

2 Thessalonians 2:15-17

Introduction

In the AV, this section begins with a very important word, “therefore”. In the light of what has gone before, i.e. since God has included you in His great purpose, and since that purpose cannot be overthrown, **stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you** (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Addressing the Thessalonians affectionately as “brothers”, Paul urges them not to be frightened by the strength of the opposition or unsettled by the problems. Paul is appealing to the solid truths of the Christian Gospel as a safeguard against being stampeded by what has upset his friends.

Holding onto the teachings

The Greek word translated “teachings” in the NIV, is παραδοσεις, and is translated as “tradition” in the AV, i.e. something that has been delivered to us. C.f. 1 Corinthians 11:23, regarding the Lord’s Supper, and 1 Corinthians 15:3ff, regarding Christ’s death and resurrection. The idea is of something handed on by one hand to another, having been received from God in the first place. A tradition has an authority external to the teacher himself. Therefore the preacher is not allowed to substitute his own thoughts for what he has received. Traditions, says Paul, come through the Word or epistle. In either form, it is authoritative.

The Bible alone is our religious authority, therefore we must reject all unwritten authority. But note that the Bible itself is a part of tradition. Of course Scripture has a supreme place among traditions. Also it represents traditions existing among the apostles. Therefore it enshrines once for all the teaching of the apostles.

We must reject Roman Catholic traditions, not because they are traditions as such, but because they originated in later times. Therefore they are not part of the apostolic tradition, and in fact are inconsistent with apostolic teaching. The command is to hold fast to apostolic teaching, to inherit and pass on the apostolic tradition.

Paul’s prayer

Paul concludes the chapter with a prayer (2 Thessalonians 2:16,17). **May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father..** Note Paul’s emphatic recognition of Christ’s deity. Note his name is not only associated with the Father, but actually comes first. Note also that Christ is the hearer of our prayers. The verbs contained in these verses, are in the singular – as though one person is acting. With the Son and the Father, there is complete unity of action, oneness of purpose though two people are involved.

The whole thing is invoked in an incidental way, without explanation. It seems to be taken for granted that Jesus would accept this prayer without question, because He is used to it. Bear in mind that this is among the earliest portions of the New Testament. This proves that the deity of Jesus Christ was not something which emerged gradually as Christian belief.

“Loved us” and “gave us” in v14 are in the aorist tense, suggesting one definite historical act in which love is manifested and given. There can be only one answer to what this historical fact is – the Cross. From His Cross we have derived **eternal encouragement and good hope**. What Christ has given us is the gift of comfort, strength or help, which is everlasting. It will never fail us amid all vicissitudes and troubles and sorrows of life. It is the only true source of comfort, because it comes from an unchangeable Christ.

He also gives us good hope through grace. Hopes in the human sphere are so uncertain and inadequate. Lots of things we hope for, we will never receive or attain. But Christian hope is firm and dependable. The adjective “good” means well-founded, absolutely assured. The scriptural view of hope is a certainty because it is grounded in divine promises.

May he encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word (2 Thessalonians 2:17). “Comfort” is implied, as in the AV’s translation, but there is much more in this word παρακαλεσαι. Also “strengthen” is suggested, translated “encourage” in the NIV.

God makes us steadfast and stable. We are so fickle and uncertain. But with God’s help, we are like a light thing lashed to something which is solid and substantial. **His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord** (Psalm 112:7). Suggestion here of mature character and developed character. **Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord** (1 Corinthians 15:58). This is so necessary in Christian living. Everything we do is dependent on a very firm relationship with Christ.

If we want our actions to please the Lord, we need to strengthen every link which binds us to Him – prayer, bible reading, ordinances, Christian work and Christian fellowship. In Him is consolation enabling us to look serenely on the ills of life and darkness of death with a calm and steadied heart.