

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

How is Your Relationship to the Lord Like a Marriage?

II Thessalonians 2:13-16

1 How is your relationship to the Lord like a marriage?

Our scripture today is from Second Thessalonians, chapter 2, verses 13 through 17. 2

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

This passage points out several comparisons between your relationship to the Lord and a Christian marriage.

Boy falls in love with a girl. He chooses her as his wife and proposes. She accepts. He formally calls her to be his wife through the wedding ceremony. They become married.

But, for the marriage to be successful, both must remain faithful to it.

These principles are true in your relationship with the Lord! ³

I. God Loves You - v13

God love you. Verse 13, **But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord . . .** ⁴

God demonstrated His love by having Lord Jesus die on the cross. John, chapter 3, verse 16, **For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,** that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have **eternal life.** ⁵

This was an historical event. It actually happened! ⁶ Jesus paid the price for your sin opening the door for a relationship to God. Romans, chapter 5, verses 6

through 8, picture it this way, **You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will any one die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** ⁷

This is like the boy in the story loving the girl and demonstrating that love to her. ⁸

Then . . .

II. God Chose You - v13

God chose you. Verse 13 continues, . . . **because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.** ⁹

Here there may be a translation problem. ¹⁰ All translations from one language to another involve interpretation.

When I was stationed in South Korea, I had the opportunity to sponsor a Korean youth choir for a

concert at our installation chapel. It was a fun experience.

Before the concert, after the choir members arrived, I was surrounded by a group of really cute girls. They were learning English and were excited about trying out their new skills with an American.

The communication was a group attempt as they collaborated putting together their presentation. I had much difficulty understanding what they were saying.

Finally, one of their adult directors stepped into the conversation, chuckled a bit, and proceeded to tell me what the girls were trying to say. They got the order of the words correct with proper dictionary definitions. But accurate communication between the languages required more than, simply, translating individual words. I had to understand context and cultural differences to finally get their message.

In the ancient Greek documents of the New Testament there were no spaces between the words and all the

letters were capitals. The original readers had to separate the words in their mind. ¹¹

For instance, try to read the following . . .

**I P L E D G E A L L E G I A N C E T O T H E F L A G O F T H E U N I T E D S T
A T E S O F A M E R I C A A N D T O T H E R E P U B L I C F O R W H I C H I T
S T A N D S O N E N A T I O N U N D E R G O D I N D I V I S I B L E W I T H L I B
E R T Y A N D J U S T I C E F O R A L L** ¹²

When the words are separated it comes out . . .

**I P L E D G E A L L E G I A N C E T O T H E F L A G O F T H E
U N I T E D S T A T E S O F A M E R I C A A N D T O T H E
R E P U B L I C F O R W H I C H I T S T A N D S O N E N A T I O N
U N D E R G O D I N D I V I S I B L E W I T H L I B E R T Y A N D
J U S T I C E F O R A L L.** ¹³

Let's look again at verse 13, . . . **because from the beginning God chose you to be saved . . .**

The phrase **from the beginning** is a translation of ἀπ ἀρχή, which appears here in the New International

Version (NIV) translation. ¹ Notice the space between the two words.

Calvinistic theology states that God chose each individual He wanted to be saved before the creation of the world. In fact, this is the main scripture supporting that interpretation. ¹⁴

The phrase could, however, equally be “first fruits”, translated from ἀπαρχή. Notice there is no space here. Let’s see verse 13 with this interpretation.

Because God chose you as His first fruits to be saved . . . ² The first fruits of the Jewish harvest each year were presented to God as a thanksgiving offering!

I prefer this secondary translation because it fits the context of the whole verse better. **But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because God chose you as His first fruits to be**

¹ I use the New International Version (NIV) as the text for all of my Bible Life Messages.

² Notice the footnote at the bottom of the page where this verse is found in the NIV Bible. “Other manuscripts *because God chose you as his first fruits.*”

saved . . . Both phrases invoke the idea of gratitude! ³

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Continuing with verse 13, God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit . . . God chose you to be saved! ¹⁶

This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit sanctifying you, setting you apart. He did this by providing you the word of God. He also did this by having His Holy Spirit convict you. This is God's part of His plan of salvation! ¹⁷

This is also accomplished by you having faith in the truth. Verse 13 continues, . . . and through belief in the truth. You accept the truth found in the gospel message. Your faith in it involves you accepting it as truth and obeying what it says. This is your acceptance of God's plan of salvation! ¹⁸

This is like the boy in our story choosing the girl by proposing marriage. ¹⁹

³ Disclaimer. My choice of interpretation here also supports my non-Calvinistic bias.

Then . . .

III. God Calls You - v14

God calls you.

Verse 14, **He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.** ²⁰

How does God call? Does He do it by randomly selecting some individuals to be saved and others not to be?

Here is how He does it. ²¹ He did it by having His only Son dying on the cross for your sins! ²² Then, He did it by providing the gospel message for you to respond to. ²³

What is the purpose of this call? ²⁴ It's so you could obtain **the glory of the Lord;** ⁴ His inheritance! First Peter, chapter 1, verses 3 and 4 put it this way, **In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from**

⁴ Verse 14 - That you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you. ²⁵ This would allow you to be joint heirs with Christ. ⁵ ²⁶

This is like the boy in the story formally calling the girl to be his wife by the wedding ceremony. ²⁷ God formally calls you by providing the gospel message. ²⁸ When you obey the gospel, you are saying, “I do”, committing yourself to Jesus as the Lord of your life. You obey the gospel, complete the marriage covenant, by being baptized. ²⁹

IV. But You Need to Remain Faithful to That Call! - v15

But you need to remain faithful to that call! ³⁰

You do this by **standing firm** and **holding to** these teachings! Verse 15, **So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.** ³¹ The verbs in this

⁵ Romans 8:17 - Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

verse are in the imperative mood so they are commands. ³²

These verbs are also in the present tense. The present tense in the original language is continual or repetitive action. So they are to be done continually. Get into the habit of doing them! ³³

The source of these teachings is also found in this verse. It is the teachings the apostles passed on to the believers verbally and in their documents, the content of the New Testament. ³⁴

Just as both people in a marriage must remain faithful, so you need to be faithful to this salvation relationship for it to be successful! ³⁵

God loves you. It was demonstrated by the cross!

God chose you. That was demonstrated by the gospel message!

God calls you. That was demonstrated by Christian baptism!

**You remain faithful by learning, obeying and growing
in your relationship with God!**

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