

*2 Thessalonians 2:13-14***PREFACE**

There are very special moments of grace during the typical Midwest summer. Very often we will have several days, perhaps even a week, of oppressive and unrelenting heat and humidity. If one does not have air-conditioning, one spends that time either in the basement of his house, or languishing away, miserable and sweating before a fan. If one does have air-conditioning, one spends that time grateful for the comfort, but after a while longing to break free of the hermetically sealed recycled air.

Then comes one fresh morning, typically after a thunderstorm, when a front has passed through, the breeze has switched to the north, and we throw wide our windows and drink in the cool, invigorating, restorative, fresh air. There is nothing like it.

We are at just such a moment in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. For the last twelve verses of Chapter Two we have been slogging through the fetid miasma of the Tribulation, and the cloying, oppressive presence of its "man of lawlessness"—the Anti-christ. But the front has passed through, and this morning we throw wide the windows of God's word to drink in the fresh air.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.**v13**

But we should always give thanks to God for you

What reassurance, what affirming joy is found in v13! Paul repeats his phrase from the greeting of this letter in 1:3, but this time the "you" seems to be emphasized and stands in stark contrast to the "them"s and "they"s in the previous passage.

v10: and with all the deception of wickedness for **those** who perish, because **they** did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

v11: For this reason God will send upon **them** a deluding influence so that **they** will believe what is false,

v12: in order that **they** all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

One has a sense that by v13 Paul cannot wait to contrast the Thessalonians with those just described during the Tribulation, to remind these new believers that they are not and will not be part of that company of reprobates. And he does so throughout the verse.

As in 1:3, "should," "ought" = Paul feels a personal *responsibility* to offer thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians.

brethren beloved by the Lord

In both passages he refers to them as brothers, but here he adds "beloved by the Lord." And again, we wonder if he isn't going out of his way to reassure them that, in contrast to those to whom God sent a "deluding influence" as judgment, they, the church at Thessalonica, are actually *loved* by Him.

because God has chosen you from the beginning

Let's first address the issue with the Greek text beneath the phrase translated "from the beginning." It is a challenging text to translate because it is atypical for Paul. But most scholars conclude that "from the beginning" is preferred, and almost all our common versions reflect this. The exception in this case is the ESV with "as the firstfruits." (*firstfruits out of what group?*)

The reference clearly hearkens back to how Paul greeted them in his first letter.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4.

Those who are saved can take no credit, cannot feel any sense of pride because of this. We can only shake our heads in wonderment, for it is all of God and, from a human perspective, utterly inexplicable.

for salvation

Read Ephesians 1:3-6.

Well before His creation had all settled into place, God saved believers—and our previous text expands on all this for which we should be grateful. His choosing of us does indeed save us from an eternity in hell, but the second chapter of this letter reminds us that He also saved us from the torments of the Tribulation. Put succinctly, God saved us from unbelief—which Paul references at the end of this verse.

through sanctification by the Spirit

Question: How many ways can you think of that the Holy Spirit is active in our sanctification?

- He convicts us of our sin, and need for Christ (John 16:8)
- He is operative in our regeneration (Titus 3:5)
- He confirms and assures us of our salvation (Romans 8:16)
- He is the guarantor of the (future) promises of our salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14)
- He initially sanctifies, then conducts our *progressive* sanctification (1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2)
- He dispenses our gifts—which are essential to one of the reasons we are saved in the first place (1 Corinthians 12:7ff)

and faith in the truth.

Here is the direct counterpoint to vv11-12:

v11-12: For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

v13: ...God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation...and faith in the truth.

Here is the evidence that we are not saved by *our* faith—that is, our human-sourced faith is not the determinative element for our salvation or sanctification, because our faith in the truth is from God. He instilled in us saving faith; it is from Him, not self-generated.

Examine every step of an unregenerate sinner becoming a regenerate saint, and you will discover that at every point along the way it is all of God, not of us.

But here also is one more token, one more guarantor of our life in Him. When we open God's word and it makes sense; when the Holy Spirit clarifies and translates His eternal truths for our understanding, and thus we have faith in His word—that faith comes from Him, and we can know that we belong to Him. We can know that, from the beginning, God has chosen us for Himself.

v14

Read v14.

Again Paul emphasizes that none of this is of ourselves, but all of God. It also gives us a good answer to the recurring question, If all this is preordained by God, where is the need for evangelism, for missionaries, for the preaching of the gospel? Paul says "He called you *through* our gospel."

Robert L. Thomas: The good news of divine truth conveyed through Paul's preaching was the means through which God called these Thessalonian converts at a particular point in time. What God purposed in eternity was carried out in history that the future might bring them a share "in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The "this" in "It was for this" refers back to the end of v13:

salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

One would think free salvation would suffice, that it would be enough that God would save us from an eternity in hell. But no, in *His* idea of salvation it is not enough. Those chosen by Him will indeed escape hell, but they will also be given a share in Christ's glory.

Read 1 John 3:1-2.

when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

Let's dwell on this for a moment.

Sidebar: The "for" in the KJVs and NIV does not really capture the idea of the Greek *hoti*, which is more causative, making the NASB and ESV "because" more appropriate.

I believe there are at least two ways we can interpret this:

- **Validation:** We find ourselves in heaven. We know we have gone through some sort of change, but we're not sure what it is. Then we see Jesus, and then we understand that we are now like Him, because we recognize traits in Him that we are now experiencing for the first time.
- **Causal:** We find ourselves in heaven. Immediately we are in the presence of Jesus, and by seeing Him in His glorified state that same glory is supernaturally transferred to us. Thus it—our share in His glory—is not just a gift of heaven, but a gift of Jesus Himself.

This second interpretation seems preferable. And I think a passage from Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" after the Last Supper supports this. [Turn please to John 17.](#)

Read John 17:22-24.

Jesus' context is eternity.

Now let's return to our passage.

This is also a "now—not yet" situation. Just as with sanctification, believers enjoy a *measure* of Christ's glory here and now. We have that because we are "in" Him, and He is in us.

But Paul's immediate context is the *parousia*, the coming of Jesus, both to take His church home during the Rapture, and to judge the world after the Tribulation. So he speaks of a glory unimaginable here on earth, something witnessed by Peter, James and John at Christ's transfiguration, where

**His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.
(Matthew 17:2)**

Many around the world today speak of this being the "new normal"—by which they mean that things such as (for example during the previous eight years) low wages, low productivity, and high unemployment are the new normal; floods of illegal immigrants pouring across borders in Europe, and terrorists blowing up innocent citizens anywhere in the world, well, that is just the new normal, and something we must learn to live with.

We all look forward to the day when even the pleasant things of this world will have faded into insignificance and have been replaced by a true "new normal"—a new heaven and new earth, and an eternity with Christ Jesus living in His light, and His glory.