

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 8: The God Who Loves

Unit 8 Big Question and Answer and Song:

"What Is God's Love for His People Like?"

PFI NIV Songs 8, Tracks 3,4

Unit 8 Bible Verse and Song: 1 Chronicles 16:34 NIV 1984

"Give thanks to the LORD for He is good. His love endures forever."

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 6:

God Will Never Stop Loving His People

Our love for others often changes. Sometimes it is strong; sometimes it is weak. Sometimes it fades away completely. God's love for His people never changes. The Bible calls God's love "hesed," steady love and kindness, flowing out to sinful people who don't deserve it.

God loved His people before they were created. He kept on loving them when they rebelled against Him. And He chose to send His dear Son, Jesus to save them from their sins. God will go on loving them forever and ever.

Why does God's love for His people never change? It's not because His people are so good and lovable. It's because God loves His people through Jesus, the perfect Son of God, who died for their sins. With His blood, shed on the cross, Jesus made a covenant—a forever promise—with God, His Father. His blood would be the perfect payment for the sins of God's people. He took God's punishment for their sins so they didn't have to bear it themselves.

Because of Jesus, God would forgive them and love them forever. Praise God for sending Jesus! He is why God will never stop loving His people.

BIBLE VERSE

How do I know this is true? The Bible tells me so!

Bible Truth 6 Bible Verse:

Romans 8:31-21,35,37-39

"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

CASE STORY

Acts 17,18; 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Our story is: The Case of the Forward-Lookers.

As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:

1. Who were the Forward-Lookers? What were they going through that was hard?
2. What were they looking forward to? How did this help them with what they endured?

This story takes place in New Testament times, about 15 years after Jesus rose from the dead and went to heaven.

How hard the last, few years had been! Full of traveling and troubles for Paul, Silas and Timothy! They had been traveling through Galatia sharing the good news of Jesus and visiting the little churches of Lystra, Derbe, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. They made plans to go next to Bithinia.

But one night in Troas, God changed Paul's plans. In a vision, Paul saw a man not from Asia but Macedonia standing before him. The man spoke to him "Come over to Macedonia and help us," he begged.

Paul felt sure this from the Lord. The next morning, Paul told his friends: "Luke, Timothy, and Silas, we're not going west to Bithinia anymore. The Lord wants us to go east to Macedonia instead."

So off they went. They sailed from Troas across the Aegean Sea to Neapolis, a seaport in Macedonia. From there they set out walking the Via Egnatia, the Roman highway connecting the cities of Macedonia.

Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke stopped first at Philippi, then Thessaloníki, then Berea. At each city, Paul preached the good news of Jesus to gatherings of Jews and God-fearing Greek and Romans at the Jewish Sabbath worship services. Paul and his friends rejoiced as many in Macedonia repented of their sins and trusted Jesus as their own Savior.

But not everyone was happy about these new Christians—and this is where the troubles came in! Most of the Jews, Greeks and Romans rejected the gospel of Jesus....and would do most anything to stop Paul and his friends from sharing it with others. So in Philippi, Paul and Silas beaten with sticks on their bare backs, then put locked up in chains and thrown in prison.

In Thessaloníki, an angry mob of Greeks and Jews beat upon the door of Jason's house, demanding Paul and Silas be handed over to them for punishment. The crowd

wanted to silence their teaching that Jesus was the Son of God who reigned in heaven as king and one day would return to set up His everlasting kingdom. The Jews thought it dishonored God to call Jesus His Son. The Greeks and Romans thought it dishonored Caesar to call Jesus King. Not able to find Paul, the crowd grabbed Jason and some of the other believers to punish in their place. Paul and his friends hid out until dark then slipped out of Thessaloníki.

Things were no easier for them in Berea. Jews who stirred up trouble in Thessaloníki came there to stir up the Bereans against Paul, too. Paul was only able to get out of Berea alive with a special escort of men who sneaked him out of town and took him all the way down the coast to leave the country.

Was this what it meant to “help” the Macedonians, as the Lord had told Paul in his vision? Did Paul begin to doubt whether it was such a good idea to go to Macedonia? Yes, many Macedonians had been saved from their sins, but now they also were being hurt by enemies. Was it really worth it?

Paul knew that it was. It was true that the lives of Christians were often filled with trials and persecutions. If this life was all there was, then Christians should be pitied for spending it suffered for Jesus like this. Yet Paul knew this life wasn't all there was! No! There was so much more to life than just this earthly life! There was a whole FOREVER with Jesus waiting for believers after they died. The Jews might not like to hear it, but Jesus really was the Messiah, the Son of God. He really did die on the cross for their sins. He did rise from the dead and now reigns in heaven. The Romans and Greeks might not like to hear it, but one day Jesus really would come back and right all wrongs. He would put an end to all evil. Then, in the new heavens and earth, Jesus would set up His kingdom where His people would praise Him and know His love forever. Yes, there might be suffering in this life for Paul and these new believers, but it would not be forever. God was faithful and He would do all He had promised. A Forever of love awaited them. This is what Paul thought about as he and the other Christians faced these trials. He would press on, looking forward to that day. He would pray that the little churches of believers back in Berea, Philippi and Thessaloníki would, too.

Paul and his friends left Macedonia and traveled on to Greece where there were thousands more who needed to hear about Jesus. Even so, Paul and his friends could not

forget the Macedonians. “How were they doing? Were they suffering for believing in Jesus? Were they holding on to their faith in Him?

At last, Paul could stand it no longer. He just had to hear something. “Silas, I want you to go back to check up on the Philippians and the Bereans. Timothy, will you go back to Thessaloníki? Check up on the believers and bring word back to me down there,” Paul urged them. Timothy and Silas were happy to go. They left and headed back over to Macedonia.

Weeks passed. Paul kept telling the good news of Jesus in Greece, but he eagerly awaited Timothy's and Silas' return. At last Silas returned from Philippi. The believers were doing well and were growing in godliness and love for each other. Their sufferings had not caused them to turn away from their faith in Jesus. Paul was so happy!

Then Timothy brought news from Thessaloníki. The Thessalonian believers had suffered a lot. Some had even died. They had many fears. Some were afraid that believers who did die before Jesus came back would miss out on the good things He promised. Others were afraid that Jesus had already come back and they had missed Him completely. But despite all their suffering and their fears, the LORD had kept them strong in their faith in Jesus.

The three friends praised God together. How faithful God had been to His people in those little churches of Macedonia! They needed help and encouragement, but but by God's grace they stood firm in the faith. In first one letter and then another, Paul, Silas and Timothy wrote words of encouragement to the Thessalonian believers:

“From Paul, Silas and Timothy:

To the church of the Thessalonians:

“Ever since we left you, we've been wondering how you were doing. We were afraid that you might have stop believing in Jesus and encouraged that you are standing strong in your faith.

“Don't be discouraged about your sufferings. These are expected in this life. Don't worry that Jesus has already come or that those of you who have already died will miss out on anything the LORD has prepared for His people. On the day He comes, you won't be able to miss Him! Jesus will come down from heaven with a loud command with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God. The dead in Christ will rise from the dead first; then we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together

with them in the clouds to meet Him in the air.”

“You might be suffering now, but it won’t be for forever. For on that day, Jesus will right all wrongs and put an end to all evil once and for all. Then, in the new heavens and earth, He will set up His kingdom where His people will praise Him and enjoy His love forever.”

“May God Himself completely prepare you for that day of Jesus’ coming! The One who calls you to live and even suffer for Him is faithful. He will do it!”

“Read this letter to all the believers so that may be encouraged. We hope to visit you soon.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy”

What happened next to the Thessalonians believers? There’s really only two things we know: for many years to come, the Thessalonian believers were known among the churches for enduring their sufferings with a deep love for God and a strong faith in Jesus. And best of all, we know that after each and every one of them died, they went to be with Jesus where they are praising Him and enjoying His love forever even now!

Our Bible Truth is: God Will Always Love His People

Our Bible Verse is: Romans 8:31-32,35,37-39

“If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What about you and me? We don’t know what we may face in this life. if we are God’s people—those who have turned from our sins and trusted in Jesus as our Savior. there may be days when we may face suffering for believing in Jesus.

But if we are God’s people, we know that God loves us and cares for us. We know there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Christ. He will bring us through everything we might have to go through in this life, and then bring us into His kingdom where we will praise Him and enjoy His love forever and ever. Our God is

faithful. He will do it.

Let’s praise God for faithfully loving His people forever and ever. Let’s ask Him to help us to trust Him with our lives and rejoice even if there is suffering and hard times ahead for us. Let’s ask Him to help us to look forward to the day when His people will enjoy His love forever. That can be us, too, if we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior!

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:

Jesus is why God’s love for His people never changes. He took the punishment for their sins.

Answer: True.

2. Crack the Case Questions

a. Who were the Forward-Lookers? What were they going through that was hard?

Answer: The Christians in Thessaloniki and Paul. They were suffering for being Christians.

b. What were they looking forward to? How did this help them with what they endured?

Answer: The day when they would go to be with God in heaven. There would be no suffering then. They would enjoy His presence and His love in a far deeper way forever. Knowing that God had a purpose in their suffering now and gave them promises of this wonderful life forever with Him, they kept on loving God and enduring whatever He, in His wisdom and love, allowed.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:

Romans 8:31-32,35,37-39

“If God is for ____, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all ____? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through ____ who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the ____ of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Answers: us; things; him; love.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication

A God, we praise You for being the Worker of Your people’s good and Your glory, even in the hardest things that happen to them.

C God, we confess that we are tempted to lie instead of trusting You, God, when we are afraid of punishment, like Joseph’s brothers did. We need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for always being true to Your promises and always working out Your good purposes.

S God, work in our hearts! Help us to turn away from our sins and trust Jesus as our own Savior. Help us to faithfully tell others about You and endure even hard things so that others might hear the good news of Jesus. Help Your people all over the world who even today are enduring hard things because they believe in You. Give them courage! Help them to look forward to the day when their suffering will end and they will be with You forever!

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

The King of Love

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 18

Verse 6

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never.

Good shepherd may I sing Thy praise

Within Thy house forever.

Words: Henry Baker, Psalm 23 Music:Traditional Irish Melody

God’s people praise God for being the King of love. They delight in having Him as their king because all that He does comes from His heart of love for them that will never end or fail. God takes care of His people like a good shepherd cares for his sheep. Sheep are very stupid and need someone to take care all of their needs or else they will die. God promises to always be with His people, taking care of them throughout their whole length of days--their whole lives. And He will go on caring for them even after they die. He will take them to live with Him in heaven forever. How wonderful that will be! No wonder God’s people want to sing His praise forever! We can become God’s people when we turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

Who Shall Separate Us?

PFI NIV Songs 8, Track 19

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?

Shall trouble? No! Shall Hardship? No!

Persecution, famine, nakedness? No!

Danger or sword? No!

In all these things we are conquerors

Through Him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life,

Nor anything else in all creation,

Will be able to separate us from God’s love

In Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans Eight, thirty-five, eight and nine.

Words adapted from Romans 8:35,38,39

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God’s people may have to go through some very hard things in this life, but they know that none of these things will ever separate them from God. He has always loved them and will always love them. He will be with them, helping them through them all, to the very end. And one day, God will bring them into heaven where they will enjoy His love and the delight of His presence forever.