

**SOMETHING WE CAN DEPEND ON**  
**2 Thessalonians 2; text: 2 Thessalonians 2: 13-14**  
**January 2, 2022**

**I. Not a Hope Based on What We Can Predict**

- A. Paul originally wrote this letter to Christians in Northern Greek city of Thessalonica who believed Jesus would come back in their lifetime.**
1. They were beginning to experience persecution and were suffering for their faith.
  2. Some in their church were actually teaching that Jesus would return in the very near future.
  3. Many Christian writers and preachers today are predicting this.
  4. And they could be right.
- B. But Paul told these people that things were going to become worse before Jesus returned.**

**2 Thessalonians 2:1b-2 (NIV)** We beg you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come.

1. Paul explained about the "man of lawlessness" and about Christians falling away from their faith.
  2. God was not going to take away their present problems; rather they would experience even more problems.
  3. Although it is comforting to think that Jesus' coming may be right around the corner and while we certainly should be ready for that, we must also be prepared for the possibility that he may not return in our lifetime and that things might go from bad to worse.
- C. The hope found in our scripture isn't an escapist hope.**
1. Paul told the Thessalonians that Jesus wouldn't come back all that soon to snatch them away from this miserable world.
  2. That's true for us today.
    - a. Our hope not based on optimistic dreams that Jesus will return in our lifetime
    - b. Or that God will miraculously take away our problems
    - c. Or that in this life we will see how our griefs will serve a higher purpose.

**Questions:**

- 1) What problems or challenges am I facing at the beginning of this year?
- 2) Do I think that Jesus will return within the next few years or within my lifetime? Why or why not? How have I prepared myself for his possible coming? How have I prepared myself to face my problems if he doesn't come back in my lifetime?
- 3) Do I think that God will always reveal to me the reason he has allowed troubles and tragedy in my life? Why or why not?
- 4) Do I believe that here on this earth God will always take away troubles from his people, if they believe he will? Why or why not?

**II. But a Hope Based on What God, Who Loves Us, Has Already Done for Us**

- A. Even though Paul trusted God for the future, he was not thanking the Lord for what he might do, but for what he had already done.**
- B. Paul thanked the Lord for choosing these Thessalonian Christians and bringing them to faith**

**2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NIV)** But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth

1. Paul stated that these Thessalonian Christians ought to join him in thanking the Lord for this.
  2. They belonged to God not because they were better than others, but only because of his grace, in other words, because of God's love they didn't deserve.
  3. And that is also true for us.
- C. We didn't choose God; he chose us.**

**Ephesians 1:4-5 (NIV)** For he chose us [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

1. In the midst of all this seeming uncertainty and as they faced pain and torture and death, Paul thanked the Lord that he had chosen these Christian brothers and sisters as his very own.
  2. That is our comfort, too.
  3. We should also be comforted that he chose us in Christ
    - a. He chose us knowing that he would need to sacrifice his only Son to save us from our sins.
    - b. Surely nothing can separate us from the God who loves us that much!
- D. God also led us to faith.**
1. In describing how uncertain the future is, we must realize it is only uncertain to us, not God.
    - a. Paul pointed out future events, explaining about the "man of lawlessness" and about "a falling away."
    - b. Obviously, he knew this because the Lord told him about it.
  2. God controls everything that happens.
    - a. Everything must in the end follow his plan.
    - b. We may not know what will happen tomorrow.

c. But we do know that God not only knows what will happen, but he will guide and use what happens to accomplish his plan for the world and for our lives.

3. God did that in the way he called us to faith.

2 Thessalonians 2:14 (NIV) He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

a. The hope of eternal life only comes to those who believe in God's Son Jesus.

John 3:36 (NIV) Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

b. So, he guided our lives to that moment when the Holy Spirit would call us to faith.

4. God, who so intricately arranged the circumstances our lives that we might come to trust him, would certainly not let us slip through his fingers.

Philippians 1:6 (NIV) being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

E. Let's not forget that we already know the last chapter of our lives.

1. We know that we will be in heaven with Jesus.

2. We just don't know what will happen in the meantime.

3. But we do know that the God who wrote this last chapter of our lives is the same God who will write the other chapters that lead to it.

Questions:

- 1) How often do I thank God for the blessings he has already given me? As I think of the billions of people who have lived and died without knowing salvation, how often do I thank him for my salvation? How might thanking God for the salvation I have received help me during times of struggle and suffering?
- 2) How do I understand what Ephesians says about God choosing me and predestining me to be his own? Do I find this teaching simply confusing, or do I find it comforting? Why? Why is it especially comforting to know that he chose me "in Christ?"
- 3) Do I find it comforting to know that God not only knows what will happen, but that he will actually use it to accomplish his plan for the universe and for my life?
- 4) How did God lead me to faith in Jesus? Was there a moment in my life when I suddenly began to believe or did the Holy Spirit build my faith as I was raised in a Christian home and community?
- 5) How does being sure of our salvation help us to endure the sufferings, griefs, and challenges of our lives? Am I sure of my salvation? Why or why not?

III. Looking Forward with Faith in the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:15 (NIV) So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

A. We must "stand firm."

1. In Thessalonians 3: 7-8, Paul told them what this means..

1 Thessalonians 3:7 (NIV) Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. .

2. Standing firm meant holding on to what they were taught, and about God's eternal love for them and how he guided them to faith.

a. In our scripture, those are the teachings, or as some English translations say, "the traditions," they knew to be true.

b. God has already told us what we must know to enter this year with confidence, despite the challenges we may be enduring.

c. But for these teachings to do us any good, we must stand firm in believing them.

B. We stand firm in believing these teachings by "standing firm in the Lord."

1 Thessalonians 3:8 (NIV) For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.

1. We do it, not by trying to convince ourselves again and again of why it's better to believe what we believe than to give into our fears.

2. Rather, we do it by looking to the Lord who loves us and by strengthening our personal trust in him, knowing that he who sacrificed so much to save us will always love us.

Questions:

- 1) What teachings in scripture are especially comforting to me as I face the challenges and griefs in my life today? Why is it important for me to firmly believe not only to these comforting teachings, but to believe everything that the Bible teaches? Why is it also important to know that while Biblical teaching is true, our understanding of it may be flawed? Why is both humility and continual study of God's Word important to my spiritual growth?
- 2) What is challenging me, as I attempt to hold stand firm in my faith? What or who has God placed in my life to help me stand firm?
- 3) Is having faith for me, simply trusting certain ideas, or do I truly have a personal trust in Jesus for my life and salvation? Do I know for sure that I belong to him and to my heavenly Father? What can I do if I am not sure of my answer to that question? How does having a personal relationship with Jesus and my heavenly Father comfort me as I go through the challenges I am facing? How do I know that God is with me today? Who is living in me?

At the beginning of another year, God is calling us to faith. But the faith to which he calls us is not a blind faith. It is a faith that is based on what he has already accomplished in our lives. It is a faith that he amazingly nurtured through all those once seemingly random events we've experienced. It is a faith that causes us to entrust our lives to Jesus and to put our hands in his. Let stand firm in that faith come what may.