

# Thessalonians

A Careful Study Of Thessalonians

November 21, 2021

## I. Introduction

A. **2 Thessalonians 2:13-17** . . . But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. [14] It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. [15] So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. [16] Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, [17] comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

## B. Pray

## II. Love, comfort, hope, and strength from our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father

A. [16] Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, **who has** loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by [means of] grace . . .

1. There are two interesting uses of grammar in this verse. First are the words “**who has**,” which would be easy to miss. However, the second one you would miss without help with the Greek.

a. The words “**who has**” are in relation to Paul saying it is both Jesus Christ and God who are loving us and giving us eternal comfort and hope.

(1) However, after referencing them both, he should have used the plural “who have.” Instead, he uses the singular “**who has**” – as if Jesus and God are one.

(2) I don’t want to make too much of this because the theology of the Trinity as we know it today had not yet been formulated when Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians.

(3) However, in **John 10:30**, Jesus said that He and God are one, and it is possible Paul was expressing this truth.

b. The **second** interesting use of grammar is Paul’s use of the feminine form of the words “**eternal comfort**” instead of the masculine. What makes this interesting is that Jesus was definitely a male, and we often think of God as a male.

- (1) Again, I don't want to make too much of this, but I suspect most of us are aware that, generally speaking, women – and especially mothers are better at giving comfort than men, and that includes most fathers.
  - (2) Now I am not suggesting God is female, but it is possible that Paul wanted his readers to see God's comfort as more like the comfort they would get from their mothers than their fathers.
  - (3) And if this is true, then it is possible Paul wanted us to see the tenderness of God so that we would turn to Him – as opposed to other things – when we need or want to be comforted.
2. Moving on, we see that God's comfort and good hope (*for a better future*) are eternal – which goes far beyond the kind of earthly and often momentary comfort and hope received from those around us.
  - a. I think the words of **Romans 8:38-39** fit the kind of **comfort** spoken of here in **vs 16**, “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
  - b. And Paul's words in **1 Thessalonians 5:8-10** speak of the kind of **hope** we get from God: “But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. [9] For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, [10] who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.”
3. Returning to **vs 16**, we see that our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father love us and are gracious toward us. And in between the words **love** and **grace** is the comfort and good hope they give us.
4. In other words, it is the combined activity or the working together of God's love and grace that gives us eternal comfort and good hope.
  - a. The important truth here is that God's love motivates His acts of love, and His grace motivates Him to act out His love toward undeserving sinners like us.
  - b. Think of it this way: we, who do not deserve to be loved by God because of how we have treated Him **and** those He loves, are nonetheless loved because God is gracious.
  - c. And in the case of **vs 16**, God shows us His love in the form of comfort and good hope.

5. To reinforce this truth, I want to reference several scriptures.
  - a. We are reminded of the extent of God's love and grace toward us in **Romans 5:8**, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
  - b. We see the effects of God's love and grace toward us in –
    - (1) **1 John 3:1**, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are..."
    - (2) **Revelation 1:5b-6**, "To [Jesus Christ] who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— [6] and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."
    - (3) **Hebrews 12:5b-6**, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; [6] for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."
  - c. And we see what kind of people God loves in ways that go beyond His general love for all mankind in –
    - (1) **Proverbs 15:9**, "The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves one who pursues righteousness."
    - (2) **John 14:23**, "[Jesus said] If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."
    - (3) **2 Corinthians 9:7**, "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."
6. Without question, God loves us – perfectly and wonderfully. But the reason any of us experience God's love is because He is gracious toward us. Therefore, as those who worship and praise God, we should humbly and gratefully keep the combination of God's love and grace uppermost in our mind.

B. *And may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father [17] comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.*

1. There is a comfort and a strengthening that goes beyond words of sympathy or encouragement or appreciation. And there is a comfort and a strengthening that goes beyond a hug or going somewhere with someone in order to be supportive or quietly sitting with someone and listening to them.

2. The comfort and strengthening that goes beyond words and deeds is the kind that touches our hearts, and this kind of comfort and strengthening comes from God.
  - a. It is God's comfort and strengthening that quiets our thoughts, calms our emotions, and comforts our hearts in the face of painful loss, sorrow, emptiness, and loneliness. However, to experience this comfort and strengthening we must submit to God's will, live according to His word, humbly accept what He is doing or allowing, and choose to be satisfied by His ongoing love and presence in our lives.
  - b. It is God's comfort and strengthening that bolsters our courage, solidifies our confidence, and exhorts us to persevere when it looks like circumstances or the powers that be or even the devil himself is going to ruin what we have worked for or destroy what we hold dear. But to experience this kind of comfort and strengthening we must continue doing what God's word says we ought to do while patiently and quietly waiting for God to bring good out of the situation.
  - c. It is God's comfort and strengthening that gives us resolve in the face of overwhelming odds – but only as we trust Him to be our provider and protector, as David did when facing Goliath.
  - d. It is God's comfort and strengthening that carries us through the challenges of obedience, growth in godliness, perseverance in faithfulness, and the practical, life-changing application of love to all our relationships. Yet here again, we must abandon self-rule, turn away from ungodliness, forsake fleshly and worldly attractions, and kill off selfishness to experience this kind of comfort and strengthening.
3. At this point I want to remind you that the effects of God's comfort and strengthening are most often incremental – which means we progressively experience the inward serenity, encouragement, and resolve that comes from His comfort and strengthening.
  - a. However, to continue experiencing this inward serenity and encouragement we must believe and rest in the fact that God is good, that He is the God of all comfort (**2 Corinthians 1:3**), and that we can do all the things He wants us to do because He, himself, strengthens us (**Philippians 4:13**).
  - b. And as you experience God's comfort and strengthening you will see the truth in **2 Thessalonians 2:17** – that He gives comfort and strength for every good work and word.

4. We cannot be certain what Paul is referring to when he speaks of every good work and word, but we can use Paul's own personal experience with God's comfort and strengthening to help us gain some understanding of what he is talking about.
5. For example, we read in **2 Corinthians 4:6-11**, "For God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. [7] But we have this treasure (*the knowledge of the glory of God as seen in Christ*) in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; [8] we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; [9] persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; [10] always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. [11] For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh."

### III. Conclusion

- A. Life has its challenges, hard times, injustices, painful losses, and times of loneliness. Our bodies experience tiredness, injury, sickness, pain, and debilitating disease. We may have to endure a physical disability. We may face harassment, abuse, discrimination, persecution, or even torture and a painful death for doing what is godly, protecting the weak, speaking the truth, or calling unbelievers to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.
- B. Paul, Silvanus, Timothy, and the Thessalonian believers faced many of these things – yet in their suffering they looked to God, trusted God, and rested in His love and care to enable them to endure the hard times and ill-treatment – and to endure such times in ways that showed they trusted God to work all things out for good, and were convinced they were safe in His hands, and gave them a heartfelt desire to pray for those making their lives needlessly difficult or painful.
- C. Therefore, when life is hard and times of suffering are upon you, I am encouraging you to follow the example set in **2 Thessalonians 2:16-17**. Let us look to God for His comfort and strengthening so that we endure them with an attitude, and with deeds and words that manifest the glory of God and make Jesus Christ look like a worthy savior to the unbelievers around us.