

The Christian's Protection

No big idea.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

INTRODUCTION

There's been a lot of conversations lately about safety. I think it's obvious that safety is a top concern for most human beings, and in some ways understandably so. Life is valuable, being wise and diligent to protect and preserve it within itself is not a bad thing. But as Christians, we should ask ourselves, "what is true safety in this life?"

Jesus said, "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it." That doesn't sound incredibly safe to me when it comes to our natural tendency toward self-preservation. Jesus' mantra was never, "Safety First." He sent His disciples into the middle of storms, out to do battle against demons, on journeys with no money or food, into the middle of deserts alone with no explanation, into shipwrecks, perils, and difficulties. Yet, the Bible is clear that the safest place for any person to be is in Jesus Christ and walking in the perfect will of God for their life. In fact, if you are not in Christ and not following Him, you can be healthy, wealthy, and seemingly secure in this world, but in the most dangerous place of all, for, ***"What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul?"***

Paul, talking to a church in Thessalonica, that was experiencing great danger, **offered them comfort in Christ that was greater than the danger.** In essence, the hope of what Christ brings for the church is greater than the difficulties and dangers you're temporarily facing right here and now. Paul tells the church, ***"You feel endangered, but you're safe because you're in Jesus; those without Jesus might be comfortable right now, but in the end, you are the ones who will be rescued to be with the Lord forever, and they are the ones who will endure the ultimate wrath of God because of their love of unrighteousness and rejection of the truth."***

As Paul continues his encouragement, we will look at a message this morning entitled, “The Believer’s Protection.”

- **We studied the Believer’s Hope** in chapter 1 – they were a church with abounding love and exceeding faith.
- **We studied the Believer’s Rest** – that Christ will bring rest for those who are troubled, and trouble those who afflict.
- We studied the Believer’s future – looking in-depth at the gathering together of the saints to the Lord, the rapture, and why our expectations and lives should be eternally focused.
- **We studied the world’s reckoning** – The Day of the Lord that is coming to judge the world and those who rejected the truth of Jesus.
- **Today we study the Believer’s protection** – not only is God going to protect us from the coming wrath by taking us to be with Him, but he protects us here and now so that we might accomplish every purpose and calling He has placed on our lives.

BIBLE VERSE

[2Th 2:13-17 NKJV] **13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. 15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. 16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given [us] everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work. [2Th 3:1-5 NKJV] 1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, 2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. 5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.**

1

Protected Through the Gospel

BIBLE VERSE

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, 14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION

Bound to give thanks – Paul finds reason to thank God for the church because he knows something about the church’s ultimate future. Yes, they were suffering. Yes, they were persecuted. Yes, their temporary state didn’t look incredibly hopeful. So why was Paul thankful? Because he knew that no matter how difficult it got for them here and now, God is ultimately going to deliver them in the end. Through their faith in the gospel, that Jesus came for sinners, died on a cross, and rose from the dead, their eternal protection was secured.

He then breaks down an overview of our salvation in one sentence, and he portrays it like a book:

Our salvation is like a book authored by God. This is why the book of Hebrews calls Jesus Christ, ***“the author and finisher of our faith.”***

- The book our salvation begins with the fact that God chose to save us from the beginning.
 - Now for all those potentially excited about a Calvinist/Arminianism debate, sorry to disappoint you today. The word Paul uses here for “Chose” is a different word than the one he uses when discussing god’s sovereign election.
 - Here Paul is simply encouraging the church that God made a decision to bring you salvation.
 - this is where everything starts. Christianity is all about a God Who came to us when we couldn’t get to Him. We can love God only because He first chose to love us.
- **He chose us for salvation** – that salvation comes through two things: The sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth.
 - It’s true that when you and I repented of our sins and trusted in Jesus Christ, we were saved through our belief in the truth.
 - But the Bible is clear that we are also “being saved” and we “will be saved.”
 - ***Through faith in the gospel, God seals you eternally.***

- ***Through the sanctification of the Spirit, God is saving you, making you ready for heaven.***
- ***Ultimately, it ends when we “obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” when Jesus comes and literally saves us from this world.***
- And all of this happens, Paul says, through God’s calling by the gospel. the message of the hope of Jesus Christ is the invitation into life with God and eternal salvation.

This is where true safety for the human being begins. The safest place a person could ever be in is to place their faith in the gospel, confirming God’s call of salvation, and bringing them into a place of God’s faithful work being done in their life to prepare them for the glory that lies ahead. As we’ve already read, the coming wrath of God is falling upon those who ***did not believe the truth and loved unrighteousness.***

CONTRAST

Here Paul is also contrasting the ultimate outcome of the believer to the unbeliever. In our last study, we learned of the fate of those who reject God’s truth here and now... and it’s terrifying. But Paul wants the believer to be encouraged that because of God’s grace, the outcome will be different for them.

- **The unbeliever is sent a strong delusion vs. the believer is chosen by God.**
- **The unbeliever believes the lie vs. the believer has belief in the truth.**
- **The unbeliever loves unrighteousness vs. the believer is sanctified by the Spirit.**
- **The unbeliever will be punished with everlasting destruction from the lord’s presence vs. the believer who will obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

APPLICATION

Friends, listen. If you haven’t noticed this world is becoming an increasingly unsafe place, physically and spiritually.

- The government’s protection isn’t worth much. There might come a time where your financial security and worldly assets don’t get you very far. And after all is said and done, there will still be a God we all stand before and give an account to of our lives, and the ultimate question on that day will be, “What did you do with Jesus?”

- But Jesus said, **“In this world, you will face tribulation, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world.”**
- When you believe and walk in the truth, responding to the call of the gospel, you are safe. You are safe because God promises that the Holy Spirit will sanctify you (that is, set you apart as holy) and see you through to the day that you are caught up to meet Jesus in all of His Glory.

2

Protected Through Tradition

BIBLE VERSE

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

WHAT PAUL'S NOT TALKING ABOUT

Hold fast to the traditions –

- He's not talking about church traditions in the context of how our western minds think of them.
- He is not saying, “Don't paint the church a different color because it's been that way for 30 years.”
- He's not saying, “Make sure you don't change the annual church events because those are traditions!”

Regarding church dynamics and gatherings, there are “traditions” that change due to culture, time, location, technology, etc. That's normal and fine. But Paul is clear that there are certain “Traditions” that need to stay the same because they are foundational to the health and functionality of the body of Christ.

QUOTE

Traditions – Doctrinal truths that have been transmitted orally or through writing.

In 1 Corinthians, twice he phrases it like this: “What I have received from the Lord Jesus I delivered to you.”

He’s not talking about church picnics or worship styles. He’s talking about theological truths regarding the nature of Jesus Christ, salvation, the meaning of communion, godly order, etc.

BIBLE VERSE

Colossians 2:8 (ESV)

8 See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

APPLICATION

Paul wants us to be warned that there is a “war of traditions” that the Christian must always be aware of.

The traditions of men (worldly philosophies, empty deceit, the base spirits of this world) vs. the traditions of Christ (spiritual wisdom, gospel-centered truth, biblical worldview).

- Translated into modern vernacular, we might hear Paul saying, ***“Don’t jump on the world’s every bandwagon! Stay rooted in scripture, anchored in Jesus, and close to the truth!”***

ILLUSTRATION

I’ve mentioned it before, but I think one of the emerging counter gospels or gospel substitutes emerging today is Critical Theory. For many today who claim Jesus, Critical Theory has become the replacement for Christian Theology.

- Critical Theory operates as a religion in that it is a worldview that asks the fundamental questions of humanity:

- Who are we? Why are we here? What is our problem? What is the solution? What is our moral imperative?
- Of course, every true Christian knows that ONLY the gospel can answer those questions effectively.

Who are we?

- Gospel = valued humans created in the image of God.
- CT = classes of either the oppressed or the oppressors depending on one's race, economic status, sexuality, religion, nationality, etc.

Why are we here?

- Gospel = to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- CT = to ensure that equity is reached, that is make everyone the same.

What is our problem?

- Gospel = sin. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
- CT = systems and classes of oppressors. If you're in the majority group your guilty, if you're in the minority group, you're innocent.

What is the solution?

- Gospel = The blood of Jesus which brings peace with God and peace with others and breaks down the dividing walls.
- CT = destroy all systems of oppression, police, White Evangelicalism, conservative politics, etc.

What's our moral imperative?

- Gospel = To love others in the truth.
- CT = to hate those who don't agree with you.

APPLICATION

What must we do?

STAND FAST – don't waiver. Remain anchored in the truths of God's word and the gospel of Jesus.

HOLD FAST – Don't let go or trade-in the timeless truths of God for some passing fad of culture.

3

Protected Through Good Words and Works

BIBLE VERSE

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

APPLICATION

Paul points out to the Christian all the good that God has done for us. He's given us everlasting consolation (comfort) and eternal hope. How much more should we turn around and do good to those around us?

- For the Christian, good works are not done in order to earn or gain salvation. No, good works are a response to the salvation we have been freely given.
- As we respond to God's goodness by loving and serving those around us, we become established and rooted deep into our faith.

QUOTE

“Too many Christians today emphasize guarding the truth, but downplay living the truth. One of the best ways to guard 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.”

Wiersbe, W. W. , (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 2, p. 203). Wheaton, IL:

Victor Books.

BIBLE VERSE

[Tit 3:8, 14 NKJV] **8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men. ... 14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.**

APPLICATION

Part of being “established” in the faith is not merely believing the right things, but doing the right things. God wants our lives to be fruitful and productive for His kingdom. He wants our actions to “profit all men” by meeting “urgent needs” as they arise.

- It goes without being said that Christians will be despised by some within their communities, but Christians should never be hated because they weren't there when others needed them. May they despise us because they are convicted by the truth, challenged by the light, or offended by the gospel. May they not despise us because we didn't feed the homeless, didn't love the widow, didn't defend the weak, or speak for those who have no voice.

But notice the dual nouns, “Words and works.”

- **The Christian must have a walk that matches their talk, and a talk that supports their walk.**
- Some of us are better at saying the right things but need grace and work to step up and put our feet to our faith.
- Others of us need a shot of courage and boldness from the Holy Spirit to speak up. They do a lot and are selfless in what they do, but never end up pointing others to Jesus because they shy away from speaking the truth, fearful that the truth of Christ might offend.

QUOTE

Those who have good words without good works make the truth unattractive. Those who have good works without good words make the truth anemic.

Josh Blevins,

4

Protected Through Prayer

BIBLE VERSE

[2Th 3:1-3 NKJV] **1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as [it is] with you, 2 and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.**

CUSTOM BLOCK

You know when any pastor says “Finally” it means there are at least 45 minutes left.

Opens the letter – I’ve prayed for you

Closes the letter – Would you pray for us?

Over the years, I’ve heard a lot of pastors ask a lot of Christians for a lot of things: Money, respect, service, loyalty.

Of all things Paul could use his authority to ask for, he recognizes that they need prayer above all things, especially when it comes to the dangers that come along with kingdom, gospel work.

A number of weeks ago I used this verse in a sermon entitled, “Why Pastors Need Prayer.” I encourage you to take a listen when you have the chance.

For today’s message, I simply want to stress that there is **protection in prayer**:

- Others might find protection through our prayers (**EXAMPLE: Acts 12**: Peter was prayed out of prison. The prayers of the church were being offered up, and the Lord sent an angel to deliver Peter. It wasn’t even that the church’s faith was great. When Peter showed up at the house where they were all praying for him, none of them believed that He got out! They basically told Rhoda, “Stop telling us impossible things like Peter has escaped, we are busy praying that Peter will escape!”
- But prayer also protects us. Paul wrote, **“The Lord is faithful who will guard you from the evil one.”**

- When we pray:
 - We take our stray thoughts captive
 - We set our minds on eternal things
 - We learn how to trust God with our needs and desires
 - We surrender to His perfect plan
 - We confess and overcome sin and temptation
 - We depend on His supernatural strength in our weakness
- All these things take place when we commit ourselves to pray.

BIBLE VERSE

[Luk 21:34-36 NKJV] 34 “But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. 35 “For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. 36 “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

5

Protected Through Obedience

BIBLE VERSE

4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you. 5 Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ.

APPLICATION

The truth is a defense and protection to those who obey it.

Paul knows that the church must not only know the truth but continue to obey it in order to stay under the protective care of God.

Confidence in the LORD – He’s like, “I know you guys too well to have full confidence in you, but I completely trust the Lord!” By God’s grace, He can enable you to do the things I’ve commanded

of you in the Lord.

- Do and will do – a continuance (present and future)

QUOTE

Yesterday's obedience won't get you through today's battle. In order for obedience to be effective, one must continue in it.

Joshua Blevins,

APPLICATION

- **The Things we commanded you** – Paul is not trying to pull a power trip. The fact is, God gave Paul spiritual authority for the good of the church. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul and the other Apostles to set forth doctrine and standards by which the Christian ought to live.
- Next week we will see that those commands even reach down to the smallest details of life and even work.

But here's the thing, the safest, most protected place. Christian can be is when they are walking in submission and obedience to the word of God. When biblical authority becomes a person's ultimate authority, they will be guarded against the flesh, the devil, and the world.

BIBLE VERSE

[1Jo 5:3 NKJV] 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

CONCLUSION

AS Christians, Paul's admonition to the Church 2000 years ago is just as relevant to ay as it was then. Jesus is coming back, and between now and when he does, we will continue to live in a very volatile world. God has promised to preserve and protect us for His purposes and His kingdom.

1. **We are protected through the gospel** – through belief in the truth, the Holy Spirit is sanctifying us and preserving us to obtain the glory of Jesus Christ.

2. **We are protected through biblical tradition** – the sound doctrine and truth that Paul gave the first church is still the anchor of our faith. We must be careful to not stray from biblical truth.
3. **We are protected through good words and works** – as we demonstrate the love of Christ and live out our faith, God establishes us and makes us fruitful for His kingdom.
4. **We are protected through prayer** – the effective fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much.
5. **We are protected through obedience** – Biblical guidelines for life don't exist to stifle our fun or limit our potential; just the opposite. When we immerse our life in and submit to truth, we are most protected from the lies and destruction within this world.