

Compelling Assurance

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[0 : 00] 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, starting in verse number 13 and down through number 17. 2 Thessalonians 2, 13 down through 17.

Sarah, it looks like is going to be reading from the CSB version. So that'll be just slightly different from what's on the screen, but that's okay. Okay, sounds good. But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved.

Through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and work.

Amen. Thank you, Sarah. What you believe is true motivates what you do.

[1 : 13] What you believe is true motivates what you do. Let me give you a few examples of this. If you believe that a bison is large and that the bison will charge you if you approach it, then you will follow what the sign says and you will not try to touch a bison anywhere on the bison.

If you believe that there will be consequences from your parents for not cleaning your room when you are told to clean your room, if you believe that the consequences will come, then you will clean your room.

What you believe is true motivates what you do. If you believe the meteorologists when they say that it is going to be hot and humid outside today, then you will dress appropriately for being outside.

If you believe that the Vikings will eventually win the Super Bowl, then you will not fall off the bandwagon. Not even in 1998 with the missed field goal or that time down in New Orleans when Brett Favre got hurt and threw the interception, you will not fall off that bandwagon.

You will continue to cheer for them because you believe something that is true, and what you believe is true motivates what you do.

[2 : 52] The first word in our text today, if you look down in your Bible or in your app, is the word but. And this word introduces for us a contrast.

I think it might be important for us to understand what a contrast is, and I was curious if one of the pre-teens or teenagers would be able to tell us what a contrast is or give us an example of a contrast.

Yes. Yes, what you said at the end was exactly right, but I saw you kind of working your way towards that, right?

Because you didn't want to say the word compare because we're doing a contrast, and sometimes we do compare and contrast together, right? Those two things. But you said it's two things that are different. Like some examples of contrast might be light and darkness, or how humid it is outside and how unpleasantly cool it feels to me in here.

I would rather be outside in the humidity. Those are contrasts, right? Light and darkness, life and death, whether you are welcomed or whether you are rejected, whether you are having summer vacation, or whether you are going back to school, these are contrasts.

[4 : 23] In order to set up this contrast so that our text will make sense to us, we should look at what it is that Paul and Silvanus and Timothy are creating a contrast about.

So look in your Bible, back up into verse number 9, chapter 2, verse number 9. The coming of the lawless one is based on Satan's working with every kind of miracle, both signs and wonders,

servicing, notice, the lie.

And with every wicked, notice, deception among those who are perishing. So there is the lie, there is the deception, they are perishing.

Why are they perishing? They perish because they did not accept, notice, the love of the truth, and so be saved.

If they appreciated and accepted the love of the truth, then they would be saved. But because they do not believe what is true, they are what?

[5 : 37] They are perishing. They are not saved. For this reason, verse 11, God sends them a strong delusion so that they will believe the lie.

Their unbelief results in judgment from God, ascending of a strong delusion that results in what? More unbelief.

Greater unbelief. So that, verse 12, as a result, all will be condemned. Who is this again that is going to be condemned?

Those who did not believe the truth, but delighted in unrighteousness. What you believe is true motivates what you do.

In this case, what you don't believe is true. They do not believe the gospel. And as a result, they are motivated towards what? Unrighteousness.

[6 : 39] In contrast to this, Paul and Silvanus and Timothy are thankful to God for the Thessalonian believers.

Why are they thankful to God for the Thessalonian believers? Chapter 2, verse number 13. But, contrast, but we ought to thank God always for you.

Brothers and sisters, loved by the Lord, because from the beginning, God has chosen you for salvation, through sanctification, by the Spirit, and through belief in the truth.

He called you to this through our gospel. Why are Paul and Silvanus and Timothy thankful to God for these believers?

Because God chose them for salvation. See that contrast? Those who do not believe, they are condemned.

[7 : 54] But, God has chosen to save the Thessalonians, and as a result, they are not condemned. God has chosen them.

That's a good reason to be thankful to God. That God has chosen them. I don't want you to think that I am cherry-picking this text, or that I have found some sort of hobby-horse text, but almost the exact same thing is in chapter 1 and verse number 5 of 1 Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verse 4. For we know, brothers and sisters, loved by God, that he has chosen you.

How can you be so sure that God has chosen them? Because our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance.

How can they be so sure that they have been chosen? Because they saw evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in them. Their lives were changed, and they became assured of their faith, confident in the gospel.

[9 : 09] We should ask, why did God choose them? Was it because they were better than others?

Is that why God chooses some for salvation? Is it because they were just better? Better people?

More moral people?

More upstanding people? Is it because they were smarter, and they figured all this tricky stuff out?

Is that why God chose them?

Because they were so brilliant, that they just navigated all the tricky texts, and found their way through them, and realized, oh yes, here it is the truth. Did God choose them, because God looked down through time, and saw that they were going to choose him, and therefore, God chose them, because they were going to choose him.

Is that how God handles choosing? Did God choose them, because they came from a long line of other believers?

[10 : 29] You know, their parents were Christians, and their grandparents were Christians, and their great-grandparents also loved Jesus? Is that why they were chosen? Were they chosen?

Because of their great potential for God, that God looked at them, and it was kind of like a draft pick, you know? We need a quarterback, and so I'm going to pick this one, but not that one, because that one's going to turn into a great running back someday.

Did God choose them based on their potential service to him? And the answer to all of these questions is no.

This is not how God chooses who he is going to save. It's far less complicated, and far more obvious in the text than that.

Look in your Bible, and see this for yourselves. What motivates God's choice? Verse 13, But we ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters.

[11 : 31] Why? Loved by the Lord. Love motivates God's choosing.

And if you flip back and happen to look at 1 Thessalonians 1, 4, and 5, you will find the same thing there. It's a beautiful little phrase. Loved by the Lord. Every time I listen to these books read to me when I go on a walk, that phrase catches my attention.

They are loved by the Lord. Love motivates God's choosing. God chooses because he loves.

This is the consistent theme of Scripture. Because God loved them, and because God chose them for salvation, a sinner is saved.

Well, how does that happen? How does a sinner get saved? Well, Paul answers it. Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy answers it this way. A sinner is saved by, through, through, sanctification by the Spirit, and through, belief in the truth.

[12 : 47] Now, think about that phrase, sanctification by the Spirit. Oftentimes, when we think about sanctification, we think about, after we are Christians, and we think about the Holy Spirit, giving us power, to do the right things.

To be more like Jesus. To produce the fruit, of the Holy Spirit. And that is true. That is how we often think about, the phrase, sanctification by the Spirit, or just that word, sanctification.

But here, in the context, Paul has something, just slightly different, in mind with that. He's talking about, the Holy Spirit, setting them apart.

Consecrating them. You might say, affirming, God's choice of them. Maybe this is helpful.

I have, I don't know, maybe I'm just weird about this, but maybe not. I have certain jeans, that I wear, for certain activities. For example, I'm wearing a pair of jeans today, that I did not wear, to the Perry Center, on Wednesday.

[14 : 01] Not just because, these were clean this morning, although thanks to my lovely wife, they were clean this morning, but because, I don't wear these jeans, because these are my nice jeans.

These are my go-to-church jeans. And I don't want to get these jeans, messed up, working, and hauling stuff around, at the Perry Center. I chose these jeans, and I set them apart.

I consecrated them, for a particular purpose. Now, I don't know about you, I have the same thought, about shoes. I didn't wear these shoes, either, to the Perry Center. Why?

Because these are, these are the shoes, that I wear, when I want to look a little nice. I don't wear these shoes, to go for walks in. Why? Because these shoes, have no support, and no heel padding, and it will hurt.

But these are the shoes, that I set apart. I sanctify them. I consecrate them, for a particular purpose.

Now, if you're not at all like me, maybe you have a particular toy, or a particular video game account, or a particular book, or maybe a Bible.

[15 : 11] Like, if someone comes over to your house, and you, and says, can I have one of you, use one of your Bibles. You may use this Bible, you may not use this Bible. Why? Well, because some of them, are consecrated, for special purposes.

enough? Are you with me, on this idea? Sanctification, by the Spirit. This is very closely aligned, with the Spirit's work, of regenerating, those who are dead, in their sins, like we talked about, this morning, during our call to worship.

This is the Holy Spirit, affirming, God's loving choice, of a sinner, by giving that sinner, new life.

Choosing to set apart, and sanctify, that sinner, for God. Sanctification, by the Spirit, matters. It matters a whole lot.

Here's why. Because without, this sanctification, by the Spirit, no sinner, would ever respond, to the gospel. How can you be so sure? I have heard, some good gospel preaching.

[16 : 18] I have also heard, some good gospel preaching. But I can be sure, about this, because the scripture, compels me, to believe it. Verse number 10, that we just, read together, to get our context.

They do not, accept, the love, of the truth. And as a result, they delight, in unrighteousness. Paul says it this way, in Romans chapter 8.

The mind that is set on the flesh, is hostile to God. And it does not submit, to God's law. Indeed, Paul says, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh, Paul continues, cannot please God. And without faith, as we know, from Hebrews chapter 11, it is impossible, to please Him. sanctification, by the Holy Spirit, matters a whole lot, because without it, no sinner, would what? Ever believe, the second thing, that we are saved through.

[17 : 29] Work of the Holy Spirit, sanctification, of the Holy Spirit. What was the second thing? Through, belief, in, the, truth. Verse 13. What truth?

truth. What truth is it, that we need to believe? Well, some people will tell you, it doesn't matter, what truth you believe, so long as you are, sincere.

Have you heard that? That is a lie. That is, that is a lie, from the devil. to convince people, that it doesn't matter, what truth they believe, that they can just believe, anything they want, so long as they are, very sincere, in their faith.

Now, let me extend, a metaphor, that I opened, maybe a month, or so back, and I don't know, if this is helpful, so just bear with me, and let's just see, if it is, right?

Do you remember me, talking about, purchasing a ticket, and then, taking your ticket, whether it's a paper ticket, or whatever, on your phone, or whatever, and you take that ticket, to the door of the event, and the ticket, is not the payment, but it is evidence, that the payment, has been made.

[18 : 54] What if I, just pull up a, a Google Doc, or a Word document, and I'm real clever, and I, you know, drop a QR code on there, and I drop some words, that look like the event, that I'm going to, and I make it look, really close, to what the real ticket, looks like, and I show up, with my piece of paper, and I show that, to the person, checking tickets, at the door, and they say, you can't come in, and I say, well why not, and they say, well you don't have a ticket, and I say, but I do have a ticket, this is what I believe, will get me in, and I believe it, very sincerely, I am committed, to this, maybe I start crying, when I realize, I'm not going to get in, I am sincere, in my belief, but I am believing, the wrong thing, that I can get there, on my own, that I don't have to have, the price paid, to get in the door, but that somehow,

I can manufacture, my own ticket, produce my own ticket, to get myself in, we are saved, through sanctification, of the Holy Spirit, we are saved, through belief, in the truth, what truth, the gospel, belief in the gospel, we are saved, through believing, the truth, that I am, a sinner, unable, to get to God, on my own, deserving, of God's, righteous wrath, the gospel, says that I need, a savior, that there is, no hope for me, in myself, that there's, no way, I can clean up, my act enough, in order to produce, a right relationship, with God, and that even, if I could do that, I still can't deal, with all of the sins, in my past, up to this point, I am in big trouble,

I am a sinner, and I need, a savior, the gospel, tells us, that Jesus, came into the world, to save, sinners, what a beautiful truth, this is the good news, that I need, Jesus, has come, from heaven, he has lived, in obedience, to God, in a way, that I have not, lived in obedience, to God, perfectly, consistently, joyfully, he has, on my behalf, gone to the cross, in order to deal, with all, of my sin, all of my weakness, all of my failure, to live up, to God's holy standard, the gospel, tells us, that Jesus, lived in obedience, that he died, as a substitute, and that he was, raised from the dead, in order to prove, to demonstrate, that sins, really have been paid for, and that he really, truly was, who he said he was,

God, in the flesh, the gospel, tells us, that I am a sinner, I need a savior, that Jesus, came into the world, to save sinners, and that Jesus, Jesus is, the savior, for me, he is my savior, do you believe that, do you believe, this gospel, gospel, if you are saved, this morning, it is not, because you know more, it's not, because your heart, was somehow, softer, to the preaching, of the gospel, it's not, because you are, believing, harder, than any other person, in this room, if you are saved, it is because, God, called you, to believe, the gospel, that through, the sanctification, of the spirit, you received, life, and where sin, once seemed, very trivial, like it didn't matter, at all, what you did, where it once, seemed like,

Jesus was, almost entirely, irrelevant, to you, now, suddenly, sin, seems, very significant, and Jesus, seems, very glorious, and you realize, I am a sinner, and I need, a savior, if you are saved, this morning, it is because, God called you, to believe, this gospel, he overcame, your stubborn, unbelief, and his irresistible, call, inside of you, compels you, to respond, to the gospel, like a newborn, baby, sucking in, that first breath, of air, and crying out, I need, a savior, and Jesus, is the only, savior, for me, my only hope, brothers, and sisters, doctrines, like election, and regeneration, and irresistible, calling, these doctrines, that we, love, and proclaim, to one another, these, ensure,

that no sinner, ever grabs, any glory, for themselves, how could you, in light, of these, gospel truths, how could you, grab, any glory, for yourself, these truths, ensure, that God, alone, gets the glory, and indeed, that's what we read, at the end of verse 14, look in your Bible, so that, he, [24 : 49] I'll start at the beginning, beginning, he called you, to this, through our gospel, so that, you might, obtain, the glory, of our Lord, Jesus Christ, God's purpose, in saving sinners, is that, he would have, the glory, and God gets, the glory, not just, because he saves, but, how, he saves, sinners, in a way, that eliminates, any glory, grabbing, for the sinner, at all, do you believe, this gospel, perhaps, you say, no, I, I have, my own thing, that I am, believing, I have, my own way, that I am, working out, to God, and it's, going okay, not always great, but it's, going okay, maybe, you believe, that God, is somehow, going to weigh, good and bad, and that, somehow, you're going, to do enough, good to get in, maybe, you believe, that you're, just going to wait, till you get, a little older, until you understand, a little more, till you feel, a little more, sure, maybe, you don't believe, that there is a God, dear, dear friend,

I love you, and I care, about your soul, and the risk, that you are taking, is to continue, on in your unbelief, to go deeper, and deeper, into stubborn, unbelief, such that God, would send, a strong delusion, that you would persist, in your unbelief, come, believe, in the Lord, Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, if you sense, the Holy Spirit, working on your heart, this morning, don't turn away, don't turn away, don't leave this place, unchanged, what you believe, or don't believe, is true, motivates, what, you do, this is true, for those, who would persist, in their unbelief, but it is also true, for followers, of Jesus, what you believe, is true, motivates, what you do, look at verse number 15, so then, brothers, and sisters, do you see that, there in your Bible, so then, or maybe, so that, everything, that he has said, so far, in verses 13, and 14, is now motivating him, to make this statement, because of what we know, about the gospel, because of how God, gets all the glory, and there's no glory, grabbing for you, because of this, so then, verse 15, brothers, and sisters, notice, stand firm, and hold, to the traditions, you were taught, whether by, what we said, or, what we wrote, now, remember the context, for this, back up in the beginning, of chapter 2, what is the context, they have, heard some things, from someone, who is supposedly, telling them the truth, maybe some kind of a, a word of prophecy, from someone, that Jesus had already come, and they had missed it, perhaps they had received, a letter, that was purportedly, from Paul, but it was not at all, from Paul, that's the context, what was the result, they were shaken, in their faith, they were nervous, they were uncomfortable, they had become, easily upset, they were in danger, of being deceived, instead, of being easily upset, and deceived,

Paul says, in light of these beautiful, gospel truths, where God gets all the glory, in light of that, stand firm, stand firm, and hold fast, hold fast, he says, to the traditions, now when you see this, don't think thanksgiving, right, don't think thanksgiving, traditions, that's, that's not what he has in mind, but that does sort of, get us in the door, of what he's talking about, he's talking about, holding on to, the teachings, and the writings, and the commandments, and the practices, and the testimonies, and even the stories, that were inherited, from the teachings, of the apostles, stories that came, from Jesus, the truths, that the apostles, told, the commands, that the apostles, gave, hold fast, to those things, that the church, has commonly, agreed upon, from the time, down through Jesus, those things, that have been, passed on, from generation, to generation, to generation, hold on, to those things, stand firm, in those things, but don't forget, this about their context, they are facing, persecution, they are suffering, they are dealing, with adversity, dealing, with injustice, they are being, treated poorly, perhaps by their employers, maybe by their, co-workers, maybe by those, they go to school with, or play on the playground with, they are being, treated poorly, by family, and friends, what about, when life is hard, how is it, that we are going, to stand firm, and hold fast, to the truths, that have been, given to us, when life is hard, listen, it's hard enough, to stand firm, and hold fast, when life is good, is that true, what about, when life, is hard, how are we going, to stand firm, and hold fast,

Christ, and the answer, the answer to that, is in verse 16, may our Lord, Jesus Christ, himself, and God, our Father, who has loved us, and given us, eternal encouragement, and good hope, by grace, encourage your hearts, and strengthen you, in every, good, work, and word, don't miss this, in the context, of persecution, and suffering, and adversity, and hardship, when life, is hard, Paul reminds them, what they have, already received, and the spirit, reminds us, what we have, already received, what is it, that we have received, we have been, loved, by the Lord,

Jesus Christ, and God, the Father, verse 15, loved, by the Lord, Jesus Christ, and God, the Father, we have, already received, eternal, encouragement, I love this, little phrase, eternal, encouragement, it's built, on the word, paraklesis, if that sounds familiar, it's because it's, reminding us, of the Holy Spirit, it's about, comfort, it's about, consolation, it's about, assurance, eternal, encouragement, I call this, assurance, for the long, haul, I don't feel, particularly, assured, about, our little car, that sits out, in the parking lot, I'm not really, all that inclined, to take that, on a trip, across the country,

[33 : 18] I don't have, a lot of, confidence, a lot of, assurance, in that, vehicle, why, well, for one thing, there's a light, that's on, that doesn't seem, to want to shut off, it has, kind of a little, weird noise, under the tire, under something, under there, when you turn, sometimes, right, there's this weird, thing that it does, with the radio, sometimes when you, shut off the radio, it actually, switches the station, instead, I do not have, assurance, for the long, haul, with this vehicle, that's what Paul, is talking about here, when he talks about, eternal, encouragement, it is, long, haul, assurance, it's the kind, of assurance, that lets you, bear up, in the midst, of persecution, in the midst, of adversity, in the midst, of suffering, in the midst, of injustice, it is, long, long, haul, assurance, assurance, what have we received, already, the love of the Lord,

Jesus Christ, and God, the Father, we have received, eternal, encouragement, long, haul, assurance, we have received, good, hope, good, hope, not just hope, notice that, good hope, hope, good hope, confident expectation, that God is working, all things, for my good, and his glory, good hope, hope, that remembers, the Holy Spirit, that I have now, living inside of me, is the beautiful, wonderful, guarantee, guarantee, guarantee, that God, will, finish, the work, that he, began in me, loved by the Lord, Jesus Christ, eternal, encouragement, and good, hope, confident, expectation, that God is working, for his glory, and my good, and then notice, Paul's ask, notice his ask here, it comes in the form, of this beautiful, benediction, this beautiful, blessing, may our Lord, Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, now skip over, what we just looked at, in the comments, what is his ask, may the Lord, Jesus Christ, and God our Father, encourage your hearts, yes, but Paul, I already have, eternal, eternal, encouragement, yes, and you're going, to need more, because life is hard, and you're going, to suffer, and you're going, to want to quit, and you're going, to be tempted, to be deceived, and you're going, to wonder, is following Jesus, really worth it, and Paul says, you have, eternal, encouragement, and I'm going, to ask God, for more, encouragement, for you, and the second thing, strength, for every, good, work, and word, what a beautiful, ask, what a beautiful, benediction, what we have, and what we need, and he asks,

God for it, brothers, and sisters, do you wish, to stand firm, do you wish, to be steadfast, and immovable, in your faith, do you wish, to hold fast, to the words, and the ways, of Jesus, do you wish, to stand firm, in the teachings, the commands, the practices, that have been, handed down, from generation, to generation, do you want, to contend, earnestly, for the faith, like Jude writes, in verse number three, the faith, once for all, delivered to the saints, do you wish, to have courage, to persevere, through persecution, to suffer, with gentle, patience, do you wish, to have strength, for every, good work, not only, the desire, to do what is good, but the actual, strength, that you need, to carry out, that good, not just, the wisdom, to know, what is the right thing, to do in this moment, but the actual, energy, and power, to carry that out, for the glory, of your savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, do you want, to have compassion, and kindness, and the mercy, of Jesus, you wish, to have boldness, for sharing, the gospel, what you believe, is true, motivates, what you do, we need to believe, that God loves us, and is for us, in our savior,

Jesus Christ, Christ, we need to believe, that God has given us, eternal encouragement, long haul, gospel assurance, and good hope, good hope, by grace, not because we deserved it, not because we've earned it, good hope, by grace, we need to believe, that the Holy Spirit's, presence in our life now, is the guarantee, that God will finish, the work he has begun, we need to believe, that God's, all sufficient grace, is all, we need, for every good work, and every word, that he calls us to, what you believe, is true, motivates, what you do, believe these, wonderful, beautiful, gospel truths, brothers and sisters, and stand firm, and hold fast, until Jesus returns, let's pray,

[40 : 00] Father, we are grateful, to receive your word, thank you Holy Spirit, for answering the prayer, that we prayed, and helping us, to understand, these truths, from second Thessalonians, would you please, continue, to settle, these truths, in our minds, in our hearts, in our consciences, so that we are, galvanized, against apostasy, so that our faith, is buttressed, against, atrophying, so

that the hope, that we have, in this gospel, overflows, in good works, and good words, to those, that surround us,

Father, we cannot, and we will not, obey, this command, to stand firm, and hold fast, on our own, and we are, so grateful, for all, that you have done, for us, in Christ, and it is, because of our confidence, of what Jesus, has done for us, that we can take, these few moments, right now, and be honest, with you, about the ways, that we are, tempted to doubt, we are tempted, to disillusionment, we are tempted, to want to give up, we are stubborn, in our unbelief, rather, rather than accepting, and reveling, in your long haul, assurance, your eternal, encouragement, that you give, your people, so Holy Spirit, in light, of this gospel, and in light, of the grace, that we have received, would you please, help us right now, to be honest, and to confess, our sin, and our weakness, and our failure,

Father, we, confess, your word, to us, your truth, to us, we hold fast, to this truth, with all we've got, there is now, no condemnation, for those, who are in Christ, make us humble, repentant, people, thank you, for the forgiveness, that is ours, through the obedient life, and the substitutionary death, and the glorious resurrection, and the wonderful, life-changing, intercession, of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, please keep us faithful, to you, help us to persevere, in Jesus name we pray, Amen.