

Comfort and Constancy

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true Christian life requires both divine comfort and steadfastness in good works, as these two together sustain faith and fruitful service.

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, Matthew 11:28-29, Romans 8:17

Topics: "Comfort", "Christian Service", "Faith and Perseverance"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the vital relationship between divine comfort and steadfastness in Christian service. Drawing from 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, Spurgeon emphasizes that true spiritual vitality requires both the consolation of Christ and the perseverance to abound in good works. He reminds believers that comfort and constancy are gifts from the Triune God, essential for enduring faith and effective witness. This message encourages Christians to seek both rest in the Lord and active dedication to His service.

Transcript

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work." 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17.

THE Thessalonians had been a good deal confused by certain persons who had said that the coming of the Lord was immediately at hand. Paul, therefore, bade them to be steadfast and not be worried and perplexed by any such teaching. And then he presented this prayer to God for them, that they might have these two things, comfort and constancy—that God would comfort their hearts and establish them—"in every good Word and work." It is a very blessed and comprehensive prayer and, while we are thinking of it, let us be praying it for ourselves and for one another, that the Lord may comfort our hearts and establish us "in every good Word and work."

I. The first enquiry to be answered is this, WHY IS THERE THE CONJUNCTION OF THESE TWO THINGS IN THIS REMARKABLE PRAYER? Why is it put thus, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father... comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work"?

I answer, first, the two things, comfort and constancy, are put together because comfort by itself is not enough. We do not desire, first and above all things, that Christians should have comfort. It is a very great privilege to be comforted, especially by the Comforter, for such comfort is sound, safe and holy, but, at the

same time, they err who think that the first and chief reason for knowing God is that you may feel comforted and happy! I fear that there are many who are under that notion. They expect every sermon to comfort them—otherwise they think it is a wasted opportunity. Even when they are alone in prayer, their chief thought is that they need to be comforted by their own devotion. But, sometimes, rebuke is better than comfort, and spiritual quickening and especially true sanctification, are more greatly to be valued than any measure of comfort whatever! If we were to confine ourselves to prayer for the Lord only to comfort His people, we would have a very imperfect form of intercession. No, it needs that we should not only be comforted by our religion, but that we should be led by it into holy activity so as to abound in every good Word and work, and be established therein.

I give another answer to the question, Why is there this conjunction between comfort and constancy? Because establishment in every good Word and work is not enough if it is alone. We need to be comforted as well as to serve the Lord. Our God is not like Pharaoh who would not give to the children of Israel even a day in which they might have rest and worship God. Pharaoh said, "Why do you, Moses and Aaron, let (or hinder) the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens." But God does not speak so to us. The service which His children render to Him is quite compatible with rest. We are like certain birds that are said to rest on the wing—we never have a better rest than when every faculty is occupied in the service of our Lord!

But work by itself, establishment in every good Word and work, alone, might tend to weariness. We might be jaded if God did not minister Divine consolation to us while we served Him. Moreover, I am sure that we would never do the work well if God did not comfort us, for unhappy workers, those who do not love their work and are not at home in it, those who feel no comfort of religion, themselves, are generally very poor and unsuccessful workers. The second blessing mentioned in our text is certainly a very necessary one, this establishing in every good Word and work, but you also need the first one, that God may, "comfort your hearts." When you get the two together—when you are up to your necks in

holy service and up to your hearts in Divine comfort—then these two things cause you not to be barren or unfruitful and, at the same time, they help you not to be weary in well-doing. You are made to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," because you are comforted with the belief that, "your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I see those two reasons for the conjunction of comfort and constancy in the text. First, because comfort, alone, is not sufficient and, secondly, because constancy without comfort will not suffice us.

And next, dear Friends, it is because the comfort of the heart aids in the establishment of the soul in service. They are put together because the one helps the other. May the Lord "comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work!" He that is happy in the Lord will persevere in the service of the Lord. He that derives real support and comfort from his religion is the man who will not backslide from it. I notice that it is usually thus with those who decline—they first of all lose the comfort and joy of religion—they have not the brightness and delight that they once had in the things of God. And then, of course, they drop, first, this particular service, and then the other—they begin to absent themselves from the means of Grace, Prayer Meetings and so forth, because they miss what is so material a stay to the establishment of their minds, that is, the comfort, joy and peace that true religion used to bring them.

Whenever you are not happy in the Lord, I urge you not to rest until you become so. It is no small evil to get out of the sunlight of God's Countenance. A dear child will not say, "If my father is angry with me, it does not matter; he will not kill me; I shall always be his child." No, just in proportion as he enjoys his

father's love, it will be painful to him to come in the least degree under his father's displeasure and he will cry out to be fully restored and to have, again, from those dear lips the kiss of forgiveness that will put away all his offenses. So, dear Friends, believe that your lack of comfort is an evil thing which may lead to your loss of industry and perseverance in the cause of your Lord. If your heart is not comforted by God, you are not likely to be "established in every good Word and work."

Now let me turn the text around the other way. I think that these two things are put together because establishment in Word and work is so necessary for our comfort. I said we must be comforted that we might be constant in the service of God. Now I put it that we must be constant in the service of God that we may be comforted! God does not give His dainties to idlers. He has choice secrets into which He does not admit everybody, nor even all of His own family. When we are diligent in His service and all our powers are fully consecrated to Him, then He gives us gracious rewards—not of debt, but according to the discipline of His own house, wherein He honors the faithful and chastises those who are negligent.

Now, Beloved, you will miss your comfort when you begin to neglect your work. I know how it used to be with the boys at home. In cold weather they huddled round the fire—almost sat on the fire! It was so cold that they could not tell how they would live through the bitter winter. But when Father came in, he said, "Now, you boys, set to work and clear away that snow. Don't sit here idle, go and do something!" And they came in with ruddy cheeks and, somehow or other, the temperature seemed to have altered considerably, for they were quite warm from their exercise. I think the best thing that could happen to some men would be that they might have something to do. I do not find much about depression of spirit in the journals of Mr. Wesley or Mr. Whitefield and men of that sort who spent themselves in the Lord's service.

The fact is, the Lord seemed to carry them on from one work to another and from strength to strength in their service—and they were comforted as to their hearts because they were established in every good Word and work. These things act and react, one upon another—the comfort makes us work—the work brings to us a fresh measure of comfort! See how even the Savior puts it. He says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That is the first rest, pardon of sin. What next? "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." That is another rest over and above what Jesus gives. "Through bearing My yoke, you shall find in My service rest unto your souls." God grant us Grace to seek that rest which we are to find, now that we have received the rest which Jesus gives to those who come to Him!

I have not yet fully answered this question—Why is there the conjunction of these two things, comfort and constancy? I think it is because the two blended together serve a very useful purpose. We are in this world to bear witness and by our bearing witness we are to bring others to faith in Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Now, there are some people who are only to be won for Christ by the holy confidence and comfort of Believers. I am sure that if a Christian woman, in the time of affliction at home, is calm, patient, resigned and happy, she is more likely to see her husband converted by the comfort that religion brings to her own heart than by taking him to hear a sermon. By her Christian character she will preach to him and supply him with evidence of the power of Grace which he will not be able to deny.

I have known persons, in a storm at sea, exercise great influence over all in the vessel by the way in which they have been able to live above the storm, resting patiently in God. And in times of personal sickness, what a wonderful influence there is about holy patience! Some members of the family, who never have been moved by the external services of religion, have been deeply impressed by the patience of great sufferers—and especially by the serenity of dying saints. They have said to themselves, "There is

something in this religion, after all. There is no mistake about it—the Grace which could support and calm the heart at such a time as this must be the gift of God." Now, if this were accompanied by idleness, it would lose much or all of its force, but when this holy calm comes over one who, in days of health, was full of active service for the Master, then the two things, together, become powerful arguments which gainsayers are not able to resist! Seek to have this blessed blending, this comfort, like a light that burns within the lamp, and then this establishment in Word and work, like the rays of light that stream from the lantern at the head of the lighthouse, that all may see, both far and near.

And I should like to give one other answer to this query, which is this. Paul in his prayer puts the two things together, because there is great need for both. There is great need to pray that our Father would comfort the hearts of His people, for there is trouble enough in the land! There is trouble enough in every house—there is trouble enough for each one of us—we need you to often pray for us, that God would comfort our hearts. It may be that we have to play the man in public and yet, when we get away by ourselves, our heart is very heavy and we have to cry mightily to God for supporting Grace. Some of the strongest of God's servants, those who carry a smiling countenance, who, if they fast, anoint their head and wash their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, yet have need to pray very earnestly to the Comforter that He would come and sustain their spirit.

And there is equal need that we should have Grace given us to be constant and instant in every good Word and work, for there is a tendency in us to think that we have done enough. The feeling creeps over men of a certain age that it is time for the young people to do the Lord's work. One says, "I am now at such an age that as much cannot be expected of me as used to be." Oh, yes, if you have much serving, Martha is not the only woman that gets cumbered with it, and being cumbered is not confined to women! Oh, how many there are who are not women, who are cumbered as much as Martha was! We need to have the Mary-spirit to keep the heart bright and cheerful, or else we shall quarrel with our work, or with our sister, or possibly with our Master, as we say to Him, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" We need both comfort and constancy and, therefore, I commend to you this piece of heavenly plaiting—let the two things be twisted together in your life! May the Lord "comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work"!

II. As I look at my text, a second question comes to my mind. WHY DOES THE APOSTLE SO SPECIALLY ADDRESS THIS PRAYER? Notice to whom he addresses it—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father... comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work." Why is this?

It seems to me that in the first place, in this prayer the whole Trinity is supplicated. When the Apostle is desiring comfort to be given, he does not mention the Comforter, for that is needless. It would occur to every Christian mind that the Holy Spirit was necessary, since in comforting and quickening He is only exercising His special office. But the Apostle does mention, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father," so that, to the mind of the thoughtful reader, the prayer for comfort and establishment is directed to the ever-blessed Three-in-One. Oh, that we more often remembered the distinction of the Divine Persons without dividing the Divine Substance! It becomes instructed Believers to remember that one blessing comes from the Father, another blessing from the Son and a third blessing through the Holy Spirit. There are times when it would seem as if the one blessing must come through the three Divine Persons, that there must be a manifestation of the whole Trinity to produce the result. I cannot help noticing that Truth of God and reminding you how the Savior is especially placed, here, side by side with, "God, even our Father," that we may see that equal reverence is to be paid to Him with the Father, and

equal prayer to be offered to Him with that presented to the great Father of spirits.

But then, I think next, that mention is here made of, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself because, as the prayer is for consolation, He is "the Consolation of Israel." The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, but Christ, Himself, is the Comfort—the Holy Spirit gives the consolation, but Jesus Christ is the Consolation. Beloved, we are never so comforted as when we turn to our blessed Lord, Himself! His Humanity, His sympathy with us, His griefs, His bearing our infirmities, His put-

ting away of our sins, His pleading for us at the right hand of God, His everlasting union with His people—all this makes us turn our eyes to Him! He is the Sun that makes our day. From Him flows that "river of the Water of Life" which quenches our thirst. So you see why the "Lord Jesus Christ, Himself," is mentioned in this prayer for comfort, since He is the every essence of the Believer's consolation!

But then we are reminded of "God, even our Father," and is not this expression brought to our mind that we may derive comfort from the relation which God bears to His people? O you children of God, does not the recollection that He is your Father comfort you? Children of the heavenly King, is not the fact of your relationship to Him a well of unceasing consolation? What more do you require to lift your spirits out of the dust than to know that this manner of love has been bestowed upon you, that you should be called the children of God! "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ"? I believe that if the Holy Spirit only lays home to the heart the fact of our new birth and our adoption into the family of God, we have enough comfort to make us swim through seas of trouble without fear! And also enough motive for the most constant, diligent service, when we know that it is for our Father who is in Heaven that we are spending the strength that He, Himself, gives us! Do you not see, therefore, why the Apostle thus addresses His prayer to "God, even our Father," and to "our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself"?

And is not this another reason why Paul thus prayed, because he would remind us that it requires the direct action of the Godhead upon our hearts to produce comfort and constancy? This is especially evident at certain times. Very frequently, when I have to comfort mourners—cases where, perhaps, a young husband has been taken away, leaving a large family of little children unprovided for—or, perhaps, where two persons who have been together for many years, till their lives have grown into one and, all of a sudden, the wife or the husband has been taken away, I have said and I cannot help saying it often, "My dear Friend, I cannot comfort you as I should like to. I have never been exactly in your circumstances and, therefore, I cannot enter into your peculiar grief. But I would remind you that one Person of the Divine Trinity has undertaken the office of Comforter and He can do what nobody else can."

You must, sometimes, have felt the power of a single text of Scripture laid upon a wound in your heart—it will staunch the bleeding and heal by a sort of heavenly magic! Have you not, at times, felt in a flutter of distress so that you could not rest? Christian friends have spoken kindly to you, but they only seemed to mock you. Then, in a moment, a soft, calming influence has stolen over your spirit and you have felt that you could bear 10 times the weight which had almost crushed you an hour before! God can comfort to purpose—therefore the Apostle did not say—"I hope you will enjoy the comfort I have given you, or that, perhaps, your minister, next Lord's-Day may give you." No, this was his prayer at this particular juncture—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work." It is grand in your prayers to fall back upon your God and upon a God whom you know as your Lord Jesus Christ, and your Father, and to feel, "The case is beyond me, but it is not beyond my God! The trial overwhelms me even in my sympathy with the tried one, how much more does it

overwhelm the actual bearer of it? But I put you and your sorrow into hands quite equal to the emergency and leave you there."

There is much more to be learned than I can tell you, because time fails me, as to how it was that the Apostle presented this remarkable prayer in this remarkable manner.

III. The third point, with which I close, is this. WHAT DOES PAUL MENTION IN HIS PRAYER AS PLEAS? He

mentioned several facts for the strengthening of the faith of those for whom he prayed and gave arguments which they should use while pleading with God for others. Let us speak of these arguments very briefly. There are six of them.

First, Paul says that Jesus is ours. He is asking for comfort and establishment and he begins his prayer, "Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself." Do, if you can, get the sweetness of this expression, "Our Lord Jesus Christ." Why did not Paul say, "The Lord Jesus Christ"? Why did he not say, "My Lord Jesus Christ"? No, here is a plural possessive pronoun—"Our Lord Jesus Christ." Is it so, then, that God has given us the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, to be ours? Can we not only call His blood ours, and His Resurrection ours, and His Kingdom ours, but is He, Himself, ours? Oh, can we get a grip of Him as, "My Beloved"? Is He my Husband, my Covenant Head, my Jesus and my All? Come, then, Beloved—I was going to say that you hardly need pray for comfort because you have it, already—you have it in Jesus!

Here is a solid mass of the pure gold of comfort in the fact that Jesus Christ, Himself, is yours. You are Christ's, but Christ is also yours! As the husband belongs to the wife, and the wife belongs to the husband, so there is a mutual posses-

sion between Christ and you who are believers in Him. Are you poor? What? And yet Christ is yours? Do you say that you are helpless and friendless? How is that when you can say, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself"? No, here is a well opened in the desert for you—come and say to it—"Spring up, O well!" Sing unto it, drink of its Living Water and fill your earthen vessels to the fullest! There is comfort enough for all saints in "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself."

The second plea in Paul's prayer is that God is our Father—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father." I have already shown you what a mine and mountain of delightful consolation lies in the fact that the God who made the heavens and the earth, the Omnipotent and Unchangeable Jehovah is "our Father." Do not think that this is a mere metaphor—that God is only set forth to us under the image of a father. There is no doubt that He is our Father— it is a matter of fact if we are trusting His Son. "Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham is ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not: You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; Your name is from everlasting." We have been begotten again by God—our new birth is from His power and His Divine energy! We belong to His family and shall never be cast out of it. Dear Friends, what a plea this is in prayer! "My Father, will You not comfort my heart? My Father, will You let Your child despond? My Father, will You not relieve me in the hour of my distress? Jesus Christ, my Lord Jesus Christ, do this for me, and great God, my Father, fail not to cheer my heart!"

Then the Apostle goes on to remind us that God has loved us. Kindly look at the text and remember it—"God, even our Father, which has loved us." You do not expect me to preach from those words, do you? "Which has loved us." I cannot comprehend this Truth! I can very well understand God pitying us, as we pity a beggar in the streets—but God's loving us always deprives me of the power to explain it! There

was nothing in us to love! There was everything in us loathsome and nothing lovable, yet the Lord loved us before the world began! He has loved us without bound, so as to give His only-begotten Son to die for us! Is not that a powerful plea in prayer? "Lord, comfort my heart, establish me in every good Word and work, for You have loved me, therefore continue to love me. If You have given me Your love, surely You will not deny me the comforts of Your face and the consolations of Your Word."

Then Paul adds, "Who has loved us, and has given us." God has given us much and all His past gifts are pleas for more gifts. Men do not plead so. The beggar in the street cannot say, "Give me a penny, today, because you gave me one yesterday," else we might reply, "That is the reason why I will not give you anymore!" But when dealing with God, this is a good plea. "O flowing Fountain, You have long been flowing, Flow on still! O blessed Sun, You did shine yesterday, shine today!" God loves us to make His past mercies arguments for obtaining future blessings, so the Apostle says, "God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us."

But what has God given us? God has given us "everlasting consolation." Catch at that expression, for it reminds us of everlasting love, the Everlasting Covenant, the everlasting promises, everlasting redemption and the everlasting Heaven. Men, nowadays, clip this word, "everlasting," round the edges. We do not—we take it as we find it. That which is everlasting lasts forever—you can be assured of that! And God has given us consolation which will last us in life and last us in death—and last us throughout eternity! Well, if He has given us "everlasting consolation," we may well plead that He would graciously enable us to lay hold upon it, that our hearts may be comforted and cheered and that we may be established in every good Word and work!

There is only one more expression upon which I will say a sentence or so. God has given us "good hope through Grace." It is of Grace and, therefore, it is a gift! And He has given it to us through the operation of His Grace upon our hearts. It is a hope, a good hope, a "good hope through Grace." We have a good hope that God's love will never fail us and that, when life dies out on earth, we shall enter into His rest forever and behold His face with joy. We have a good hope that when days and years are past, we shall meet in Heaven! We have a good hope of dwelling throughout eternity with our God—"forever with the Lord." O Father, after You have done so much for us and given so much to us, it is but little we ask of You, now, when we pray You to comfort our hearts and to establish us in every good Word and work!

I cannot understand what those do who have no God. I cannot comprehend the condition of those who have no "good hope through Grace." What can they do? They have to work very hard from Monday morning to Saturday night. On Sunday they have no day of rest, no thought of a world to come, no rising to a purer atmosphere. They lie in bed, perhaps, in the morning, and then get up and lounge about in their shirtsleeves. There is nothing for them to get but what is found beneath the moon and very little of that. It is better to be a dog than a man if there is no hope of a hereaf-

ter! It is better not to live at all than to live such a dead, good-for-nothing life as that man lives who lives without God and without hope!

Surely, you who are without God and without Christ, have your sinking, your mourning, your dull times, have you not? What do you do, then? Perhaps you try to drug yourself with strong drink. Alas, some do that and this is mischievous, indeed—to try to poison conscience and silence the best friend you have within you! Do not so, but think about God, and about "our Lord Jesus Christ." This way lies hope, where stands that Cross, and He pleads, who received, there, those five wounds for sinners! This way lies your

only hope! Oh, that you would think of it and consider it! If God Himself comes down from Heaven to save men, it must be worthwhile for man to look and understand what God did for him in that wondrous Sacrifice. Look, for—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One"—

look now, for—

"There is life at this moment for you." Especially is there life for you who came in here troubled, downcast, almost wishing you were not alive at all, but fearing that when life came to an end, it might be worse for you than ever, for you have "the dread of something after death." Oh, that you were reconciled to God through the death of Jesus Christ! That being done, He would comfort your hearts and you would be led into every good Word and work through gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, and His Grace would save you and preserve you to the end! May this be the very moment when you shall seek and find the Lord!" "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." God grant it, for His dear son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 Thessalonians 2; 3:1-5.

2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand. Paul believed in the Second Coming of Christ, for he beseeches the Brothers and Sisters, "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He felt the power of this great Truth. He often exhorts us to be watchful because of the uncertainty of the time of that coming as far as we are concerned. But there were some who sprang up in his day, as in ours, who professed that they knew a great deal about the Second Advent—when it was to happen, and so on—and they began to foretell and to prophesy beyond what was really revealed of God. By this means, some persons were terrified and others driven to a very foolish course of action. It would seem, from this Epistle, that some people forsook their daily calling and, on pretence of the near return of Christ, endeavored to live upon the alms of Christian people instead of themselves working. Many, however, were shaken in mind, so Paul wrote to reassure and strengthen them—"That you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand."

3, 4. Let no man deceive you, by any means: for that Day shall not come, except there comes a falling away, first, and that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. It has been usually thought that this passage alludes to the great apostasy of the Church of Rome and, certainly, if there were a hue and cry raised for the culprit here described, one might well arrest that apostasy upon suspicion! It may not, however, be the man of sin, or the son of perdition—it may be that general spirit which springs up again and again, one of the many anti-Christ's that were already in the world even in John's day. There are many such spirits that are constantly rising up, not outside the Church—there, we could deal with them—but inside the Church, using the Words of Truth, and the signs of Truth to signify something far other than the Truth of God! This is the great rook that threatens destruction! Oh, that God's Church might always be kept from striking upon it! But there is this rook which would, if it were possible, wreck the very elect ship of Christ, itself!

5-7. Remember you not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity does already work: only He who now lets will let, until He is taken

out of the way. There was something that hindered the full development of anti-Christ in Paul's day. When that is taken out of the way, then will there be a fuller revelation of this sinful system.

8-12. And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish, because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. We will not attempt to explain all this in detail. It would be too much of a task for a mere exposition, but the Church has always to be on her guard against that which comes as an angel of light, but is really a spirit of darkness.

13. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth. How the saints praise one another! How sweet is Christian fellowship! How we rejoice in the blessed love of God to His people when we are assailed by those who battle against His Truth! Then is the love of the Brethren stronger than ever and our faithfulness to God is largely increased. The Apostle falls back upon the doctrine of electing love—"God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation." And he admires the methods by which that love effects its purpose—"Salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth." Men are made holy by the Spirit of God—the holiness is that of life and of the understanding. They attain to a belief of the Truth of God, as well as to a practice of the Divine Commands. Oh, happy people who are ordained, from the beginning, unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth!

14. To which He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. How the Apostle loved the Gospel! It was Christ's Gospel, but Paul calls it, "Our Gospel." He and his Brethren had made it so completely their own and it had become so much their own in contradistinction to "another gospel, which is not another," that he speaks of it with unction and joy! "He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle. "The things which we have handed out to you, which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle." They had heard Paul preach. He had not only written to them, but he had also spoken to them. And he bade them treasure up what he had said and what he had written, and hold it fast as for dear life. The Apostle did not preach that which he, afterwards, left, as the ostrich leaves its eggs, but he watched over it and he watched over the people who had heard it, anxious that the Truth of God to which they had listened should prove in them to be the message of everlasting life! Oh, my dear Hearers, are there not still some of you who have heard our Gospel, to whom we have often and long spoken and yet, notwithstanding, it has not yet been the message of eternal life to you though it has been to many others? God have mercy upon you and yet bring you to the feet of Jesus! As for others who come to listen to the Word for the first time— may it be the power of God unto salvation on the very first occasion of their hearing it, to the praise of God and the Glory of His Son!

16. 17. Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work. I believe in an established Church—not established by acts of Parliament—but established by the purpose and by the Presence of God in the midst of it. Oh, to be a member of a Church

established in every good Word and work! Do you know God's Word? Seek to know it better, still! Try to strike your roots down deeply into this fruitful soil! Suck out the Divine nutriment of it, that you may grow so strong that none shall be able to tear you away from it!

Have you begun to work for Jesus? May you be established in that good work! Go on working more and more, with both your hands and all your heart, that somehow you may glorify His blessed name! Let me read these sweet verses again—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work."

2 Thessalonians 3:1. Finally, brethren, pray for us. "Pray for us," says the Apostle. "Pray for myself and the Brothers who are with me. Pray for all the Apostles and preachers of the Word." "Finally, Brethren." If this were the last word we had to say to you, we would make just this request, "Finally, Brothers and Sisters, pray for us." You cannot tell how much God's servants are helped by the prayers of His people! The strongest man in Israel will be the better for the

prayers of the weakest saint in Zion! If you can do nothing else, you can pray for us—therefore, day and night, be at the Mercy Seat on our behalf. "Finally, Brethren, pray for us."

1. That the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you. "You Thessalonians enjoy the power of the Word. Pray that it may be so everywhere else." Paul is said to have written this Epistle from Corinth or Athens, and he longed that, there, the Word of God might prevail as it had done at Thessalonica. Pray just now that in every part of the world, God's Word may have free course! There are many who stand in the way of it. Pray God that they may be swept out of the way, that the Word of the Lord may have free course. We need the Gospel to run and spread till the whole earth shall know its blessed message!

2. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. All men are not candid, or true. "All men have not faith."

3. But the Lord is faithful. What a wonderful contrast this is and how suggestive of comfort! "All men have not faith. But the Lord is full of faith, faith-ful." True, He keeps all His promises. "The Lord is faithful."

3-5. Who shall establish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts. You see, Paul does not command the Thessalonians to do anything but what he can pray God to work in them. The command of a man, by itself, is nothing, but when he only asks that to be done which he can pray God to do, then there is power about his message! "We have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts."

5. Into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ. May the Lord hear that prayer for all of us, for Christ Jesus' sake! Amen.

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