

## STANDING FAST IN THE LAST DAYS

### **TEXT: II THESS. 2:13-17**

#### **Introduction:**

1. The first twelve verses of II Thessalonians 2 deal with prophecy, particularly the rise and fall of the antichrist.
2. The rest of this chapter is practical. The primary advantage to understanding Bible prophecy is so that we "stand fast" and be established "in every good word and work" (2:15, 17).
3. Studying Bible prophecy and preaching Bible prophecy should produce motivation, not speculation. Our concern should not be the identity of the antichrist, or how soon the Lord is coming back, but rather salvation and sanctification, standing fast, etc. (2:13-17).
4. The Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming back. This is emphasized throughout I and II Thessalonians. Therefore, we should be motivated to live godly lives.
5. Worldly people do not understand that this wicked world is heading toward the great tribulation, with all of its demonic delusions and one-world government headed up by the antichrist.
6. But those of us who do understand should be motivated to pray more, to attend church more, to read the Bible more, and to witness more for Christ. We are surrounded by billions of lost souls. If we do not bring them the Gospel, who will?

#### **I. WE ARE BOUND TO GIVE THANKS (2:13).**

1. Paul was thankful. Paul wrote in II Thess. 1:3, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet (right)..." (1:3).
2. Paul wrote in I Thess. 1:2, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers..."
3. In fact we see this emphasis throughout Paul's epistles (Col. 1:3; Phil. 1:3; Eph. 1:15, 16; etc.).
4. In II Thessalonians 2:13, Paul refers to the doctrine of election -- "because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."
5. First Thess. 1:4 says, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."
6. Here in verse 13, Paul says, "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you...because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Paul gave thanks for their election.
7. Their election (and ours) was "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2:13). Here we see God's sovereignty --

- "through sanctification of the Spirit" and man's responsibility --  
"and belief of the truth." Man has to believe in order to be saved.
8. Albert Barnes said, "No one can have evidence that he is chosen to salvation except as he has evidence that he is sanctified by the Spirit...No one who is not a believer in the truth can have evidence that God has chosen him."
  9. Election is based on God's sovereignty – "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2:13; cf. Ephesians 1:4). It is also based on God's foreknowledge (I Peter 1:2).
  10. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).
  11. DL Moody said, "The elect are the *whosoever wills*, and the non-elect are the *whosoever won'ts*."
  12. Once a Bible school student came to Spurgeon and told him he was disturbed because he could not understand some of these difficult Scriptures. Spurgeon's wise advice to him was, "Young man, allow me to give you this word of advice. Give the Lord credit for knowing things you don't understand."
  13. It is not God's will that any should perish (I Tim. 2:4; II Peter 3:9).
  14. The Holy Spirit sets some people apart (II Thess. 2:13) – to God and from the world. One preacher put it this way, "If it had not been for Christ, there would have been no feast; if it had not been for the Holy Spirit, there would have been no guests."
  15. "Whereunto he called you by our gospel..." (2:14). God never calls men apart from the Gospel.
  16. Salvation has a three-fold aspect:
    - Wrought out by a divine choice – "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (2:13).
    - Made effective through a divine message – "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel" (2:13b, 14).
    - Will be perfected in divine glory – "to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2:14).
  17. There is a contrast between the spiritual darkness of those who reject the truth (II Thess. 2:12) and the glory that awaits those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (2:14; cf. 1:10).

## **II. WE ARE TO STAND FAST (2:15).**

1. There is a natural tendency in the heart of Christians to backslide. Against this bent to backsliding we must stand. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast..."
2. The Christians in Thessalonica were being persecuted. They were to stand fast in the face of opposition from the enemies of the Gospel.
3. The word "traditions" (2:15) means things that have been passed on from generation to generation (cf. 3:6). Paul is referring to teachings which originated with God, not man-made traditions.
4. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you..." (I Cor. 11:23).
5. Paul is not speaking here of man-made traditions, such as the unscriptural traditions of the RCC (the mass, praying to Mary, purgatory, priesthood, etc.).
6. Paul is speaking of apostolic doctrine. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Romans 6:17).
7. First and Second Thessalonians were Paul's first epistles. Therefore, the New Testament canon was not yet complete.
8. Today all churches have their various traditions. Some church traditions are good (VBS, Sunday School) and have a Biblical basis. But traditions which contradict Scripture must be rejected.
9. Our Lord strongly condemned the Pharisees for elevating their traditions above the Word of God (Mark 7:1-13).
  - replacing the Word of God (Mark 7:7).
  - laying aside the Word of God (Mark 7:8).
  - rejecting the Word of God (Mark 7:9).
  - nullifying the Word of God (Mark 7:13).

### **III. WE ARE TO BE STABLISHED IN EVERY GOOD WORD AND WORK (2:17).**

1. Chapter 2 concludes with a prayer (2:16, 17).
2. "Stablish" means, "to fix firmly."
3. "Work" refers to ministry.

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Albert Barnes was a great preacher and Bible teacher. In addition to being a pastor, Barnes also served as the President of the Pennsylvania Bible Society, and wrote *Notes on the New Testament*, as well as commentaries on

Job, the Psalms, Isaiah and Daniel, and other books on Bible subjects.

2. Barnes said this about II Thessalonians 2 -- "This chapter is very important in reference to the rise of that great antichristian power which has exerted, and which still exerts so baleful an influence over the Christian world."
3. Albert Barnes died 144 years ago -- on December 24, 1870. If he referred to the rise of that great antichristian power which exerted "so baleful an influence over the Christian world" in his day, what about the situation today?