

# High Peaks Bible Fellowship

## Paul Contrasts the Lawless with the Saved (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17)

### Paul's Contrast (2 Thess. 2:13-14)

Paul contrasts the followers of Christ in Thessalonica with the followers of Antichrist in the Tribulation.

### The Thessalonians are among the group of chosen believers:

- We are obligated = the same construction as in 2 Th 1:3. Paul gives another reason why he is duty-bound to give thanks to God for the Thessalonians.
- Beloved by the Lord = literally, "having been loved" (*agape*). This is a perfect tense, which indicates past action that has continuing results. The same construction appears in 1 Th 1:4 (but there the one loving is *God* rather than the *Lord*). God's love is the basis for His other actions, which Paul now mentions.
- Chosen (*haireomai*) = literally, "He chose you for Himself" (middle voice). The typical word for "choosing" in the sense of God's election is *eklego* (His selection), but here Paul uses *haireomai* with the idea of God's eternal purpose of adoption -- taking them to become His own (see Deut 7:7-8; 10:15 in the Septuagint).
- From the beginning = at the time of God's decree in eternity past. Other equivalent expressions used by Paul include "before the ages" (1 Cor 2:7), "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4), "from the ages" (Eph 3:9), and "before eternal times" (2 Tim 1:9; Tit 1:2).
- For salvation = the product of God's loving and choosing is our deliverance from sin and the wrath of God (see 1 Th 5:9).
- Through sanctification = this is the Holy Spirit's work of setting individuals apart for God's use.
- Faith in the truth = literally, "belief of the truth" -- a direct contrast with those who "believed not the truth" (2 Th 2:12).
- It was for this = it was for their salvation that God called them. This is the irresistible, effective call of God to His chosen ones.
- Through our gospel = this call comes by means of the message of the "good news" of the gospel.
- Gain the glory = the ultimate end of the process of salvation is the glorification of the believer (see John 17:22; Rom 8:17).

### A Summary of Paul's Contrasts:

In the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians so far we have seen the following contrasts between the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and the followers of the *man of lawlessness*:

Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ	Followers of the "man of lawlessness"
Those who are loved and chosen by God from eternity (2 Th 2:13)	Those who [by their own choice] perish (2 Th 2:10)
Those who put their faith in the Truth (2 Th 2:13)	Those who do not receive the love of the truth (2 Th 2:10), but put their faith in falsehood (2 Th 2:11-12)
Those who are sanctified by the Holy Spirit (2 Th 2:13)	Those who are deceived by Satan (2 Th 2:9), so that wickedness seems good to them (2 Th 2:12)

Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ	Followers of the "man of lawlessness"
Those who are called through the gospel (2 Th 2:14)	Those who reject the gospel which could have saved them (2 Th 2:10)
Those who are destined for glorification (2 Th 2:14)	Those who are destined for condemnation (2 Th 2:12)

**These two verses form a miniature systematic theology of salvation!**

- They describe the elements of the "Golden Chain of Redemption" (Rom 8:29-30)
  - "Fore-Loved" by God
  - Election to Salvation
  - Sanctification by the Holy Spirit
  - Faith in the Truth
  - Effectual Calling through the Gospel
  - Ultimate Glorification of the Believer
- In the area of election alone, here is what this section shows:

FACT	IMPLICATION
God has chosen or elected them to salvation	The doctrine of <u>election</u> is true
This was from "the beginning" -- from eternity (see John 1:1; Eph 1:4; 3:9-11)	The doctrine of <u>eternal election</u> is true
This involved choosing the individuals to whom Paul speaks in this letter	The doctrine of <u>individual election</u> is true

**Paul's Directions for their Conduct (2 Thess. 2:15)**

- So then = here is the practical conclusion -- here is how they are to respond to all he has said about God's work in them. Paul connects *positional* truth with *experiential* truth.

**Paul's two-fold command:**

1. Stand firm = literally, "remain stationary" or persevere (see 1 Th 3:8). Earlier Paul had *requested* that they not be shaken from their composure (2 Th 2:2), but now he *commands* them to stand firm.
  2. Hold fast = to have a masterful grip on something. Earlier Paul had *reminded* them he had taught them these things while he was still with them (2 Th 2:5), but now he *commands* them to hold fast.
- The Traditions (*paradosis*) = things delivered or handed down from one person to another. This word is from the verb *paradidomi* and implies that the teacher is faithfully passing on a specific message received from a higher authority. The traditions or opinions of men are valuable only to the extent that they confirm the intended meaning of the Word of God.
  - By word = "by *our* word -- by what I taught when I was with you!" (see 2 Th 2:5)
  - By letter = "by *our* letter -- the authentic one I sent you earlier!" (see 2 Th 3:17)
  - *In no way* can this verse be used to support the idea that man-made traditions and rules hold equal authority to the revealed Word of God in the closed canon of Scripture.

## **Paul's Prayer for their Comfort and Encouragement (2 Thess. 2:16-17)**

Paul again puts the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father on an equal plane of deity.

### **Two things that characterize God (2 Thess 2:16)**

- He loved us (*agape*) = this is God's love that manifests itself in our redemption.
- He gave to us = this is God's giving which flows out of His grace toward us.

#### **Two things God gives:**

1. Eternal comfort = coming alongside to support -- an ever-present source of comfort during affliction.
2. Good hope = the expectation of the certainty of future good.

### **Paul's two-fold prayer (2 Thess 2:17)**

1. Comfort = to console, encourage, support -- this is the verb form of the noun used in the previous verse.
  2. Strength = to make stable, place firmly, set in a fixed position (see 1 Th 3:13).
- Every work and word of good = in the practice of every virtue and in every true doctrine. Principles and practices should correspond in the life of every believer.

### **Points of Application:**

- When we think of everything God has given to us -- especially the riches and depth of our salvation -- it should bring us to our knees in worship and gratefulness to God.
- Like the Thessalonians, we too should stand firm and hold fast to the Truths of God's Word as it is contained in the Scriptures. Let us beware of the traditions of men, and let us cling to the written revelation of the Bible.
- The Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father are the source of eternal comfort and good hope, and we too need both of these things in our lives today so that we can be strengthened in every good work and word.

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**Our primary purpose is to uphold the truths of the Word of God.**

I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

**Our primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.**

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-12)