

Comfort in Good Doctrine

2 Thessalonians 2:16—17

The Thessalonians wandered away from the truth of God's word to believe a lie. Paul has been bringing them back to the words God gave him to get them back on track. They needed to understand that God's word never changes and that everything needs to be weighed in accordance with Scripture. Paul begins wrapping up his teachings on end-time events to give them practical admonitions on everyday Christian living.

Lord Jesus Christ Himself

Paul makes it clear that we have a very close relationship with Jesus Christ. He is personally involved in our lives along every step of the way. Although we often do not "feel" that closeness and care, Scripture give assurances that He is not just watching, but is actively comforting us as we live our lives.

This close relationship is emphasized in the title "the Body of Christ." Jesus Christ is the head and we are His body. There is no other picture that could be made to express the closeness we have with Jesus Christ. This closeness is not a feeling or experience, but is a fact laid out in Scripture. As our head, He is continually making intercession on our behalf to the Father (Romans 8:33—36). In this passage we learn that no charge can be brought against us because Jesus Christ is making intercession on our behalf while sitting at the right-hand of the Father. The love He demonstrated on the cross is being demonstrated to us even to this day.

The Accuser

People often speak of Satan as the Accuser. This comes from Revelation 12:10 where Satan is called the accuser of the brethren, a reference to Satan standing before God and accusing believing Israel day and night. Satan is also shown accusing Joshua the high priest as they stand before the Angel of the Lord (a Christophany) in Zechariah 3:1. There is no doubt that Satan does stand before God and that he does accuse Jewish believers.

Job is another example of how Satan has access to God and how he deals with Jewish believers. He approached God and challenged Him to allow him to move Job from his strong faith in the Lord. Satan wanted to show that God's protection of Job is the only reason Job retained his faith. As we all know, Job passed with flying colors. Since Job is a picture of Israel going through the Tribulation, we can see how Satan will be working overtime to cause the faith of believing Israel to falter and have them turn from God. This is what is happening in Revelation 12:10. The Little Flock of believers will triumph over Satan's attacks because of the blood of the Lamb.

Unaccusable

Members of the Body of Christ have a completely different relationship with Jesus Christ than Israel did when under the Law. In our current dispensation, God is not dealing with Jews or Gentiles, but with individuals. Anyone can now come individually to God through Jesus Christ through faith.

Romans 8:33 clearly states that there is no one who is able to bring a charge against a believer. This ties in with the first verse of the same chapter that says that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. We are not condemnable because we are perfect in Christ Jesus. If we could be accused, then Jesus Christ could also be accused.

I believe this goes along with verses like Ephesians 1:4 and Colossians 1:21—22 that show the members of the Body of Christ to be blameless. We cannot be accused because of our position in Christ as His Body. We are unaccusable because we are already seen as being

seated in the heavenly places (in this Dispensation of Grace). The One who shed His blood for us is continually before the throne of the Father making intercession for us. However, Israel's salvation (as a nation under the Dispensation of Law) is shown to be in the future, at the Second Coming (Romans 11:26; Jeremiah 31:34). Their position is not secure and Satan WILL have reason to accuse them until they are given the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26—27).

Even though Satan is not able to accuse us before God, we unfortunately sometimes take on that function by accusing our fellow believers. Instead of building up, we tear down. Instead of obeying the “one another” admonitions, given to us by Paul, we strive to make it all about ourselves. Instead of coming to church to help build up each other, we look at how we can be built up. Our natural man, the old nature is wired to feed itself and it has an appetite that has no end. As members of each other we are to accept one another (Romans 15:7), build up each other (Romans 14:19), serve one another (Galatians 5:13), bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32), and abound in love for one another (1 Thessalonians 3:12). These admonitions can be summarized by saying we need to regard one another as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:3).

Eternal benefits

Along with our eternal life comes eternal benefits. These benefits are ours because of God's love directed to us through the Person of Jesus Christ shedding His blood on the cross. Just as our eternal life begins at the moment we put our complete trust in the Person of Jesus Christ and His death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1—4), our blessings (benefits) also begin. Verse 16 lists two of these benefits that Paul mentions to encourage the Thessalonians, consolation (comfort) and good hope. The book of Ephesians lists many more blessings.

Since the Thessalonian believers had put God's Word aside in favor of a false document, they had lost all hope and were shaken, greatly in need of comfort. When they turned away from God's Word, they opened themselves up to be tossed by every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). Turning away from God's Word caused great harm to their spiritual growth. Instead of resting firmly in the unchanging truths of God's Word, they waivered, not sure what to believe nor whom to trust. If they had held on to the clear teaching God gave them through Paul, they could have endured their persecution with much confidence, knowing that they were secure in the Lord.

We need to use the Thessalonians as our example of how important it is for us to study what God has given to us. Not only do we need to study Scripture, but we also need to approach it rightly divided. When we understand that the 13 books penned by the Apostle Paul are written directly to those of us in the Church, the Body of Christ, then we can take every word and apply them to every situation of our lives without having to spiritualize or allegorize.

Scripture has the power of the Holy Spirit behind it. As we read and study His Word, the Holy Spirit gives us insight and understanding. God's power works in us to transform us into useful instruments. It is amazing that we can be containers of God's great power (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Comfort and establish

The results of the Thessalonians putting their trust back onto God's Word are comfort and being established. Comfort because they would know they are not going through the Tribulation and could still look with hope toward the Rapture. Being established, meaning they would be set firm and unmovable in God's Word. According to Romans 16:25 they were established according to the gospel preached by Paul, the revelation of the Mystery. Once set firmly in Paul's gospel, we will be able to move on to spiritual maturity.

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