

Do you have an uneasy and sometimes all-consuming fear that others are doing something... or experiencing something... that you're not?... If so... you may be suffering from a new form of social anxiety... called "FOMO," or the Fear of Missing Out. ... The term... first identified by marketers in the mid-'90s... refers to the sometimes energizing... sometimes terrifying anxiety... that you are missing out on something absolutely terrific. ... It could be a party... a new movie... a special relationship (a spouse, a child, a friend, or a grandchild)... or a delicious romantic dinner.

I laugh at the current commercial on TV that is played during football games. The actress in the commercial gets a panicked look on her face... because she is out with her fiancée's parents... instead of home watching football. In the commercial they use the term "FOMOF" – "fear of missing out on football. ... But apparently FOMO is considered a serious problem today... that has accelerated thanks to real-time digital-updates and the smartphone. ... Social media expert Marc A. Smith explained it this way: "Those who used to dine behind thick stone walls and had caviar now do so, Tweet about it, and can be seen by those sitting down to dinner at Chipotle's." In The New York Times Jenna Wortham wrote about a friend who works in advertising who told her that she felt fine about her life—until she opened Facebook. The friend said, "Then I'm thinking, I am 28, with three roommates, and, oh, it looks like they have a precious baby and a mortgage. And then I [wanted to] die." Wortham claims that social media updates can make our simple domestic pleasures pale in comparison with all the fun things we *could* or *should* be doing.

The passage we studied last week in 2 Thessalonians... was written by the Apostle Paul... because the Thessalonians had such a clear case of FOMO. We saw last

week... in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 that they were being shaken in mind and alarmed. They were losing the stability and strength and calmness that Christians should have in times of trouble. At the root of their instability was a deceptive and false teaching that they were living during the period of time known as "The Day of the Lord" ... and they had therefore missed out on the rapture that Paul wrote about in his first letter.

Paul's first approach was to restore their balance by showing them why it was not possible for the coming of Christ to establish His earthly reign... to be just over the horizon. There was a few things that had to happen first.

According to verse 3, Paul reminds them, that they are not on the verge of Christ's return because the apostasy and the man of lawlessness must appear on the scene first. There is going to be a significant falling away from the faith by professing Christians, and this will be brought to a climax by the man of lawlessness who comes in the very power of Satan and deceives many.

The text last week ended in verse 12 of 2 Thessalonians 2... with the horrifying prospect that God Himself is going to delude those who refuse to love His truth and condemn them forever.

But... Has Paul written enough to ease the fears of those who had been tremendously shaken? ... Does such talk settle the mind and give stability and strength and calmness? ... Paul had even written about the victory of Jesus in verse 8... that Christ will slay the AntiChrist (the coming man of lawlessness) with the breath of His mouth... and destroy him by the brightness of His coming."

But the question still exists... If the times of apostasy are going to be as terrible as the verses we studied last week say it will be — then has Paul written enough to overcome the shaking and the alarm in Thessalonica? What should give the Thessalonians stability and confidence and calmness that they too may not be swept away in the apostasy and deceived by the man of lawlessness?

The obvious answer is that Paul is not finished. In a sense he has just begun. Last week's passage... Verses 3–12 were intended to dislodge the error about the second coming... and clarify the end of the age. ... But with today's passage... there is something Paul wants to build in to their minds and their behavior. And this especially is what will give the stability they need.

Imagine the day when sin, death, and evil are finally defeated by Christ: Suppose for a moment... that just like what the Apostle Paul describes... God allowed you to be caught up into His 3<sup>rd</sup> Heaven... Try to sense the indescribable eternal joy... and complete peace... no worries or concerns... everything that mankind has strived to obtain here on earth... It is all yours. The ultimate end of all your pursuits here on this earth... every pleasure you hoped to derive from possessions... whether you yearned for it or actually owned it... physical health and beauty... a strong bank account... recognition... respect... love and relationships... all the joy that you sought from those things... are now yours to the ultimate degree. You were able to experience a preview... to your future experience of having your whole heart's deepest desire. How would you continue to live... after a peek into Heaven...? ... Especially if you were guaranteed this future... ... If you had no doubt... nothing but certainty... that it will be yours. ...

Would you not come back to present reality with fearlessness and singing?  
... Honestly... what can anyone... or anything... on earth do to you... if you  
are guaranteed heaven? ... To fear the worst earthly loss... would be like a  
millionaire fearing the loss of a penny... Or even less... a millionaire  
fearing a scratch on one of his pennies.

So... turn with me now... to our passage of study this week... and see how  
Paul tries to bring this kind of awareness to his readers... for gaining such  
a sense of stability.

## **2 Thessalonians 2:13-17**

Notice verse 15. "*So then . . .*" Or: "*Therefore, brethren stand firm . . .*"

This "standing firm" is the opposite of "being shaken" in verse 2. So it is  
clear that Paul is still concerned in verses 13–15 to stabilize the Christians.  
His practical soul-concern is still paramount. And we can be grateful for  
this, because every one of us is shaken at one time or another.

Our passage of study today... addresses the effect of the heady doctrine...  
the end-times matters... the eschatology... that we studied last week... the  
effect **THAT** is have on our conduct. ... This morning we come to the  
practical lesson... that should always be the result of a study on end-time  
matters. ... Paul moved from prophecy... to practical Christian living. ...  
And we must never permit the study of prophecy... to be any kind of  
escape from our present day responsibilities.

Here are three responsibilities... we find in today's passage... that will help  
you and I to stand firm... because every one of us is shaken at one time or  
another.

1. **Believe the Truth (2 Thes. 2:13-14)**
2. **Cling to the Truth (2 Thes. 2:15)**
3. **Practice the Truth (2 Thes. 2:16-17)**

So lets take them now in this order...

## **2 Thessalonians 2:13-14**

Verse 13 starts with a conjunction of contrast – “but.” We are getting a sharp contrast to the condemnation of those who follow the “man of lawlessness”... the Antichrist who is to come... seen in last week’s passage. ... A different future is guaranteed... for those beloved by the Lord... chosen by God... and saved. And Paul seems to go to extremes to show how certain this is.

The first aspect of this certainty that Paul wants them to see... is that they are beloved by God. His salvation is rooted and grounded in His love. ... God proved this love... when Jesus temporarily laid aside all the pleasures of Heaven... came to this earth which He created... suffered tremendous humiliation from His creatures... endured pain... suffering... and death... to take the punishment you and I deserve for our sins.

God... in His grace... gives us through Christ... what we do not deserve – salvation! ... And God... in His mercy... does not give what we do deserve – an agonizing death... instead... He gave that to Christ!

This salvation is guaranteed... It is a sure thing... because God chose you.

All I know is what it says... and I believe it. “...*Do you mean to tell me that God chose us before we even got here?*” ... Spurgeon used to put it

something like this: "*I am glad God chose me before I got here, because if He had waited until I got here He never would have chosen me.*"

It is dangerous to engage in idle speculation about divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Did God chose me...? Or did I chose Him...? ... Both divine sovereignty and human responsibility are taught in the Bible. ... We simply have to admit that there are *mysteries* to our salvation... but we can rejoice that there are *certainties* on which we can rest.

"God, having chosen us for salvation," is a most wonderful truth. God has *chosen* believers before the world was ever created, chosen us to salvation. ... God wants us to be with Him. God wants us to live with Him forever and ever.

The word "chosen" (eilato) is not Paul's usual word to explain election. The word is used only two other times in the New Testament. ... Paul uses the word in Philippians 1:22... when talking about personal choice. ... It is also used in Hebrews 11:25... of Moses choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God... rather than enjoy the blessings of Egypt.... Now... here in 2 Thessalonians 2:13... this very strong verb is used purposefully... to show God's active choice... in God's election of believers.

The word's uniqueness is this: it is one of the words that is used when God chose Israel (in the Greek, Old Testament, Septuagint):

**Deuteronomy 7:6-7 (ESV)**

“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the

LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples,

The point is this: God has chosen believers in the very same sense in which He chose Israel. Believers are as chosen by God as Israel was. God loves us from the depths of His heart, and He wants us to be secure in the fact that He has *chosen us*. Our salvation is secure because it is based upon His having chosen us.

This is a most glorious truth: God saw us *as saved* before we were ever born. He chose us to be saved before He ever created the world. Just think of the security in this. If God saw us *as saved* before the earth was made—if God saw us *saved* before we were ever born, then there is no way we can be lost and removed from His love and care. This is what Jesus meant when He said:

**John 10:28-29 (ESV)**

*I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*

The Thessalonians... as Paul wrote... were “firstfruits.” In other words... Paul is still telling them that they had not missed the rapture... and Christ was about to return. ... Because God has more to come... others that He has chosen. They are merely firstfruits of many more centuries of others who will join them... in obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These first two verses of our passage... verses 13-14... give us the total spectrum of salvation. You know... it would be just as correct... for me to

say... “You and I **HAVE been** saved... we **are being** saved... and we **will be** saved. There is a past... present... and future aspect of our salvation. And these two verses present all three of these aspects. J. Vernon Mcgee says, “*They give you salvation from Dan-to-Beer-sheba – all the way from the past... the present... and down to the future...*”

God chose us... and this looks to the past. We are saved through sanctification of the Spirit... and this looks to the present.

The word "sanctification" means to set apart or be separated unto God... for His special use. We are separated out of the world and made distinct. God purifies us... and that is what makes us distinct. Everyone who has been saved is set on a course of growing more and more like Christ. This process continues all the way to the time God takes us to live with Him. It doesn't stop until we either die... or Christ comes and gets us in the rapture. We are being saved.

Commenting on sanctification, the Puritan writer John Owen wrote,

*Sanctification is an immediate work of the Spirit of God on the souls of believers purifying and cleansing of their natures from the pollution and uncleanness of sin, renewing in them the image of God and thereby enabling them from a spiritual and habitual principle of grace, to yield, obedience unto God . . .*

The third part of our salvation is that we will be saved... verse 14... that you may obtain the glory the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is future. It will happen at death... or the rapture... whichever comes first for a believer.

**1 John 3:2 (ESV)**

*Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet*

*appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.*

The **purpose** of salvation is to gain the glory of Christ. Remember: the Thessalonian believers were suffering severe persecution. Think what this verse meant to them. ... If you are facing your own hardship in life right now... think about this: As a believer... you are bound for glory — to obtain and share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This is truth to be believed!

In order for us not to be shaken... to remain calm when trials come our way... we have truth to believe... a certainty to cling to.

We need to... #1. Believe the truth... and ... #2. Cling to the truth

### **2 Thessalonians 2:15**

Christians are in constant danger of being swept downstream by the currents of ungodly culture. They are also prone to let the truths they know and the relationship they enjoy with God grow cold. They need to vigorously **hold to** what they have been taught by God's servants. The Thessalonians were in danger of loosening their grip on the apostles' teachings which they had received (cf. 2 Thes. 3:6) in person from the missionaries and from their letters. They were in danger of slipping backward in their Christian experience because of the pressures of their trials and the daily negative influences of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Now what gives this stability and calmness of soul that God means for his people to have? Verse 15 gives the key. He says, "stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter."

So when circumstances arise that alarm you... and when the winds of error start to blow you off your stability... the key is to take hold of something and to hold it fast — namely... the traditions that were taught by the apostles. And what is that today...? Scripture!

In September of 1987, Henry Dempsey was flying his 15 passenger turboprop plane from Lewiston Maine to Boston. At 4,000 feet he heard a noise in the back of the plain where the rear stairs are. He turned the controls over to his co-pilot and walked back. The plain hit turbulence knocked him against the door and it fell open.

Dempsey was sucked part way out, fell face down on the steps, and grabbed for something—anything that might save his life. He caught a railing and held on. The co-pilot, Paul Boucher, saw that the "door ajar" indicator light was on and realized something had happened, so he changed course and flew to the nearest airport. Dempsey hung "partially in the aircraft and partially out" for about 10 minutes before the plane landed at Portland International Jetport.

When he landed, they found him with his face 12 inches off the runway and with his hands so tight around the rails that his fingers had to be pried open.

What I want you to see from this story is that the life and death grip with which Henry Dempsey held on to the stair railing at the back of that turboprop plane is the kind of grip we should have on the teachings of the apostle Paul... handed down to us in the New Testament.

The wind and the suction and the gravity and the noise that swirled around him and tried to pull him to his destruction was less dangerous than the mystery of lawlessness that is swirling around you today and which will someday become even stronger. And the stakes are greater, because the mystery of lawlessness and unbelief is sucking us not to physical death in the Atlantic ocean, but to eternal destruction in hell.

To keep from being shaken from our faith... we need to:

1. Believe the truth
2. Cling to the truth
3. Practice the truth

## **2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**

It is not enough to believe the truth and cling to it... we must also practice it. ... If we hear the Word... but do not obey it... we are only fooling ourselves.

### **James 1:22-25 (ESV)**

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

Believers... no matter what their present status is... need to grow spiritually... become stronger and healthier spiritually.

It is God who establishes... but He uses people to accomplish His work. ... I am so thankful for this church... as it recognizes our need for a youth pastor to come along side and establish the younger believers. It is needed. ... But let's not sit back and think we have been completely obedient to the Lord... and we have done our part in establishing others in the faith.

Too many Christians today emphasize *clinging to* the truth... but downplay *living* the truth. One of the best ways to cling to the truth is to put it into practice. ... It is good to be defenders of the faith... but we must not forget to be demonstrators of the faith. ... Lazarus did not have to give lectures on the resurrection. People had only to look at him and they believed...

"Deed and word" is a comprehensive phrase encompassing all of human behavior, as in Colossians 3:17 ("*whatever* you do, whether in word or deed"). "Paul's desire is that inward encouragement in the face of external opposition be accompanied by godly behavior in whatever Christians say and do."

Paul was concerned about two aspects of their Christian life: their *word* and their *work*, their *saying* and their *doing*. If our walk contradicts our words, we lose our testimony. Our "walk" and our "talk" must agree; good works and good words must come from the same yielded heart.

We are not saved by good works (Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:3-7); but good works are the evidence of salvation (Titus 2:11-15). It is not enough to depend on

good words; the words must be backed up by the deeds (1 John 3:18). It must be a steady practice, not an occasional one. We must be *established* in our words and works. ... How is this possible? Only God can do it by His grace... and this is what Paul prayed... for his friends.

In November 2010, a wedding party in Glenelg, Australia, was unexpectedly called into action right after the wedding ceremony. While they were posing for pictures on a scenic ledge, a woman unrelated to the wedding fell into the water and started drowning. Dressed in his tuxedo, the best man jumped in and brought the woman back toward shore. Then the bride, a trained nurse, waded into the water and started administering CPR. By the time the Surf Life Saving volunteers had arrived, the woman had regained consciousness. But according to one safety official, "[The victim] was very lucky that the bridal party was there and they acted quickly and got her to the shallows." After the daring rescue operation, the drenched but heroic best man and the bride happily rejoined the wedding reception and continued with the festivities.

In some ways, this unusual event serves as a great image for the calling of every local church. ... We're dressed up for a party (celebrating worship)... we are celebrating just as Paul did in verse 13... the fact that God has chosen us... by His grace. ... But at the same time we're also prepared to dive into mission... even when it's inconvenient... and dangerous... and we might get messy doing it. ... Worship and mission... loving God and loving others... praising and serving — these combinations aren't opposites... they form the dual nature of our calling as the church.