

THE PAYMENT OF A GREAT DEBT
2 Thess. 2:13, 14

Intro: These are two verses that have been on my heart for several days now, and I just have to speak on them tonight.

They come out of a book that is characterized by prayer, and they are themselves a prayer -- one of 9 found in 2 Thessalonians

Note: 1:2
1:3, 4
2:13, 14 1:11, 12
2:16, 17
3:1, 2
3:5
3:16
3:18.

How wonderful it would be to be a man of prayer like Paul was!

It is the prayer of a grateful servant. No one was more amazed at what had taken place in Thessalonica than Paul was, and no one knew better than he did that the Lord was the only One who was deserving of praise for that work.

Let us take care, first of all, to note . . .

I. THE MEANING OF THE VERSES.

"We" is emphatic, meaning we (1:1) of all people.

"Are bound" -- are obligated (like 1:3), owe the payment of a debt.

The debt is being paid off by praise, thanksgiving. But it never will be fully met because it has to continue "always."

And Paul goes to the ultimate source of blessing, the One who has done the work: "to God." The reason: "for you," i.e., for all that has taken place, is taking place, and will take place in your lives.

And then Paul mentions five things:

- 1) The origin of the plan.
- 2) The nature of the work.
- 3) The process to be seen.
- 4) The beginning of the work.
- 5) The goal and purpose of the work.

For all of these GOD is to be thanked, and He is to be thanked "always."

II. THE MESSAGE OF THE VERSES.

Notice how the great truths of Scripture enter into Paul's prayers. He is not teaching here; he is praying, or telling them how he prays. This is the best way to learn to pray -- by using the prayers of Scripture.

And note that he had to be thinking very clearly about the work of the Lord in order to pray in this way. Most of us have too great an opinion of our place in the work of the Lord, and so that is the reason we do not pray the way Paul did.

Let us note carefully how Paul goes back to the very beginning of all that he had seen God do in Thessalonica. When did it actually start?

A. The origin of the plan.

This immediately will spoil this verse for some people. There is that doctrine of election, some will say. And we have to acknowledge that it is. I just can't believe it, others will say, because there are too many problems connected with it.

Let me say this: You do not believe all of the Bible if you do not believe in election. It is not only here, but it is in many other places. Treat this doctrine like you have to treat other doctrines -- accept it because it is in the Word, not because you can understand it.

But here is something else that may be helpful: Make it a matter of praise and thanksgiving. Rejoice in it.

It will tell you this about salvation. It is a work that began before there was a world and before there was a man. It began with God -- and it is all of grace.

We may have problems with it, but is this the only doctrine of Scripture that you cannot explain to your own satisfaction. Will you reject the incarnation until you can understand how the eternal, infinite God could become a man?

Let us praise God, and He will make us love it. (See Spurgeon's comments in Daily Readings, Oct. 28, a.m.)

"Salvation" is the big word for all that the Lord is doing in the lives of His people. It includes the past, the present, and the future!

Let me change the order in which we look at these tonight. Let us look next at . . .

B. The goal and purpose of the work (2 Thess. 2:14b).

Do you not have some trouble with this? Are you never discouraged about yourself? Can you visualize a time when you share the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

From what Paul says about this, he evidently is thanking God that there is no doubt but that this goal will be reached by everyone whom the Lord has chosen. He means for this to be assuring!

How amazing is the grace of God!

But how did this get started?

C. The beginning of the work in Thessalonica: See v. 14a.

Now here is something else to help you with the doctrine of election: The doctrine of election does not set aside the preaching of the Gospel; IT REQUIRES IT. If God has chosen us for salvation, He has also ordained the means by which we are to be saved.

The greatest evangelists of Israel and the Church were men who believed these truths. Look at the ministry of the Apostle Paul, for example. No one who has ever lived had a greater burden for the lost than Paul did -- with the Lord as the one exception. Read Rom. 9:1-3.

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But that leaves one other thing -- actually two in one:

D. The process that is going on now -- in this present life. See v. 13b.

How will we ever be changed from what we are when we are saved into what we need to be when we obtain "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Have you worked on this yourself? Have you found out what a hopeless job this is?

Paul answers this question by putting two things into one: "Through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The "through" is used only once so that we will know that these two belong together and must not be separated.

What do they mean? They mean that God is using the

Spirit of God and the Word of God to set us apart from that which is sinful and profane to that which is of God. The Spirit works, and He uses the Word -- and He works with us so that we believe the Word.

Note 2 Cor. 3:18.

This is the reason that it is SO IMPORTANT that we read and study our Bibles. You cannot do that without being sanctified.

On the other hand, you will never know the full sanctifying work of the Spirit until you get into the Word and stay there!

Concl: Could anyone but the Lord pack so much in so few words?

What are they here for? For us to understand the truth? Yes. But they are here for another reason -- SO THAT WE WILL DO WHAT PAUL IS DOING, GIVE GOD THANKS NOW AND FOREVERMORE FOR ALL THAT HE HAS DONE, IS DOING, AND WILL DO TO BRING ABOUT THE FULNESS OF OUR SALVATION.

A thankful believer is one who will enjoy the truth and one who will come to a greater understanding of the truth. Let us never cease praising Him -- and only Him!