

2nd Thessalonians

"Nothing but the Truth"

(2nd Thessalonians 2:13-3:5)

The Big Picture: The apostle Paul had his life in balance. He understood the elementary doctrine of Christ and this grounded him in the faith helping him understand why he did what he did. But in a very real sense, he was a practical Christian. His doctrine drove his behavior and he wanted that to be so for the church of the Thessalonians. He had detected and adequately dealt with a doctrinal error that existed within the church. Now it was time to spell out plainly what they were to do about it. In this passage Paul indicated that every believer has four responsibilities with respect to God's truth: (1) Believe the truth, (2) Guard the Truth, (3) Practice the Truth, and (4) Share the Truth.

The Text: ¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. ¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. ¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. **3** Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, ² and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. ⁴ And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. ⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ. (ESV)

Believe the Truth (2:13-14): Paul constantly gave thanks to God for the impact that he had made in the lives of the Thessalonians. In these two verses Paul summarized the salvation experience of the Thessalonians: (1) God loved them, (2) God chose them, (3) God set them apart, (4) God called them, and (5) God gave them glory.

God loved them (v13a): To Paul they were brothers that were beloved by the Lord. Whatever God does for the lost world he does from love (John 3:16). Paul in his letter to the Romans indicates that God proved his love at the cross where Jesus Christ willingly lay his life down for the sins of the world while the world continued to reject God.

God chose them (v13b): God loves the whole world and yet the whole world is NOT saved. Love reveals itself in grace and mercy. In his grace God gives us what we do not deserve. In his mercy God does not give us what we do deserve. To us Christians as if we choose him. In actuality, he chooses us. We dare not explain away God's election of sinners.

God set them apart (v13c): The verb "to sanctify" means to be set apart. There are three aspects of Sanctification: (1) Positional, (2) Practical, and (3) Perfect. The positional aspect occurs at conversion. The practical aspect we experience throughout

our Christian walk (1st Thess 5:23). The perfect will come when we receive our heavenly bodies and are freed from any connection with sin. Here Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit's work in leading the unbeliever to faith in Christ; the positional.

God called them (v14a): The same God that calls us to salvation also calls us to the means to salvation (Belief). Romans 10:13-15: we are called for a purpose – to believe on him and share the good news. God uses his people to work out his plan of salvation.

God gave them glory (v14b): What started on eternity past will end in eternity future: We share the glory of God. Jesus gave us his glory (John 17:22) and prayed that we would see his glory (John 17:24). Whom God chooses he glorifies (Romans 8:29-30). We are awaiting the Lord's return and then his glory shall be revealed (We suffer now, we glory later).

Guard the Truth (2:15): While Paul had warned of future danger, he also knew that there was a clear and present danger. The church MUST guard God's truth and NOT turn away from it. Traditions are that which are handed down from one generation to the next. Specifically, the tradition that Paul is speaking of is the truth that he had handed down orally to the church and had included in his previous letter. This letter would become part of that as well. The church is to embrace these truths, make them part of themselves and NOT move away from them. Satan is a worthy adversary who knows our weaknesses, and we need to be diligent in our guarding. We need to temper these thoughts with caution. The body of faith handed down has its basis in God's word not man's ideas about God's word. On the other hand, think about how far the religious leaders of Jesus' day had strayed from God's word and embrace their own traditions. Secondly, none of us have arrived at the point where we know the entirety of the word of God. We must never cease to study, mull over, and meditate on God's word, allowing the Holy Spirit to work the truth of God's words into our hearts.

Practice the Truth (2:16-17): The practice of the truth was both Paul's desire and prayer for his converts. He wanted God to encourage them and establish them. For certain, Paul had encouraged them: He was a faithful servant to them. He loved them like a nursing mother. He challenged them like a concerned father. He sent Timothy to them. He wrote them a letter. He taught them truth about how to live to please God. He taught them the truth about the rapture of the church. He had corrected a doctrinal error about the Day of the Lord. Now it was time for them to stand on their own two feet and let God do in and through them, what he had intended to do all along.

Share the Truth (3:1-5): Learning about God's world and living in it go together. When we believe the truth about God, our lives are changed. We guard the truth and practice the truth for a reason: to share it with others. God's word is alive, and we must let it do what it was intended to do. Paul spoke of the gospel of Jesus Christ as the power of God. The universe was created and is sustained by the word of God. That same word, going out through the lives of God's people will create new life and sustain it in those that are called by God. They just need to hear it!

Calvary Bible Church and the Thessalonian Letters: The Constitution of the Calvary Bible Church (CBC) makes reference to 2nd Thessalonians 2:13-14 in support of its Statement of Doctrinal Beliefs as recorded in Article III.F. Regarding "Salvation" the statement reads: "*We believe that salvation is a sovereign work of God initiated by God's grace due to man's fallen sinful nature, and received by those whom the Holy spirit regenerates, enabling the sinner to receive God's free gift of salvation by the exercise of personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins.*" God, in his grace and mercy, gave us a gift. He didn't have to. He just did!

Next Week: "Order in the Church" (2nd Thessalonians 3:6-18)