

2nd Thessalonians

More Thanksgiving, Encouragement and Prayer [2:13-17]

- Thanksgiving [2:13-14]
 - But we ought to give thanks to God for you always, brethren beloved by the Lord,
Ἡμεῖς δὲ ὀφείλομεν εὐχαριστεῖν τῷ θεῷ πάντοτε περὶ ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοὶ ἡγαπημένοι ὑπὸ κυρίου,
 - The phrase “we should” is from ὀφείλω (opheilō) which means “owe”, “be obligated” or “ought”.
 - We saw this same construction back in 2 Thess 1:3 where it was translated “we ought to” and we will do the same here.
 - We also saw the same awkward positioning of the word “always” in the NASB translation of 2 Thess 1:3.
 - We will move it to the end of the phrase just as we did there.
 - The phrase “give thanks” is from εὐχαριστεῖν (eucharisteō) which means “be thankful” or “give thanks”.
 - This word is based upon the word χάρις (charis = grace) which tells us that thankfulness is based upon grace orientation.
 - Paul refers to the Thessalonians as “brethren” – a term of affection acknowledging them as his brothers & sisters in Christ.
 - Here he adds the phrase “beloved by the Lord” emphasizing that they are the objects of the Lord’s love as well [1 Thess 1:2-4].
 - because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
ὅτι ἐλάτο ὑμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἀπαρχὴν εἰς σωτηρίαν ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας,
 - The word “because” is ὅτι (hoti) which means “that” or “because”.
 - This word is a marker of causality here, so Paul is highlighting the reason why they ought to give thanks.
 - The word “chosen” is from αἰρέω (haireō) which means “pick” or “choose”.
 - The only other two instances of this word in the N.T. are used of people making choices [Phil 1:21-22; Heb 11:24-26].
 - Here, God did the choosing and the object of His choice is “you” which is in the plural.
 - This refers to God’s choice of the Thessalonian believers, but is part of God choosing to give salvation to everyone who believes.
 - God made His choice in eternity past (from the beginning) to provide salvation on the basis of faith.
 - Paul is saying this as a sharp contrast to the powerful delusion God chose to bring upon those who reject the truth (disbelieve).

- Some manuscripts have ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (ap’ archēs) which means “from the beginning” as opposed to ἀπαρχήν (aparchēn) as found here which means “first fruits”.
- The context strongly prefers ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (ap’ archēs).
- Our salvation comes through...
 - Sanctification by the Spirit (regeneration, indwelling, baptism)
 - Faith in the truth (the gospel)
- It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

εἰς ὃ [καὶ] ἐκάλεσεν ὑμᾶς διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἡμῶν εἰς περιποίησιν δόξης τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

- The word “this” is the neuter pronoun ὃ (ho).
- The only neuter noun in the previous verse is Spirit (πνεύματος, pneumatos), but it is very obvious from the context that this pronoun is not referring to the Holy Spirit here.
- The other nouns in the previous sentence are...
 - salvation (σωτηρίαν, sōtērian) which is feminine
 - sanctification (ἁγιασμῷ, hagiasmō) which is masculine
 - faith (πίστει, pistei) which is feminine
 - truth (ἀληθείας, alētheias) which is feminine
- This is one of the cases (like Eph 2:8-9) where a neuter pronoun refers to the overall clause (“salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth”) in the previous verse.
- In particular, salvation is what is in focus here.
- The word “called” is from καλέω (kaleō) which means “call” or “invite”.
- God invites unbelievers to be reconciled to Him and receive eternal life through the message of the gospel.
- The phrase “our gospel” does not refer to a gospel message which is different from the pure gospel.
- This phrase merely refers to the fact that the Thessalonians had heard the gospel through Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy [1 Th 1:5].
- God’s purpose in calling unbelievers through the gospel is that they may share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- This happens progressively in time and ultimately comes to its fullness in eternity.

- Principles of 2nd Thessalonians 2:13-14
 - In sharp contrast with the bleak future awaiting the unbelievers mentioned in verses 10-12, the believers in Thessalonica had a glorious future awaiting them.
 - This motivated Paul to express his thankfulness to God once again [2 Thess 1:3].
 - Paul knew that the Thessalonians had been saved not because of his own efforts, but by the grace of God [Eph 2:8-9].
 - The believers in Thessalonica, like all other believers, are the objects of God infinite love [Rom 8:37-39].
 - In eternity past, God exercised His sovereignty in the sphere of His infinite love by choosing for the salvation of mankind to come by grace through faith rather than through any other means.
 - He demonstrates His infinite love by having Jesus Christ die for us even while we were yet sinners [Rom 5:8].
 - At the moment someone trusts in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit performs His sanctifying work in that person...
 - regeneration [Titus 3:5]
 - indwelling [Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16]
 - baptism [1 Cor 12:13]
 - etc...
 - After salvation, the Holy Spirit continues His sanctifying work in each believer [1 Thess 4:3-8].
 - People are saved through faith and should continue to live by faith after their salvation [Col 2:6-7].
 - By doing so, believers can enjoy the abundant life that God has purposed, and Christ came to bring to them [John 10:10].
 - As determined in eternity past, God intends for each believer to become more and more Christ-like over time [Rom 8:29].
 - This comes through spiritual growth as believers yield to the Holy Spirit [Gal 5:16] and pursue godliness [1 Tim 6:11].
 - Ultimately, every believer will be perfectly glorified in the image of Christ [Rom 8:16-17].

- Encouragement [2:15]

- So then, brethren, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught,
Ἄρα οὖν, ἀδελφοί, στήκετε καὶ κρατεῖτε τὰς παραδόσεις ἃς ἐδιδάχθητε
 - The phrase “So then” connects to the previous passage and builds upon its content.
 - What follows is the proper response of the Thessalonians to the fact that they have been saved by grace through faith.
 - For the fourth time in this letter, Paul calls the Thessalonian believers “brethren”.
 - As we have seen, this is a term of affection acknowledging them as his brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - The phrase “stand firm” is from **στήκω** (stēkō) which means “stand” or “stand firm”.
 - This word is used here of being firmly committed in conviction or belief [1 Thess 3:8].
 - The phrase “hold to” is from **κρατέω** (krateō) which means “attain”, “hold” or “seize control”.
 - This word is used here of holding fast to something, so we will translate it that way.
 - The word “traditions” is from **παράδοσις** (paradosis) which means “hand over” or “tradition”.
 - This word is used here of the content of instruction that has been handed down.
 - The instruction in view here is the word of God which Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy had taught the Thessalonians.
 - This is not talking about the traditions of men [Mark 7:8; Col 2:8].
- whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us.
εἴτε διὰ λόγου εἴτε δι’ ἐπιστολῆς ἡμῶν.
 - The phrase “by word of mouth” is simply “by word”.
 - It is implied from the context that this is describing in-person verbal communication.
 - This could be translated as “by spoken word”, but the addition of the words “of mouth” by the NASB translators works well.
 - The phrase “by letter from us” tells us that some of the teaching from Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy (PST) was done via letter.
 - Clearly, this would include 1st Thessalonians, but it is possible that they wrote some other letters as well.
 - While the Thessalonians should ignore forgeries [2 Thess 2:2], they should take heed of the actual letters from PST.

- Principles of 2nd Thessalonians 2:15
 - Born-again believers cannot lose hold of their salvation [John 6:39-40; 10:27-29; Rom 8:38-39].
 - However, it is incumbent upon believers to stand firm in the faith [1 Cor 16:13; Gal 5:1; Phil 1:27; 4:1] and hold fast to the truth of God's word [1 Cor 11:2; Rev 2:25; 3:11].
 - If we fail to do so, we will become spiritually unstable and easily affected by all sorts of false ideas [Eph 4:14].
 - Paul, along with Sylvanus and Timothy, had delivered the word of God to the Thessalonians [1 Cor 11:23; 15:3].
 - Later in this letter, Paul commands the Thessalonians to avoid people who live in a way not in accordance with the word of God they had delivered [2 Thess 3:6].
 - Today, God provides pastor-teachers to deliver the word of God to their congregations [Eph 4:11-12].

- Prayer [2:16-17]
 - Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father,
 Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς καὶ [ὁ] θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἡμῶν
 - The word “may” is supplied here as a helping word for the optative verbs “comfort” and “strengthen” in verse 17.
 - This word is correctly placed here by the NASB translators for readability reasons.
 - Paul mentions two members of the Trinity – Jesus Christ and the Father – in the opening of his prayer here.
 - Both are in view here, but by beginning the sentence with Αὐτὸς (Autos = Himself), Paul puts the emphasis on Jesus Christ.
 - Some manuscripts do not have the definite article ὁ (ho) here.
 - Typically, the word for God (θεός, theos) is preceded by ὁ (ho), but this verse would have the exact same meaning with or without the definite article.
 - who has loved us and given us unending encouragement and beneficial hope by grace,
 ὁ ἀγαπήσας ἡμᾶς καὶ δοὺς παράκλησιν αἰώνιαν καὶ ἐλπίδα ἀγαθὴν ἐν χάριτι,
 - The phrase “who has loved us and given us” is made up of two aorist participles.
 - These participles, along with the verbs “comfort” and “strengthen” in verse 17, are in the singular.
 - These participles are in the singular because the Son and the Father are regarded as One.
 - As was mentioned before, Paul puts particular emphasis on the role of the Son in this passage.
 - The word “loved” is from ἀγαπάω (agapaō) which describes integrity-based love.
 - God’s love for us is based upon His character, not any supposed merits we might think we have [Rom 5:8].
 - The word “comfort” is from παράκλησις (paraklēsis) which means “encouragement”, “comfort”, “urging” or “exhortation”.
 - The translation “encouragement” makes more sense in the context of “hope” [Rom 15:4].
 - The word “eternal” is from αἰώνιος (aiōnios) which means “eternal” or “without end”.
 - The translation “unending” fits better in this context.
 - The word “good” is from ἀγαθός (agathos) which means “good” or “beneficial”.
 - The word “hope” is from ἐλπίς (elpis) which means “confident expectation”.
 - Having confident expectation in our salvation, the return of our Savior, God’s faithfulness, etc. is beneficial to our Christian walk.
 - Therefore, we will translate this as “beneficial hope”.
 - The phrase “by grace” emphasizes that the encouragement and hope we have from God come purely on the basis of grace.
 - We are saved by grace and, once saved, believers continue to live by grace.

- encourage and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.
 παρακαλέσαι ὑμῶν τὰς καρδίας καὶ στηρίζαι ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ καὶ λόγῳ ἀγαθῷ.
 - The word “comfort” is from παρακαλέω (parakaleō) which means “encourage”, “comfort”, “urge” or “exhort”.
 - This word is a cognate of παράκλησις (paraklēsis), so we will translate this as “encourage”.
 - The word “comfort” is from στηρίζω (stērizō) which means “establish” or “strengthen”.
 - This word means to make someone or something more stable through increased strength.
 - The word “hearts” is from καρδιά (kardia) which means “heart”.
 - This word can describe the muscle which pumps blood in our bodies, but here it is describing the soul as the seat of our thoughts, passions, desires, affections, etc.
 - The phrase “every good work” refers to the good works which God has prepared for us [Eph 2:10].
 - The phrase “(every good) word” refers to those things we say which glorify God.
- Principles of 2nd Thessalonians 2:16-17
 - Only born-again believers can refer to God as Father [John 1:12-13; Gal 3:26; 4:6-7].
 - Both the Son and the Father hear and answer our prayers [John 14:13; 15:16; 16:23].
 - The Son loved us so much that He went to the Cross for us [Gal 2:20] and the Father loved us so much that He sent His Son to the Cross for us [John 3:16-17].
 - Salvation is a gift from God [Eph 2:8-9], but God continues to give blessings to believers after their salvation [Rom 8:32].
 - One of those blessings is encouragement [Rom 15:5].
 - God often uses other believers to bring us this blessing of encouragement [Acts 11:22-23; 14:21-22; Col 4:7-11; 1 Th 3:2; 5:11, 14; Heb 3:13; 10:23-25].
 - This encouragement can lead to an abundant and beneficial hope [Rom 15:13; Heb 6:17-18].
 - This hope becomes the anchor for our souls [Heb 6:19-20].
 - These blessings, along with everything believers are and have, comes from God on the basis of grace [Rom 5:1-5; 1 Cor 15:10].
 - God’s grace equips, strengthens and stabilizes us, so we should stand firm in His grace [1 Pet 5:10-12].
 - We need the encouragement and strengthening in our hearts that comes from the word of God for every good work God has called us to do [2 Tim 3:16-17].
 - We need the encouragement and strengthening in our hearts that comes from the word of God for every good work God has called us to do [2 Tim 3:16-17].
 - Our words should always be gracious so that they might glorify God [Col 3:17; 4:6; 1 Cor 10:31].
 - Our words reflect our thoughts [Psalm 19:14; Matt 15:18-20].