

A Firm Conviction

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INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Illustration:** “Louis Zamperini”
- B. For someone to choose the road of great difficulty instead of ease and comfort, he has to be extremely committed to the cause for which he stands.
- C. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15, we see this as the apostle Paul reminds the disciples of their calling, salvation, and the need to faithfully and firmly hold fast to the calling.
- D. **Main Idea:** God has called us!

DISCUSSION:

I. **THE ACCESS OF OUR CALLING – 2:13a, 14**

- A. The Gospel Message: “*To this He called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*” – verse 13a, 14
 - 1. We can be sure that this calling is not subjective because the Source of the calling is revealed—God—and throughout the Bible, when God called (Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Paul), He makes the calling clear and objective.
 - 2. In this calling, there is also an identity given: “*brothers beloved by the Lord*” (verse 13).
 - a. To be counted as “*brothers beloved by the Lord*” places them in a special, unique family where God is the Father of the household (verse 16; 1:1; Ephesians 2:19).
 - b. The word “*brothers*” is used 9x in this small letter, referring to “unity, a fellowship of life and love based on identity of origin.”
 - 3. God “*chose*” them “*from the beginning*” for salvation (verse 13), but what does that exactly mean?
- B. **Application:**
 - 1. We miss a key concept if we only stop at “*God chose*”... the pendulum this phrase rests upon is “*through the sanctification by the Spirit and **faith in the truth.***”
 - 2. That’s why it makes perfect sense for Paul to be so concerned with preaching the Gospel wherever he went:

3. It's the Gospel truth message which contains the soul-saving news regarding the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and answers the question, "What must we do to be saved?" (Acts 2:37, 38).

II. THE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR CALLING – 2:13b

A. Saved & Sanctified: "... as the firstfruits to be saved, through the sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth" – verse 13b

1. Highlighted at least four times, the apostle Paul purposefully praised the disciples for how they responded to the preaching of the Word:
 - a. They **believed** the testimony of Christ (1:10)
 - b. They **received** the Word of God (1 Thess. 2:13)
 - c. They **accepted** as truth (1 Thess. 2:13)
 - d. They **received** it in much tribulation with joy (1 Thess. 1:6).
2. The greatness of their response is brought more into focus when we notice what is written concerning those who did not respond in like fashion (1:8-9)
3. Notice how verses 12 and 13 are placed in contrast to one another:
 - a. Verse 12 – they "*do not believe in the truth*" and "*had pleasure in unrighteousness*"
 - b. Verse 13 – regarding God's provision of salvation through "*sanctification by the Spirit*" and "*faith in the truth*"
 - 1) On the one hand, we have a denial of the truth and a lifestyle that follows in wickedness.
 - 2) On the other hand, we see a belief in the truth that entails submission to the truth and a lifestyle that is continually being dedicated and consecrated to God by the Spirit.

B. **Application:** The noun form "*sanctification*" in the Greek means "personal dedication to the interests of Deity, being holiness and consecration."

1. This dedication begins when an individual obeys the Gospel in his response to Christ Jesus "*to be saved*" (Acts 2:38; 1 Corinthians 6:11).
2. This "*sanctification*" involves emptying ourselves of old habits, traits, lifestyle, and replacing them with the interests of God: such as good works (verse 17); encouraging the weak (1 Thess. 5:14); giving thanks in all circumstances (5:18); holding fast to that which

is morally and spiritually good (5:21); abstaining from every form of evil (5:22); living quietly, minding your own business, working with your hands (4:11); and having self-control against temptation (4:4-5).

3. When a person responds and accepts the Gospel call, he is saved, and lives a life of sanctification!

III. OUR ALLEGIANCE TO THE CALLING – 2:15

- A. Stand Firm & Hold Fast: “*So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter*” – verse 15
 1. The word “*stand firm*” in the Greek, literally means, “to be unshakably committed in conviction; to remain unbroken in belief.”
 - a. This word stands in contrast with Paul’s concern in verse 2 that they not be “*quickly shaken*.”
 - b. Apparently, some were spreading falsehood regarding the second coming of Jesus.
 - c. Therefore, Paul exhorts the saints to be firmly rooted and immovable when it comes to these false teachings.
 2. The second imperative action is for them to “*hold to the traditions*” – the word “*tradition*” in the Greek means “the content of instruction that has been handed down.”
 - a. This is an important definition because some consider the word to mean “a way of doing something that may or may not be what others are doing.”
 - b. It has often been placed in a negative light... at times, this is for a good reason (such as Matthew 15:1-9).
 - c. But not all traditions are bad... in our text, the apostle Paul clarifies the source of the traditions and the method of delivery:
 - 1) The source: “*taught by us*” – the apostles who were selected by Christ Himself and given divine authority and inspiration (1 Thessalonians 2:6)
 - 2) The method: “*either by our spoken word or by our letter*”
 - d. The New Testament church is to walk in accord with apostolic teaching and divine tradition that they gave to us by inspiration of the HS (3:6).
 3. The point? ***Remain standing firm and hold on to what is the truth!***

B. Application: One of the most effective descriptions found in Scripture of the Christian life is that of a race (Hebrews 12:1).

1. This race is not portrayed as being a sprint... if it were, there would be little reason for the word “*endurance*” to be used in that verse.
2. Since the race is not a sprint, it stands to reason then that Biblical writers would spend time exhorting the readers of their letters to “*hold fast*” (Philippians 2:16), “*stand firm*” (Ephesians 6:13-14), and “*not lose heart*” (Hebrews 12:3).
3. Because the race we run is a lifetime endeavor and the prize we are promised is extremely valuable and significant (1 Corinthians 9:25).

CONCLUSION:

- A. Main Idea:** God has called us!
- B.** The precious Gospel message of Jesus Christ is the greatest message man has ever heard and ever will.
- C.** We must choose to remain steadfast even when it costs us dearly.