

Nothing But The Truth

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

¹³ As for us, we can't help but thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are always thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation—a salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and through your belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to salvation when we told you the Good News; now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you both in person and by letter. ¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope, ¹⁷ comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.”

Paul was a balanced Christian who had a balanced ministry; and we see evidence of this as he brought his letter to a close. He moved from prophecy to practical Christian living. He turned from the negative (Satan's lies) to the positive (God's truth), and from warning to thanksgiving and prayer.

We desperately need balanced ministries today. As, from time to time, we deal with the subject of prophecy; we must always remember that we are still living in the present. We must never permit the study of prophecy to be an escape from our responsibility for today.

Paul's emphasis was on the truth of God's Word, in contrast to Satan's great lie, which Paul discussed in our

earlier studies. Every believer has at least two responsibilities to God's Word.

First of all, we are responsible to believe the Word. Paul says this in verses 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, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We have already seen Paul's repeated words of thanksgiving for these early Christians. He gave thanks for the way they responded to God's work in their lives. In these two verses, Paul reviewed the five stages in their salvation experience.

First, he reminded them of God's love for them. Verse 13 says, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord." **Whatever God does for the lost world springs from His eternal love.** We must never think of God's great plan of salvation as an impersonal machine. John 3:16 reminds us that God's plan of salvation is rooted and grounded in His love, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Romans 5:8 reminds us that God proved His love for us when Christ died for the sins of the world, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

In John 3:16 God said it; on the cross Christ proved it; and in Romans 5:8 the Bible reminds us of it.

Second, he reminded them that God chose them. Look again at verse 13, "...because God did from the beginning chose you for salvation..." **Now watch this - it is not love alone that saves us, for God loves the whole world, and yet the whole world is not saved.** Love reveals itself in grace and mercy. God in His grace gives us through Christ what we do not deserve, and God in His mercy does not give us what we deserve - but He gave that to Christ. **Jesus said in John 12:32, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me."**

Third, he reminded them that God had set them apart. "...God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification..." The word "sanctify" means "to set apart." **Sanctification reveals itself in three stages: past, present and future.** When we were saved, we were set aside. Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." **In our daily walk, and as we allow God to work in our lives, we are being conformed into the image of Jesus Christ.** Paul reminded us in Romans 8:29, "For whom He did foreknow, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son..." **Ultimate sanctification will be ours only in eternity.** Paul said this in 1

Thessalonians 5:23, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Four, Paul also reminded them that all of this began with God’s call. Verse 14 says, “To which He called you by our gospel...” The same God who ordained salvation also ordained the *means* to salvation. Look again at Romans 8:29--30, “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” **You see, God not only knew who was going to be saved, but when we came to Him by faith, He predestined us for heaven.** That in itself is pretty awesome, but the story does not stop there, because after we responded to God's call to salvation, He also foreordained that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. In other words, the glorified Son of God is to be our pattern, our power, and our goal.

Five, he reminded them that God also gave them glory. Look again at verse 14, “...for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What began in eternity past reaches its climax in eternity future: we share in the glory of God. Now watch this - what begins with *grace* also leads to *glory*. **This is quite a contrast to the future assigned to the lost.** Hell is unspeakable when it comes to suffering.

Our second responsibility to God's Word is to *practice it*. Look at verses 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, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work." **Isaiah 7:9** says this, "... If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established."

It is a biblical fact that believing the Word and practicing the Word will cause the child of God to be established. Some believers talk more about their weak faith and their failures than they do about what God says in His Word about them. **Then they wonder why they never seem to grow strong spiritually!**

I am convinced that a believer who is weak in faith should take the same amount of time he has spent bemoaning his failures and lack of power, and spend that time studying the Bible. If a believer will do that, he will be well on his way to becoming strong in faith and established in the Word.

For instance, the Bible says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 that when you invited Christ to come into your life, forgive you of your sins, and make you a Christian, you became a new creation in Christ Jesus. So read the epistles carefully and look for scriptures that reveal who you are in Christ Jesus.

Then, you need to go through the New Testament and look up all the verses that include the phrases, "in Him," "in Christ," and "in whom." Each of those verses tells you something about *who you are* or *what you possess* in the new

birth. And as you believe God's Word and fix your faith on what God says about who you are in Christ, you will keep your heart strong and established in the midst of life's trials and temptations.

Closely associated with the study of the new birth is the study of our *sonship* privileges. Learning about, believing, and appropriating our inheritance as God's children is an important part of establishing ourselves in our Christian walk. For example, the Bible says in 1 John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" **In the new birth, we became children of God and heirs to certain rights and privileges in the Kingdom of God.** In fact, Romans 8:17 tells us that we are "joint (or equal) heirs with Jesus Christ."

In regard to our sonship privileges, I want to remind you once again of the story about the prodigal son and his elder brother found in Luke 15:11-32. I am confident Jesus told this story to teach the religious leaders of His day concerning the heart of God. And you know the story about how the younger brother ask for and got his inheritance, left home, spent it all on lose-living, ended up in a hog-pen, and, out of desperation, swallowed his pride and went back home. Verses 22-24 tell us that upon the return of the younger son, the father called for a great feast to be prepared to celebrate his son's return.

When the elder brother heard about it, he was angry and jealous. Verse 29 reveal the heart and attitude of this older brother, "I have served you faithfully all of these years, but you

have never had a big feast in my honor." I like the father's response to the elder brother in verse 31, because it tells us something about our sonship privileges, "And he said to him, Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours." **Hallelujah!** I don't know about you, but I could just have a shouting spell over that one statement!

When you are born again into the family of God, your Heavenly Father tells *you*, "All that I have is yours." All you need to do is ask yourself this question, "What does my Father have?" If He has it, it's yours, because you are His child and a joint heir with Jesus Christ.

How are you going to find out what God has provided for you? By studying the Word of God. Once you discover in the Word that God promises to meet a particular need in your life, you can claim your need met in the Name of Jesus. Whatever God's Word says is yours in Christ – belongs to you.

A study of the Holy Spirit will also help to establish you in the Word! The Bible tells us in 1 John 4:4 reminds us, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." **In other words, the Spirit of God is also the power of God living in us.** But if you don't know what to believe about the Holy Spirit, you can't put His power and ability to work in your life!

For instance, do you remember what Jesus said to the disciples about the Holy Spirit just before He went to the Cross? Listen to John 14:16, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Comforter (Counselor, Helper, Intercessor,

Advocate, Strengthener, and Standby) **that He may remain with you forever."** Anything you could ever need from the Holy Spirit is included in that verse!

But, listen carefully, you have to believe in order to be established, as we have seen in Isaiah 7:9. It is up to you to establish your heart in what the Word of God says about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. You must believe in His power and act on His leading before the Greater One within you can work in your life the way He wants to.