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# The Thessalonian Letters

*Praying for Believers' Steadfastness*

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5



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## Beloved and chosen for salvation (2:13)

- **“should”** (*opheilō*) ~ Paul feels obligated to thank God for them because it is no more than they rightly deserved (as in 1:3).
- They are **“beloved by the Lord”** (1 Thess 1:4) ~ God is eternal and He set His love upon them from eternity past.
- **“chosen”** (*haireomai*) ~ choosing something to belong to oneself. Refers to God’s eternal purpose of election and adoption.
- **“salvation”** ~ the result of God’s loving and choosing them. Through **“faith in the truth”** ~ simply receiving God’s gift of **salvation by grace** (*the unmerited favor of God*) through faith, apart from any works.
- The ongoing process of spiritual growth continues through their **“sanctification by the Spirit.”**

# Called for glory (2:14)

- **“called”** (*kaleō*) ~ God’s irresistible, effective call to His chosen ones which results in their salvation.
- **“through our gospel”** ~ the true facts in which believers place their faith and trust.
- **“gain the glory”** ~ the future glorification of the believer at the time Christ comes to resurrect them with glorified bodies (1 Cor 15:43).
- A miniature systematic theology of salvation:
  - **Foreknown (“fore-loved”) by God**
    - **Election (*chosen*) for salvation**
      - **Effectual calling and drawing**
        - **Faith in the truth of the gospel**
          - **Sanctification by the Holy Spirit**
            - **Ultimate glorification of the believer**

## Stand firm and hold to the traditions (2:15)

- **“stand firm”** (*stēkō*) ~ take their stand firmly on the truths they have been taught (see 1 Thess 3:8).
- **“hold”** (*krateō*) ~ to take hold of, to get possession of, or to get mastery over the traditions they were taught. Believers are to become the master of these truths so that they will not be shaken from them.
- **“traditions”** (*paradosis*) ~ the truths faithfully handed down from one person to another.
  1. **“by word of mouth”** ~ the in-person teaching that Paul and his missionary team shared when they were with them (2:5)
  2. **“by letter from us”** ~ the authentic letters of Paul (see 3:17 for determining whether a letter is authentic)

# Paul begins his prayer for them (2:16)

- **"Now may"** ~ marks the beginning of his prayer (as in 1 Thess 3:11; 5:23).

## God's character guarantees the answer to Paul's requests:

1. God **"loved us"** ~ the starting point for their relationship with Him.
2. God **"gave"** ~ demonstrated love through self-sacrificing action (see John 3:16). God's gifts include:
  - **"eternal comfort"** ~ everlasting encouragement, support, and cheer, now and throughout the life to come.
  - **"good hope"** ~ the expectation and certainty of future good. This looks forward to the future blessings believers will receive, including all of the good and perfect gifts that God promises for eternity.

# Paul's requests for the Thessalonians (2:17)

- **"comfort"** (*parakaleō*) ~ to call alongside to provide help, support, or exhortation. Believers do not need to struggle through their lives by themselves; they have a Comforter who comes alongside for support.
- **"strengthen"** (*stērizō*) ~ to set firmly in place, to establish and confirm (see 1 Thess 3:2 and 1 Thess 3:13).
- God would establish them **"in every good work and word."** This reflects Paul's desire that they demonstrate holiness in all of their thoughts, words, and deeds.
- Comfort and strength for their **"hearts"** ~ especially meaningful in light of the trouble that resulted from the forged letter and false teaching they recently encountered.

## Paul asks for prayer (3:1-2)

- **“Finally”** (*loipos*) ~ “as for what remains” (see 1 Thess 4:1).
- Paul asked them to pray that the **gospel** (“**word of the Lord**”)
  - **“will spread rapidly”** ~ literally, “run” or make swift progress.
  - **“be glorified”** ~ honored and acknowledged as supreme.
- Paul requested prayer for himself and his ministry team:
  - **“will be rescued”** (*rhuomai*) ~ to be delivered from “**perverse and wicked men**,” using strong terms that describe the unrighteous, evil character of his opponents.
- **“not all have faith”** ~ not everyone had received the gospel as the Thessalonians did. Many people are indifferent or actively oppose it.

# The faithfulness of God (3:3)

- **“But”** ~ in contrast to those who were faithless and set themselves in opposition to his ministry, Paul declared that **“the Lord is faithful.”**
- **“strengthen”** (*stērizō*) ~ Paul says that God Himself will be faithful to firmly establish believers (2:17).
- **“protect”** (*phulassō*) ~ to keep watch over something for the purpose of guarding and preserving it. Nothing will touch believers that is not permitted by God to bring about His purpose and plan.
- God **“will guard from the evil”** ~ does not define “the evil.” Most Bible versions translate it as personal (**“the evil one”**) which is reasonable given the previous context (2:9).



## Confidence in their faithful response (3:4)

- **“We have confidence”** (*peithō*) ~ persuasion, assurance, or a state of trust. Paul’s confidence was not in the Thessalonians, but **“in the Lord”** and His faithfulness on their behalf.
- **“are doing and will continue to do”** (*poieō*) ~ confidence that they do what is right, both in the present and into the future.
- **“what we command”** (*paragellō*) ~ Paul reminds them of their faithful response to his previous commands (1 Thess 4:2 and 11).
- Paul seems to be preparing the Thessalonians for a new **“command”** that he is about to give them in the last part of his letter. Here he is gently transitioning into that existing issue in their fellowship.

## Our example: God's love and steadfastness (3:5)

- **"May"** ~ marks the continuation of his prayer from 2:16.
- God would **"direct your hearts"** (*kateuthunō*) ~ to make a smooth, straight path and to remove any obstacles or hindrances to making progress in two areas:
  - **"into the love of God"** ~ the unselfish, sacrificial love that is characteristic of God Himself (see 1 Thess 3:12; 2 Thess 1:3).
  - **"into the steadfastness of Christ"** (*hupomonē*) ~ literally, "to abide under" with patient endurance or perseverance, especially under the pressure of affliction. Christ set the ultimate example when He endured the cross, despising its shame, in order to purchase our salvation (see Heb 12:3).