

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 – “Secured and Steadfast”

Summary Statement:

In this passage, Paul expresses gratitude for the Thessalonians, acknowledging their response to God’s truth and emphasizing the importance of standing firm in the faith. He reassures them that God’s love and grace empower believers to hold on to hope and remain steadfast even when life feels shaky.

1. The Security of Our Salvation – 2:13-14

2:13-14 - *But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, ¹⁴ to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In light of all that is coming in a future day, Paul doesn’t want to neglect what’s taking place in the present day. And when he thinks about this church in Thessalonica and the believers that have been formed here, he says, ***I’m bound to give thanks to God always for you.*** That word bound means to be *obligated*. Paul saw this as his duty to give thanks because he’s seen the work of God take root in the lives of these Thessalonians. Through a time of persecution and trial, they have been saved and have experienced the love of the Lord. That’s something to be thankful for.

Paul says they are ***beloved by the Lord***. It’s not just that they love the Lord, which would be something to be thankful for, but it’s that they are loved ***by*** the Lord. Think about that.

- God has a lot going on. He is ruling over the universe, holding all things together. That’s pretty significant. I’m fortunate if I just uphold my weekly schedule without forgetting an appointment. But though God is ruling over all, He does so with a great love for us. How sweet is that?
- Beloved is the word *agapao*, where it’s a sacrificial, unconditional love. It’s the love that Jesus has showered down on us.
- **1 John 3:1**, *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."*
- It’s almost as though John could not even fathom the greatness of love that we have been shown by God.
- I pray that you daily reflect on and thank God for the love He has bestowed on you. Everything we do for the Lord is not to be done out of some

burdensome duty but rather done out of a blessed duty because of what He has done for us. And we should feel obligated to thank Him for the fact that we are beloved by the Lord. Thank you Jesus!

God's actions are always rooted in His love for us.

Now one of these rooted in love actions that Paul points out is that **God from the beginning chose you for salvation.**

Now remember, Paul is writing to this church corporately. He's been addressing the coming day of the Lord because some of these new believers thought they were right in the middle of it. And as a refresher, the day of the Lord is a period of time where God's judgment, the wrath of the Lamb, is being poured out in the tribulation period. These believers thought they were going to be taken home before that day. Paul is assuring them that this is the case, that God's chosen them for salvation so that this day will not overtake them.

These verses are in contrast to what we've been looking at in the beginning of 2 Thessalonians 2 where Paul is highlighting the period of time when the Antichrist will come onto the scene and there will be great wickedness and deception.

These believers may be looking at all that's going to come and think, *We're not gonna make it through that. We're weak, we're gonna break!* But Paul says, *'No, don't sweat it, God's chosen you for salvation! His plans are that you won't have to try and survive that very awful period in human history.'*

This has been God's plan all along, **from the beginning.**

- **Ephesians 1:4**, *"just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,"*

Now to read these words, **God... chose you for salvation...** can seem contradictory to what we read or discussed last week. I emphasized in our message last Sunday that there are some who will teach that God chooses those who will be saved. This is the doctrine of election. And they'll say that if God is Sovereign in who He saves, then man doesn't really have free will.

Yet last week we looked at the responsibility that was put on man. They were perishing because *'they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved'* (2:10). The emphasis was on man's part. It didn't say they perished because God didn't choose them.

You see, it's important to look at all this not in the sense of personal salvation, but in corporate salvation. That the church has been chosen to be saved and delivered from the tribulation period (1 Thessalonians 5:1-9).

And this salvation comes: 1) **through sanctification by the Spirit**, and 2) **belief in the truth**.

It's the only way to be saved. When I look at this the focus isn't on the **WHO** but on the **HOW**. It's that He has chosen that salvation would come through faith, and belief in the truth. It's not that He's chosen some for salvation and some not to receive it. Rather, He's chosen the means for salvation to come through the Spirit and through believing in the truth. The truth being that God is God, and His Son Jesus is God. It's believing the truth that Jesus' death and resurrection is the means by which we can be forgiven and made right with God. His means for salvation is believing the truth, unlike those in 2:10 who are perishing "*because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved*".

We had an event here on Friday that generated a little bit of attention. The title behind the event was "The Truth Matters". And it really does! And yet, many are not wanting to receive the truth or allow the truth to really make them free.

I was reading this week the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The rich man implored Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his 5 brothers not to end up in Hades in torment like this rich man was experiencing. Abraham said, they have Moses and the prophets. That was a term used to speak of the Old Testament Scriptures. In other words, they have the truth! But the rich man thought, but if someone comes to them from the dead, that's really going to cause them to wake up and repent. But Abraham said, if they don't hear Moses and the prophets (the word and truth) then they won't be persuaded by something miraculous. It's the truth that saves!

Now this word **sanctification** can trip a lot of people up. It's one of those big Christianese words where we let on like we know what this is all about when we really don't know what this is all about.

Let me break it down, because as Paul says here, this is linked to our salvation. In fact, let me share 3 aspects to our salvation that's seen in a past, present, and a future aspect.

Justification, sanctification, and glorification.

- Justification is God declaring us righteous based on Christ's righteousness. It's forensic – like a legal verdict. It's instant and complete the moment we believe. Sanctification is God making us righteous through the Holy Spirit.

It's progressive – over our lifetime. Justification changes our position before God. Sanctification changes our practice. Justification is once-for-all. Sanctification is ongoing. Glorification is the final product; the completion and realization of all that God has done. It's when we stand before Him in our glorified state and behold His glory. Right now we're clothed with mortality and corruption. But this will be replaced with immortality and incorruption, and we will then see Him face to face.

- Justification, Sanctification and Glorification are seen in these ways: We have been saved from the penalty of sin (justification), we are being saved from the power of sin (sanctification, and one day we'll be saved from the presence of sin (glorification).

Notice the tie in from vs. 13 to vs. 14: ***to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

Again, this is God's purpose in saving us, it's to lead us to glory. Not the glory of self. This isn't about you arriving in heaven where everybody turns and gives you a big applause as they pat you on the back on your way to the throne. No, this is ***the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!*** We're going to one day partake in His glory.

When Jesus took His inner 3 disciples up on the Mt. of Transfiguration, Jesus revealed His glory to them. It was incredible to behold. We see that in part today.

- **2 Corinthians 3:18**, *“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”*
- Jesus is right now working that glory in and through us, but there will come that day when we shall obtain it in full!

“In a single sentence the apostle's mind sweeps from ‘the beginning’ to ‘the glory’. There is no room in such a conviction for fears about Christian instability. Let the devil mount his fiercest attack on the feeblest saint, let the Antichrist be revealed and the rebellion break out, yet over against the instability of our circumstances and our characters, we set the eternal stability of the purpose of God. We glance on to 2 Thessalonians 3:3 and declare with Paul, ‘The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you ...’.”¹

¹ Stott, J. R. W. (1994). *The message of Thessalonians: the gospel & the end of time* (p. 177). InterVarsity Press.

So in light of this incredible work of salvation – past, present, and future – look at what Paul directs us to do...

2. The Stability of Our Position – 2:15

2:15 - *Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.*

In light of what Jesus has done for us, we're called to stand fast and hold the traditions...

To ***stand fast*** means that we're not going to be moved from the place of truth. Throughout the Word of God there's many exhortations given to be sure that you are standing firm, knowing the tendency of man to drift:

1 Corinthians 15:58, *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*

1 Corinthians 16:13, *"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong."*

Philippians 4:1, *"Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved."*

Colossians 4:12, *"Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."*

1 Thessalonians 3:8, *"For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord."*

What causes us to veer off course or lose our footing? Fear, feelings, false teachings.

We need to be anchored to the truth; anchored in Christ so that we don't veer off course or begin to get caught up in the current of culture and falsehood.

It's true God has saved us and that has been secured positionally in Christ, but we have a responsibility to stand fast in this truth without wavering.

This is not about working for your salvation, this is simply about remaining in your salvation. That salvation is through faith in Jesus alone, but it is to be a faith that continues to hold to Jesus, where we are anchored down without drifting.

We have a responsibility to stand and not lose ground. We're to keep on holding to the truth and holding on to Jesus.

Don't let anything move you, discourage you, or dissuade you.

There's lots of things that are trying to get us off focus from the main thing being the main thing. The purpose of the church is for the equipping of the saints, *"that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,"* (Ephesians 4:14).

So **stand fast!** And... **hold the traditions**... Paul is speaking of the Word of God, the things he had spoken to them which would become Scripture. We are not to hold on to traditions for traditions sake. There were those in Jesus' day that were holding on to their own traditions (Matthew 15:2-3), but it was their interpretation of the Scriptures and in reality it was contrary to Scripture. Paul is speaking not of man's tradition, but of the apostolic tradition that has been passed down by their writings and preserved in the Word of God.

Hold dearly to them like a lifeline for a drowning person. Don't be in the water wondering if there's something else to 'try out'.

- Sadly, I see many Christians who are no longer holding to the truth of the Word of God. And I use that term Christian in that case very loosely.
- Illustration: protestors at the Action4Canada event who said they were Christians but do not believe the Bible.

3. The Strength of Our Provision – 2:16-17

2:16-17 - Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

Paul ends with a great prayer and wonderful exhortation to this church in Thessalonica.

And he points them back to this being a work of the Lord. Remember in the beginning of the chapter he encouraged them *not to be soon shaken*... And there's no need for them to be shaken when they remember that God loves them. And He's given them **everlasting consolation** [Gk=*paraklēsis*, meaning comfort]. This comfort doesn't have a time expiry or a best before date. It's everlasting.

They have **good hope by grace**. Hope is a wonderful thing. Now there's things I can hope for, but I know, it's not going to happen.

- I can hope that if I get pulled over by a police officer for speeding (very hypothetical here), that he's not going to give me a ticket. But I deserve it. And chances are, I'll get a ticket, whether I hoped he wouldn't or not.
- But what Paul talks about is good hope by grace. Meaning it's not dependent on my performance, good or bad. It's based on His grace. In other words, I'm assured of it.

So here's what Paul prays that God would do in their lives and it's a good thing to pray into our lives – ***comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.***

We need a lot of comfort today. And I'm so thankful that we have a God of all comfort to turn to (2 Corinthians 1:3).

And we can be comforted knowing that God is establishing us in His work. That word ***establish*** is the Greek word *sterizo*. Sounds kind of like steroids.

- Steroids are meant to give you that boost, that help to really get the body functioning in its proper way and reduce deficiencies.
- This is like what God is doing in us! He's establishing us.

So, don't be shaken, be established, strong, comforted, and may the Lord guide you in every good word and work.

- These two go nicely together. Because our words lack power if not followed by our work. And our work will be weakened if our words don't match.

Rest in His Love – You are beloved!

Stand in His Truth – The devil would love to move you.

Rely on His Grace – He will establish you.

Points to Ponder:

1. Are you treating sanctification as optional or essential?
 - Salvation is not just a past event, it's an ongoing transformation.
2. Are you standing fast – or slowly drifting?
 - Drift is rarely dramatic. It's subtle. Where have you loosened your grip on truth?
3. Do your words and your works agree?
 - Paul prays for establishment in both.