

Worship Material
Living tradition
Material from Roots Bible Study
Sunday 9th November

Begin with an opening prayer

As we come before you now:
open our eyes to see your truth,
give us the courage to stand firm,
and strengthen us to follow where you lead.

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5,13-17

Bible notes

Paul quells the alarm caused by a rumour, circulated by false prophets or a letter purporting to be apostolic, claiming that 'the day of the Lord' (v.2) has finally arrived. In the Hebrew Scriptures, this 'day' ushers in the end-times, when God will defeat his enemies and bring about a world of justice and peace (e.g. see Isaiah 13:6, Joel 2:1, Amos 5:18). In the light of Jesus, the 'day' is his Parousia, his glorious return at the end of the present age as God's redeemer and judge (e.g. see 1 Corinthians 1:8, Philippians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, and see for a more in-depth article on the second coming).

Paul argues that the rumour of Christ's return can't be true because the sequence of events – starting with 'the rebellion' and the appearance of 'the lawless one', who is restrained by another equally mysterious figure (vv.3,7) – is yet to begin. What he refers to here continues to mystify experts and everyday readers alike. These details are missing from other similar passages in Paul's writings, and we have no real grasp of what they mean here. Are they general terms for apostasy, military battles or wars, or particular characters from Jewish or Roman history, or the more cosmic figures of Satan or the antichrist (see 1 John 2:18,22)? Presumably Paul's audience understands them (v.5), even if we don't.

Paul reminds those who are disturbed by the rumour of the roots of their security in God's choice and call (vv.13-14). The fullness of God's glorious salvation is yet to come, but what they already experience of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit through their faith is real enough. It's like the 'first fruits' of the harvest that show that the whole crop belongs to God (Leviticus

23:10, Deuteronomy 26:2). Paul's reassurances should be enough to draw his audience back to genuine apostolic teaching, as a living tradition and a reliable guide that will settle and strengthen those whose faith is disturbed.

Prayer

We give thanks, O Holy God, for your steadfastness,
for the firm foundations you give us
and the ties that bind us to you.
We give thanks, O Holy God, for the generations before us
who, inspired and moved by your Word,
have left traditions to guide, uphold and inspire us.
Help us, your faithful people, to pass on living traditions
to those who will come after us.

Amen.

A prayer to conclude

Lord, send us out as living saints to worship you, the living God.
Lead us daily into your life-enhancing presence.
Help us to stand firm in life's storms.
Give us words of life to speak.
Help us to bring your transforming life and love into every situation.

Amen.