

ENCOURAGEMENT TO SMALL PEOPLE IN A BIG WORLD

(Sermon Summary)

Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

Earlier in this chapter, we have seen that there are great events that are due to happen at some point in the future. The appearance of the man of sin and then the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ are big events. We can feel out of our depth and also feel very small. These verses speak to people as they survey these things. They are promised everlasting consolation and good hope.

1. Out of our depth.

This is quite a natural response to verses 1 -12. These are very supernatural events that will happen in a world that we are used to and which does not regularly display such huge supernatural events. Our life is, in the main, quite orderly and predictable. When we are catapulted into this very supernatural realm, we feel out of our depth. It tests our faith and the depth of our commitment.

So, to his readers who might have been feeling like this, the apostle gives words of comfort. While we might be fearing that we ourselves could be soon unsettled or have pleasure in unrighteousness, Paul recovers us and re-assures his readers (and us too), that we are beloved and safe.

In fact, as the apostle looks at their lives, he is able to make some deductions that take him back to the deeper purposes of God. He can see that the Lord has already done a very supernatural intervention on their behalf in the past. They are chosen and elect, and therefore can have great security, not insecurity. God has not chosen them to fail, to fall away, to be deluded. They are chosen for salvation (v14). They will be sharing in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ at His return. If the end of all things has much that takes our breath away, so does that which happened at the beginning, before time began. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

It has been the infallible work of the Holy Spirit to find those who are the beneficiaries of Christ's death, and to set them apart and sanctify them. These people have heard the gospel (v14) and been able to understand and respond to it. They believed the truth, reckoning it true what the Bible records about the state of man, the glory of God, and the Person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord's people have seen that they cannot save themselves but have to lean on the Lord to save them. Other people do not

hear it as the truth but believe a lie instead, the true message seeming to make no sense to them. His people respond to the message as something of the first importance. So we are actually in our depth. We are already part of something very large and very supernatural with God at the heart of it all. We are standing on something that will not let us down when times become more demanding and critical. God Himself has undertaken for us in the past and will undertake for us in the future too. We are already part of something infinitely bigger than we will ever understand properly or know. We are connected to global events of unmistakably supernatural character and which have been world-changing in their effect. The fact that we are here listening to sermons is a reflection of that.

2. The response of small people in a big world.

We are to stand fast and not to give way. This is the opposite of what we see the apostle writing about in vv 1-3 or in Galatians 1: 6-9 where people were falling away from the gospel. People there are quickly troubled and then fall away.

When it speaks of 'traditions', we should not suppose that this is some lesser revelation. Paul is referring to the things that they have received from apostles and prophets. They are not the inventions of humans but are reliable and trustworthy teachings.

We are to know those truths so that we can stand fast in them. We will not be able to defend what we do not understand or fully grasp in the first place. So we should be able to defend those truths to ourselves as well as to other people. Certainly we should not attempt to agree with those who differ on key and fundamental teachings, such as the divinity of Christ, the resurrection, the Trinity and the authority of the Bible.

We are to expect a battle as we seek to uphold those doctrines. There will be books written and sermons preached that will go against what we read in Scripture. We may have to do research and become more familiar with spiritual truths.

3. Divine help.

God provides us with grace and hope. These things are within reach of the Lord's people. We can receive consolation and hope now. As part of this, there is power, fresh realization of the goodness of God, more knowledge and more experience of Him. There is more comfort for our hearts which can establish us. The normal Christian life involves solid truths upon which we build solid lives. We are to be stable and not blown around by events.