

WORTHY OF HIS CALLING

Stand Firm and Hold Fast to His Calling

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

Main Point: By God's grace, believers are not only saved, sanctified, and glorified in Christ, but they are also strengthened to stand firm and hold fast to God's call for his work in this world.

Stand firm and hold fast to the true gospel given through the Apostles (13-15).

- *Believers are called through the true gospel to obtain the glory of Christ (14).*
- *Believers are saved by sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (13c).*
- *Believers are God's chosen people (13b).*

Right in the center of Paul's letter is one of the most important commands, wrapped in some of the most significant truths, related to living a life of faith and grace that's worthy of God's calling. The command is simple. Paul used two different commands to emphasize the same concept: "Stand firm" and "hold fast." Both of these commands emphasize the critical call for perseverance. It doesn't matter what other gospels you hear or how much they tickle your ear. It doesn't matter what kind of new ideas and interpretations you encounter and how much they may confuse or confound you. The wisdom of God to his beloved children is simple: Stand firm and hold fast to the true gospel given through the Apostles. Nothing needs to be added to or taken away from the clear teaching found in the Holy Scriptures. Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians is God's encouragement for us today: Stand firm and hold fast! Why? Because believers are called through the true gospel to obtain the glory of Christ. In other words, never forget what you have received by the grace of the Father through his Son. It was through the gospel proclaimed by the Apostles that these first Christians were redeemed and given an eternal inheritance in Christ Jesus. Also, believers are saved by sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. What a beautiful picture of the work of God in salvation through the work of the gospel. The gospel is proclaimed. The Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin, life, and faith, and the sinner's response is belief in the truth. All of this is possible because believers are God's chosen people. Paul reminded the church in Thessalonica that they were among these first Christians because God chose them! In the language of the New Testament, the word for "chose" literally means that God selected them, picked them, voted for them, or showed preference to them. By God's grace alone, they were chosen by God. Why in the world would anyone look for another gospel? Why would anyone take away from or add to a gospel of grace that is so amazing? Stand firm and hold fast to the truth gospel of God's grace through Jesus Christ his only Son!

1. Use the BlueLetterBible app to do word studies on stand firm and hold fast. What is the range of meaning of these words? How does this help you understand what God is saying and how it applies to your life as a believer?
2. What does it mean that we're called through the gospel to attain the glory of Christ? Use the BlueLetterBible app to look up cross references for verse 14 to help you answer this questions using Scripture. If you are a believer, what does this mean for you in eternal life?
3. What does sanctification by the Spirit mean? In this verse, the work of the Holy Spirit *and* belief in the truth are directly connected to God's work of saving sinners? If you are a believer, what was the reality of these two elements in your conversion?
4. Some people shy away from the idea that God chooses or elects his people, but it's a thoroughly biblical concept. Jesus used the word for chose or elect often, as did Paul and others in the New Testament. The point isn't to emphasize who is excluded (God's calling is

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God's business.). The point is to encourage the heart of God's children. We are his children – just as Israel in the Old Testament – only by the mercy of God in the gracious fact that he chose us. How does it strengthen your faith and grow your love for the Lord knowing that he chose you?

Pray for the God of grace to fulfill his work in us (16-17).

- *In his grace, God loves us (16).*
- *In his grace, God gives us eternal comfort and good hope (16-17).*
- *In his grace, God establishes us in every good work and word (17).*

Paul added a short prayer for the church in Thessalonica. The prayer was beautiful and important. It reminded the church then and us today that the command to stand firm and hold fast is one that is ultimately dependent on the grace of God. Remember, in his grace, God loves us. When we consider the reality of our sin and our enmity with God because of sin, it's a miracle that he loves us, but he does. This is the very gospel Paul proclaimed. In Romans 5:8, Paul taught that "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus himself reminded us in John 3:16 that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." God loves us, and in his grace, God gives us eternal comfort and good hope in Christ Jesus. The reality of eternal comfort is felt in the heart of the one who is moved from the darkness into the light. It's a reality that's known by the sinner who stood condemned and then is justified and set-free through the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is "good hope" for the heart of faith, and its rich comfort through faith. The Thessalonians needed the comfort of God in their souls. We need his comfort as we face all of the difficulties, pains, and hardships of life in a fallen and sinful world, and we need God's comfort, hope, and love *so that* we can live worthy of his calling today! In his grace, God establishes us in every good work and word. Paul prayed for this because he knew they needed this. We need this just as much as Paul and the Thessalonians, and by God's grace, he is able to give his children what they need. Still today, we should pray for the God of grace to fulfill his work in us!

1. Use the BlueLetterBible app to do a word study and cross reference search on love in verse 16. What does it mean that God loves us? What are the practical implications of this truth in your life each and every day?
2. How have you recently experienced the comfort of God in your life? Share, and thank the Lord for his comforts in our daily lives. What is God's eternal comfort? Do you have this in your soul? If not, why not? Take time to look to God's Word together to remind and encourage one another about the eternal comfort and good hope God's given us in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
3. On a practical level, what does it look like to be established in every good work and word? What are good works? What is a good word? Why is God needed to establish believers in these things? How are these things related to his calling in our lives – in our church?
4. Take time in your group to break into small prayer groups and to pray for the God of grace to fulfill his work in us.