

1/23/00

A Thankful Heart
2 Thess. 2:13-15

Paul has laid out for the Thessalonians the necessary information about the “Day of The Lord and the man of sin”.

All of this information was not new to them for they had known these very truths all along but had allowed themselves to be deceived.

The apostle reproves them mildly by telling them, “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?” 2:5

Paul has described the deceptiveness of the man of lawlessness and the extent of those deceived, along with their condemnation for following him. vs. 9-12

This middle section is the very heart of the epistle and the main reason for writing the epistle. 2:1-12

Now in sharp contrast Paul declares his thanksgiving for the Thessalonians who are saved and following Jesus and evident by three elements. 2:13-15

I. The expression of thanksgiving. vs. 13a

II. The explanation for thanksgiving. vs. 13b-14

III. The exhortation in view of thanksgiving. vs. 15

I. The expression of thanksgiving. vs. 13a

A. The person being thanked was God. vs. 13a

* ”But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you.”

1. Paul and his co-laborers acknowledged a debt to God for the salvation of the Thessalonians.

a. The word bound “ophilo” inn the verb form indicates a sense of continual obligation to give thanks, with the idea of, to owe.

b. The Thessalonians stood in sharp contrast to those just mentioned, who would follow the antichrist.

c. The word “but’ marks the contrast between the two groups.

1) Those who did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2:10b-c

2) Those who had received the love of the truth, the Thessalonians.

d. The thought about their salvation caused the apostle to be gripped with the sense of gratitude to God for the Thessalonians.

1) The word is used for paying a debt or obligation.

- 2) Paul used it once before regarding their growth of their faith and love. 1:3
2. Then man Paul and his co-laborers were characterized as men who acknowledged God as the source of all spiritual things.
- a. The evidence of thankfulness is overwhelming. 1Thess. 1:2, 2:13, 3:9, 5:18, 2 Thess. 1:3, 2:13
 - b. The word always “pantole” has the idea and means at all times whenever they prayed. 1Thess. 1:2, 2Thess. 1:3
 - 1) Some plant, some water, but God gives the increase. 1Cor. 3:6-7
 - 2) Jesus said, “Without Me, you can do nothing. Jn. 15:5e
- B.** The persons being thanked for were family. vs. 13a
- * “Brethren beloved by the Lord.”
1. The Thessalonians had been born into the family of God.
 - a. The word brethren “adelphos” means from the same womb.
 - b. The word appears nineteen times in the first letter and nine times in the second.
 - c. The apostle and his co-laborers were their equals not their superiors.

* Born again of the water (word) & Holy Spirit!

2. The apostle Paul and his co-laborers felt a close family camaraderie to those who had been born into the kingdom as they had.
 - a. In that they were the very ones who were used by God to preach the gospel to the Thessalonians.
 - b. In that they had been forced to leave by persecution and did not know how the Thessalonians would fair.
 - c. In that Timothy had returned with the good news of their perseverance and contagious faith in Christ.
 - d. The Thessalonians were being recipients of the loving care and affection of older brothers.
3. The Thessalonians were loved by the Lord.
 - a. The Thessalonians were identified as the object of God’s love.
 - b. The Thessalonians had been and continued to be the recipients of the Lord bestowing His love on them, individually and corporately.
 - 1) The love was “agapao”, God’s divine love, without respect of persons.
 - 2) The agape love of God was due to their repentance from their sins.
 - c. The One loving the Thessalonians as the object of His love was “the Lord”.

- 1) The word for Lord is “kurios”, the Master and owner of their lives.
- 2) The One who died for them.
- 3) The One who would do all and the best for them.

Illustration

An evergreen is always green despite the changes in weather around it. It is green in the heat of summer as well as the cold of winter. So also our lives are to be characterized by an enduring thankfulness that is unaffected by the changes around us. When the heat of a pressured week or the deadly cold of pain strikes us, we should stand “ever green,” always thankful, regardless of that which surrounds us.

Application

1. Do you acknowledge your indebtedness to give thanks to God for the salvation of others?
 - a. Your family members, Your father, mother, sisters and brothers.
 - b. Your friends you grew up with.
 - c. Those God allows you to bring to the Lord.
 - * Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, *And* into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, *and* bless His name. Ps. 100:4
2. Do you ever express to brothers and sister your thankfulness to God for their salvation?

- a. Due to the enrichment of your life by their friendship.
- b. Due to the loving help they so loving give to you.
 - * And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Col 3:15
3. Do you give thanks to God as you see Him bless others who are following Him?
 - a. Even when they seem to be blessed more than you?
 - b. Even if God uses them more than you?
 - * And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.. 1Cor. 12:26

The expression of thanksgiving was a personal obligation!

II. The explanation for thanksgiving. vs. 13b-14

- A. The plan of God was manifested. vs. 13b
 - * “Because God from the beginning chose you for salvation.” Divine side
1. The person behind the plan was God.
 - a. God is the subject and is made emphatic by being placed after the verb.

- b. The middle voice of the verb “He chose” makes God the one acting and the recipient of the action.
- c. The aorist tense makes it a past fact, even as the apostle told them in the opening of his first letter, “Knowing, beloved brethren, your election of God”. 1Thess. 1:4
 - 1) The very One who created the heavens and the earth.
 - 2) The One who created Adam and Eve to fellowship with Him.
 - 3) The One who sought Adam out when he sinned and covered his sin.
- 2. The point in time of the plan was from the beginning.
 - a. The word beginning “arkee” means commencement but the beginning of what.
 - 1) Is it the beginning of time?
 - 2) Is it the beginning of their lives?
 - 3) Is it the beginning of the age of Grace?
 - b. The beginning refers to nothing less than from eternity past.
 - 1) The point and time of God's redemptive plan.
 - 2) The plan and determined purpose of God's choosing.

- 3) He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Eph. 1:4
- 3. The personal choice was for salvation.
 - * There are many words in the Scriptures related to God's choosing; election, predestination and ordained. 1Thess. 1:4
 - a. God's choosing is based on His foreknowledge.
 - 1) Peter says, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” 1Pet. 1:2a
 - 2) Foreknowledge simply means to know beforehand, only God has this attribute!
 - 3) God's choosing is based on His perfect knowledge and wisdom and perfect righteousness!
 - b. Therefore God's choice in salvation can never be partial, unjust or forced on the individual because He never violates man's free will.
 - 1) God in the book of Isaiah declares, “For I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, “My council shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.” Is. 46:9-10

2) Those He foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. Rom. 8:29

* Any attempt to reconcile divine election and human responsibility is not only futile but potentially heretical. Ja 1:18

B. The process of God is described. vs. 13b

* “Through sanctification by the Spirit and belief of the truth.”

1. The method of God is a setting apart of an individual.
 - a. The word sanctification “hagiasmos” means to set apart, context being prior to salvation.
 - 1) God begins to deal with the individual for salvation, prior to salvation as they are exposed to the gospel.
 - 2) John Wesley called this “Prevenient Grace” as God began to move the individual to justification to be saved.
 - b. After salvation there is positional sanctification based on the work of Christ, followed by practical sanctification as Paul has mentioned.
 - 1) Concerning their sexual purity. 1Thess. 4:3-8

2) Concerning their entire body, soul and spirits, blameless till the coming of the Lord. 1Thess. 5:23

2. The means is two-fold.
 - a. By the Holy Spirit.
 - 1) The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, Who carries out the divine plan of God.
 - 2) The Holy Spirit represents the person of Jesus Christ and does not speak about or glorify himself.
 - 3) The Holy Spirit illuminates God's word. Jn. 16:13, 1Cor. 2:12
 - b. By belief in the truth.
 - 1) The human side is belief in the truth of God's word.
 - 2) The word belief “pistis” means a firm persuasion or conviction based on hearing, to trust God for what He has revealed.
 - 3) The object of that state of belief is in the truth, that which has a quality of truth as opposed to deluding error of those who follow the spirit of antichrist.

* Not my own ability to entrust myself to God on a mere intellectual decision but my openness to the Holy Spirit to do a work in my heart. 1Thess. 1:5, 1Cor. 2:4

C. The purpose of God's plan is revealed. vs. 14

* “To which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. For calling men and women by the gospel.
 - a. The gospel is the good news that God has made a way of redemption for man! Rom. 10:17
 - b. It is called the gospel of Christ. 2Cor. 9:13
 - c. It is called the gospel of God. 2Cor. 11:7
 - d. It is called the gospel of salvation. Eph. 1:13
 - e. It is called our gospel.
2. For the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. God has chosen to impart to man the glory of His Son.
 - 1) The word glory “doxa” has a wide application in the Scriptures.
 - 2) The basic idea is of honor and dignity.
 - 3) The Father’s plan and Christ’s desires is to share with man His particular honor and dignity of His life. 1Thess. 1:10, 2:12
 - b. God’s desire is to change us.

- 1) The glory of every day transformation to be more like Him. 2Cor. 3:18
- 2) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Col. 3:4
 - a) But those who reject Jesus will be punished and removed from the presence of Jesus' glory. 2Thess. 1:9
 - b) Notice the trinity is one in salvation, God, the Lord and the Spirit!

Illustration

Corrie ten Boom in **The Hiding Place** relates an incident that taught her always to be thankful. She and her sister Betsy, had just been transferred to the worst German prison camp they had seen yet, Ravensbruck.

On entering the barracks, they found them extremely over-crowded and flea-infested. That morning, their Scripture reading in 1 Thessalonians had reminded them to rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in all circumstances.

Betsy told Corrie to stop and thank the Lord for every detail of their new living quarters. Corrie at first flatly refused to give thanks for the fleas, but Betsy persisted, and Corrie finally succumbed to her pleadings. During the months spent at that

camp, they were surprised to find how openly they could hold

Bible study and prayer meetings without guard interference. It was not until several months later that they learned the reason the guards would not enter the barracks was because of the fleas.

Application

1. Are you thankful to God for His plan of salvation towards you, that He chose you?
 - a. Or are you always attempting to figure it out?
 - b. Or worst yet, are you being recruited to choose sides on Calvinism or Armenianism, forever arguing “eternal security” and “the loss of salvation”, it is a state of carnality and immaturity, ignoring the balance. Phil. 2:13
 - c. The divine and human are complements that neither violate each other nor contradict one another, they are two legitimate truth regarding salvation that can only be reconciled in the mind of God!
 - * Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. Acts 13:48
2. How about the process, are you excited about the changes or are you griping and complaining always?

- a. John the Baptist told his disciples, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Jn. 3:30
- b. Our light afflictions are incomparable to the exceeding and eternal weight of glory that awaits us. 2Cor. 4:16-18
3. How thankful are you to God for His purpose to bless you with all the glory associated with Christ?
 - a. You have His Spirit. Rom. 8:15-16
 - b. You have His mind. 1Cor. 2:16b
 - c. You have His word. 2Tim. 1:13
 - d. You have His promise that you will be just like Him. 1Jn. 3:1-3

The explanation for thanksgiving was their salvation!

III. The exhortation in view of thanksgiving. vs. 15

- A. The conclusion of the apostle is that the believer is to have a certain posture. The human side.
 - * “Therefore brethren, stand fast.”
 - 1. The believer is to stand fast.
 - a. The phrase stand fast “steeko” means to be stationary, steadfast and immovable, persevere.
 - b. The phrase is in the present imperative, indicating continuing duties.

- c. They were to stand fast in view of the glory of Jesus to appear. 1Thess. 1:10
 - d. They were to stand fast in view of the deception and persecution going on. 2:2
2. This posture of steadfastness has to be decided on by each individual who comes to Christ.
- a. Man's free-will is never violated prior to salvation.
 - b. Man's free-will is never violated after salvation.
 - c. Man's choices are honored by God at all times.
- B.** The conclusion of the apostle is that the believer is to have a certain passion.
- * "Hold the traditions which you were taught whether by word or our epistle."
1. The believer is to hold to the traditions they were taught.
- a. The word hold "krateite" means to exert strength, be it physically or mentally and have a masterful grip on a thing. Col. 2:19
 - b. The word tradition "paradosis" means that which is handed down
 - 1) The word is used for the tradition of the elders. Matt. 15:2
 - 2) The word is used for of the teaching of Paul. 1Cor. 11:2

- 3) The word is used for the traditions of men. Col. 2:8
 - * The context is vital for proper interpretation. For human tradition is often contrary to God's truth.
- c. The tradition the Thessalonians were to stand fast in and hold fast to, was the teaching they had received from Paul and his friends, be it by word or epistle, both having equal authority.
- 1) The doctrine of sin and salvation.
 - 2) the doctrine of forgiveness.
 - 3) The doctrine of the coming of Christ for His church.
 - 4) The doctrine of judgment.
 - 5) The doctrine of the Antichrist.

Illustration

Luther was called to recant his opposition to Rome but said, "Unless I am refuted and convicted by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments (since I believe neither the Pope nor the councils alone; it being evident that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am conquered by the Holy Scriptures quoted by me, and my conscience is bound in the word of God : I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is unsafe and dangerous to do anything against the conscience."

(History of Church: Schaff-Vol. 3 pp. 139)

Application

1. What is your posture in the faith? Are you giving up and withdrawing or are you pressing forward?
 - a. Remember Peter says, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” 1Pet. 1:2
 - b. Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me...Phil. 3:12-14
2. Are you clinging to the Gospel or letting go?
 - a. The world will deceive you. 1Jn.. 2:16
 - b. Sin and self will deceive you.
3. Your posture and pursuit regarding the Gospel will be the greatest evidence of thanksgiving.
 - a. Don't be moved away from the Gospel. Jude 3
 - b. Don't forget it is a good fight to fight. (spiritual warfare) 2Tim. 4:7
 - c. Don't forget to put the armor on. Eph. 6:10-11

The exhortation in view of thanksgiving was practical!

Conclusion

Paul's thanksgiving is for their salvation.

- I. The expression of thanksgiving was a personal obligation!
- II. The explanation for thanksgiving was their salvation!
- III. The exhortation in view of thanksgiving was practical!