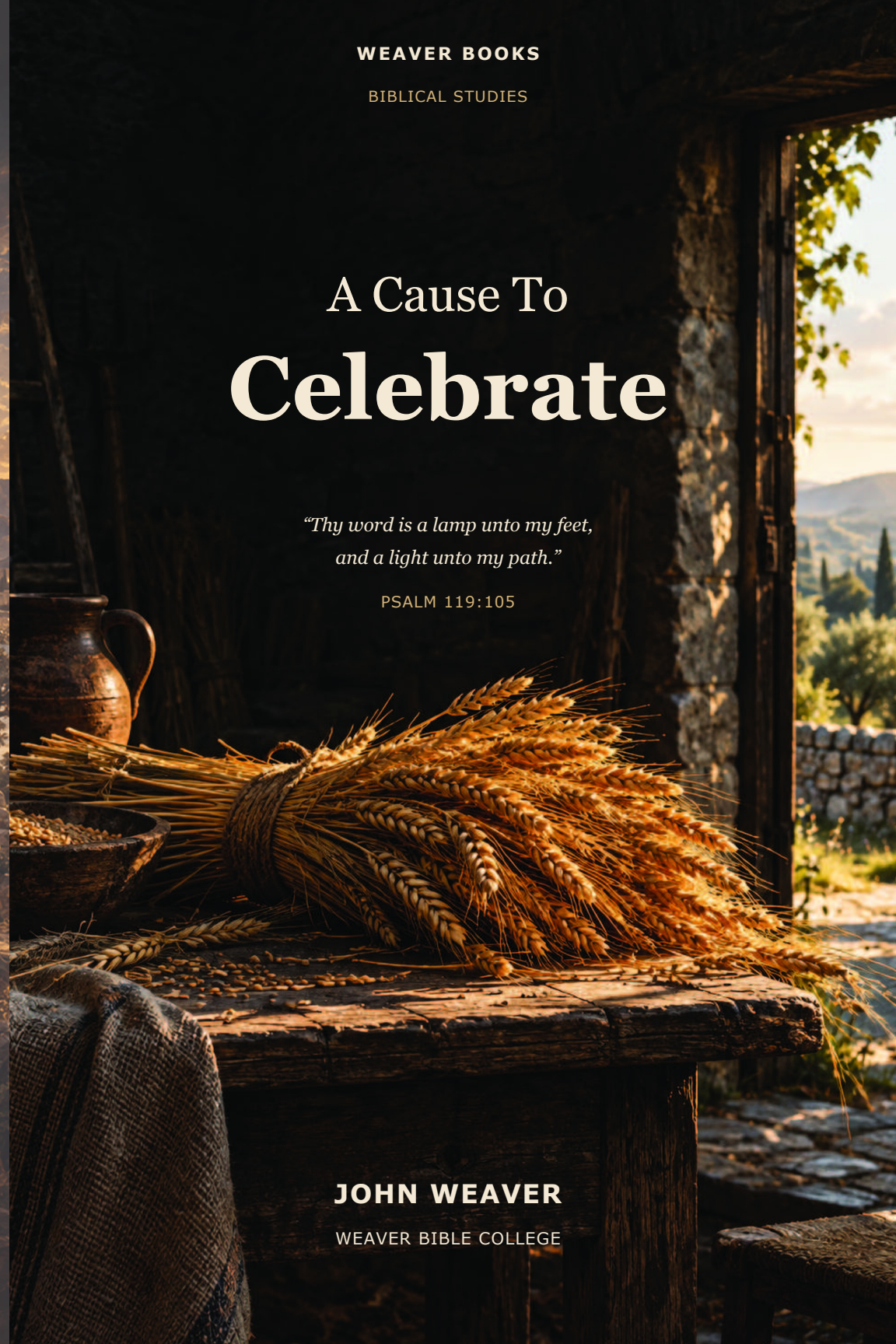
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A Cause To Celebrate

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

WEAVER BIBLE COLLEGE

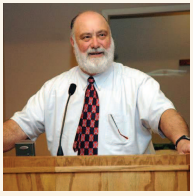
Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:15

The Christian's thanksgiving begins with what God has done. John Weaver examines the grace of calling, election, and salvation, asking how these truths should shape gratitude and obedience. These messages direct the reader away from self-congratulation and toward the God whose gifts provide a lasting cause for celebration.

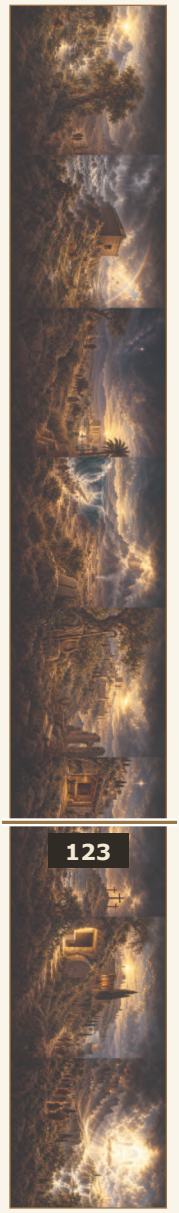
"Your election, your calling, your salvation, and ultimately your glorification are due only to the grace and mercy of God."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

John Weaver's sermons form the teaching collection presented by Weaver Bible College. This volume gathers his teaching from that collection.



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CHAPTER 1

A Cause To Celebrate

Part One of Two

The title of the message is “A Cause to Celebrate.” This message will be in two parts. The larger explanation will be next week, Lord willing. The apostle writes in 2 Thessalonians 2:13–17:

“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”

Introduction: The Meaning of 'Cause'

It appears today that everyone has a cause. There are many causes that are righteous, and there are many causes that are unrighteous.

Some have standing, and some certainly have absolutely no standing. But have you ever thought about the word "cause," and how it is used in the Bible?

We probably use the word "cause" or "because" hundreds of times each day, especially if we have little children. They are going to ask, and the answer may be, "Because I said so," or "Because this is right," or "Because this is what we're doing." We use that term frequently. But when the Bible talks about causes, sometimes it is given in a negative situation and sometimes in a positive situation.

Let us look at some negations when we are talking about causes. In Exodus 23:2–3, the Bible speaks negatively in one sense concerning a cause. God says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment: neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause."

The Hebrew word for "cause" in this passage refers to strife, contention, controversy, an argument, and even a case at law. This passage appears not only for the sake of Christians, but also for the sake of attorneys, that they should take these verses to heart. God is telling us that one does not support evil simply because one is poor, deprived, agitated, vindictive, numerous, or demanding. God says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment." We want judgment; we do not want it to decline. Then He said, "Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause." In other words, just because someone is poor or has disabilities, God says that if the cause is wrong, you do not countenance him merely because he is poor or disabled. Right is right, and wrong is wrong.

It does not matter whether he is rich or poor, or whether they are numerous or not numerous; that is immaterial. Then, in verse 6, He says again, "Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of the poor in his cause." Just because a poor man is unable to fight and defend himself, God says, he still must have judgment and justice. We are not to wrest a poor man in his cause. Unhappily, many individuals make their living by taking money away from poor people who cannot fight and defend themselves.

Bringing Our Causes Before the Lord

When you go through the Bible, there were some cases so complicated that they had to bring them before the Lord. One such illustration is found in Numbers, chapter 27. This deals with the children of Zelophehad. Zelophehad had only daughters; he had no sons. The complication was that property in the Old Testament was passed through the sons, from the father to the sons. Here, then, was a case where this man had no sons whatsoever, only daughters. In Numbers 27:3, the daughters say, “Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah, but died in his own sin, and had no sons. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family?”

Because he hath no son. Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father." So the daughters wanted the inheritance of their father. Moses then took their cause to the Lord. "And Moses brought their cause before the Lord. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them."

One of the biggest problems we have is that we seldom bring our problems, controversies, and complicated issues before the Lord and His Word. We try to work them out in the arm of the flesh, to the best of our ability, and consequently we usually end up very miserably.

We fail to take into account Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 through 7: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil."

Another passage that goes along with this is 1 Peter 5 and verse 7: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." Someone has noted, accurately, that usually when we cast our cares and burdens upon the Lord and turn to walk away, we trip over the strings we left attached to them. The implication is that we never really cast them

upon Him to begin with. If we had really cast them upon Him, they would no longer be our burdens or our problems. They would be His.

It would be up to Him to work them out the way He desired and wanted to. Of course, He would lead us and direct us in that way. I find it absolutely astounding that very few Christians really and truly bring their problems to the Lord. Very few say, "Lord, I need help. I need wisdom. I need direction." Very few Christians really pray concerning these problems.

It is easy for someone to say, "Pray for me. I'm facing surgery." But how about, "Pray for me, I'm facing financial problems. Pray for me, I'm facing family problems. Pray for me, I'm facing problems with my children." When it comes to our troubles and problems, very few consult the Word of God, and very few truly pray and ask the Lord to solve those problems. There are some biblical causes that we should never hesitate to bring before the Lord. These are indeed biblical causes, right causes. The Scriptures show us several passages that establish this truth and show how God's people may bring such matters before Him.

Biblical Causes That Are Righteous

Look in Psalm 9 and verse 4: "For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right." David is saying that God maintained his right and his cause because his cause was biblical and right. He brought it to the Lord as the judge, and God judged rightly and maintained that cause. David understood that the cause had to be biblical and right, and he entrusted it to the Lord as Judge.

In Psalm 35 and verse 1, David prays, "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me. Fight against them that fight against me." "Plead my cause, O Lord." The position David was holding, the truth he was speaking, the way he was living, and the cause he was standing for, he simply asked the Lord to plead his cause, to take his case: "You fight against them that fight against me." In other words, "I'm in the right, Lord. I want you to help me with my enemies and my adversaries."

In the same psalm, David says, “Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.” So he is asking the Lord to stir Himself up and come and help him because he needs help desperately.

Psalm 43:1 is a prayer that you and I need to pray, especially in light of today’s situation. Look at this prayer request: “Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.” Certainly, we have an ungodly nation, and our nation is filled with deceitful and unjust men. David is taking this cause to the Lord, asking Him to plead that cause and deliver him from the deceitful and unjust man.

Now, there are many causes in the Bible. Unless someone thinks, “Well, there’s not a real cause.” Yes, there is. In John 18:37, our Lord was standing before Pilate. “Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

Our Lord said, “For this cause came I into the world.” He came to bear witness to the truth, for He Himself is truth incarnate. He does have a cause to judge, because He is King of kings, and Lord of lords, and God of gods, and Judge of judges. He also has a cause to save. Why? Because He is the Redeemer. He’s the reconciler. He’s the Messiah. He is salvation, and he is in salvation alone.

There are causes also to celebrate. When you stop and think about the celebrations that go on in our world, think with me just for a moment. People celebrate their birthday, anniversaries, promotions, and their team winning the championship. Sometimes those celebrations really get out of hand. Many people celebrate Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, and any other day that they want to celebrate, and men think nothing of celebrating in these areas.

Yet the truth of the matter is this: There is one cause to celebrate that most people never ever really think about, and they hardly ever celebrate it.

Defining 'Celebrate'

Before I show it to you, I want to give you some definitions of "celebrate." You can look in the online dictionary, Oxford's, Cambridge's, or Merriam-Webster's; it does not matter. You are going to come up with some definitions of "celebrate," and I want you to listen to four of them.

The first is this: to observe a day, to commemorate an event with ceremonies or festivities, with the illustrations "to celebrate Christmas" or "to celebrate a new play." Basically, to observe a day or commemorate an event with ceremonies and festivities.

Number two: to make known publicly; to proclaim. The illustration is, "The newspaper celebrated the end of the war in red headlines." But note, if you would please, the definition means to make known publicly, to proclaim. The third one is to praise widely or to present to widespread and favorable public notice. The last one, number four, is to perform with appropriate rites and ceremonies. The illustration is "to solemnize" or "to celebrate a marriage."

So here is what I want to emphasize: the word "celebrate" for us means to observe, to commemorate, to make known publicly, to proclaim, and to praise widely, and even to perform rites or ceremonies appropriate for that celebration.

With that in mind, look back in your Bibles to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 and verse 13, because out of four points I am only going to cover one today. Look at verse 13. Here the apostle writes, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because"—here is the reason—"because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."

The Divine Choice: God Chose Us to Salvation

When you stop and think about this, when you meditate upon it, you should have a cause to celebrate and commemorate, to make it known, to praise and be thankful, and to perform appropriate ceremonies of thanksgiving because of this divine choice: “God hath chosen you to salvation.”

Go back to verse 13. There is a word to emphasize. He says, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God.” The word “bound” is the Greek word opheilō, which literally means to owe, to be bound, to be bound to a duty, and to be a debtor. Still further, it even has the meaning to accrue. Simply stated, this debt of gratitude, this debt of thanksgiving and praise, grows over time. In other words, your debt increases. You never ever get out of this debt. You never ever pay this debt off. He says we are bound; we owe thanks always to God.

This is indeed a debt of gratitude and praise, because he says in verse 13, “But we are bound to give thanks.” The Greek word for “thanks” there is eucharisteō, and it literally means to be grateful, to be thankful, and to be appreciative. The word occurs thirty-nine times in the New Testament.

This, then, is a cause to celebrate and be thankful. What is that cause? It is a divine choice. He says, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.”

I do not know how much simpler, plainer, or clearer this truth could be. It is stated straightforwardly: “God hath chosen you to salvation.” Let me make this exceedingly clear. We did not choose Him; He chose us. In John 15:16, our Lord tells His disciples, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” Notice again: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” He says it again in verse 19.

Christ said, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The Bible tells us plainly that we did not choose Christ; Christ chose us.

This is not only spoken of individually, but also collectively. First Peter 2:9 says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." In time past we were not a people, but now we are the people of God; we had not obtained mercy, but now we have

obtained mercy. We are a chosen generation, chosen that we might obtain mercy and be a people of God.

When our Lord returns to destroy His enemies, there will be individuals with Him. Revelation 17:14 labels them this way: "These"—that is, His enemies—"shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." Called, chosen, and faithful.

Someone may say, "But pastor, I did choose Jesus Christ, and I chose to come to Him." Yes, you did. But the only reason you chose to come to Him was because He chose you first. First John 4:19 says, "We love him, because he first loved us." We would never be able to love Him if He did not first love us. First John 4:10 says, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." We would never love Him unless He first loved us, and we would never have come to Him unless He had first chosen us.

Salvation is always theocentric. Theos is the Greek word for God. Theocentric means salvation is always God-centered. Salvation originated with God; He is the initiator of salvation. Without Him, there would be no salvation. If He did not move first, there would be no hope, no help, and no salvation.

An interesting study would be to go back and read how God gave Moses directions for the tabernacle. When God told Moses how to build it, He gave him the pattern and warned him, "Be sure that thou make all things according to the pattern which is given thee in the mount." When you read how God gave Moses that pattern, you find that He began with the holy of holies, which would be with Himself, and worked His way out to the last court. When Moses set up the tabernacle, he began with the outer court and worked his way in. In other words, had God not come out and proceeded, there would never have been an entrance to God in the first place.

When he says in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation," consider this: When you think of election, there are four different types of election

in the Bible, and in each one, it is God who does the choosing. First, there was a national election. God chose Israel to be His nation.

Four Types of Election in the Bible

He did not choose the Babylonians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Moabites, or Ammonites. He chose Israel. That is why the Bible says in Amos 3:2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Surely God knew all the other families. He created them, and He judged them; He destroyed many of them. Surely He knew who they were. But what does it mean when He said, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth"? He was saying, "You only have I chosen. You only have I entered into a covenant with. You only have I revealed myself unto. You only have I given my word." Israel as a nation was unique in the sense that God chose them to be His national and peculiar treasure.

That is what He said in Exodus chapter 19. God chose them. So there is a national election. Secondly, there is what you and I would call a vocational election. In the Old Testament, God chose the tribe of Levi to minister unto Him. No other tribe could minister unto God in the tabernacle and the temple. You will find that in numerous places, including Numbers chapter 3 and verse 41. Here is what God said.

"And thou shalt take the Levites for me (I am the Lord) instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel; and the cattle of the Levites instead of all the firstlings among the cattle of the children of Israel." God chose the Levites. You remember in Numbers chapter 16, when Dathan and Abiram and Korah united together and wanted the priesthood. Even though some of them were Levites, they could not intrude upon an office to which God had not called them. The Levites had the opportunity to serve, but God chose Aaron to be the high priest.

God still does the same today. He calls whom He wills vocationally. In other words, He called me to be a preacher. He calls some to be doctors, some engineers, some teachers, and some mechanics. It is astounding how God prepares a person for his vocation, for his life's work.

The Bible tells us in Mark chapter 3, verses 13 and 14, concerning Jesus Christ, "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach." He ordained twelve and called unto Himself whom He would. He still does that today. When it comes to preachers and pastors, some are mama called and papa sent, and some have entered the ministry as a profession. It is only a job to some of them. But there are those whom God has called, as He called Aaron.

Hebrews chapter 5 and verse 4 says, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Aaron and the Levites were specifically called of God. God not only chooses in a national election; He chooses in a vocational election.

Does that mean that I did not want to preach? Yes, I wanted to preach, because God chose me and put the desire in me to preach and teach His Word. Just as He puts in some the desire to be a doctor, it is a vocational election. There is a third election: a messianic election. God the Father chose the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Messiah.

No one else was chosen. In fact, you will find that particular statement in Isaiah 42 and verse 1. Listen to what God the Father says about the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation does not exist anywhere else or in anyone else except the Lord Jesus Christ. Why? Because God the Father chose Him to be the mediator, the Messiah, and the Redeemer. Therefore, salvation is in Him and Him alone.

It goes even further than that. God the Father chose the tribe from which Jesus Christ was to come. You have to remember that in the Old Testament, the two leading tribes were Ephraim and Manasseh, who happened to have been the sons of Joseph. You remember he got the double portion. Yet Psalm 78:67 says, "Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: but chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved." Do you realize that everything about the Lord Jesus Christ was ordained to the detail?

Nothing was left to accident. Acts 4:26-28 says, "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the

Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." The life of Jesus Christ was mapped out exactly and perfectly the way God ordained it. There were no accidents whatsoever in His life. And I might point out, there are no accidents in our lives, only incidents which God uses to bring His providence to pass in our lives.

So, you have a national election, a vocational election, and a messianic election. If you look in your Bibles at 2 Thessalonians 2:13, our text tells us that there is a soteriological election—an election unto salvation—and that this election is by God's choice: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.”

The word “salvation” is the Greek word sōtēria, referring to salvation, messianic salvation, and preservation. Arthur W. Pink states in his fourfold salvation that it means being saved from the penalty, power, presence, and ultimately even the pleasure of sin. We are not only saved from sin's penalty; we are saved from its power. That power has been broken, according to Romans 6. We will be saved from its presence when we are with the Lord, and, most importantly, we are now even being saved from the pleasure of sin.

“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” Why did He choose us? Why did He choose you? Why did He choose me? His choice is always in Him and in Him alone.

Why Did God Choose Us?

We could answer truthfully that He chose us for His own honor and His own glory. And that is true. But here is the truth: we have nothing in ourselves, nothing in us to commend us unto God. There is absolutely nothing in which we can boast, and there is absolutely nothing outside of His sovereign grace and mercy for Him choosing any of us. We were sinners, and still are rebels, transgressors,

iniquitous, disobedient, hateful, and wicked; yet He chose us in His mercy and His grace. There is nothing good in us.

When you stop and think about God's omniscience, He knows everything. He knows the end from the beginning, according to the Bible. In His omniscience, God looked down through eternity, saw us, and saw all our sins, all our wickednesses, all our disobediences, and all our lusts. Still He said, "I love you," and chose us anyway. Romans 5, beginning with verse 7, declares: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." While we were yet sinners, while we were yet His enemies, while we were yet in our sins, while we were yet in our wickedness and rebellion, Christ died for us.

When we stop and think of the fact and reality that we deserve nothing but the justice of God, it makes the truth of Isaiah and the truth of the Apostle Paul come alive in our hearts. What truth is that? Romans 9:29 says, quoting Isaiah: "And as Esaias said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrha." If God had not left us a seed, we would have been absolutely, totally, and completely destroyed. We would have been wiped out just like Sodom and Gomorrah. So let me put it to you like this: if God had not chosen some to be saved, none would be saved.

How can I say that? Romans chapter 3, beginning with verse 10, says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." Nobody deserves to be saved. No one was righteous. "There is none that understandeth." Not one. "There is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Here is our description: "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

This is what we are by nature. This is what we were when Christ died for us. This is what we were when God chose us. I can understand how God can condemn, doom, and destroy sinners. But how He could love us and choose us—there's no explanation other than just the sovereign grace and mercy of God.

So let me ask you a question. Why did God save you? Why did God choose you? Stop and think of the multitudes that hate God. They hate His Word. They hate His people. They hate His salvation. They have no interest in the things of God, in reading the Scripture, in going to church, or in learning anything right. And it's not just the multitudes. Sometimes it's our own family. I have family members that care nothing about Christ. I have family members that I witnessed to in time past. They are now dead. But they told me very quickly they didn't want anything to do with Jesus Christ.

When you look at your own family, your own friends, and your own neighborhood, why did God choose you? Why did God save you? Why are you here? Understand something: once you see this truth, it will humble you. It will make you bow before God in the dust with adoration and praise and gratitude in your heart for His so great salvation.

The Humbling Effect of Election

The Bible says in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 1, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." So God made us alive when we were dead in trespasses and in sins.

In other words, we were helpless. We were hopeless. We could not do one thing for ourselves. Although we were dead in trespasses and sins, according to verse 1, verses 2 and 3 tell us we were quite alive. What does it mean to be dead in trespasses and sins? Verse 2 says, “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

Would I have any volunteers to stand up in this room and tell me all the sordid details, sins, and wickednesses that have been in your life since you were, say, ten years old? I would not have any takers, because you would be embarrassed to do so, and so would I. Each one of us lived exactly like this until the grace of God came into our hearts.

Verse 1 tells us we were dead. Verse 2 tells us we walked according to the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, which we were. Then verse 3 says, "Among whom also we all had our conversation"—that is, our conduct—"in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature"—that is our nature—"the children of wrath, even as others," deserving doom, death, and condemnation.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved). "But God" is a divine intervention. That is what changed our lives and made us what we are.

When you read Ezekiel, chapters 8 and 9, the people in the city are so wicked and vile that God sends an angel with a sword to slay all the wicked. God tells the angel to wait until the man with the inkhorn puts a mark on the foreheads of his people.

Those are not to be slain. Everybody else is to be slain. In Ezekiel 9:8, Ezekiel said, "And it came to pass, while they were slaying them," that is, in the middle of the death, "and I was left, that I fell upon my face, and cried, and said, Ah Lord God!"

When I realized I was spared, I fell on my face. Now let me ask you: Why are you saved? Let me show you. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 7. Here are questions you need to ponder and answer biblically. The Apostle asks, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

"Who maketh thee to differ from another?" Why are you saved and others are not? Why do you understand truth when others do

not? Why do you have a hunger for the Word of God when others do not? Who made you to differ? If there is a difference in your life, someone made that difference, and that difference was made by God alone.

“And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” You say, “Preacher, I repented and I believed.” Wonderful. Where did you get repentance? Who gave it to you? Read Acts 5 and Acts 11. Repentance is the gift of God. Read 2 Timothy chapter 2. Repentance is the gift of God, and faith is a gift of God. Everything that you have—spiritually, physically, mentally, and economically—God gave you.

He said, “If you have received it, why do you glory or boast as if you had not received it?” Everything that we have, God gave us. It was God who made the difference. Let me show you. Turn back to Romans chapter 9, and I want to begin reading with verse 10. This is a divine choice. We have a reason to celebrate, a cause to celebrate. Watch this: Romans 9, verse 10.

God's Sovereign Mercy

"And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)" This had nothing to do with Jacob and Esau. They weren't even born. They had not done any good or evil. It had to do with the purpose of God, that the election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.

"It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?" And then he says, "God forbid." You'll find that expression a number of times in the Bible, especially from the Apostle Paul. Here's what it means: Perish the thought. Don't even think that way. Don't let that thought enter in your mind. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." Here's the answer.

"For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." You know, we like to take this to ourselves and forbid it to God.

If I happen to have $10,000 in my pocket and walk outside, and there are 20 homeless people, sickly, hungry, and I give that money to five of them, are the rest going to complain I didn't give to them? How many of them deserved a gift from me? None. When I gave, I had compassion on whom I would have compassion. I had mercy on whom I would have mercy.

We do that all the time. You'll pass people by, and there are others that you won't pass by. God said, "I will have mercy on whom I'll have mercy." It's God's mercy. He can give it to whomever He pleases. It's His compassion. He can exercise it whenever He sees fit. He did not see fit to exercise it on Pharaoh. He hardened Pharaoh's heart, but he had mercy upon us.

Do you understand something, folks? Your election, your calling, your salvation, and ultimately your glorification are due only to the grace and mercy of God. It is a cause to celebrate, but also a cause to be humble, thankful, appreciative, and to celebrate with praise and thanksgiving that great salvation God has given us. If we understand our vileness, wickedness, and just desserts, and understand the holiness, grace, and mercy of God, it will throw us on our face before Him.

Application: A Debt of Praise

Again, 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 13: “But we are bound”—that is, here is a debt we owe—“to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” Here is my first application, and I want you to listen carefully. God's salvation does not make one arrogant, haughty, and proud. God's salvation brings us in the dust before

Him, recognizing that we deserve nothing but death and judgment, and that everything we have comes from His grace and His mercy.

He saved us, and to Him alone belongs the glory and the honor. Jonathan Edwards said it like this: “You contribute nothing to your salvation but the sin which made it necessary.” And that's a fact. Remember, he says we are bound to give thanks. We're bound. It is a duty. It is an obligation. It is a debt that accrues. The longer God lets us live, and the more understanding and the more light that He gives us, the more we ought to praise Him, adore Him, worship Him, and glorify Him.

Let me show you something. In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul says, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord.” We're bound; we owe it because God hath from the beginning chosen us to salvation. Psalm 50, verse 23, says, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.” Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.

We ought to be praising the Lord daily for His so great salvation in Jesus Christ. We ought to praise Him for first loving us, for first choosing us, for sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and for opening our eyes and granting us understanding. We ought to praise Him that there is a desire in us to live holy, obediently, and godly before Him and to walk pleasing in His sight.

We are bound and indebted to praise Him, and we are to glorify Him by offering Him all the praise in our lives. I am thankful the Lord has let me live as long as I have and has given me the help that I have, and I want to praise Him for that. But I especially want to praise Him for His so great salvation in Jesus Christ. Without Christ, we are lost.

We love Him only because He first loved us, and we chose Him only because He first chose us.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word, truth, grace, and mercy. We thank You for Your so great salvation in Jesus Christ. Help us to love Thee, to live for Thee, and honor Thee. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

A Cause To Celebrate

Part Two of Two

Introduction and Review

In 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, beginning with verse 13, the Apostle writes: “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God, even our Father, which has loved us and has given us an everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”

As I pointed out last week, causes are prevalent. They are everywhere. Of course, there are some causes that are very good and some that are very bad. There are some causes that are biblical and, of course, some that are unbiblical. But when we talk about a cause, one truth needs to be emphasized: if we want divine help—if we want

God to speak to us, help us, lead us, direct us, and protect us—we need to make sure that it is not merely our cause that is holy, just, and right, but that we ourselves are also holy, just, and right. We need to remember that a right cause does not make an unrighteous person right before God.

In other words, God is not going to help us in an evil and unjust cause. Moreover, God is not going to help us when we ourselves are evil, unjust, wicked, and unclean.

For instance, if you would hold 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, but turn back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy chapter 23. In this passage, God has given instruction to His people as they are about to embark upon war.

In Deuteronomy chapter 23, beginning with verse 9, God says, "When the host"—that is, when the army—"goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing." It is not just the cause that has to be right; you have to be right as well.

Moreover, he said in verse 10, "If there be among you any man that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp. He shall not come within the camp." Once a man is unclean—and he is talking about ceremonially—he has to go out of the camp. "But it shall be when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water, and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again." In other words, he has to be ceremonially clean to come back into the camp.

Nothing unclean or impure is to be in the camp. He says in verse 12, "Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, where thou shalt go forth abroad." He is talking about an outhouse, a latrine, a bathroom. "And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon, and it shall be when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee." Why? Not just for sanitation. Verse 14 says, "For the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee. Therefore shall thy camp be holy, that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."

God demands not just a holy cause, but a holy people and a clean people as well. If we want God's divine help, we need to make sure

that we ourselves are holy and clean and pure, and not just simply our cause. Our actions and our attitudes must be holy. We demonstrate the sincerity and genuineness of our faith by our obedience and adherence to the Word of God. It is only then that we can plead some of those pleas that David gave in the book of Psalms. For instance, Psalm 35, verse 1, where David said, "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive against me.

"Fight against them that fight against me." So he is asking God to plead his cause. In Psalm 35, verse 23, he said, "Stir up thyself and awake to my judgment, even to my cause, my God and my Lord." Finally, in Psalm 43, verse 1, he said, "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation." Then he said, "O deliver me from the unjust and the deceitful man." If we want God to help us, not only must our cause be right, but we must be right as well.

Divine Choice (Review)

In referring to these causes, remember this is the second part of the message, "A Cause to Celebrate." The word "celebrate" means, first, to observe a day or commemorate an event with ceremonies or festivities; second, to make known publicly and proclaim; third, to praise widely and to present as favorable, widespread, and favorable public notice; and fourth, to perform with appropriate rites and ceremonies. Putting these together, to celebrate means to commemorate, observe, make known publicly, praise widely, and perform with appropriate rites and ceremonies.

Last week we looked at the first cause to celebrate, found in 2 Thessalonians 2:13: a divine choice. The Word of God says, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because"—there is the cause—"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."

There are four types of election in the Bible. First is national election, where God chose Israel. He did not choose the Babylonians, Assyrians, or Hittites; He chose Israel. Second is vocational election, where He chose the Levites. He could be even more specific: He chose Aaron to be the high priest. Not just any Levite could be high priest, but the Levites and the Levites alone served around the tabernacle and the temple. Third is Messianic election, where, in

Isaiah 42:1, God chose His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Messiah. Fourth, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, is soteriological election—election unto salvation: “We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.” When you pause and think that God chose us, it is a flesh-withering and soul-humbling thought. The next question should be: Why would God choose me?

When you examine your life, your thoughts, and your heart, you know the sin and wickedness that abounded in you. You know how unrighteous, ungodly, and unholy you truly were and are. You understand how easily, freely, and readily you transgressed the law of God. You were iniquitous; you were the one in rebellion; and you did all these things simply to fulfill the lust of your flesh. It is just that simple.

You look at yourself and think, "Wow. Look at all the sins I've committed," and yet God, in His infinite grace and mercy, looked down through eternity and chose you to salvation anyhow. Knowing your sin, your rebellion, and your wickedness, He still chose you.

Now turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 9. We are still talking about divine choice. The Bible says, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." Look at that carefully: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath."

The word "appointed" is the Greek word *tithēmi*, meaning to appoint, fix, establish, cause to stand, set forth, and ordain. You could read it this way: "For God hath not ordained us to wrath. God has not appointed us to wrath. God has not established us for wrath. God has not caused us to stand for wrath." No. He has appointed us "to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Greek word for "wrath" is *orgē*, literally meaning wrath, anger, vengeance, indignation, and punishment. Thankfully, God has not appointed us to wrath; He has appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember this: had God not chosen some to be saved, none would be saved. No one deserves salvation. All of us were sinners, wicked, and rebellious. In Romans 9:29, Paul quotes Isaiah: "And as

Isaiah said before, 'Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we should have been made as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah.'" If God had not chosen some to be saved, none would be saved.

A Divine Channel

The very first cause to celebrate is what I called a divine choice. The second point, and where I want to start today, is a divine channel. Second Thessalonians 2:13 says, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." Now here is a divine channel: "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The channel through which our Sovereign's divine choice flows to fruition is through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

Divine Channel: Sanctification of the Spirit and Belief of the Truth

Many people misunderstand and pervert the clear teaching of the Word of God, especially concerning salvation. Most do not understand that election is indeed the foundation of salvation, but it is not salvation of itself. It is unto salvation. I have heard people say, "Well, if I'm one of the elect, I'm going to be saved regardless. Nothing I can do, and no reason to do anything."

I always like to answer that with this: Nobody is going to be saved anyhow. Anybody who has ever been saved is going to be saved God's how. And God's how is through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

No one can have any evidence that he is one of God's elect except through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. All of those whom God has chosen, He chooses through this channel. His choice flows through this channel to them. So, if you have not been regenerated, convicted, converted, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and if you do not believe the truth, then you do not belong to Him. You are not of His.

You are an alien and a stranger. Now, how can I say that? Hold 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, and look back in your Bibles to Romans chapter 8, verse 9. Here the Apostle Paul makes this so clear that I do not see how it could be misunderstood. In Romans 8, verse 9, the Bible says this—and he is talking to these Roman Christians—"But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." So once we are saved, we are in the Spirit. I can explain why. He said, "If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." That is the answer. Because once we are saved, the Holy Spirit of God resides in us. Now, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Isn't that clear? Isn't that plain? If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. So this is why I am saying, if there is no sanctification of the Spirit in your life, if there is no belief of the truth in your life, then you do not belong to Christ.

It is the Holy Spirit of God who regenerates, who convicts, who converts, who draws, who enlightens, who illumines, who imparts, who leads, who guides, who directs, and equips. If you are not indwelled by the Holy Spirit, then, of course, you do not belong to Him.

Let me show you some other verses. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, and look, if you would please, at verse 8. I am just trying to show you the truth: if any man has not the Spirit of God, he is none of his. In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 8, the Word of God says this: "He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given us of his Holy Spirit." Did you see that? It is God who has also given us—that is, a believer—of His Holy Spirit.

Then turn on over your Bibles to 1 John—Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and then 1 John. Notice 1 John chapter 3, verse 24. The Bible says, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we do know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." We know that we abide in Him by the Spirit which He has given us, and it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to be obedient. Now look in 1 John 4, verse 13. Here he says this: "Hereby

"know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." When you read the Bible, you find that the

Holy Spirit is a witness to us, and the Holy Spirit is also a witness in us. The sanctification of the Spirit refers to his work upon us and his work in us. It is only the gift of the Holy Spirit, only his work, that draws us to Jesus Christ. He leads us, draws us, opens our eyes, and illuminates us. He enlightens us to understand truth.

The Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 that this divine channel is through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. You cannot divorce these two concepts. If someone is sanctified by the Spirit, then he does indeed believe the truth. If someone believes the truth, he is indeed sanctified by the Spirit. In other words, you cannot separate them; you cannot divorce them.

The Inseparability of Spirit and Truth

Consider 2 Timothy 2:24: “And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” Why then must a pastor be apt to teach and patient? “In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.”

When are men recovered out of the snare of the devil? According to verse 25, it is when they acknowledge the truth. When men acknowledge the truth, that is when God gives them repentance. There is no acknowledging of the truth without repentance. Repentance is the gift of God, according to Acts 5 and Acts 11. Notice that all those to whom God gives repentance acknowledge the truth. There will never be recovery from the enemy unless we acknowledge the truth.

It is not just our salvation, but also our sanctification, that comes by knowledge of the truth. In the high priestly prayer of our Lord, recorded in John 17, verse 17, He says, “Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth.” This is why you cannot separate the work of the Spirit from belief of the truth. When the Spirit of God works in you, you believe the truth. If you believe the truth, the Spirit of God has worked in you.

In verse 19, our Lord also said, “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” We know that Jesus Christ is truth incarnate. The Bible is truth. The Spirit is truth. God is a God of truth. So very clearly, sanctification as well as salvation comes through acknowledging of the truth.

Now turn to the book of Hebrews, chapter 2. We are still talking about the sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth. Beginning at verse 10, Hebrews says, “For it became him”—that is, the Lord Jesus Christ—“for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” He that sanctifieth—the Lord Jesus—and they who are sanctified are all of one.

Now let me ask you a question. I had said earlier that you cannot divorce the sanctification of the Spirit from belief in the truth. Jesus Christ is the sanctified one. Is there any possibility that He might disbelieve the Word of God? Is there any possibility that He might acknowledge some error or some heresy? The answer is absolutely not.

You have to remember that Jesus Christ is truth incarnate, and it is only by Jesus Christ that we are saved and sanctified. It is only by the Spirit of God that we are saved and sanctified as well.

It must be made clear once again. When we are talking about acknowledging the truth, we are not simply talking about giving mental assent to the truth, nodding in agreement, or assenting to a number of historical facts and reality. No. Believing the truth according to this passage means far more than mental assent. It means that truth has so permeated our minds and permeated our understandings that truth is our life. We not only believe the truth; we do the truth. That is, we know it, apply it, and obey it.

In John 3, beginning with verse 19, our Lord says, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." We understand that. Verse 20 says, "For everyone that doeth evil hateth

the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Notice that he does not merely believe evil; he actually does it. He "hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." Now verse 21: "But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought of God." This is what our Lord is talking about when He says, "He that doeth truth cometh to the light."

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. The Bible, of course, is the light written. He that doeth truth is not afraid of light. He is not afraid of facing reality, and he is not afraid of truth. You remember what David said in Psalm 116, verse 10: "I believed, therefore have I spoken." In other words, we actually act out what we genuinely, truly believe. We end up doing what we believe. The man who does not believe the truth does evil because he believes evil, and he does not want to have anything to do with truth or with anything that will expose his wickedness. But he that does the truth is the man who is willing to come to the light.

The word "doeth" there is the Greek word *poieō*, and it literally means to bring forth, to cause, to work, to perform, to carry out, and to fulfill. So he says, he that is carrying out the truth, he that is doing the truth, he is bringing forth the truth, and he is fulfilling the truth. He doesn't care anything about the light. He is willing to be exposed because everything is true. It is like one man said, "If you always tell the truth, you don't have to remember everything that you said previously." And that's true.

Look back at verse 21. He says, "But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest." Are you watching? "That they are wrought in God." We do the truth. Listen carefully. We do the deeds. And those deeds manifest, make known, and reveal that whatever we do in truth is wrought of God. In other words, God did it.

If there is ever a godly motive in you or a godly act, if there is anything biblical and true and right and gracious and glorious in you, God put it in you, because it is not in us by nature. Therefore, when we have been sanctified by the Spirit, He has worked in our

lives, and we have acknowledged the truth and are willing to do the truth, that revelation or manifestation of truth reveals the fact that our works are wrought of God.

Remember Philippians 2:13: "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." If God put the will in you, He is going to put the to-do in you. Anything that you are willing to do, and anything you do that is right, holy, just, and glorious, God put it in you.

Isaiah 26:12 says, "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou hast also wrought all our works in us." Why? For thou also hast wrought all our works in us.

The Author of the Call

So it is true there is a divine choice. But that divine choice flows through and by and in the channel of sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. You cannot separate. You cannot divorce the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. The man who has been sanctified by the Spirit—that is, the Spirit of God has worked in him—and believes the truth believes it because the Spirit of God has worked in him. The man who believes the truth believes it because the Spirit of God has worked in him.

Divine Calling: The Author, Means, and Effect

If you will look back in your Bibles to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, that brings us to another question. How does one receive or come to the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth? That answer is given to us in verse 14. Verses 13 and 14 say, “We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Here is a divine calling: “Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

There are several truths in verse 14 that we need to understand. The first truth is this: we should note the author of this call. The Bible said, “He has called you by our gospel.” The author is none

other than the sovereign God of heaven and earth. Calling in the Bible is ascribed to God the Father.

In 1 Corinthians 1, verse 9, the Bible says, “God is faithful”—we are talking about God the Father now—“God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” God is faithful, by whom you were called. It is God the Father who does the calling. This is also shown in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verse 7. God is the author of this call.

You're going to see this again. "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." But notice, it is God that has called us. "But God"—or "For God"—"hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." And if you'd go back in your Bibles to 2 Timothy—over just a few pages from 2 Thessalonians—2 Timothy chapter 1, look at verses 8 and 9. We read it last week, but I want to emphasize something else this week. Look at it. Paul writes to Timothy, says, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God"—so we're talking about God—"who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Note, if you would, it is God who has called us with a holy calling.

Now, if you would turn right on over to 1 Peter—Hebrews, James, 1 Peter. Notice if you would, chapter 1, verse 15. Here's a verse that practically everyone can quote. And we've never ever thought about it. 1 Peter 1, verse 15: "But as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Did you see what he said? "But as he who hath called you is holy"—that's God the Father. As he is holy, be holy in all manner of conversation. But it is God that has done the calling. Then if you look in 1 Peter 2, verse 9, you'll see it again. 1 Peter 2, verse 9:

The Means of God's Call

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." When the

Bible says in 2 Thessalonians 2:14, "whereunto he called you," the author of our call unto salvation is God the Father himself.

What is the means of that calling? The same verse says, "Whereunto he called you by our gospel." The word "gospel" refers to the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, the good news of his salvation, and the good news of his work. The gospel is the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is not just facts about Christ; it is Jesus Christ.

First Corinthians 1:18 says, "For the preaching of the cross"—the gospel, the preaching of the person and work of Jesus Christ—"is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God." To those who are perishing, the preaching of the gospel is foolishness. They do not have time for it. They would rather go skiing, fishing, or bowling; they would rather do anything, even cut grass. It is foolishness to them.

Verse 21 says, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. No wonder the Apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Now, let me show you something. Turn back to 1 Thessalonians chapter 1—not 2 Thessalonians, but 1 Thessalonians chapter 1—and look at verse 5. In the preaching of the gospel, there is that sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth that work together in this as well. He says: "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes." Wow. He said, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sakes."

Understand that God is the author of this call. The preaching of the Word of God, the gospel, is the means of this call. Look back in your Bibles at 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 13—here is the third

truth of verse 14: "Whereunto he called you by our gospel"—here it is—"to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." When God calls us unto salvation, it is an effectual call. It actually works. That is what he says: "Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." There are actually two different calls mentioned in the Bible: the outward, external call, which is the public preaching of the Word of God, and the inward, secret, effectual call, which is the work of God alone. Pastors may call outwardly, externally, and vocally, but that is all we can do.

The Effectual Call Illustrated

I can tell you your duty, your obligation, and your responsibility, but I cannot save you. Only God can do that. What I do is outward, external, and vocal. What God does is inward, secret, and effectual.

Here is a good, clear illustration. Years ago, I was preaching in South Carolina. It was Sunday morning, and the building was packed. Right in the middle of my sermon, a man about halfway back screamed and shrieked, saying, "Oh God, I'm lost, I'm lost." He got up from the pew, ran straight to the pulpit where I was standing and preaching, fell on his knees, and put both his arms around my feet. All he would say was, "Oh God, I'm lost. I'm lost." He was crying, and here I was in the middle of my sermon.

So I looked at the pastor of the church and said, “If you don’t mind, would you take a couple of men and take him into a side room and tell him about the person and work of Jesus Christ? Then I will finish my sermon.” They took him inside, and I finished preaching. The Lord was very gracious that day, and a number of people were saved, I do genuinely believe.

After the service, he came out grinning from ear to ear. He was a preacher. He said, “I just want to tell you, God saved me. He saved me, and I’m so thankful.” So I asked him, “Let me ask you a question. What was it that I said that got you under such conviction?” I was thinking, Well, if it worked one time, it’ll work again. He looked at me and said, “Do you want me to lie to you or tell you the truth?” I said, “I want the truth.” He said, “I heard very little of what you said. You were short-circuited.”

He said, “God Himself was speaking to me.” That’s the truth. That’s the difference between the public preaching of the Word of God and that secret, effectual call of God. Those whom God calls actually obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at John chapter 6. I want you to see what this effectual calling really is. John 6, verses 44 and 45: “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall be all taught of God.’ Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”

Look at verse 44. Our Lord says, “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” This is that effectual call. God draws us. He doesn’t drag us. He draws us.

Please pay attention to the word “can”: “No man can come unto me.” If Steve asks, “Pastor, can I play your piano?” my response would be, “You have my permission if you have the ability to do so.” “Can” is a term of ability; “may” is a term of permission. Our Lord is saying that no man has the ability or power to come savingly to Him unless the Father draw him.

How does God draw us? Verse 45 says, “It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall be all taught of God.’ Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” God teaches, opens our eyes, and enlightens our minds. He illuminates us to the truth and releases our will from its bondage to sin. He draws us tenderly and savingly to Jesus Christ. He shows us the wickedness of our sins, the just deserts of our sins, and the glorious remedy for our sins, the Lord Jesus Christ. “Every man that hath been taught of the Father,” our Lord said, “every man that has been taught comes unto me.” It is effectual; it does not fail.

Here you have a perfect illustration. He said in verse 14, “Whereunto he called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The word “obtaining” is *peripoiēsis*, literally meaning a purchased possession: coming into, obtaining, and possessing a certain thing.

What is this possession—the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ? First Peter 1:3 says that, according to His abundant mercy, God has

begotten us again unto a lively, or living, hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,” who are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” That inheritance is already ours. What is going to stop us from receiving it? Nothing. We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Clearly, nothing is going to hinder us.

Look again at 1 Corinthians 1:9. We are talking about the calling. The author is God the Father; the means is through the gospel; and it is an effectual call. It actually works. It brings us to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called”—look—“unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” This calling culminates in fellowship with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a calling that genuinely works.

Put it like this: He chose us, so we chose Him. He loved us, so we love Him. He called us, and we came to Him. He taught us, and we learned and understood. He loved us first; therefore, He gets all the honor and all the glory of our salvation.

Divine Character: Standing Fast and Being Established

Now go back to 2 Thessalonians 2, because here is one last question: How do we know that we have been savingly called? The answer is a divine character. We have seen a divine choice, a divine channel, and a divine calling. In verses 15 through 17, there is a divine character. The passage says: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”

The word “therefore” is a conclusion based upon what Paul has previously written and said. In the immediate context, he is speaking of a divine choice, a divine channel, and a divine calling, which ultimately results in and culminates in a divine character. “Therefore, brethren, stand fast,” and “hold the traditions”—a word

also translated as “ordinances”—“which ye have been taught, whether by word,” that is, orally by them at that time, “or,” he says, “by our epistle,” the written Word of God. The truth he gives us is this: grace and mercy always produce a godly character.

You remember that passage in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." You cannot be saved and remain the same. You cannot acknowledge the truth and remain in error. You cannot be saved and sanctified by the Holy Spirit and remain in sin and wickedness. What did the Apostle Paul say in Romans chapter 6? "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid"—that is, perish the thought. Don't even think about that.

When God saves you, He changes you. He begins to produce in you a godly character. That godly character is not necessarily built overnight. Clearly, it is not. It takes years; it takes a lifetime to build character. But the truth of the matter is, He gives us the character to stand fast in what we have been taught, in His truth and in His Word.

We do not give in. We do not give up. We do not give out. We do not quit. We stand fast. We do not pitch in the towel. We do not give way to discouragement, desperation, or depression. No, no, no, no. We just stand fast. That is the divine character that He builds in us through His Word and through His truth and by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit of God.

Paul repeatedly commands believers to stand fast. In 1 Corinthians 16:13, he says, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." Galatians 5:1 says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Philippians 1:27 says, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit." Therefore, in Philippians 4:1, he says, "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord." And 1 Thessalonians 3:8 says, "For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

There is a godly character developed in us that will not make us quit, give up, or give out. This is like the truth of 1 John 2:19: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

The proof that we have ever savingly believed is that we continue to believe. The proof that we have ever savingly repented is that we continue in repentance. The truth that God preserves us is evidenced in our perseverance.

Finally, in verses 16 and 17, he says, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace"—"comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." God, the Almighty God, comforts our hearts and establishes us in every good word and work.

This means we cannot fail or be stopped; we will overcome. Why? Because of a divine character wrought in us by divine calling, a divine channel, and a divine choice. Everything is built and based upon God himself. He gives us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. Do we have a cause to celebrate?

Conclusion: A Cause to Celebrate

And the answer is yes. We have a cause to honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a cause to praise God the Father. We have a cause to praise God the Holy Spirit. If we cannot celebrate and rejoice in the salvation that He has so graciously provided in Jesus Christ, our understanding is very deficient in the Word of God. If you do nothing but meditate upon 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 9—“For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ”—wow! God could have rightly condemned us for our sins and our rebellion. But instead of appointing us to wrath, He appointed us to the obtaining of salvation through Jesus Christ the Lord.

I believe that I can be thankful for that. I believe that I can celebrate that fact. I believe that I can rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ and all that He has done for us. I believe that He will receive

all the honor and all the glory for everything in our lives. He deserves it.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. Lord, I pray that You would indeed enable us to celebrate the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, our Lord. May we see His greatness, His glory, His goodness, His graciousness, and may we rejoice in Him and in Him alone. Thank You for working in us. Thank You for changing us. Enable us, Father, to stand fast in the faith. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Source Notes

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