

“Standing firm, being loved” - 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

The sixth Sunday of the Epiphany season – Feb 13, 2022

Holy Trinity Church - Tom Mount

Exegesis of 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

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.

- **loved by the Lord.** Loved is *agapao*, verbal form of agape: divine love. In this case, Jesus (“Lord”). This is their core identity.
- **God chose you as firstfruits to be saved.** “Firstfruits”: the first wave of believers in Thessalonica. **Chose** is *haireo*, not the normal *eklegomai* (e.g., Eph 1:4, 21x; cf. 1 Thess 1:4): “to take for oneself, to prefer, to choose.” This idea of God choosing us runs throughout the bible. Cf. Dt 7:7-8.
- **belief in the truth.** They had to believe in certain things to be made right with God.
- **the sanctifying work of the Spirit, *hagiosmos*;** lit. “holy-fication.” The spirit’s job is to make us holy. Our job is to dedicate selves to live as holy people (e.g., 1 Thess 4:3, 4,7) And, when we fail, to quickly return to holy standing (1 Jn 1:9).

He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- **that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.** Glory is *doxa*. In a certain sense, the Gospel all about glory. Cf. Ps 8:4-5; Rom 3:23; Phil 3:20-21; 2 Ptr 1:4.
- This glory comes to us incrementally in this life (2 Cor 3:18) and will be fully actualized at the parousia (1 Jn 3:2).
- C.S. Lewis: “It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship... It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection

proper to them, that we should conduct all of our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics.”

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. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

- **stand firm**, *steko*, “remain stationary, persevere, persist.” (cf. 1 Cor 16:13) **and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you.** Teachings is *paradosis*, “traditions, rituals” both written and oral. Religious traditions can be negative (e.g., Mt 15:2-3,6; Mk 7:3,5,8-9,13; Col 2:8) or positive (e.g., Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 11:2,23; 15:3; Jude 3) depending on whether they help to genuinely enhance our relationship with God.
- Paul then pronounces a benediction, asking that God gives the strength to “stand firm” and “hold fast.”
- Rarely, if ever, has the need been greater for American Christians to “stand firm” and “hold fast.”

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. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.

- Pray for us: that our ministry would be successful, people would obey the gospel. And that God would protect us in the process, because there are a lot of people who are bad actors. Have to be on guard.
- Paul concludes with a second benediction; this one with two parts. In reverse order:
- **May God direct your hearts into... Christ’s perseverance**, *hupomone*, “steadfastness, endurance, constancy.” This allows us to stand firm and hold fast. cf. Heb 12:1-3.
- **May God direct your hearts into God’s love.** Subjective genitive in Greek: “The love that God has for you.” May you know it by experience, grasp it, be so convinced that you are God’s beloved that nothing can shake you from it (cf. Eph 3:16-19; 1 Jn 4:16; Jude 21).