

**II THESSALONIANS 2:13-17**  
**LIGHT FOR DARK DAYS!**

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Thessalonians chapter 2 as we continue our study through Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica.

As we have seen in our study of II Thessalonians, Paul gives to these believers in chapter 1, ***ENCOURAGEMENT IN SUFFERING!*** They were young believers and because of their faith they were facing persecution. And Paul wanted to encourage them that this is not abnormal.

But, in spite of that persecution, they were growing, maturing in the Lord and Paul did not want that to stop.

Then, as we have been going through chapter 2 of II Thessalonians we have seen Paul focus on the ***ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE DAY OF THE LORD!*** You see, because of the persecution they were facing. Because of some false prophecies that were given. Because of some false teachers and teaching. Because of a false letter supposedly from Paul, these believers were shaken in their faith because they thought they missed the Rapture and were in the Day of the Lord!

And Paul corrects them on that and tells them that before the Day of the Lord can begin the church will be taken home to be with the Lord, there will be a departure. It is after this the man of sin will be revealed, the Antichrist and the start of the Day of the Lord!

And Paul makes these remarks that will lead us to what we will be looking at this morning. In II Thessalonians 2:9-12 Paul tells us, **“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”**

Notice that God was reaching out to these people and they rejected the love of the truth and thus, God gave them a strong delusion that they should believe **“the lie”** and as we said last time, that lie is that we are God’s!

Yes, that is good news. They did not miss the Rapture, they were not in the Day of the Lord, but what about all the pain they were enduring? What about all this persecution. These words don’t really help me here and now!

Let’s face it, how many of us enjoy pain? I don’t think too many if any at all! And yet, pain is important in our lives. Think about it for a minute. If you did not have chest pain, you would not know that you might be having a heart attack!

If you did not feel pain and you placed your hand in the fire, you would not recognize that you were burning yourself!

Thus, pain is useful to us even though we might not like it.

Now, think about leprosy. Leprosy kills the nerve endings in your body and thus, you don’t feel pain. And that is not a good thing and it can be devastating to the person who has leprosy.

Because of this deadening of the nerves, they lose feeling, their bodies become disfigured and they say that you could smell a leper 100 feet away!

This bacterial infection begins under the surface of the skin, just like sin does, until it then begins to manifest itself outwardly. It is a deadly disease that can take a person's life in 9 to 30 years, but you don't want to live that long.

Now, because you had no feeling, people would lose fingers, toes, and-so-on because they would not have the warning of pain to remove that part of their body from the irritant, like fire.

It was so bad that rats would come in at night and chew off their fingers and toes and they would not feel it, and they would not notice it until they woke up and saw that part of their body missing!

So, pain is a good thing, even though we might not like it because it is a warning to us to do something, don't continue down that path and-so-on.

I think the same is true in our spiritual lives. We don't like pain, but God will use it to warn us, to correct us, to strengthen us and-so-on. Apart from pain it would be difficult!

David said in Psalm 119:71, "**It is good for me that I have been afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.**"

Also, we are told in Psalm 119:67-68, "**Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word. You are good, and do good; Teach me Your statutes.**"

God's chastening gets our attention, it shows us we are His children, and then we have a choice to make, to either listen, to heed His warning, or refuse to listen. If we refuse, He will continue to chasten us until we do listen, because He loves us and wants what is best for our life. As parents, that is how we deal with our children, not that we are trying to keep them from fun, but to protect them. How much more does God deal with us, and in a righteous way!

I have called this study: ***LIGHT FOR DARK DAYS!*** And the reason being is that these believers were discouraged, they needed to be lifted up and I think that is exactly what we see Paul doing here.

Paul lights up the darkness for these believers by giving them . . .

***WORDS OF COMPASSION*** – II Thessalonians 2:13

***WORDS OF INSTRUCTION*** – II Thessalonians 2:14

***WORDS OF EXHORTATION*** – II Thessalonians 2:15

***WORDS OF INTERCESSION*** – II Thessalonians 2:16-17

That will be our outline for our study this morning and my prayer is that as we look at these points God would give us light for the dark days we are living in and lift us up so that we may shine for Him.

With that said, let's begin reading in II Thessalonians chapter 2, beginning in verse 13 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

**II THESSALONIANS 2****VERSE 13**

Yes, they did not miss the Rapture! Yes, the Day of the Lord had not begun! That is great but all this persecution they were facing. All these things that were coming down upon them and it confused them in their relationship with God and what was going on.

So, what does Paul do? “You losers! How can you fall prey to such things? How can you be so messed up? What is wrong with you?” No, Paul did not say that!

Notice what he does here. He shines the light of God in these dark times and gives them ***WORDS OF COMPASSION!***

Notice how he does this. “**But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you.**” He starts out by saying he is so thankful for them, that they are part of his life and part of the body of Christ!

Have you ever found yourself in a dark time, discouraged, and you encounter someone, and they say something to the effect, “Hey, I am so glad I ran in to you today! What a blessing! You look great!”

I have, and I can’t tell you how that light, maybe just a small candle can brighten my day and has brightened my day!

Have you encouraged someone today? There still is plenty of time if you haven’t and even if you have, there are more that need that little light of hope, of encouragement, of compassion!

Let me put this into perspective for you. There are some 7.6 billion people in the world today and a majority are not Christian. That means there are billions of people who are against you! They are at war with God and since you are a servant of God, they are also against you!

Not great odds. You get blasted here and you get blasted there! But the wonderful thing is that we as Christians have each other to show compassion and give that hope to. Hope is a powerful emotion or feeling. Without hope you lose the will to go on!

Let me share this story with you and you will see how just a little hope can change everything. We are told,

The school system in a large city had a program to help children keep up with their school work during stays in the city's hospitals. One day a teacher who was assigned to the program received a routine call asking her to visit a particular child. She took the child's name and room number and talked briefly with the child's regular class teacher. "We're studying nouns and adverbs in his class now," the regular teacher said, "and I'd be grateful if you could help him understand them so he doesn't fall too far behind."

The hospital program teacher went to see the boy that afternoon. No one had mentioned to her that the boy had been badly burned and was in great pain. Upset at the sight of the boy, she stammered as she told him, "I've been sent by your school to help you with nouns and adverbs." When she left she felt she hadn't accomplished much.

But the next day, a nurse asked her, “What did you do to that boy?” The teacher felt she must have done something wrong and began to apologize. “No, no,” said the nurse. “You don’t know what I mean. We’ve been worried about that little boy, but ever since yesterday, his whole attitude has changed. He’s fighting back, responding to treatment. It’s as though he’s decided to live.”

Two weeks later the boy explained that he had completely given up hope until the teacher arrived. Everything changed when he came to a simple realization. He expressed it this way: “They wouldn’t send a teacher to work on nouns and adverbs with a dying boy, would they?”

- Bits & Pieces, July 1991

Do you see how that hope changed this boy’s life and hope will change our lives!

These believers, they were not a burden to Paul. He was not disappointed in them. And what he told them I am sure blessed them tremendously. They were important to Paul and he was thankful that these Thessalonian believers were in his life.

So, he gives them these words of compassion showing them how he loved them and how important they were to him.

Not only that. He shows compassion on them by letting them know God loves them. He told them, “**brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.**”

Have you ever felt that, because of the things that are going on in your life, the difficulty that you are encountering in your life, that God doesn’t love you or maybe God is mad at you?

I am sure many if not all of us have felt that way from time to time, and of course, it is wrong. And maybe these Thessalonian believers, because of all the persecution that they were facing, felt that God was mad at them or didn't love them and Paul corrects that. He is having compassion on these believers and shining a light upon the situation that they are in, this dark time that they are in.

Now when it says that God has chosen them, in reality, He chooses all of us and then it is up to us to respond. That is how much God loves us. And to think that anything can separate us from the love of God, that will not happen!

Listen to what Paul says in Romans 8:35-39, **“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: ‘For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.’ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

There is absolutely *NOTHING* that can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus! But again, we can be overwhelmed by the darkness and then, a brother or sister in the Lord comes by with a candle of light, some hope and shares with us how much God loves us, and that darkness flees!

How wonderful that is!



Now, for these Thessalonian believers, Paul has told them that he loves them and is thankful for them. He has told them that God loves them and has chosen them! I don't think that is a small candle anymore but a bright light that has caused the darkness to flee in their lives.

But it flowed from the compassion that Paul had for these believers. He cared for them and that care was manifested in the words he spoke to them!

Peter put it like this in I Peter 3:8-9, **“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.”**

Notice Peter's plea for submission towards each other as he makes a plea for unity and love among God's people that boils down to submission within the body of Christ.

Peter tells us that we need to be of one mind and that is no problem as long as they agree with me. How true that is and that is what usually happens and that is not Peter's point, that is not the mind he is speaking of!

Then what is the point, what mind is Peter speaking of? We don't have to guess because Paul expounds on this. Paul tells us in Philippians 2:1-5, **“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

In other words, we are to put on the mind of Christ. But what does that mean. What is this mind of Christ that we are to put on?

The mind of Christ is one of humility, servanthood, submission, looking out for the welfare of others. How do we accomplish that, how do we put on the mind of Christ?

By allowing the Spirit of God through the Word of God to direct us to walk in His ways, for as Paul said in I Corinthians 2:16b, “**. . . But we have the mind of Christ.**”

Now that is interesting. If we have the mind of Christ, why do we see so much trouble in the body of Christ? Because we refuse to listen and submit to His Spirit’s leading. Self gets in the way and we succumb to it!

But that is not what we are to be about, self! You see, as we surrender to the Lord, as we crucify the flesh, as we are one with God, as we put on the mind of Christ, there will be unity with the brethren and if not, then it just gets ugly as Paul said in Galatians 5:15, “**But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!**”

Again, what can we do?

Paul goes on to say in Galatians chapter 5, “**I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**”

Galatians 5:16-18.

You see, there is the answer to our fighting, our anger, or whatever, walk in the Spirit and the Fruit of the Spirit which is love, will flow from your life and not the ugliness that comes from the works of the flesh!

One of the challenges we face in this area of loving the brethren is when we have been wronged, someone treats us unfairly and the natural response is to repay evil with evil, distance yourself from them but the supernatural response is to love them and bless them, why?

Because God has commanded us to love the brethren and if you can't, you need to do a heart check and ask God to help you! You need to **REPENT** and get right with God because apart from doing that, you will **NEVER** get right with your fellow man!

And think about it, God has blessed you by forgiving you of all your sins and thus, learn to forgive others as God has forgiven you!

And Peter says that when we do this, when we truly love the brethren, not just go through the motions, there is a blessing from God!

May we be known for our words of compassion towards others and that compassion that is extended will be a light to shine upon the darkness they are in and give them hope! **WORDS OF COMPASSION!**

#### VERSE 14

So, they have received these words of compassion from Paul, this light for the darkness that they were in, but how do they know this is true?

That is a great question and Paul is giving to them **WORDS OF INSTRUCTION!**

You see, these Thessalonian believers, as I have said, were suffering and they had become derailed, theologically speaking, in regard to their end time theology. And yes, when you become derailed, theologically speaking because of difficult times you are facing, it is easy to become theologically disoriented and disillusioned!

And yes, they needed words of compassion, but they also needed instruction to get them back on track, theologically speaking!

And that is really what we see here in II Thessalonians 2:13-14. There are six points that Paul brings out, points that are doctrinally important to keep them and us on track.

First of all, as we already covered, ***GOD LOVES THEM!*** Again, theologically speaking, you can get derailed about the love of God when tough times come. And thus, Paul wants them to understand that God loves them more than they will ever know!

Secondly, Paul wants them to understand that ***THEY ARE PART OF THE FAMILY OF GOD!*** That is important as these Thessalonians came to know the Lord, family and friends may have departed from them.

The family of God, the body of Christ, how important we are to each other, at least we should be. And yes, like in any family there may be struggles, but we are family and we need to keep that in mind!

Not only that, but ***GOD HAS CHOSEN THEM FOR SALVATION!*** I like that. It is not that God has chosen some for Hell or not for Salvation. Not at all! That would not make God righteous or just. He has given all of us a chance to come to saving faith and then it is up to us to choose Christ or reject Him. If we choose Christ, then we are foreordained from the foundation of the world to be saved because God knew who would come to Him and who would not!

The fourth point is that ***GOD HAS CALLED US THROUGH THE GOSPEL TO THAT SAVING FAITH!*** It is the same message to all, that God has become flesh, dwelt among us to be that perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. He is the Lamb of God who has come to ***TAKE AWAY OUR SINS!***

The fifth point is this. That ***HE SANCTIFIES THEM BY THE SPIRIT AND FAITH!***

The moment we get saved the Holy Spirit is working in us to make us more like Christ. He is setting us apart for His glory and that sanctification process will continue on until we go to be with the Lord.

Spurgeon gives to us this perspective regarding salvation and sanctification. He wrote,

“Had it been possible for you to have had salvation without sanctification, it would have been a curse to you instead of a blessing. If such a thing were possible, I cannot conceive of a more lamentable condition than for a man to, have the happiness of salvation without the holiness of it; happily, it is not possible. If you could be saved from the consequences of sin, but not from the sin itself, and its power and pollution, it would be no blessing to you.”

And the sixth point that Paul mentions here regarding theological instruction you might say is this. ***THEY WILL SOMEDAY GAIN THE GLORY OF CHRIST!***

I believe that this is the same glory that John wrote about in I John 3:1-3, **“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”**

Let me share this story with you and you will see what I mean. Several years ago I read a book called *Running Against the Wind* by Brian Flynn.

In this book Brian warns of the New Age practices that are coming into the church and he should know, he was heavy into the New Age and what he was practicing he is now seeing the church involved in.

“As a kid Brian hated going to church so when his father announced to the family one day they were through with church, Brian couldn’t have been more delighted. From there, Brian experimented with Ouija boards and Tarot cards. After time in the Air Force, he become consumed with the occult. In time, he developed his skills for Transcendental Meditation and eventually had his own spirit guides.” (Back cover of *Running Against the Wind*).

I want you to listen closely to what transpired in Brian’s life and the ensuing battle that took place. It was a battle for his soul and a battle of who really loved him.

Brian was asked to come to church one day by his friend June and not knowing why, he came. A short time later June invited Brian to a seminar given by a scientist, it was a three-part series. Brian went just so he could try to refute what this man was saying but after two of the sessions, Brian's thoughts of the foolishness of the Bible and of Jesus were shattered. We are going to pick up and see what took place on that last session where we are told,

I asked June to come with me to the last class. During the session, Don told a story from the Bible that really shook me. The story was about Abraham and his desire to have a son. God had promised him a son, but the years went by, and he and his wife Sarah were getting old. Sarah was well past her childbearing years. However, when she was ninety and Abraham was one hundred God blessed them with a son whom Abraham would name Isaac.

God then tested Abraham's faith and asked him to take his beloved son into the land of Moriah and sacrifice him. Abraham traveled many miles to arrive at the place God had instructed him to go to sacrifice his one and only son. Abraham brought his son up the hill to set him upon the altar, and not until Abraham raised the knife to slay his son did God cry out, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me" (Genesis 22:12).

God knew that Abraham was willing to obey God even in such a difficult circumstance. Don then told us that the very same place where Isaac was to be sacrificed, 2000 years later on the same hillside, the Jewish Temple was built, and that was the same hillside where Jesus would hang on the Cross.

I realized there was no way this could be a coincidence. Abraham was to sacrifice his one and only son on the same hillside where God's son would be sacrificed 2000 years later? The last block of my unbelief was suddenly shattered. It was true. The story of Jesus was true! For the first time in my life, I knew it was true. June and I sat in the back of the classroom as I prayed for God's forgiveness. Right there and then I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior and asked Him into my heart and make me born-again. June's eyes welled up with tears as she put her arm around me. "Am I really a Christian now?" I asked.

She smiled and said, "Do you believe Jesus is Lord?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Then you are a Christian; you are a child of God, and you are forgiven," she said with joy beyond her imagination.

As I stood to leave, I felt a little dizzy and disoriented. I hugged her and thanked her for being there with me. I walked out to the parking lot towards my car, when suddenly Phil's voice [one of Brian's spirit guides] entered my mind and said, *You are not a Christian, Brian. You just said some words. You can't be a Christian!* Phil sounded a little different. He sounded angry and disturbed. *You can't live like that. You are not going to be able to be good for the rest of your life. You are kidding yourself.* His words echoed in my head until I fell asleep that night. Was I really a Christian?



After I got home from work the following day, I stopped by the liquor store and decided to pick up some beer. This was unusual for me. I was not a big drinker and I rarely, if ever, drank at home. Sitting alone in my darkened living room, I drank a few beers, and then I did something I had never done before – I got in my car and drove to a video store to rent some porn videos. I had never rented one before. I had certainly seen them in the Air Force and at some bachelor parties, but I had never rented any ever before.

I felt really creepy about getting them. I always pictured someone who rented them to be desperately lonely and pathetic, and I wasn't sure why I was doing this. I picked some out and headed home. I watched them and drank more beer. The next day, I was hung over and decided to call in sick to work. I slept on the couch in the morning and then later got up in the afternoon to return the videos and get some more beer. As I drove to the liquor store, I questioned why I was behaving this way? Miriam, [another of Brian's spirit guides] purred in my head, "*Do you really want to give this life up?*" I pushed her voice out of my head. I grabbed another six-pack and instead of dropping off the videos, I decided to rent more.

When I got in line, a woman and a child stood in front of me. The mother looked at the video in my hand and smirked, drawing her child closer to her as if I was some evil villain waiting to lurch out and attack her child. I felt my face redden with embarrassment and shame, but it didn't stop me. Without making eye contact with the man at the cash register, I paid for the videos and drove home. All that afternoon and into the evening I watched videos and continued to drink. At the end of the night, I crawled into bed tired and drunk. Phil spoke sharply, condemning me, *Do you see what I mean? You are not a Christian. This is the way you are, and you are not going to change. We didn't make you drink, Brian – you chose to do it all on your own.*

I fell into a deep sleep until my alarm woke me in the morning. My head pounded as I lifted it off the pillow, and I knew there was no way I could go to work. I again called in sick.

I went downstairs and collapsed on the couch. I felt bad from the hangover, but something else far deeper was bothering me. *Why am I acting this way? Why did I rent those videos and get drunk two days in a row? Aren't I supposed to be Christian now? Why at this time? This isn't like me.* The voices of my guides were constantly ringing in my head. Of all the philosophies and religions I had looked into and considered, I never felt this type of resistance or opposition from my guides. In fact, I often felt an urging from my guides to further pursue and study Buddhism and Hinduism. What was so different about Christianity?

And then I saw it! The answer came to me in an instant. As if a veil was lifted from my eyes, I saw something I had never seen before. The reason they were resisting me was because they were opposed to Him. They hated Jesus. All at once every memory of anything anyone had ever said about Jesus, Satan and demons came flooding into my mind. And I realized my guides were opposed to Jesus, because they were demonic. They did not want me to become a Christian, because they were not of God. Satan, in his attempt to keep me where I was, revealed who *he* was! In order to stop me, he had revealed himself to me. He was now exposed. His real identity and the identity of my guides were revealed.

“My God,” I cried out loud. I fell to my knees and began to cry, “Oh my God, my Lord, I have been wrong my entire life! You are the way. Please Jesus save me. Please God forgive me for I have sinned against you.” I crawled into a ball and wept like a child.

From that moment on I knew who God was. The truth had been revealed to me. Jesus Christ is Lord, and I am saved. Amen!

In the weeks and months that followed I began to learn about the Bible, but this time I read it with joy and excitement. I found God’s book exhilarating, knowing it was the truth. When I went to church I went with great enthusiasm. Several times when singing, I began to weep, knowing what the Lord had done for me. He had set me free. For the first time in my life I knew who the Father was, who I was and then very soon what plans He had for my life. Is that not the answer every human being wishes to know? In one instant, I knew what truth was. I felt the peace in my heart and in my head that I had seen in other Christians. It’s a peace and assurance that has never left me to this day.

- Brian Flynn, *Running Against the Wind*, pp. 82-85

I do realize that was a little long, but I wanted you to understand that battle that is going on and how the enemy doesn't love us. Remember, the enemy has come to steal, kill and destroy us and it seems he is very effective.

But God does love us. In fact, he loves us so much that we have been adopted into His family, we are called the children of God!

Paul, in Galatians 3:26-27 tells us this, **“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”**

For Brian Flynn, do you see the light that shined upon his life and opened his eyes to the darkness that was around him! He was set free!

But make no mistake about it, there is a battle going on. Satan can't take away our salvation, but he can destroy our witness by the things we say, the things we do. Thus, as I have said this morning, we must surrender to the Lord, submit to the Spirit's leading and walk accordingly because the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. And, whatever you are feeding the most, will win. Feed the Spirit by being in the Word, being in prayer, being in fellowship with other Christians!

John R. W. Stott sums this up for us very nicely. He wrote,

In a single sentence the apostle's mind sweeps from “the beginning” to “the glory.” There is no room in such a conviction for fears about Christian instability. Let the devil mount his fiercest attack on the feeblest saint, let the Antichrist be revealed and the rebellion break out, yet over against the instability of our circumstances and our characters, we set the eternal stability of the purpose of God.

These are doctrinal truths that Paul is giving them to hang their hat on. It is to bring stability in their lives, in their walk these **WORDS OF INSTRUCTION!**

#### VERSE 15

Paul has given them words of compassion. He has given them words of instruction. And now, he gives them **WORDS OF EXHORTATION!**

Because of the persecutions, the false doctrines that were being taught, they needed to hold fast, to stand strong in the faith.

It seems that some have become complacent in their faith but now is not the time to lay back and take it easy. And what Paul said to the church in Thessalonica, the Holy Spirit is speaking to us. These words are just as important for us today.

You see, we are in danger of being swept downstream by the currents of ungodly culture. Thus, we are to stand firm, not give in, not even to the traditions of men that have religious overtones to them!

Now when Paul speaks of “**traditions**” he is not speaking of false religious traditions as Jesus spoke of in Matthew 15:1-3, “**Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying, ‘Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.’ He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?’**”

Paul is not speaking of the empty traditions of men, which he did speak of in Colossians 2:8, **“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”**

An example that we are not to accept some traditions is seen in the Roman Catholic Church. They teach that these traditions are things that are true but didn't make it into the pages of Scripture – extrabiblical traditions that were given to the apostles and handed down through the centuries to the church through the popes.

These then would include Roman Catholic doctrine that is not found in the Bible but which the Roman Catholic Church affirms to be the oral traditions of the church which are every bit as inspired as that which is found in the pages of Scripture.

Things like the doctrine of purgatory, the infallibility of the popes, indulgences and the efficacy of the sacraments to purchase installments of grace that earn a person salvation.

Then what is Paul speaking of? Paul is speaking of the apostolic traditions that were spoken by the apostles and written in letters that later became the Word of God.

You see, it is only God's Word that is an anchor to hold us stable during these storms against our faith. He can help us to stand strong to the deceit that is out there.

That is why the enemy attacks the Word of God so much, because he knows it is powerful in our lives and if he is going to keep us from the truth, he has to keep us out of the Word of God or distort the Word of God!

One writer summed up why Christians must “**stand fast**” and not be moved. He wrote,

**Stand fast** because of the current distress (*the persecutions and tribulations* described in II Thessalonians 1:4).

**Stand fast** because of the coming judgment of this world (*in flaming fire taking vengeance*, II Thessalonians 1:8).

**Stand fast** because of the strength of coming deception (*all power, signs, and lying wonders*, II Thessalonians 2:9).

**Stand fast** because of our glorious destiny (*the glory of our Lord Jesus*, II Thessalonians 2:14).

“For us, the exhortation is the same, especially when faced with experiences of suffering. In times of pain, anguish, mourning, depression, or doubt, nothing is more stabilizing than the truth of Scripture – *nothing*. We should never cave in to the temptation to take uncertain steps or change course in the darkness of despair. If we do, we will certainly misstep, stumble from the right path, or trip over unseen obstacles. This is why Paul illuminated the darkness with the light of exhortation to ‘stand firm.’”

(Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s Living Insights, 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, p. 141)

#### VERSES 16-17

Here we see the fourth point in these verses and this light that is shining in this darkness is this. Paul is giving to them **WORDS OF INTERCESSION!**

In other words, Paul is showing that he is praying for them. We saw this intercession of Paul also in this letter. In II Thessalonians 1:3 Paul said, “**We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other.**”

Also, in II Thessalonians 1:11 Paul said, **“Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power.”**

And we see Paul praying for them here in II Thessalonians 2:16-17, **“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”**

I can only speak for myself, but I am so blessed when someone comes up to me and says, “I am praying for you Pastor Joe!” They don’t know what I am going through, the day I had but God does, and He knows what I need, and those words bring light to some dark days!

And may we pray for each other, lifting them up and giving them light in the dark days that are out there. Get the phone list out and pray for the people of this church!

Now before we look at what Paul is praying for; did you notice what he is not praying for? He is not praying that the persecution would stop, that the suffering they were enduring would end, that the dark days that are upon them would end immediately.

No, he prays for God to comfort them and strengthen them in the work that He has for them, even in these dark days!

And something that can help us as we are going through tough times is looking upon God’s past faithfulness to us and that will help encourage us in the present situation we are in. You see, His faithfulness in the past is a promise of His faithfulness in the present and for the future!



Remember what Paul said in Titus 2:13, “**looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.**”

In having that perspective, don’t retreat but forge ahead in the work. That is what Paul said in I Corinthians 15:58, “**Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**” May we do so and not fall prey to the lies of Satan but let the truths of God set us free!

So, we have seen this morning that as dark as things may be for us, God always has light for us to get us through those times.

Yes, we don’t like pain, but it does make us aware that something is going on and I think God uses pain to get our attention so that we will look to Him!

So, as dark as things may be, may we remember that we can bring light to someone’s day with . . .

***WORDS OF COMPASSION***

***WORDS OF INSTRUCTION***

***WORDS OF EXHORTATION***

***WORDS OF INTERCESSION***