

AN UNSHAKEABLE LIFE -- A Study of 2 Thessalonians

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First Section

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. ¹⁶ May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Saved through... the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth (v. 13): before Paul deals with the big moral problem in the Thessalonian church, he encourages them by assuring them of God's love that was demonstrated by His salvation of them.

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

The two-fold work of salvation includes 1) the Holy Spirit cleansing and progressively transforming the believer into the image of Christ and 2) the believer forming his/her life on the truth.

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie ¹² and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the **truth** but have delighted in wickedness.

Share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 14): Paul is referring to the "risen" glory of Christ in and through his majestic resurrection. He is the "first-fruits" of the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:16-20 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸ Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. ²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen asleep.

Stand firm and hold fast to the teachings (GK *paradosis*, "traditions") we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter (v. 15): The word here has a rich Jewish cultural history and includes the meaning of coming alongside a person and delivering/receiving the essentials of a teaching.

Here Paul begins to focus on the bad behavior among the Thessalonians. The point is that Christians can stray from the truth and start acting badly.

The basic concept in this passage is that Christianity is a "received" religion. What has been once "delivered" is to be believed, lived-out, and never changed. The tradition includes both doctrinal content and proper moral behavior.

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I **received** from the Lord what I also **passed** on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,

1Corinthians 15:3 For what I **received I passed** on to you as of first importance^[a]: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

Second Section

2Thessalonians 3:1-5 As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. ² And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. ⁴ We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. ⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

Other matters (v. 1) Paul eases into his admonitions about errant behavior by a request for intercessory prayer (vv. 1-2) and a statement assuring the Thessalonians that he has "confidence in the Lord" (v. 4) that they will be obedient to what "we command."

Third Section

2Thessalonians 3:6-10 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching ("traditions") you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...We command you (v. 6): Paul is serious about this matter, otherwise he would not invoke the holy name of Jesus. He is demanding that those who disobey this command be excluded from the fellowship of believers.

We were not idle...eat anyone's food without paying...worked night and day, laboring...not be a burden (vv. 7-9): obviously, the moral problem in the Thessalonian church was idleness where some able-bodied believers were living off the toil of others. Paul was not a socialist.

"The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat" (v. 10): this is to be understood as an "apostolic rule" that is to be obeyed by all Christians everywhere.

Final Section

2Thessalonians 3:11-15 We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. ¹² Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. ¹³ And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good. ¹⁴ Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.

Busybodies (v. 11): it seems that there were believers who used their end-times beliefs to be idle busybodies. Paul commands them to get busy or be cut off from the congregation for their discipline.

Christians are to exemplify hard work, self-reliance and deferred gratification.