

21. Helping Our Children Learn to Stand Firm

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the man of sin, known as the antichrist, will deceive the people of the world in the future. He will be able to deceive many people because God will allow him to deceive those who have already rejected the Gospel. Paul also wanted to help the Christians in the city of Thessalonica learn to stand firm and not be deceived by false teachers. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15, we read, “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.” Here, we see that Paul and those who traveled with him were continually giving thanks to God for the way that the people of Thessalonica had responded to the Gospel. This encouragement was needed because verses one and two of chapter two said, “Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.” Paul wanted them to know he was thankful for them and they did not need to be troubled. This gives us an example for our own lives as we learn to become thankful as we see the Lord working in the lives of others.

This is also a verse where we see the whole Trinity mentioned in one sentence. In this verse, we see that we are beloved by the Lord. We have been chosen for salvation by the Father from the beginning. We have been set apart from sin by the Holy Spirit. We can look forward to enjoying for eternity the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. In addition to telling us what each member of the Trinity does for us, this verse also teaches us about the salvation that the Lord has given us. We are the beloved or those who are greatly loved by the Lord. We were chosen for salvation before the world was ever created. Ephesians 1:4 says, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” We were set apart from sin. We have been called to eternal glory.

These characteristics of all Christians are reasons why we do not need to be troubled or fear that we will ever face judgment like those who follow the antichrist. That is why Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to stand fast and hold to the traditions that they had been taught. The word translated “traditions” means *the things they had been taught by Paul*. Paul had taught the Thessalonians in two different ways. First, he taught them the teachings of Christ when he was with them. Second, he taught them with the written word when he wrote the book of 1 Thessalonians to them. We know that we can depend on the message when it comes from the Word of God instead of the traditions of people.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 goes on to say, “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.” Paul wanted the Thessalonians to

know that they did not have to fear the antichrist because they would be taken to heaven before the antichrist is revealed. In the same way, we want to help our children understand that they do not need to fear the antichrist or what will happen in the future. Instead, they can rejoice in the fact that they are greatly loved by both Christ and the Father. Christ has also given us everlasting encouragement. He has given us a good hope because He has risen from the dead and will one day return to take us to be with Him in heaven. As a result, we are secure for the future.

However, we are also given promises for the present. Like Paul, we want to help our children understand that Christ will comfort their hearts. The Lord often provides this comfort through other Christians. Hebrews 3:13 says, “But exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” The word that is translated “establish” means *to strengthen or to make firm*. 2 Thessalonians 3:3 says, “But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.” As the Lord comforts and establishes us through His Word, we want to help our children understand that the Lord makes it possible for us to carry out every good work. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” God created every Christian for good works.

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 says, “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith.” Here, we see that Paul asked the Christians in Thessalonica to pray for him and those with him. In the same way, we need to encourage our children to pray for us as we pray for them. Here, we see that one of the things that we need to encourage our children to do is to pray that the Word of God will spread *swiftly*. The word that is translated run is used twenty times and often talks about running in a race. Hebrews 12:1 says, “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.” We want our children to pray that we will run with endurance as we spread the Word of God. Paul also prayed that the Word of God would be glorified as it is spread.

Paul then asked them to pray that he and the team with him would be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men. The word that is translated “unreasonable” means *anything that is unrighteous or sinful*. The word that is translated “wicked” is translated “evil” in 2 Timothy 3:13 where we read, “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” Paul knew that there were many people who were opposed to the Gospel. He knew that he and those with him were in danger from those who would try to stop the spread of the Gospel. As a result, he asked the Christians in Thessalonica to pray that God would protect them from these evil people.

Paul also explained why these people were filled with evil. He said that all men did not have faith. Some of those who are controlled by evil are in strong opposition to the spread of the Gospel. Paul understood that well because it described his own life before the Lord stopped him on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:1-2 says, “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so

that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” Until the Lord stopped Paul, he had been controlled by evil and did everything possible to stop the spread of the Gospel.

However, Paul also understood the power of the Lord during those times when people were opposing the spread of the Gospel. 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5 says, “But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard *you* from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.” There will also be times when we or our children will face opposition as we faithfully share the Gospel. In such situations, we need to remind our children of the same things that Paul reminded his spiritual children in Thessalonica. The Lord is faithful.

Because the Lord is faithful we know that He will do at least two things to help us when we face opposition and even persecution. First, we see that the Lord will establish us. The word that is translated “establish” means *to strengthen or to make firm*. The Lord used this same word when He said to Peter in Luke 22:31-32, “And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.’” The Lord knew that Peter would deny Him three times. Christ also knew that the faith of Peter would not fail. As a result, the Lord told Peter to establish or strengthen the other disciples when he returned to Christ. Here, we see that some of the most important lessons that we learn are learned in times of testing.

Second, we see that Christ will guard us from the evil one. The word that is translated “guard” means *to obey, to watch, to keep or to guard something or someone*. In 2 Timothy 1:12-14, we see that this word is used twice. Those verses say, “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” Since God keeps us through the power of the Holy Spirit, we know that He will protect us from the evil one. Paul knew that the Christians in Thessalonica would do what he asked because they knew he was concerned for them.

Paul also understood how the Lord would continue to work in their hearts. The Lord would help them to continue to grow in their understanding of the love of God. The Lord would also help them grow in patience as they followed the example of Christ. We know that the Lord will do the same things in the lives of our physical and spiritual children as we help them grow to spiritual maturity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to stand fast in the Lord.