation of God's work in these believers was their perseverance amidst all the persecutions they were experiencing. We know little about whether these afflictions were a continuation of the first troubles this church endured (Acts 17:1-5; see also 1 Thess. 3:3-5), or whether they were facing a new kind of difficulty brought by people hostile to them.

### **When you find yourself facing persecution or adversity, what brings you patience and hope?**

### **Why is it important to spend time reflecting on all that God has done for you and the ways He has blessed you?**

If you received a letter or email from someone who had been helpful in leading you to Christ, it might open with words similar to those Paul used to open 2 Thessalonians. The writer would be happy to boast to someone else about what God had done in your life. Perhaps this Christian would think not only about when you were converted, but also would point out what God is still doing in your life. Comprehending what God has already accomplished in our lives will help us realize we can keep on trusting Him.

### **What is the relationship between having gratitude for all God has given us and trusting Him to be fair to us?**

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 1:5-10.

Here in verses 5-10, Paul's thanksgiving took an unexpected turn, one in which he meditated on the justice of God, especially as it will be revealed in the future. The Thessalonians' ability to endure hardship showed the power of God in their lives. This evidence should assure them of a glorious future when Christ returns, for He would find them worthy of the grace He had bestowed on them.

When believers endure patiently in the face of troubles, they have clear evidence that something good still lies in the future: the righteous judgment God will render to every person. Judgment in this case is not condemnation; rather, it results in a favorable verdict for Christians.

### **Why is it important for us to understand that God is righteous and just?**

### **Paul described God's judgment as "rest" or "relief" for His people. Why is this good news for us?**

**Which statement in verses 5-10 gives you the most comfort concerning God's fairness? Why?**

**Why is it important that we keep an eternal perspective in view when we go through times of difficulty?**

When we go through times of difficulty, especially because of our faith, we are sure to be helped by keeping an eternal perspective in view. God will be just in condemning the wicked. Further, we can be confident that at Christ's return, He will vindicate His people. We will enter into the joyful experience of rest in Christ's kingdom, fully enjoying His presence forever and ever. God will be just in His final judgment. This means we can trust Him, now and forever.

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 1:11-12.

**Look at verse 12. What were the two goals of Paul's prayer?**

**Why do you think Paul included the idea that Christians will glorify Jesus in a passage about God's fairness?**

**What do you see as the intended effect of Paul's thanksgiving and prayer?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Which of your current struggles are results of being a Christian?**

**Share about some of the hardships you are experiencing and how God is using them to strengthen your faith.**

**What are you doing to prepare for Christ's return?**

## PRAYER

For your closing prayer, use Paul's prayer as a guide: "We always pray for you that our God will consider you worthy of His calling, and will, by His power, fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified by you, and you by Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

UNDERSTANDING ANGELS

ISAIAH 6:1-6; 2 THESSALONIANS 1:6-12

2/7/2021

## MAIN POINT

A biblical understanding of angels teaches us to worship God for His glory, work for His pleasure, and trust in His protection.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**If you took a poll of friends and family members, how many do you think would say they believe in angels?**

**How are angels depicted in pop culture? What about these depictions is accurate? What is inaccurate?**

**What do you specifically know about angels?**

Some polls show that as many as 8 in 10 Americans believe in angels. Unfortunately, however, misconceptions about angels and what they do abound. Most people think of them merely as protectors or cute cherubs that try to get us to do the right thing. According to Scripture, angels are spiritual beings created by God for His glory. While some of them fell away from God (Gen. 3:1-2, Rev. 12:3-9), the angels we see in Scripture do three things: worship for God's glory, work for God's pleasure, and war for God's victory.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ ISAIAH 6:1-6, LUKE 2:13-14, HEBREWS 1:6 AND NEHEMIAH 9:6.

**Who is the Lord surrounded by in Isaiah 6:1-3? What are these creatures doing?**

**Why do you think the seraphim spoke the word "holy" three times? What does this communicate about the nature of God?**

In Isaiah's vision, God was surrounded by seraphim, or "fiery angels." These angels hid their faces and their feet in humility, communicating their unworthiness to be in the presence of God. The Seraphim cried out, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty." The Hebrew word translated "holy" comes from a root that means "to separate" or "to cut off." The Seraphim's repeated expression of God's holiness reminds us that God is separate in being from His creation.

**Where were the angels when the world was made (Nehemiah 9:6)?  
What were they doing?**

**What are the angels focused on in Luke 2:13-14 and Hebrews 1:6?  
What can we learn from the angels' example about how we should  
focus our lives?**

The angels are focused on worshiping God for His glory. Notice that none of the angels in these verses boast in their own power or fame, but rather acknowledge, submit to, and reflect the glory of God. Angels exist to glorify God and the same is true for us. Looking at what the angels do should move us to acknowledge God's greatness and submit our lives to His glory.

READ PSALM 103:20, HEBREWS 1:14, PSALM 34:7 AND PSALM 91:11.

**What do God's angels do with His word in Psalm 103:20?**

**What does God promise to use His angels to do in the hearts and  
lives of believers (Psalm 34:7 and 91:11)? Why is it important to note  
that these promises are only for "those who fear Him"?**

**Who does God send the angels to serve (Hebrews 1:14)? How might  
knowing this change your perspective during times of difficulty?  
During times of temptation?**

God's angels perform and obey God's Word. This is good news for us because God has promised to send His children angels to serve us. When Elijah was on the brink of despair, God sent an angel to provide for him and strengthen him to continue doing the work of the Lord (1 Kings 19:4-8). Even Jesus was ministered to by angels after overcoming Satan's temptations in the wilderness. Therefore the Psalmist recounts how "the angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him" (Ps. 34:7) and how God commands "His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" (Ps. 91:11). Knowing that God has surrounded us with powerful servants to protect and aid us in our walk with Christ should empower us both to persevere in faith and fight temptation.

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 1:6-12 AND REVELATION 12:7-9.

**What will God's angels do when Jesus returns (2 Thess. 1:7-8)?  
What does this tell us about them?**

**How should we respond to the knowledge that Christ is coming with  
his angels to inflict "vengeance upon those who do not know God"?  
How should this future reality motivate us to live now (2 Thess. 1:11-  
12)?**

While we tend to default to thinking of Jesus as our savior and angels as our guardians, Scripture paints a far more robust picture of both. In Revelation 12 and 2 Thessalonians 1, Jesus is seen returning to earth for the purpose of bringing judgment and He employs God's angels to bring that judgment about. Knowing that Christ is coming to judge the

world should motivate us to make sure “we are on the side of Jesus and His angels.” This reality should motivate us to “fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by [God’s] power so that the name of Jesus might be glorified” (2 Thess. 1:11-12). In other words, knowing that Christ is coming back in vengeance should motivate us to share the gospel with those who do not yet know God while there is still time.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What is one misconception about angels that you’ve held until this study?**

**What things in your life most commonly distract you from worshiping the Lord? What is one change that you could make this week to devote yourself to worship?**

**What is one way you could follow the example of God’s angels in worshiping God for His glory? Working for His pleasure? Trusting Him for protection?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for demonstrating His love for us by sending His Son to die for our sins. Thank Him for committing His angels to our aid so that we might stand firm in faith when Satan and his demons attack. Pray that we would be encouraged towards a worship and serve God more passionately through the example of God’s angels.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

2/14/2021

## MAIN POINT

We know what the end of the world will be like and what we as Christians should do in the meantime.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What is the strangest example of an end times prediction you've heard?**

**How do you generally react to end times predictions?**

The end times can lead to an assortment of reactions. Some people write fiction books and others actually attempt to predict the day and time that Jesus will return. For centuries, people have been predicting Christ's return, and many still try to do so today. But God has warned against such predictions, and has instead pointed us to preparation.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-4.

**What must have been happening in Thessalonica to lead Paul to write this?**

**Why were Paul's readers troubled? What falsehoods might have bothered them?**

**Read Acts 17:1-10. How much time was Paul able to spend with the Thessalonians? How would this affect their willingness to believe rumors about Christ's return (v. 2)?**

**What events did Paul mention in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 as evidence that Jesus had not yet returned? What do you know about these events?**

In verses 3-4, Paul pointed out two prophetic events connected with Jesus' return that had not yet happened as evidence that He had not returned. The apostasy (falling away) had not happened. Before Christ's coming, many who profess to belong to Him will

deliberately turn away. (Paul was not talking about the loss of salvation by a true believer.) Throughout history, notable defections from Christianity have occurred. We cannot be sure what kind of massive turning away from Christ is in view here. We can be sure it had not yet happened when Paul wrote and still hasn't happened. Second, the man of lawlessness had not yet been revealed. This person will be the personification of evil, also called the son of destruction.

**Can you identify different ways in which the spirit of lawlessness is evidenced today?**

Some Bible students identify the man of lawlessness with the "Antichrist" of 1 John 2:18. However, instead of identifying this person, Paul focused on his evil characteristics. He will oppose not only the God of Christianity but every other object of worship. He will fancy himself superior to God and to all so-called gods. He will arrogantly put himself in God's sanctuary to be worshiped as divine. (Paul likely had a literal religious building in mind, but he did not elaborate.) He will blaspheme by demanding worship, supposing that he himself is God.

**Why are many Christians today confused about Christ's return?  
What ideas confuse them most about Christ's return? Why?**

**Paul warned Christians not to believe lies and rumors about the last days. How can we recognize these rumors and yet still prepare for the last days?**

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 2:5-12.

**What is God's ultimate purpose in allowing the "man of lawlessness" to deceive people? What will ultimately happen to this figure, and why is that good news for us (v. 8)?**

**According to verses 9-10, how does the man of lawlessness contrast with Jesus?**

In Paul's writings, "mystery" refers to something not previously revealed but now made known. Paul taught that though the man of lawlessness is not currently revealed, the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Satan's program of opposition to God and His standards of righteousness is a current and ongoing reality. However, Jesus will destroy the terrible lawless one after he has been revealed and has done the horrible things described in verse 4. No matter what evil forces Satan has at his disposal, no matter how monstrous and powerful and blasphemous the "son of destruction" is, he will be no match for Christ.

**What is the warning for us from these verses?**

**What does 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 teach us about God? About our relationship with Him?**

In the Gospels, Jesus Himself taught about His return—what we can expect and how we can prepare. In Matthew 24, Jesus tells His disciples what they need to do in light of His promised return.

READ MATTHEW 24:36-51.

**Why is it significant that no one knows when Christ will return?**

No one, neither angels nor humans, knows when Jesus will return. Many may try and guess, but Jesus promised He would not come according to predictions. Instead, His return will be like the flood, which surprised people when they were caught up in their unrighteousness instead of following God. As believers, we should constantly be following Christ and hoping for His return.

**Who were the two types of servants? How did they react to the master's absence? What was the master's reaction when he returned?**

**In what aspects of your life are you like the faithful servant? In what areas of your life are you most likely to be like the wicked servant?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How should we talk about the end times? How should you respond when you encounter people making predictions about Christ's return?**

**How does the prospect of Jesus' unpredictable, rapid return speak to how we carry out the mission of God?**

**How can you live expectantly? What might that look like in practice this week?**

## PRAYER

Close your time in prayer, thanking God that He is not slow to fulfill His promises but instead is working all things in His timing. Pray that we would have peace and patience as we live out today in the knowledge that Jesus will return.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

CHOSEN TO STAND FIRM

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-17

2/21/2021

## MAIN POINT

The gospel comforts us as we wait for Jesus to return.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**If you were going to have the CEO of your company, the governor of your home state, or some other important person over to your house for dinner, how would you prepare?**

**What would your level of preparations communicate about your respect for that person? What would they convey about the depth of your personal relationship with him or her?**

Most people's tendency when preparing to host such a person for dinner is to focus on external things, such as what they will cook, and making sure the house is spotless. However, such preparations actually say very little about our personal relationship with those we host. If we hope to really get to know others and develop strong relationships with them, we should give less thought to such external things and more thought to how we might connect with the people we host on a personal level. Having taught extensively on the return of Christ and the coming judgment, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17, Paul challenges believers to prepare for Christ's second coming by focusing on their personal connection to Christ. In today's study we will see that standing firm in the gospel of Jesus Christ requires holding to the teaching of the gospel and connecting to God personally in prayer.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-15.

**Based on these verses, how and why will God save His people?**

**What do verses 13 and 14 remind you about God? How do we see the Trinity at work in these verses?**

The Thessalonians did not belong in the category of those facing condemnation. As a result, Paul offered a prayer of thanksgiving for what God had done in their lives. He reminded them that God loved them, chose them, and transformed their lives through

the power of the Spirit. Paul used language pointing to the reality of the Godhead existing in three Persons. He referred to the Father's work in eternity past, to Jesus' love that He expressed through His death for us and through our conversion, and to the Spirit's sanctifying work in our present relationship with God.

**How might believing the truths about God in verses 13 and 14 help us to stand firm in our faith? Where do you need encouragement and strength from God now?**

**What makes standing firm in your faith difficult for you? What tools has God given us to help us persevere in our faith in the midst of difficulty?**

Paul's understanding of salvation moved from the past to the present and on into the wonders of an everlasting future with God. Those who respond with faith to the gospel call to salvation (in the present) will obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (in eternity). When Christ returns, He will share His glory with His brothers and sisters—those who have trusted in Him—by giving us everlasting, perfect bodies so we can perfectly praise Him forever.

**Read verse 15 again. In response to God's initiative and Paul's ministry, what are we to do, and how do we do that?**

**What are some of the things that make standing firm in the faith a challenge for you?**

How should brothers and sisters respond to biblical teaching about Christ's coming? We should stand firm, the opposite of being shaken (v. 2). God has given us the help of His Spirit, who will enable us to persevere (v. 13). God also has given us His Word, which Paul referred to as "the traditions you were taught." He had in mind what Jesus had entrusted to His apostles and which they in turn passed on. At first, the word came orally, through an apostolic message. Later on, it was put in permanent form, such as the letter Paul had already written. Today, we have the great blessing of having the apostolic traditions in the Scriptures. The books of our New Testament form the written foundation upon which we may stand firm.

**Jesus Himself taught about the need to stand firm while we wait for His return. Read Luke 21:34-36. How did Jesus caution His followers about waiting for His return?**

**What things might prevent people from being prepared for Jesus' return? What do you think enables believers to be ready to stand before the Lord without fear or shame at His return?**

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 2:16-17.

**Put Paul's prayer in verses 16-17 in your own words.**

In the prayer in verses 16-17, Paul also emphasized what God has done: He has loved us from all eternity, He has given us eternal encouragement for our present life, and He has

given us good hope for the future. All these things come by grace: God's undeserved favor. Because we have such a God, we can be confident He will hear and answer our prayers.

**What else does Paul remind us of regarding God and His work in our lives through these verses? Why must we remember these things in light of Christ's promised return?**

When we are faced with diverse teachings about Jesus' return and our future with Him, we need to do just as the Thessalonians were asked. We too are to stand firm. We benefit both from receiving and offering prayers that God will help us stay calm, will encourage our hearts, and will strengthen us for the tasks He has designed for us to accomplish through His direction and ability.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Have you recently experienced discouraging or difficult times? What difference has the reality of God's faithfulness made in the way you faced this challenge?**

**What are you doing to prepare for Christ's return? What is one step you could take this week to be more mindful of this reality?**

**How can we, as a group, help each other live in light of Christ's promise to return? How might we help one another prepare and remain ready at all times for His return?**

## PRAYER

Close your time in prayer, thanking God that He is not slow to fulfill His promises, but instead is working all things for good in His timing. Pray that we would have peace and patience as we live out today in the knowledge that Jesus will one day return in victory—a victory that has been secured for all who believe in Him through His triumph over the grave.

# Second Baptist Church

WINTER 2020 - 2021

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-17; 3:1-5

2/28/2021

## MAIN POINT

Because God is faithful to us, we are to be faithful to Him.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Have you ever been disappointed in God because the circumstances you faced were not what you expected?**

**What did you think about Him during that time? How did it affect your faith in Him?**

One of the characteristics of God for us to remember is His faithfulness. God's faithfulness relates to His trustworthiness and commitment to His children. Because God is faithful to us, we are to be faithful to Him. True faithfulness, birthed in us by the Holy Spirit, is perseverance with God through all seasons of life—no matter what they bring.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 2:13-15.

**Based on these verses, how and why will God save His people?**

The Thessalonians did not belong in the category of those facing condemnation. So, Paul offered a prayer of thanksgiving for what God had done in their lives. He reminded them that God loved them, chose them, and transformed their lives through the power of the Spirit. Paul used language pointing to the reality of the Godhead existing in three Persons. He referred to the Father's work in eternity past, to Jesus' love that He expressed through His death for us and through our conversion, and to the Spirit's sanctifying work in our present relationship with God.

**What encouragement do verses 13-14 give you as you face hard times?**

Paul's understanding of salvation moved from the past to the present and on into the wonders of an everlasting future with God. Those who respond with faith to the call to salvation in the present will obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ in eternity. When

Christ returns, He will share His glory with His brothers and sisters—those who have trusted in Him—by giving us everlasting, perfect bodies so we can perfectly praise Him forever.

**What are some things that make standing firm in the faith a challenge for you?**

**How should brothers and sisters respond to biblical teaching about Christ's coming?**

How should brothers and sisters respond to biblical teaching about Christ's coming? We should stand firm (v. 13). God has given us the help of His Spirit, who enables us to persevere. God also has given us His Word, which Paul referred to as "the traditions you were taught" (v. 15). Paul had in mind what Jesus had entrusted to His apostles and which they in turn passed on. At first, the word came orally, through an apostolic message. Later on, it was put in permanent form, such as the letter Paul had written. Today, we have the great blessing of having the apostolic traditions in the Scriptures. The New Testament books form the written foundation upon which we stand firm.

**Jesus Himself taught about the need to stand firm while we wait for His return. Read Luke 21:34-36. How did Jesus caution His followers about waiting for His return?**

**What enables believers to be ready to stand before the Lord without fear or shame at His return?**

During a lengthy teaching about the end times and His second coming, Jesus gave His listeners a practical appeal consisting of two warnings. The first warning called the disciples to beware of being overcome with drunken revelry or worldly concerns for this life. While we wait for His return, Jesus' followers must keep a constant check on their attitudes and conduct. Jesus' second warning is positive. Be always alert, always ready, always living your life with a sense of urgency and anticipation of Christ's return. Such alertness is not done in a sense of dread, fearing we might miss His return. Instead, our alertness demonstrates love for Him. We want to be with Christ, our trust is in Him, and we are ever ready to meet Him.

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 2:16-17.

**What else did Paul remind us about God and His work in our lives?**

In the prayer in verses 16-17, Paul emphasized what God has done: He has loved us from all eternity; He has given us eternal encouragement for our present life; and He has given us hope for the future. All these things come by grace, God's undeserved favor. Because we have such a God, we may be confident that He will hear and answer our prayers.

READ 2 THESSALONIANS 3:1-5.

**Why was it so important to Paul that others prayed for him?**

**What does Paul's prayer in verses 1-2 show us about his relationship with the Thessalonian believers? About his commitment to his ministry?**

Paul's request for prayer shows how much he counted on the prayers of God's people. It also demonstrates the close bond he felt with the believers in Thessalonica. In his first letter, Paul had asked the brothers to pray for him and his colleagues (1 Thess. 5:25), but he offered no specific prayer requests. Here he did so. His primary concern was that the Lord's message may spread rapidly. Paul was one of God's agents for spreading the gospel message; he earnestly desired to continue doing this. Paul's secondary concern was about being delivered from wicked and evil men. The Thessalonians knew firsthand how fiercely the gospel message could be opposed (Acts 17:5-9). When the message spreads, some respond with faith and obedience. Others, however, respond by refusing to heed the message.

**How does God's faithfulness help us persist in faithfulness?**

The Christian life always involves two forces. On one hand is the Lord's power. On the other hand is the believer's willing obedience. Paul knew these young believers had stayed firm up to the present moment. He had confidence—based on God's faithfulness—that they would persist into the future. Paul wanted them to live and act in a way that reflected they had experienced God's love. Paul longed for his friends to persist in faithfulness.

**How do you experience both the Lord's power and your own willing obedience as two parallel forces involved in being faithful to God's commands?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Have you recently experienced discouraging or difficult times? What difference has the reality of God's faithfulness made in the way you faced this challenge?**

**How has your life changed as a result of your faith in God? What has your faith cost you?**

**How can you use your personal experience with God's faithfulness to help those currently facing hardship?**

## PRAYER

Thank God for the ultimate expression of His faithful love—the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Pray that once we understand God's faithfulness and trustworthiness, our lives will change.