

DON'T PANIC – (FROM 2 THESS 2)

This week we are continuing in the Paul's 2nd letter to the Thessalonians. In what we call the second chapter Paul is addressing a deception being played on the Thessalonian church that they were already living in the day of the Lord and that somehow Jesus has returned and left them behind.

Paul encourages the Thessalonians believers not to be diverted from the business of abiding quietly with God, of enjoying life's deep pleasures of growing, creating and loving.

He reminds them that they were:

"...saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." (v13)

In order that they

"...might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (v14)

But they were drawn into drama and contention and as a result became distracted from the one thing that mattered most;

"...stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you..." (v15)

Stand firm...

Hold fast...

When did you last hear these words or something similar?

In dangerous times we instinctively plant our feet and take hold of something solid don't we?

This is exactly what Paul wants the Thessalonians to do!

Stand firm...

Hold fast...

But it seems every culture and every generation is guilty of investing the events of life with a value they don't deserve:

- the so-called 'clash of civilizations' after 9/11, with a global cast of goodies and baddies,
- the global financial crisis (GFC) with popular uprisings against greedy CEOs and corrupt politicians, and
- the adversarial world of TV and news with dysfunctional dramas of manufactured incident, division, conflict, violence and scapegoats.

It's easy to see why some believe that somehow gods plan if there was one has gone horribly wrong.

But has it?

Do you remember the TV series or perhaps the movie of "The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy" or perhaps "Dads Army"?

Both had one reoccurring and very sensible piece of advice...

Do you remember what it was?

DON'T PANIC!!!

Well Paul gives the Thessalonian believers the same message...

"So then, brothers and sisters stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter." (v15b)

In other words... **DON'T PANIC.**

Paul also teaches a very sobering truth to the Thessalonian believers and through them us:

- A person can so resist the truth that they finally become deluded and believe a lie.

Unfortunately the mantra of our world has become "worship the creation and not the creator".

This lie is behind all our modern idols:

- Sports stars, Reality TV stars, Music and movie stars,

- The allure of Financial independence, Professional standing, and Career achievements, and
- There are many others.

Now I call them idols because they are all used in some way to give our lives meaning that is not in line with God's word, and that is the sin and the trap.

Not only does the human heart become harder every time we reject Gods truth, we become more likely to replace the truth with lies.

Know that God has no delight in judging the lost... but He will not permit fence sitters either; there can be no neutral ground. The "powerful delusion" Paul talks about will ensure that we either choose:

- Gods truth, which will save us, or
- a lie which will result in terrible judgement.

The purpose of bible prophecy is not to create a calendar, but to build character through faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now I don't know if you agree with the views of the:

- A-millennialist's; or the
- Pre-millennialist's; or the
- Post-millennialist's; or the
- Pan-millennialist's (see Jason about this group).

And in truth I don't think it matters. Because regardless of what we believe.... and which is correct...right now at this moment and for every moment of our lives all we need to know is...

1. First, we must believe the truth that God so loves us... that Jesus chose to:
 - a. Live the life of a human man
 - b. Die on a cross to save us from the judgement of our sins
 - c. Rise from death to give us the guarantee of an eternal life.
2. Second, we respond to Gods love in Jesus by:
 - a. repenting of our sins as often as we must; and

- b. seeking to lead a HOLY life; and
3. Finally, by trusting that God is faithful, and on His return Jesus will publically vindicate you for your faith in front of the largest assembly in human history.

As Advent begins and with it our new Church year, God invites us again into the adventure of contemplation and discernment—of knowing where God is, and where God is not: to know the truth that sets us free, to distinguish the real God from the false ones.