



2 Thessalonians

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...that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:12

“That” is referring to “God sends them a strong delusion” of verse 11. As noted in the previous verse, the “strong delusion” or literally, the “working of error” will be begun by God, but it will be responded to by the people in a way where they carry the blame for their actions. God is not purposefully sending people to hell. He allows them to make their own beds, but He provides the opportunity for them to do so. This is actually confirmed in the coming words of this verse.

“They all” is speaking of those referred to in verses 10 & 11. Paul says (according to this translation) “that they all may be condemned.” The word “condemned” here is incorrect, as is the term “damned” used by the KJV. The Greek word *krinó* simply means “to judge.” Condemnation may be implied here, but it is based on judgment on those “who did not believe the truth.” Here is the key to the entire passage, belief.

God does not ask the world to do great or fantastic things in order to be saved. He simply asks for faith. No matter how great or how fantastic our deeds are, they can never replace faith in what He has offered. In demonstrating faith, it then conveys the fact that God is righteous. In accepting this, we then should naturally desire to pursue Him in this capacity. But because of unbelief, those who are to be judged “had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Such a delight in that which is opposed to righteousness is incompatible with what is true, moral, and holy. Instead of lacking understanding what is right, they simply desire what is morally perverse; they believe the lie. It is a willful rejection on their part, and it is what condemns them. It is completely unnecessary to find an active sending of delusion by God into the minds of man in order for him to be judged. Rather, God provides the opportunity for those who willingly reject Him to receive what they deserve.

Life application: What does God desire from you? He simply asks for faith in what Christ has done. From that springboard, we should naturally desire to be like Him, to follow Him in righteousness, and to be holy just as He is holy. If we fail to do these things, it does not negate that we demonstrated the faith that saved us. If it were to do so, then we would not be saved by grace through faith. Our salvation would still be conditioned on what we do. Have faith, and then be responsible enough to exercise that faith in right living.

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, 2 Thessalonians 2:13

Here we have Paul, after his detailed discourse on end times events, going back to a train of thought from the beginning of the epistle, and then expanding on it. In verse 1:3, he said –

“We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other...”

In the same type of fashion, being bound to giving thanks, he begins with, “But we.” There is an emphasis on the word “we” which is given to contrast Paul and his associates with those mentioned in verses 10-12. The contrast, though, is actually made between those mentioned and the Thessalonians who, along with Paul and his companions, are set apart from those who are lost. This is seen at the end of the clause, “But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you.”

Paul has written of those who would be lost, and why they would be lost. He would only do this as one who was setting himself apart from that group. His words here unite the Thessalonian believers into that same setting apart. This is first evidenced by the words, “brethren beloved by the Lord.”

First, they are “brethren.” Secondly, they are “beloved by the Lord.” The word “beloved” is in the perfect tense, showing its completed nature. They have been beloved by the Lord, and they are beloved of the Lord. This is essentially the same phrase that he used of them in 1 Thessalonians 1:4 where he used the word “God” instead of “Lord.” Thus, one can logically make the connection that in Paul’s mind, Jesus the Lord is God.

It is this Lord, who is God, that Paul continues his thoughts with. He states, “because God from the beginning chose you.” This is the only time in the New Testament that the Greek word translated as “chose” is used concerning God’s election. It is used in the Greek Old Testament (such as in Deuteronomy 26:18), which is surely what is on Paul’s mind, concerning Israel having been chosen as the Lord’s peculiar people.

As this is not the ordinary word when speaking of election, implying His eternal selection, it means that He has “taken for Himself.” He has adopted them according to His eternal purpose. There is a group of people who would come to Him by faith in Christ, and He has adopted them as His own. This was His eternal selection, and it was “from the beginning.” The words here mean “from eternity.” God knew before He created what would come to pass, and who would make certain choices, and He elected those “for salvation.”

God chose to save certain people in a certain way, and He did it before anything was created. “I will save, and this is how that salvation will occur.” Paul then goes on to explain that process which is first “through sanctification by the Spirit.” The words here actually read in the Greek, “in sanctification by the Spirit.” Sanctification is the mode of salvation. Christ did the work and, in our faith in that, we are sanctified, thus bringing about our salvation.

The Spirit of God will sanctify those who are to be saved. This is necessary because being saved implies that one is first fallen. One must be saved “from” something and “to” something. Man is fallen and separated from God; man must be sanctified in order to be reconciled to God. This is the work of the Spirit, but it is based on “belief in the truth.” Belief in the truth is man’s part in the equation. It is here contrasted with those who “believe the lie” of verse 11, and “did not believe the truth” of verse 12, of this same chapter. There, those who did not believe were then said to be condemned. Here, those who believe are said to be saved. In both, man is involved in the process (synergism). God elected those who would believe; He elected them to be sanctified by the Spirit; and He elected them to be saved. God chose the means of salvation, and He laid it out for those who would hear and heed.

Condemnation already exists (John 3:18), but it is also a choice when one hears and rejects the truth. One willingly stays in their default position of condemnation, or that person willingly chooses the path of salvation and is saved. The doctrine of monergism is not at all evident in this process. It is true that the choice of how salvation would come about is solely up to God, but the choice allows man to freely choose that “how.” It also allows him to willingly decline the same if it is presented to him.

Life application: Salvation is a gift. A gift is not forced upon a person, but it must willingly be accepted. The Person and work of Jesus Christ is that gift, and it is offered to you to accept or reject. Be wise; be discerning; choose life.