

**November 5, 2023**

**2 Thessalonians 2:13-15**

*13* But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. *14* To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. *15* So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

.

Scriptures for further study:

Romans 8:29-30

Hebrews 1:3

1 Corinthians 1:18

Galatians 6:14

“In Thessalonians Paul exhorted believers again and again to dedicate themselves to sanctification, reminding them that sanctification was God’s will for them and that God called them to the same.”

-Gene Green

“This notion of glory first derived from the Jewish belief that Adam and Eve lost their ‘glory’ luster when they sinned, and that one day God’s salvation would include the return of divine glory, that is, God’s outward brilliance reflected in his people.”

-Charles Wanamaker



## Glory

### 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

**BIG IDEA:** If God’s salvation includes Christ-like glory, let His word be a soul anchor for those standing and clinging in faith to a humiliated savior.

In other words, Jesus moves me to holiness and makes me glorious.

## OUTLINE

### 1. God’s Salvation

### 2. Christ-like Glory

### 3. (Soul anchor) Gospel Standing and Clinging

“Glory is frequently associated with ‘honor’ and obtaining such honor was one of the chief concerns in ancient Mediterranean culture.”

-Gene Green

“The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.”

-WCF, Chapter 1

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Paul reassures the Thessalonians that, in contrast to unbelievers, they have accepted God's call and so have demonstrated that God elected them to be saved when Jesus returns. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to hold on to the true traditions passed on from him to them. Paul's exhortation contrasts with v.2, where he warns them not to be shaken by a false prophecy, teaching, or a forged letter attributed to the missionaries. Instead, they are to "stand firm and hold to the traditions" that were communicated directly to them "by our spoken word" during his ministry among them and later by "our letter."

1 Thessalonians. – ESV Study Bible

***Praise to Jesus.*** Praise the Lord that we have all the truth we need in the Bible to stand firm and cling to as we make our way through life. Praise the Lord for the gospel so that we may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, which will always satisfy and far outshine any glory that the world clings to.

***Repentance through Jesus.*** Repent for mediocre dedication to sanctification in your life. Repent for pursuing and being satisfied with personal glory found in friendships, possessions, accomplishments, or likes.

***Consecration for Jesus.*** Be dedicated to asking someone you don't know what they are most passionate about; then ask, has that thing ever disappointed them? If they answer yes, share where true glory comes from. Suppose they answer no. They are satisfied by their pursuit of their passion; pray for them.

## DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon discussion questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. Who is the person in your life whose example motivates you to be a better person?
2. What two means of sanctification does Paul point to in 2 Thess. 2:13?
3. About sanctification, Pastor Bill writes, *“Essentially, Paul says that the Spirit loves to work with God's Word. The Spirit loves to give insight into how the Word of God applies to your life. To be dedicated to sanctification, we must be dedicated to God's Word. Not in a way, we are just checking off the 1-year reading plan every day, but being committed to letting the Word wash over our hearts, where we devote ourselves to seeing the beauty of God's Word; this resolve is different from the world around us. It is a life that the Spirit controls through a life of walking in the Word rather than being controlled by your selfish desires. The Bible becomes bread and water to you, the Bible becomes your masterpiece painting, the Bible becomes the lens by which you view all reality and the basis by which you make all decisions, it is the center and circumference of your mind, and it is the fire and the furnace your heart.”*
  - a. What does a life that is dedicated to sanctification look like? How would you describe your commitment to sanctification?
4. From 2 Thess. 2:14 and Hebrews 1:3, what is the glory of God? How does God's glory belong to a Christian? How is the glory that God gives to you different than glory that comes from the world?
5. Read 2 Thess. 2:15. What is Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians? (The Oxford dictionary defines exhortation as “an address or communication emphatically urging someone to do something.”) Paul points the Thessalonians to “traditions.” What traditions do we share with the Thessalonians? What do the traditions point to, which is where we stand firm (refer Luke 9:24, Mark 10:42&43, 1 Cor. 1:18, Gal. 6:14)?

## FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

1. In this passage, Paul is trying to encourage and comfort the believers in Thessalonica. How did he comfort them in verse 13? *(Paul reminded them of their election for salvation by God. He reminded them that “God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved.” He also mentioned their sanctification or the process of God setting them apart for His work in the world and making them more and more like Christ. Finally, Paul said that they “believed the truth.”)*

- a. Take time to talk with your children about why knowing that salvation is from the Lord and not from us gives us comfort in life.

2. How does Paul comfort the church in Thessalonica in 2:14? *(He connects their “calling through the gospel” with the reminder that they “may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul’s pastoral heart is shown in this verse since he knew that some had fears about missing the day of the Lord (2:2). He wanted them to realize the amazing fact that our salvation given to us by God included His glory. Paul taught in Romans 8:30 that part of our salvation includes our glorification due to our being united with Christ. Our salvation is not only that our guilt is put on Christ and taken away from us, but we also are given the amazing gift of Christ’s glory.)*

3. What is Paul’s charge to the Thessalonians in 2:15? *(He wants them to continue to be guided by and founded on God’s Word. Since the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write these letters to the Thessalonians, then he wanted them to “stand firm and hold to” his apostolic teaching that would become part of the New Testament.)*

- a. Talk with your children about the importance of God’s Word in our lives today.

Scriptures for further study:

Ephesians 1: 3-4

Matthew 7:24-27

2 Timothy 3:16-17

## FOR STUDENTS

1. For what reasons did Paul encourage people to thank God? (2:13)
2. How did Paul describe God's role in our salvation? (2:13)
3. Who calls people to salvation? (2:14)
4. What encouragement did Paul give to the church? (2:15)
5. In what sense is God's word our defense? Do you think this is true in your own life, or do you find you are easily confused by different teachings?
6. In what ways are you most tempted to worship created things in the place of the Creator? How could you combat that temptation?
7. Who do you know who is struggling in their faith at the moment or who shows signs of having been deceived by Satan's lies? What could you do to strengthen and encourage them in the truth?

\*Selected questions borrowed and adapted from *2 Thessalonians for You* by Ligon Duncan.

## FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

“A system of theology in miniature.” This is the way one commentary describes these short but rich verses (13-15).

1. First, re-read these dense verses. Notice that salvation is entirely a work of God, who chooses, saves, calls, sanctifies, and glorifies. It is a fully trinitarian work accomplished by God the Father who calls, Christ who saves by his person and work (i.e., “the gospel”), and the Spirit who applies this work to us! And it is a salvation that was won for us in the past, is being worked out in the present as we are being sanctified, and has a future dimension in which we will one day share fully in the glory of Jesus Christ.

**Reflect and Pray:** Wow, take a moment to reflect on all of this! And as Paul says in verse 13, spend a moment thanking God for all that he has done in and for us!

2. Salvation is fully a work of God’s grace. But humanly speaking, it also involves a response on our part. We are saved “through belief in the truth” (v.13), that is, the truth of the “gospel” (v.14), as contained in the “teachings” (v.15) of Scripture.

**Question:** God calls us to salvation as he is offered in the gospel. Have you ever received a full and clear presentation of the gospel? Does it make sense to you? Have you believed already, or would you now be prepared to do so and trust in Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?

3. Implicit in just one brief verse (v.15) is a bold statement about Scripture: that it is from God (divine in origin), it is therefore authoritative, and must not be altered or changed, nor are we at liberty to substitute our own thoughts.

**Question:** Do you believe the Scriptures to be the word of God? Are the Scriptures the supreme authority for you?

4. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to “stand firm and hold to the teachings” of Scripture (v.15). In this way, they will neither be frightened by present opposition nor unsettled by the uncertainties about the future, both of which were particular challenges they were facing.

**Question:** What are some of the current challenges you are facing? Or, what are some anxieties you have with regard to your own future? How might we hold more firmly to the Scriptures, and how would doing so help us to stand more firmly?

# A Sustaining Gratitude: The Abundant Growth of Faith, Love and Hope in Thessalonica



*Sunflowers, Vincent Van Gough, 1888*

**About 2 Thessalonians:** Paul writes to express his GRATITUDE for the church's continued growth in faith and love. At the same time, he encourages them to stand firm amidst persecution, seeks to correct a false teaching concerning the return of Christ, and addresses an idleness problem.

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians to commend them for their continued spiritual growth while encouraging them to progress. He deals with misinformation about the 2nd Coming and an emerging problem of idleness. The letter's focus is eschatology, or the theology of end times. While this is a prevalent theme in 1 Thessalonians, instead of continuing a discussion about what will happen to the dead, the Thessalonians were confused and disturbed by false teaching that said Jesus had already returned invisibly and the church missed it. Paul provides much-needed clarity about when Jesus will return.

**About the artist and painting:** In 1888, the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh moved to southern France with a dream. He wanted to establish an art community where painters could live, work, and inspire one another. One of his mentors, a man he deeply respected, Paul Gauguin, agreed to come and live in this community. As a symbol of his thankfulness and happiness, Van Gogh painted a series of sunflower paintings and hung them in his room. The sunflower meant to reflect his surprising joy towards achieving a dream.

The apostle Paul was probably not an artist but he did produce a letter expressing his surprising joy, his thankfulness, and happiness. This letter was his “sunflower” to the church Thessalonica. It’s Paul’s verbal painting of Gospel Gratitude. What are things you are most grateful for in your life? Has the Gospel taken root in your heart? If so, what fruits of gratitude are being produced and overflowing in your life as a result of Jesus?

In his opening words from Paul to the Thessalonians, he writes:

2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. The same faith, hope, and love that made a difference in the lives of believers then can make a difference in your life now. “I’m excited for what God has in store for us First Presbyterian Church, as the Spirit washes us in these words of Gospel gratitude. May Christ be our hope for the world to come, our faith for today, and our love for a lifetime.”

Pastor Bill Pardue