

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; “A Wonderful Contrast” July 23, 2023

I. Welcome & Review

A. Good morning! Ohaiyogozaimasu! Welcome to Calvary Chapel Iwakuni.

1. How wonderful it is to be here with you all as we gather in praise and worship of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What a blessing it is, a foretaste of what it will be like in heaven when we sing of His glory, His power, and His honor with all the rest of heaven.

2. *Welcome any new faces and those streaming online.*

B. Before we continue any further, let's go ahead and dismiss our elementary aged children to their Sunday School classrooms.

1. As well as the bible English class (Second Service)

C. For the rest of us, we will be continuing our study through the small epistle of 2 Thessalonians.

1. This letter was written to a young church that was started by Paul during his second missionary journey. He only was able to be in the city of Thessalonica for just a few short weeks, prior to being run out of town by some Jews who did not like what Paul had to say about the gospel.

2. Though Paul left them physically, his heart was still with them. He was very concerned about them and wanted to make sure they were doing ok and that they were continuing in their newfound faith.

3. That's why he sent Timothy to the church in Thessalonica, to go check in on them and to see how they were doing as Paul continued upon his missionary travels down to the city of Corinth.

4. When Timothy rejoined Paul in Corinth he was overjoyed to hear the report from Timothy about how the church was thriving despite some heavy persecution.

5. Paul sat down and wrote them the letter of 1 Thessalonians encouraging them and reminding them of all the wonderful things God had done in them and through them in the short time they were together.
 - a. He wrote to them as well to clarify a few things pertaining to the return of Christ. He wrote and told them about the rapture of the church and how all believers will be reunited with the Lord at that time; the dead in Christ will rise first and those who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. **(1 Th. 4:17)**
 - b. He also wrote to them about the coming “Day of the Lord” a time of destructions, great tribulation; a time where God’s wrath will be poured out upon a Christ rejecting world.
 - c. And while this day will certainly come, Paul encouraged the Thessalonians that they would not have to face this “Day of the Lord”. For God had not appointed them to wrath, “but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” **(1 Th. 5:9)**
 - d. And it is Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come according to what Paul wrote in his first letter. **(1 Th. 1:10b)**
6. It would seem that Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica with his first letter to deliver it to them and to encourage them even more.
7. Timothy then rejoined with Paul in Corinth and after a short time they got wind of some news from Thessalonica about how there were others that had come along and were teaching things contrary to what Paul had taught. Namely that they were living and experiencing what Paul had referred to as “The Day of the Lord”.
8. And so Paul sat down and wrote this second letter to encourage them and address these false ideas about

how the “Day of the Lord” had already come and the church in Thessalonica was living in them.

D. Now last week we looked at the beginning of chapter 2 where Paul specifically addressed these false teachings regarding the coming of the Day of the Lord.

1. Paul basically highlighted different proofs or evidence as to how they church in Thessalonica could know that they were not living in the Day of the Lord. And he did so by speaking of events that would have to take place prior to the coming of the “Day of the Lord”.

a. Paul highlighted how there would be a falling away that would take place prior to the “Day of the Lord”

i. That falling away more than likely referred to a time where people would turn from the faith and give heed to deceptive spirits and doctrines of demons and how they would substitute lies for the truth.

ii. But it could also be referring to the rapture. For the word “falling away” literally means “departure”, which could be referencing the departure of God’s church prior to the “Day of the Lord”.

b. Paul also spoke of the man of sin being revealed, and how since that had not yet happened it was proof that they were not living in “the Day of the Lord”.

i. This man of sin was referring to the Antichrist. One who would come and set himself up against Christ and instead of Christ.

c. But Paul also said that the man of sin would not be revealed until He who restrains was taken away.

i. Most Bible scholars believe this to be a reference to God’s Holy Spirit and His presence inside the church.

- ii. Once the church is removed and the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit is no longer around here on earth, then this will pave the way for the Antichrist to come upon the scene and begin "the Day of the Lord".
2. Now, in describing details about "the Day of the Lord" and the coming of the lawless one, Paul spoke about how the Antichrist will be empowered by Satan himself and that he would come with all of his power, signs and lying wonders among those who were perishing.
 - a. And Paul spoke about the people who would perish during that time. They were people who did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. These people rejected God's love and God's truth.
 - b. And because of their disbelief they would be condemned by God. All because they did not believe the truth, and instead took pleasure in unrighteousness.
 3. And that is how our text ended last week. A very dark picture for those who rejected God's love, who rejected the truth, and instead of believing the truth of the gospel, they believed the lie and will end up perishing for their choice in the Day of the Lord.
- E. Our text this morning picks up right after that. And Paul offers to us and the Thessalonians a wonderful contrast.
1. Death, destruction, punishment, and the wrath of God awaited those who rejected God's love, who rejected God's truth, who didn't want to have anything to do with God and His righteousness.
 2. But that wasn't who the Thessalonians were. And that is the point of our text this morning. It is a wonderful contrast to what Paul just spoke about. And that is going to be the title of our study this morning. "**A Wonderful Contrast**".

3. Our text is going to be 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 vs. 13-17. So, if you have your Bibles with you and you haven't done so already, open them up to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. And then once you are there, I'd like to invite you to rise to your feet in honor of the Lord and His Word.
4. I'm going to read through our text in my Bible, I want to encourage you all to follow along in your own Bible.
5. Paul writes this beautiful and wonderful contrast to what he has just wrote with the following in verse 13... (R & P)

II. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Praising God for Salvation

A. Our text this morning opens up with what I like to refer to as a significant insignificant.

1. A significant insignificant is a word that is usually small, or common, that we don't pay much attention to. Even though it seems insignificant, it becomes very significant as we recognize it and understand why it is being used.
2. Verse 13 opens with the word "but". Such a small and common word, a word that we usually don't pay much attention to. The word "but" is a word of contrast. It is used to show differences when compared to something else.
3. Here in this context, Paul is contrasting what he just spoke about with what he is going to speak about.
 - a. What he just spoke about in verses 10-12 are those who are going to perish in the Day of the Lord because they did not receive the love of the truth that they may be saved. These people will fall prey to a strong delusion that will result in their condemnation.
 - b. "But", in contrast to that, Paul is going to speak about the salvation of the Thessalonians. The Thessalonians did receive the love of the truth that

they may be saved. They are not headed for condemnation but glorification in Christ.

B. Let's take a look at all the things Paul had to say about the salvation of the Thessalonians.

1. Paul starts off with thanksgiving to God. Paul once again felt bound to thank God when he considered the Thessalonians. Here he felt bound to thank God for the work of salvation He had done in and through the Thessalonians.

a. This notion of Paul feeling bound to thank God for the Thessalonians is something Paul has spoken of already once before at the opening of this letter back in verse 3 of chapter 1. There he wrote, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other," (**2 Th. 1:3**)

b. Whenever Paul, Silas, and Timothy thought of the church in Thessalonica, their overarching sentiment was to thank God for them. To thank God for how He was working in them and through them.

c. Paul understood that the church family and the work that was happening there in Thessalonica was purely a result of God doing an amazing and wonderful thing. It wasn't about him, or his companions, but about God and what He had done. So he constantly was giving thanks to God for the work He had done.

d. As I thought about Paul's heart of gratitude and thankfulness it reminded me of the importance of **thanking God for the work He is doing** in and through us today.

i. I'm so thankful for the work God has done here in Iwakuni and continues to do in and through us. We are a small church that has been around here in Iwakuni for coming up on 18 years.

- ii. And God has done a lot in those 18 years. What started out as a small home Bible study in Pastor Mike's living room has blossomed into a small congregation that continues to focus upon ministering to the community here in Iwakuni.
 - iii. We've seen a lot of people come and go throughout the years, what started with Pastor Mike Silva and his family has continued with myself and my family. There's been tons of change, but God's faithfulness has remained the same throughout. And I for one, am so thankful for the work God has done in and through this church. It's all about Him and His faithfulness, His work in and through us.
2. After beginning with thanksgiving to God for the salvation of the Thessalonians, Paul then mentioned the love of God.
- a. Paul described the church in Thessalonica as brethren beloved by the Lord. The root word for "beloved" is the Greek word "agapao". It is the verb form of the noun "agape". This is the word that is used to describe the kind of love that God has for us as His children.
 - b. God's love for us is an unconditional love, a love without beginning or end, a love that will be with us for all of eternity. It is not a fickle love that is dependent upon whether or not we perform or meet certain standards. We can't earn God's love, or merit it. It is something freely given to us.
 - c. When it comes to God's work of salvation in us and really any all the various works God does in and through us, the primary motivation to do so is His love.
 - i. Why did God save us? Because He loves us.
Why did God choose us? Because He loves us.
Why did God call us? Because He loves us?

- ii. Why does God use us to represent Him to the world around us? Because He loves to use the foolish things of this world? Why does God discipline us? Because He loves us.
- iii. Why does God do any of the things that He does for us? It's all because of His great love for us.
- d. Church family, be encouraged and **know that God loves you** and He does the things He does in your life because He loves you. Don't ever think or let the enemy whisper into your ear the lie that God doesn't love you. He thinks the world of you.
 - i. Isn't that the truth we proclaim in John 3:16, "That God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (**Jn. 3:16**)
 - ii. God demonstrated His own love toward us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (**Rom. 5:8**)
 - iii. John writes, "In this the love of God was manifested towards us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (**1 Jn. 4:9-10**)
 - iv. If you ever begin to doubt or wonder about God's love for you, remember the work of the cross. Remember what God did for you, remember what He did to demonstrate His love for you. He sent His one and only begotten Son to die on the cross for you. That's how much God loves you.
- e. And God's work of salvation is a work that is rooted in His love for us.

3. The next thing Paul highlighted in his thanks to God was the fact that God had chosen them from the beginning for salvation.
 - a. From the beginning of what you may ask? From the beginning of the church there in Thessalonica? No, before that. From the beginning of Paul's missionary work? No, before that as well. From when God sent His Son to the earth in the form of a babe? No, even before that. When did God choose these Thessalonians for salvation?
 - b. Take a look at Ephesians 1:4 & 5 to get a clue as to when God chose those of His for salvation.
 - i. Paul wrote to the church in Ephesus discussing God's choosing of them for salvation as well, and there he wrote, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will." (**Eph. 1:4-5**)
 - c. God chose the Ephesians, the Thessalonians, **and you and I for salvation** from the very beginning, before the foundation of the world. Before God laid the foundations of this world, He had already chosen us to be His. And He did it based upon the good pleasure of His will.
 - i. It wasn't because we were special, it wasn't because He knew we would be great representatives of Him, it wasn't because God knew we would do something amazing for Him. He chose us, not because of us, but in spite of us. He chose us based upon the good pleasure of His will. It pleased God to choose us.
 - d. God has chosen us, He has predestined us, He has elected us. The scriptures are very clear on this issue.

- i. Jesus Himself said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit...” (Jn. 15:16)
 - e. God chose us to be part of His family. He saw us from before the foundation of the world. He saw us and knew how bad we would blow it and how often we would need to ask for His forgiveness. He saw how we would fall short so often. And He still chose us. He chose us because He delighted to do so. It pleased Him to do so.
 - f. How grateful I am that God, in His infinite wisdom and grace, saw fit to choose me for His kingdom. I cannot thank Him enough.
4. Well, Paul thanked God for His work of salvation in choosing the Thessalonians, but he further goes on to describe that work of salvation and choosing. Paul says that it was through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.
- a. Our salvation was something determined by God. He chose us. And yet our salvation is a work that involves two great forces.
 - b. One, it involves the work of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. The Holy Spirit was sent to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come according to John 16. (Jn. 16:8)
 - ii. If not for the work of the Holy Spirit in convicting us of our sin, and revealing our need for righteousness and testifying of a coming judgment, there is no way we could have been saved.
 - iii. The Holy Spirit must come along and show us our need for a Savior, He needs to show us our need for forgiveness.
 - iv. And then that is when the second great force comes in.

- c. Our salvation involves the needed work and ministry of the Holy Spirit, but it also involves our needed belief in the truth.
- i. We have a responsibility to believe, to put our hope, trust, and faith in Jesus Christ. This too is a necessary element of God's work of salvation and sanctification.
 - ii. Now, some of you may be thinking to yourselves, "Now wait a minute, you just said that our salvation was based upon God's choosing of us. That we were predestined and elected for salvation prior to the foundations of the world being laid. That God chose me, apart from me. How is it that my need to believe in the truth is tied to my salvation?"
 - iii. You see, we need to understand that God's sovereignty in choosing us and electing us, **does not negate our responsibility** to respond to the work of His Holy Spirit. The sovereignty of God does not negate the free will of man.
 - iv. We must choose for ourselves whom we will serve as described in the book of Joshua. (**Josh. 24:15a**)
 - v. Romans 10:13 says, "For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (**Rom. 10:13**)
 - vi. Jesus Himself said, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (**Mk. 8:34**)
 - vii. People have a choice to make. If they will call upon the name of the Lord they will be saved. If they desire to come after Jesus, they may. We have a choice in the matter.
- d. Now, these things in our finite minds do not make sense. How can God sovereignly choose me and elect me, but at the same time, I have a say and a

responsibility to choose Him? In our minds eye it would seem that these things cannot co-exist.

- e. We think either God chose us, or we chose Him. Both can't be true. But that is clearly what the Scriptures teach.
 - i. You see the Bible teaches both the sovereignty of God and the freewill of man. The bible never looks to reconcile these two truths. God leaves them in His word without any sort of attempt to reconcile what we see as irreconcilable truths.
 - ii. And it is at times like this that we must remind ourselves of how much greater and wiser God is in comparison to us. God is infinitely greater and wiser than us. And there are things that He understands and knows to be true that we simply can't comprehend.
 - iii. Isaiah 55:8 & 9 states, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.'" (**Is. 55:8-9**)
 - iv. Romans 11 states, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?'" (**Rom. 11:33-34**)
- f. There are things in God's word that won't always make sense to us. And that is ok. Because God's ways are beyond our ways. We can't figure them all out. We can't put God into our little box of understanding. And, I don't know about you, but I'm perfectly fine with that. It doesn't bother me that I serve a God that is infinitely greater than I am in all His thoughts and ways.

5. In verse 14 Paul mentions our calling to salvation and how it came by the gospel.
 - a. The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. That He came to this earth, lived a perfect life, and then laid down that life upon the cross of Calvary, taking upon Himself the sins of all humanity. And that after dying on the cross, He was buried in a tomb, but then three days later He rose back to life, defeating sin and death, and now offers to all who would believe upon Him the opportunity to share in His victory. And we do so by grace through faith.
 - b. That is the simple gospel message. And it is a powerful one.
 - c. Paul wrote in Romans, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (**Rom. 1:16**)
 - d. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were led by the Spirit of God into the city of Thessalonica and there God’s Spirit worked in and through Paul and his companions to share the gospel message with the Thessalonians.
 - e. And as the Spirit of God led and the gospel message went forth, people got saved. They responded to the prompting of the Spirit of God and the declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ and put their hope and faith in Jesus Christ and His completed work upon the cross.
 - f. This idea of God’s calling upon our lives and it’s connection to the proclamation of the gospel is an important one. For the gospel needs to go forth.
 - i. Paul asks a series of very important questions in the book of Romans pertaining to this thought. He asks, “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they

believe in Him of whom they have not heard?
And how shall they hear without a preacher? And
how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it
is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who
preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad
tidings of good things!'" (**Rom 10:14-15**)

g. Indeed, there is a need for the gospel to go out so that people can respond to it. And God has chosen you and I as vessels of the gospel. We are to take it with us and share it with the world around us that they too may believe and avoid the destruction, condemnation, and damnation that will come upon those who do not respond to the truth of the gospel as described earlier in vs. 10-12.

h. **May we be faithful servants.** May we, like Paul, not be ashamed of the gospel, but believe in the power of it to change lives and share it with those around us.

6. Well, there is one more thing that Paul shared in relation to his thanksgiving to God for the salvation of the Thessalonians and that has to do with their glorification. Paul wrote about how God's calling by the gospel leads to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

a. Jesus Christ suffered a humiliating death upon the cross in order to save us. And because of that, God has exalted him and given to him honor and glory.

i. Philippians states, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted

Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Ph. 2:5-11)

- b. Through our salvation, we have become children of God. And Romans 8 declares that as children and heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Rom. 8:17)
 - i. Just as Christ suffered, the Thessalonians also were suffering. They were feeling the pain of persecution for the faith in Christ. They were experiencing all sorts of trials and difficulties because they had believed upon the gospel of Christ.
 - ii. They had become children of God and heirs with Christ. That just as Christ was glorified, so too they would be glorified.
 - iii. Romans teaches us that for whom God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” (Rom. 8:29-30)
 - iv. God has glorified us and will glorify us when we Christ appears. Colossians teaches us, “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” (Col. 3:4)
 - v. When we enter into God’s presence with our glorified bodies, we will share in the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

C. And so there you have all the things that Paul was so thankful to the Lord for regarding the work of salvation in and through the Thessalonians.

1. The Thessalonians were not going to be like those who perish in the Day of the Lord, those who rejected God and didn't want anything to do with Him or His truth. The Thessalonians were different, they were loved by God, chosen by God for salvation, they responded to the work of the Spirit and placed their belief in the gospel that was presented to them and for this they need not worry about their future. For their future is bright and glorious in the Lord.

D. Let's move on to our next verse, in verse 15 where Paul has an exhortation for the church based upon these wonderful truths.

III. 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Exhortation Command

A. Verse 15 has another one of those significant insignificants. In the NKJV the verse begins with "therefore"; in many other translations they begin, "so then". Whether your Bible reads "therefore" or "so then" or something else. The idea behind this transitional phrase is very important.

1. "Therefore" and "so then" are transitional phrases that speak of something that comes about as a result of something.
2. So, anytime you come across the word "therefore" you should pause and ask yourself the question, "why is it there for? What is it that has come about as a result? What is being connected here?"
3. And in our text, Paul is going to give two commands based upon the truths he just shared about.

B. Looking back through the chapter we understand that Paul has been detailing two groups of people that have gone down different paths and will experience two very different futures.

1. One group took pleasure in unrighteousness and did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved and as a result have believed the lie. Because they have believed the lie they stand condemned and they face the judgment of God and will perish for their unbelief.
2. The other group, has believed in the truth of the Gospel, they have responded to the love of God, they've yielded their life to the work of the Spirit and therefore they have a future that is bright and glorious with the Lord in heaven.

C. And based upon those truths Paul now exhorts the Thessalonians who were part of that second group who responded to God, to do two things.

1. Number one, Paul exhorts them to stand fast.
 - a. The idea behind this verb is that Paul is calling them to stand fast in the faith, to be constant, to persevere.
 - b. The church in Thessalonica was under heavy persecution, but Paul wanted to exhort them not to give up, not to grow weary. They were to stand firm, to stand their ground, to not give in to the trials and persecutions.
 - c. Paul had already mentioned in this letter how there would be a falling away that preceded "the Day of the Lord". Paul wanted those in the church to stand their ground. To not be part of those who would fall away in the last days, ditching the truth and turning to the lies of the enemy.
2. And number two, Paul exhorted them to hold the traditions which they were taught, whether by word or epistle.
 - a. The idea of holding the traditions speaks of adhering to and keeping them. That they would be obedient to them.

- b. Now it is important that we understand what Paul means here by traditions.
- i. In the NT, and specifically in the gospels, we hear a lot about traditions. Especially the traditions of the men as it pertained to the religious rulers and their interpretations of the scriptures.
 - ii. And Jesus didn't care too much for these traditions. He asked the scribes and Pharisees, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (**Mt. 15:3**)
 - iii. The religious leaders and twisted the commandments of God and came up with their own interpretations of what was most important and in doing so "they made the commandment of God of no effect by their traditions" according to Jesus. (**Mt. 15:6b**)
 - iv. Jesus said, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—" (**Mk. 7:6-8a**)
- c. So obviously this is not what Paul had in mind when he exhorted the Thessalonians to adhere to, or hold the traditions.
- d. The word "traditions" simply means teachings or doctrines. Paul's exhortation was for the Thessalonians to hold on to that which Paul had taught them in word, when he was with them and through epistle, having written now two letters to them.

D. These exhortations to the Thessalonians are exhortations that we must take and receive to ourselves as well. **We**

must stand firm and hold to the traditions, or the doctrines of the faith.

1. Now when we're talking about doctrines here, I think it important that we delineate between clearly understood doctrines of the faith and doctrines that are more in line with certain interpretations of the scriptures.
2. There are certain things that most all of Christendom believes upon. Things like the deity of Christ, the trinity, the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross, salvation by grace alone through faith alone. These are some important things that we must stand firm upon and hold onto.
3. But there are other things that we teach as doctrine that are more based upon interpretations. This is where we can run the danger of ending up like the scribes and Pharisees that put their interpretations and traditions above the clear commands of God.
 - a. When it comes to certain things about the Scriptures we have to understand that there are grey areas, areas that aren't so crystal clear.
 - b. Eschatology and the exact outline of events that will happen at the end of days when Christ returns is not something that we should be using to divide the church. These are not main pillars of the faith. These are not things that should define us as believers.
 - i. I believe in a pretribulation rapture of the Saints, that will be followed by a 7-year time of Tribulation, culminating with the physical return of Jesus Christ where he will come against Satan and the nations that have united against Him and He will wipe them out setting up and establishing an earthly reign upon the world for a 1,000 years.

- ii. Not everyone believes that. And that's ok. I think that I am right, and I teach these things, but I also am clear that these are not things that define us as Christians. I know a lot of great brothers and sisters in the Lord that don't have the same convictions when it comes to how things will play out in the end. That's ok. These are not the things we need to cling to and make a stand upon.
- c. It's ok to have an opinion, and to study and come to a conclusion on certain areas of scripture that are less than black and white.
- d. But we need to be careful when we start using those opinions to trump the already clear understanding of God's word. When we start to use our opinions to divide the body of Christ and look down upon others that don't share the same opinions as us.
 - i. That is a dangerous place to be, a place more like the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day whom He called hypocrites.
- e. So, we cling to that which is important. That which is clearly taught and supported throughout the Scripture and we allow for grace and different ideas when it comes to things that are less black and white.

E. Moving along, let's turn to our final section of our text which deals with a prayer that Paul has for the Thessalonians. Read with me verses 16 & 17.

IV. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; Prayer

- A. Here in these verses Paul offers a prayer for the Thessalonians, but before we get to the details of what Paul is asking for in this prayer, let's look and note the things that the Thessalonians already have.
- B. Before making any requests in this prayer, Paul reminds the Thessalonians of what they already have in the Lord. He lists three things, note them with me.

1. First of all, Paul once again speaks of and mentions the love of God that had been poured out upon the Thessalonians.
 - a. It's the same Greek word as before "agapao" in verse 13 that Paul gave thanks for.
 - b. Paul wanted to make sure they knew and understood this essential truth; that God loved them unconditionally and without end. That no matter what they went through, no matter what happened, God's love would remain constant throughout it all.
2. Second, not only did they already have the love of God, but they also already had been given everlasting consolation.
 - a. The word "consolation" speaks of comfort and encouragement. They had been given God's consolation, God's comfort, His encouragement. And the amazing thing about God's consolation is that it is everlasting.
 - i. It isn't temporary. No matter what they go through, no matter how difficult it gets as they continue to suffer through persecution, God will be there to comfort them.
 - b. With the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit inside us, He, the Great comforter, and helper, will be there to get us through each and every situation, season and circumstance.
 - c. We will never be left abandoned or alone in any situation. God will always be there to comfort us and to help us through it.
3. Third and finally, Paul noted how the Thessalonians already had a good hope by grace.
 - a. Their hope was in Jesus Christ. In His completed work upon the cross. In their future glory with Him. And all this was based upon God's grace.

- b. They didn't have to earn it, or merit it in any way. It was all a byproduct of God's grace being poured out upon them.
 - c. Their future hope was a good one. One they can take courage in and be excited about.
 - d. They were going to be with the Lord in heaven some day and all the pain and suffering they endured will be nothing in comparison to eternity in God's presence.
- C. Well, after mentioning what the Thessalonians already had, he got to the actual request of his prayer and Paul prayed for two things.
1. He prayed that their Lord Jesus Christ and their God and Father would comfort their hearts.
 - a. The church was going through a tough time. The persecution was difficult, they were still babes in Christ. They had it tough.
 - b. So Paul prayed that God would comfort their hearts. That God would remind them of that everlasting consolation they already have in Christ.
 - c. He wanted to see them encouraged. This was something he wrote about often to this church. Over and over again you read of it in both 1 Thessalonians and 2 Thessalonians, this need for comfort and encouragement. Paul didn't grow weary in asking for and desiring that this young church that was going through so much would feel and sense God's comforting touch upon their hearts.
 2. The second thing he prayed for was that they would be established in every good word and work.
 - a. The word established is the Greek word "sterizo". You can almost hear the English word that comes from this, it's steroids. This word means to strengthen, to make stable, or place firmly.

- b. In this context it is used in connection to Paul's desire that their faith would be established, or made stable through both good words and good works.
 - c. Words and works need to go hand in hand. It isn't enough to simply talk a good game, but you need to be able to put words into action.
 - i. We need to be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves. (**James 1:22**)
 - ii. Our words and our actions need to line up. If we say we are a believer, then our actions should demonstrate that we are a believer, our works will be in line with what Christ has called us to.
 - d. Now it is important to note that we are not saved by our good works, Ephesians 2:8 & 9 makes that clear, but our good works are the evidence of our faith and salvation.
 - i. James said, "Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (**James 2:18b**)
 - e. John wrote, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (**1 Jn. 3:18**)
 - f. So, we see here the importance and the need to be established both in every good word and work. They need to go together. And that was Paul's prayer for the church in Thessalonica.
 - g. That they would be comforted in their trials and tribulations and that they would be established in every good word and work.
3. And that is **my prayer for us as well**. That we would know the love and comfort of the Lord and that we would be strengthened in both our words and our works, all to the glory of God. Let's pray.