

Commentary on 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Series*) for **July 18, 2010**, is from **2 Thessalonians 2:13-17**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the Bible Lesson Commentary. These are my preliminary verse by verse study notes before writing my Bible Lesson for *The Oklahoman* newspaper. They may help you in your class preparation and discussion. I do encourage you to write your own verse by verse notes and questions before reading the notes and questions below.

13 But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

In the previous verses in this chapter, Paul explained that the one who takes pleasure in unrighteousness or practices immorality refuses to love the truth; therefore, as punishment, he or she receives a powerful delusion from God, believes what is false, and will be condemned. This fact may partially explain the unreasonable behavior of those who practice sin. On the other hand, those who are saved believe in the truth, the truth about God and Jesus Christ (who is The Truth), and the Holy Spirit then uses the truth they believe to help them live a holy life, a moral life, separated from practicing evil, so they can be of sacred service to God.

14 For this purpose he called you through our proclamation of the good news, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God has chosen and called believers through their hearing, understanding, and accepting the good news about Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The good news may be summed up: Jesus' death on the cross for our sins makes God's loving, just, merciful, and gracious forgiveness of our sins possible when we repent of our sins and place our faith in Jesus Christ; Jesus resurrection from the dead grants those who trust in Him the assurance of eternal life and everlasting joy in the Kingdom of God.

15 So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

Since we are sanctified and saved through the Word of God, Jesus Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, Paul expected believers to stand firm with God's help when facing trials, temptations, persecutions, sufferings, and various afflictions, and to hold fast to the traditions (what they had heard and seen practiced from the Apostles, as they taught what they had learned from Jesus Christ). Paul also expected his letters to be as authoritative as his public teaching.

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope,

God will be personally involved in our lives, and knowingly so to us, if we will allow God our Father to reveal himself to us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Prayer makes a difference; especially as we pray for the Father and the Son, Who love us, to give us and others comfort and hope. Notice: our comfort is eternal, beginning when we receive Jesus Christ as Lord, and our comfort and hope is through grace; therefore unmerited and unearned by believers.

17 comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

One way to comfort our hearts and strengthen our hearts in relation to the many blessings and benefits bestowed upon us by God (blessings we have not and cannot deserve) is to do good works with sincere appreciation to God (with the Lord also being our enabler and helper) and to share the good words of the gospel and encouragement that others need to hear in order to be saved or maintain their good hope – especially when suffering affliction or persecution.

Five Questions for Discussion

1. Jesus declared that He is the Truth and His word is Truth and we can belong to the Truth. Why is Truth so important to God? What difference can Truth make in the world and in people's lives?
2. Why are belief in the Truth and sanctification by the Spirit both necessary for salvation? How can belief in the Truth and sanctification by the Spirit make a difference in the way we lead our lives?
3. When believers "obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ," how are they different? What does it mean if a "believer" is not different?
4. What is the difference between "the traditions" Paul wrote about and "the traditions" of church history? Why must believers especially "hold fast to the traditions" today? What "traditions" are especially under attack in our day? What can believers do if "the traditions" are changed or ignored?
5. How can "good works" and "good words" give our hearts comfort and strength? Why does Paul seem to think both "good works" and "good words" are important instead of just one or the other?

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