

**Nothing But The Truth**  
**2 Thessalonians 2:13-17**  
**Part Two**

In the future, we do not know exactly when, a man will come upon the world scene and he will make a covenant with many at the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel. He will look, to the world, to be a man of peace. He will look, to the world, to be a religious man. But in the middle of the week or in other words 3.5 years after this period begins he will break his covenant and he will be revealed or uncovered. People will see him clearly. He will be seen not as a man of peace, but rather as a man of war. He will be seen not as a religious man, but as an enemy of religion as he sets aside the sacrifices and offerings in the temple and displays himself to be “god.” In order to accomplish this there will be incredible displays of power that will be extremely effective in convincing the unsaved that he is in fact divine. Compounding the deception will be the fact that God will send a “deluding influence” on those who are in the process of perishing. He will do this because they did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness.

All of these basic truths Paul shares with the Thessalonians in **VV. 1-12**. Paul now uses these truths concerning future things as a springboard to minister to the Thessalonians in respect to their day to day lives. How does he do this? He does this by drawing a contrast between those who will in the future choose not to believe the truth and the Thessalonians who have chosen to believe the truth.

In making this contrast we will see three different responsibilities that we have in respect to truth. Three different responsibilities that we have in respect to God’s revelation. Three different responsibilities that we have in respect to the Scriptures.

First of all, we need to make sure that we believe the truth. Certainly Paul was convinced of this in respect to the Thessalonians. That is why he is able, as he repeatedly does throughout the Thessalonian epistles, to give thanks for them. Look at **V. 13**, **“But we should always give thanks for you.”** Why was he so thankful? He was thankful because they had chosen to embrace the truth of the gospel and had received the gift of salvation.

As he rehearses for them the steps involved in bringing them to salvation we can clearly see that salvation is not so much an event at a point in time as much as it is a process. He wanted them to know that salvation is not something that comes and goes like the tide. But rooted in an eternal plan of redemption.

The process begins with God’s love - “brethren, beloved by the Lord” (Eph. 1:3-5).

Flowing out of God’s love for us was his choice of us - “because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation.” His choice of us in love had nothing to do with us. In fact, He chose us before we were even born. He chose us from the beginning for salvation.

Those who have been chosen will be transformed. This transformation will not take place until

two elements are present. The first element is **“sanctification by the Spirit.”** And the second element is **“faith in the truth.”**

Sanctification by the Spirit involves both a positional and practical sanctification, or setting apart from sin to God. Positional sanitation takes place at the moment we are saved when the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ. Practical sanctification is then the by-product of positional sanctification and takes place over the remainder of our lives. Positional and practical sanctification work hand in hand with each other.

But neither of these elements can become a factor in our lives until we are called through the gospel. Look at **V. 14**, **“And it was for this He called you through our gospel.”** Our transformation, our positional and practical sanctification, does not take place until we hear Jesus calling us through the gospel. Our transformation does not take place until we desire to be set free from sin and come to Jesus for salvation.

There is one more step in the process of salvation that we did not have time to mention last week. And that is: we will be given glory. Look again at **VV. 13-14**, **“But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (14) And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** What began in eternity past reaches its climax in eternity future where we will share in the glory of God.

**John 17:24: “Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world.”**

**Romans 8:29-30: “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; (30) and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”**

What begins with grace always leads to glory. This is quite a contrast to the future assigned to the lost.

Who will **“pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (1 Thess. 1:9)?”** These are the steps of the salvation process that Paul shares with the Thessalonians for their comfort. He wants them to know that their profession of faith was a part of something much greater and grander than what appeared on the surface. It was something that did not come and go like the tide of the sea. Rather, it is something God the father began in eternity past and is reaching to eternity future.

God’s judgments are coming. There are those who will not be prepared because they did not believe the truth but rather chose to take pleasure in wickedness. But there will be others that are prepared. Certainly the Thessalonians are among those who had prepared themselves. They had

received the gift of salvation and were therefore not destined for wrath. Hopefully we would respond as well as they. Hopefully, in respect to the truth, our lives leave no question as to the fact that we have believed the truth.

What is our second responsibility in respect to the truth? We are to guard the truth (v. 15).

Let us read V. 15, **“So, then brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.”** In light of the fact that you have been saved because of your proper response to the gospel, guard it.

Paul does not specifically mention the gospel in this verse. Rather he exhorts them **“to stand firm and hold to the traditions.”** But though this is true, the concern for the gospel’s preeminence certainly was at the heart of what he was sharing with them. What does “traditions” refer to? Tradition simply means “that which is handed down from one person to another.” In this context Paul is talking about what they had handed down to them. Whether that was orally or in written form. Isn’t this clearly what the passage says? **“So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.”** Certainly this would include all the various truths that Paul, Silas and Timothy had passed to them. But we must remind ourselves of what was at the heart of all that they shared. And what was at the heart of all that they shared? It was the gospel!!

Paul had told them about the future rebellion against the truth, the great apostasy headed by the Antichrist. But he also warned in his letters that there was a *present* danger, and that the church must guard God’s truth, and not turn from it. There are repeated warnings about this in the New Testament: 1 John 2:18-24; 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1 Tim. 4; and 2 Tim. 3 to name only a few. And of all the truths that have been given to us, there is no more precious truth that we have been given than the gospel itself. Of all the traditions that Paul, Silas and Timothy passed to these Thessalonians there was no greater tradition than the tradition of the gospel.

These Thessalonians had lost their handle on the gospel. If they had a firm handle on the gospel, they would never have been shaken or disturbed by the teaching that they were in the day of the Lord, which was a day of wrath. If they had a firm handle on the gospel, they would have known that because Jesus had taken their judgment and wrath upon himself, there was not a chance of them going into the day of the Lord. It was impossible. But not only had they lost a handle on the gospel, they had lost the handle on other basic truths that Paul had shared with them concerning the day of the Lord and the revealing of the man of lawlessness. If they had had a firm handle on these basic facts, they would have known that it was impossible for them to be in the day of the Lord. But they did not have a firm handle on these things. Which leads quite naturally to Paul’s exhortation.

What is Paul exhorting these Thessalonians to do in respect to the traditions, the teachings they had received from them? They were to **“stand firm and hold”** to them. **“Standing firm”** tells us very clearly that we are not to be moved away from them. We are not to be moved away, but rather we are to stand firm. How are we able to do this? By “holding” on to them. The word “hold” is related to a Greek word that means “strength, might, power.” We are not to hold God’s

truth in a careless way, but grasp it firmly with power and never let it slip from us. We are not to hold the gospel in a careless way, but grasp it firmly with power and never let it slip from us. Each generation of Christians must receive the truth from others, guard it, and make sure it is kept intact for the next generation.

I fear for the current generation of Christians. I don't believe that as a whole they are **“standing firm and holding to the traditions and truths that have been delivered to us.”** Certainly I know this is true for the gospel.

This morning I believe you could go into a typical church in this city and ask them to answer this question: “What would you say to God if He were to ask you, ‘why should I let you into my heaven.’” I don't believe that you would get confident and clear answers. And beyond this, if you began to ask them to defend a particular doctrine biblically, I believe that most of them would have extreme difficulty.

We not only have the responsibility to make sure we believe the truth. We have the responsibility to guard the truth. We also have the responsibility to practice the truth.

Our third responsibility is to practice the truth (vv. 16-17).

Let us read **VV. 16-17, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, (17) comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.”**

It is not enough to believe the truth and guard it; we must also practice it. If we hear the Word, but do not obey it, we are only fooling ourselves. We are not saved by good works (Eph. 2:8-10), but good works are the evidence of salvation. **Titus 2:11-15, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, (12) instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, (13) looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; (14) who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”** This is what we should be. But the fact of the matter is from time to time we can be disrupted and our fruitfulness threatened. For these Thessalonians, the false teaching that they were taught about the day of Lord had shaken them. It had disturbed them. Their powerful witness and their dynamic ministries were being threatened by fear and doctrinal conviction. In response to this Paul prays for them.

These two verses record Paul's desire and prayer for his friends: He wanted God to comfort them. He wanted God to strengthen them. Isn't this what the verse tells us? Look again at the prayer, **“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace (what?) (17) comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work.”** The Thessalonians had been saved unto good works. They had been abounding in their service to the Lord. But now he prays for them that the present disruption from these false teachers would not change that. He prays for them that though they

had been shaken, they might be comforted. He prays for them that though they had been disturbed, they might be strengthened.

There are future judgments approaching. God's wrath will be poured out upon this earth during the time period of the day of the Lord and ultimately in the fires of hell. In light of these things we need to give special attention to the truth.

## CONCLUSION

We have three very specific responsibilities:

We need to make sure we believe the truth.

We need to make sure that we guard the truth.

We need to make sure that we practice the truth.