

“Standing Fast” – 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

Jesus is coming again.

The Thessalonians believed it. You should believe it too. In fact, you must believe it if you are to be a Christian. It is our blessed hope. But as we learned last week, we should not obsess over exactly when or exactly how Jesus is going to return. Those are things God has left in His own authority.

When the disciples asked Jesus about it, He essentially said “Don’t worry about it. It’s not your business.” God has all that handled. We need to be focused on what Jesus wants us to do right now.

It startles me to see how many Christians are really worried about the Antichrist, the very time of the end. You shouldn’t be. The enemy of your souls wants you to be afraid. Satan wants you to doubt the goodness of God. He wants you to doubt the precious promises found in this Book. But if we read this Book, we find an authoritative history of how God is working out His plan of redemption. We find that God always keeps His promises.

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

We need to stand fast and rest on those precious promises.

Let’s go to the word now, 2 Thessalonians, Chapter 2, beginning with verse 13.

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. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. 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. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17)

I have an assignment for you, and I hope you will follow through. Would you read this passage every day this week? And then meditate on the awesome promise it contains. This is so rich, and there are many ways to approach the truth it conveys. This morning, though, I want to focus on just four awesome facts. And I would ask you to reflect on these throughout the week.

Fact One: If you confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are beloved of the Lord.

Fact Two: If you confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are chosen by the Lord.

Fact Three: If you confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior, your duty is to stand fast and rest in His promises, but God the Holy Spirit will make sure that you do.

Fact Four: All glory for your salvation goes to God the Father and His eternal Son, Jesus Christ.

Let’s briefly look at each of these.

Jesus said:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3)

This doctrine of Spiritual rebirth is absolutely central to the Christian Faith. And it is an act of God; you do not generate your own Spiritual rebirth. If you have come to the point where you can honestly say, “I love Jesus”, that is evidence that God the Holy Spirit has quickened you because in your corrupt, fallen state, you couldn’t say that.

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)

We love Him because He first loved us. (1 John 4:19)

Do you have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? I want you to ask yourself that question right now. Some of you, perhaps most of you would reply “Absolutely!” No doubt in your mind. You have assurance of God’s love for you. You have assurance of your salvation. That’s a wonderful place to be. Just make sure that you are relying on the finished work of Jesus alone, not in your own piety, not in your own righteousness. Salvation is not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Some of you might say, “Well, I think so. I hope so. I want to love Jesus ... But I still mess up. I’m such a sinner. Oh, wretched person that I am!”

You know, that’s not such a bad place to be either, because you understand your desperate state apart from Jesus. You can pray “Lord I believe, help Thou my unbelief.” Keep reaching for Jesus.

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)

But some of you might say, “I don’t think I’ve ever accepted Jesus as my Savior.” You might be religious. You might be a good, moral person. But you need to realize that you are *like an unclean thing, And all your righteousnesses are like filthy rags;* (Isaiah 64:6) in God’s sight. You are a sinner. I know you are because we’re all sinners.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (Romans 3:23)

And the Bible says that the only future you have earned is an eternity in hell.

For the wages of sin is death, (Romans 6:23)

And anyone not found written in the Book of Life [will be] cast into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:15)

But the good news is that God loves you anyway.

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Yes, the wages you have earned will cast you into hell forever,

but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

Jesus paid the penalty for your sin. All you have to do is believe, believe Jesus died for you. Call Him your Lord and believe that God raised Him from the dead. As an act of your will, just believe, and call on the name of the Lord.

“Lord Jesus, please, save me from my sin. I want you to be my Lord. I want to live my life as Your disciple. I can’t do it on my own, so I yield my life to you.”

That’s what it takes to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. That’s what it takes to become a Child of the King.

If you can yield your life to Christ, you know you are loved by God. But more than that; if you can yield your life to Christ, you know you were chosen by God. Look at verse 13 again:

*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** (2 Thessalonians 2:13)*

That's the way it works! God chooses you. Don't try to figure out why God chose you. Just praise the Lord that He did.

Yes, it is true that you must respond to the Gospel call and you are awesomely responsible for the choice you make. God does not send you to hell. You choose hell because you refuse to accept Christ. But the only way you can accept Christ is if God changes your heart. And yes, the choice to be merciful is God's alone. Like Jesus said to His disciples:

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, (John 15:16a)

Your salvation is God's work from beginning to end. And listen, if He has begun that good work in you, He ...

... will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (Philippians 1:6)

That is exactly what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

*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. (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)*

If you are a follower of Jesus, it is because God chose you! He loves you. He has chosen to be merciful to you!

And what is your duty? What must your response be to God's glorious grace?

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

You need to stand fast. You need to hang on to the truth of the Gospel. You need to cling to the truth of the Bible. You can only do that when you set your anchor deep into God's holy word. You need to know what this Book says. You need to know what this Book means. You need to allow the Holy Spirit to apply it to your lives.

One of the most frightening verses in the Bible can be found in Matthew 7:21. Jesus is speaking, and He says:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

Salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ alone, but the true disciple of Jesus must seek the will of the Lord and strive for obedience. If Jesus is your Lord, you need to listen to Him. If Jesus is your Lord, you need to hear His voice. If Jesus is your Lord, you will follow Him.

Open your Bible and find out what the Lord wants from you. Open your Bible and strive for obedience. You will fail from time to time. We all stumble. But if you strive to hold on to Jesus' teachings, if you confess your failures to Him and ask for forgiveness, He will complete the work He began in you.

And then, you must give Him the glory. It is good to start each day by thanking Jesus. Thank the Lord for choosing you. Thank Jesus for taking the wrath you deserve. Praise God for choosing you from before the universe existed. Fall to your knees in humble gratitude because if He started the work in you, He will finish the work in you.

Finally, don't forget to pray. Paul didn't. The last two verses in our text comprise a prayer:

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. (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17)

Stand fast, my friends. Do not let Satan move you off the sure foundation of Jesus Christ. Hold on to those good and precious promises.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Do you believe it?

Hold on to it!

Soli Deo Gloria!