

Having just described the spiritual disaster of those refusing to love the truth (2 Thess 2:9–12), Paul seemingly switches abruptly to his thoughts for the Thessalonians (2:13–17). But remember that those destined to perish could have been their loved ones and neighbors with whom they had shared the gospel. How should believers respond? Essentially Paul is calling them to a proper response, to get God-focused when considering the destiny of the lost. The same lesson applies to us when we think of those who are lost. Paul offers three focal points concerning God.

I. Get God-focused by giving thanks to God that He chose you to be saved (2:13–14).

The Thessalonian believers were clearly different than those who did not love the truth, but they should thank God for their own salvation which they did not deserve. Some would perish, but God in His gracious sovereignty chose to save some.

1. God's choosing made them family; their salvation revealed His love.

This is the (implied) reason Paul could call the Thessalonians "brothers loved by the Lord."

Pray and weep for the lost, but also keep in mind the relationship to which God has called you and thank Him for that.

2. God determined both divine and human means by which His choosing would be realized.

a. By the Spirit using His Word He sets apart men and women from sin and the world unto God (cf. John 17:17; Ephesians 6:17; John 16:8).

b. It is equally true that a person must believe the truth to be saved (Romans 10:17). Therefore, the gospel must also be proclaimed, for it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16).

Election is God's choice to save some through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. Thank God that someone shared the gospel with you.

3. God called that believers might share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Salvation is more than forgiveness, but includes much more such as justification, adoption, and sanctification, and will one day include glorification, sharing in the glory that belongs to Jesus Christ (cf. Philippians 3:21; Colossians 3:4; 1 John 3:2).

Thank God for the glory that is waiting for you, as a believer in Jesus Christ.

As we thank God for choosing us to be saved, we challenge less His decision to save some and not others and plead more for His grace, because if we got what we deserved, it would be death.

II. Get God-focused by holding fast to God's Word and standing firm (2:15).

1. In this Paul summarizes his plea and the need of the Thessalonians in light of being shaken and caused to fear by false teaching concerning the day of the Lord (2:1–12).

2. But "so then" and the continuation in verses 16–17 shows another reason for this command, the need to stand firm and hold to the word when tempted to despair at the lostness of many. Resist any temptation to change the message and always trust in God and not self.

Remember God's truth and hold to it.

III. Get God-focused by pleading with God for encouragement and strength (2:16–17).

1. Salvation is the work of the triune God, the only proper source for strength and encouragement.

See v. 13 for the work of the Spirit; Galatians 2:20 for the Son's love and giving; Romans 8:32, 39 for the Father's love and giving.

2. Salvation has its eternal perspective: eternal encouragement, God coming alongside to give whatever is best now and into eternity; and good hope, our expectation for the future, that is, eternally in the presence of Jesus and final glorious transformation.

3. Salvation has its present benefits for which we pray now.

a. Comfort, consolation, encouragement, exhortation – whatever is needed, especially as we consider the future and potential lostness of some.

b. Strength to stand firm, to hold to the truth and keep doing and saying what is right and good.

Don't sink into despair about the lost, but plead with God to do His work in your heart. So that you can stand firm, holding to His Word, and continue to do what is needed – what He has prescribed – for the salvation of the lost.

Keep your primary focus on God so that you can view the world correctly, with a divine perspective. Be thankful for salvation in Jesus Christ, stand firm on the truth, and plead with God for encouragement and strength. Jesus knows our struggles, and has also set the example by the obedience that brought our salvation.