

Sermon, May 6, 2012
“Comfort and Strength” – 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

The 27 Books of the New Testament

- Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
- Early Church: Book of Acts
- 13 Letters of Paul: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, **2 Thessalonians**, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
- 8 General Letters: Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude
- Prophecy: Revelations

Overview of 2 Thessalonians:¹

- Paul wrote to the new believers in Thessalonica around 51-52AD, a major military and commercial port located along the Egnatian Way (an important Roman road connecting Asia Minor with the Adriatic Sea).
- Thessalonica had a population of about 200,000, making it the largest city in Macedonia.
- It appears that 2 Thessalonians was written soon after 1 Thessalonians, probably after Paul had received a response to his first letter. Thus, 2 Thessalonians was likely written from Corinth in about A.D. 51-52.
- Second Thessalonians was clearly a response to ongoing issues among the Thessalonians.
- On the one hand, these believers were enduring in the faith despite persecution (2Th 1:4).
- On the other, some had become frantic about the return of the Lord (ch. 2), while others had taken to living off the largesse of their fellow believers (3:6-15). Paul wanted to set the record straight.

General Outline of 2 Thessalonians:

- I. Greeting, Thanksgiving and Prayer
- II. Instruction Regarding Jesus' Coming and Christian Conduct
 - A. The Role of the Man of Lawlessness (2:1-12)
 - B. Admonition to Stand Firm (2:13-15)
 - C. Prayer for God's Enabling in Life and Ministry (2:16-17)
- III. Request for Prayer and Warning Against Idleness (3:1-15)
 - A. Paul's Request for Himself (3:1-3)
 - B. Warning Concerning Laziness and Idleness (3:4-15)
- IV. Final Greetings and Benediction (3:16-18)

Major Themes of 2 Thessalonians:²

- Christ's return. Some of the Thessalonians had developed an unhealthy anxiety about Christ's return and had been duped by those who claimed this event had already occurred (2:2). Paul stated that Christ's coming will be preceded by the arrival of an antichrist figure, who will unleash a season of unprecedented hostility to God, incite widespread rebellion and delude many through satanic signs and wonders. He will be a self-deifying figure who will exalt himself over other deities, seek to destroy Christ's work and beguile those who are perishing (2:4-12).
- Vigilance until Christ's return. Paul reminded this church that it had been chosen for salvation through sanctification by God and that it must stand firm to the end (2:13-17). Since God is the One who will inflict vengeance on those who afflict the faithful, Christians are to wait patiently and faithfully for Christ's return. Watchfulness is expressed by diligent work for Christ.

God has separated you from the world to Himself and gives you comfort and strength to hold fast the truth to the end.

¹Kaiser Jr., Walter C.; Garrett, Duane (2010-10-19). NIV Archaeological Study Bible: An Illustrated Walk Through Biblical History and Culture (Kindle Locations 109015-109019). Zondervan. Kindle Edition..

²Kaiser Jr., Walter C.; Garrett, Duane (2010-10-19). NIV Archaeological Study Bible: An Illustrated Walk Through Biblical History and Culture (Kindle Locations 109575-109577). Zondervan. Kindle Edition..

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1. Paul gives thanks for the church chosen by God for salvation through belief in Christ and made holy by the Spirit.

- **2 Thessalonians 2:13** ¹³ *But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth.*
- Throughout the Bible we always find God choosing whom He would save.
- Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, the prophets, apostles, even Paul himself.
- The sovereignty of God is found in the famous 5-point summation of the doctrine of salvation from 1619
 - T -- total depravity. sin is in every part of one's being, so that a man cannot save himself.
 - U -- unconditional election. God chooses to save people unconditionally; not of your own merit.
 - L -- limited atonement. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross was for the purpose of saving the elect.
 - I -- irresistible grace. When God has chosen to save someone, He will.
 - P -- perseverance of the saints. Those people God chooses cannot lose their salvation; they will continue to believe.
- It is God who does the choosing to soften our hearts to accept His terms of salvation.
- Belief in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior by which you are indwelt and set apart by the Holy Spirit.
- So give thanks for God's church, the blessed organization of His people continuing the mission of Christ.

2. The church was called by God through God's people proclaiming the Gospel to others.

- **2 Thessalonians 2:14** ¹⁴ *For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- God tells us to “Go and make disciples”...”Go...be my witnesses” share the good news to others.
- We do this so that others may come to a life in the fullness and glory of Jesus Christ!

3. When you have heard the good news proclaimed, accepted it with genuine authentic faith in Christ, then you must persevere

- **2 Thessalonians 2:15** ¹⁵ *So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.*
- **Traditions = παράδοσις** that which is handed over for instruction, “the teachings we passed on to you”
- Paul encourages them to remember the teachings of his gospel message about Christ and the Christ-like life that they received by personal instruction or by letter which were given in authority.
- No only remember the teachings, but hold fast and stand firm in them.
- To hold fast or stand firm in anything you have to keep it in the forefront of your mind at all times.
- It is a relentless endeavor to maintain your walk with Jesus all the time in everything you do...hard/impossible to do, but what we must strive for.

4. In the midst of our perseverance know that it is God who give you comfort and strength to be able to hold fast and stand firm.

- **2 Thessalonians 2:16-17** ¹⁶ *Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope,* ¹⁷ *comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.*
- It is God who does the work to save you, who continues His work in your heart to bring you to Him eternally
- So have comfort and strength in all that you do and say, knowing God is always with you
- Be encouraged that your final destination will be a glorious one

Conclusion:

- God takes you out of the dirt of the world. He transforms and conforms you to Himself.
- The Holy Spirit works on you to mold you, shape you, bake you, so that you may be able to stand firm and fulfill the purpose God has made you for
- Be encouraged that you are part of the church, separated out for divine purpose, part of the family of God who gives you comfort and strength to hold fast to that which He called you for, the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.