

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Being Established By God

By Dan Trygg

“But the Lord is faithful, and He will establish you, and protect you from the evil one.” 2 Thessalonians 3:3

“And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself equip, establish, strengthen and make you unwavering.” 1 Peter 5:10

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy,²⁵ to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” Jude 1:24-25

“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept silent for long ages past,²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, unto obedience of faith;²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.” Romans 16:25-27

This is it! The final few verses of the book of Romans. We have been working through this book for the past year, and this is the culmination of our study. It is a *doxology*, a “study in praise”. There is a lot of rehearsing of ideas presented earlier in the book, finally ending in a declaration of praise: “...to the only wise God... be the glory.”

There is one final nugget here for us to dig out and ponder. It is an important truth, but one which must be put in proper perspective. **People err on one side or the other of the statement Paul makes here.** To neglect this important truth is to invite frustration and spiritual disaster. Ignorance or presumption of this powerful reality can foster a religious spirit, ...or an unhealthy hyperactivity of “trying to be good”..., without ever seeing a corresponding advance in genuine Christian maturity. To emphasize it out of perspective can lead to an unhealthy passivity, which also keeps people immature. People expect God to just “make them grow”, but they do nothing to foster that maturity.

What am I talking about? The first statement Paul makes in this prayer, “Now to Him who is able to establish you...” What an important statement! **What a crucial truth to get into our minds and hearts! GOD IS ABLE TO MAKE US FIRMLY-STAND!** The Greek is “To the One being-able/being-capable/being-strong/being-mighty to stand/strengthen/firmly-establish y’all...” **The point is: GOD can DO THIS! Not just to one of us, ...but to the entire group!** God is able to build us up and make us strong to face whatever we must face, or to do whatever He would ask us to do. God is capable of working with us to strengthen and solidify us where we are weak and wobbly, ...where we struggle. He is able to lead us to victory and steadfast maturity in Him.

The word translated as “establish” in Romans 16:25 is the Greek word *stērizō*. Literally, it means to “set something up so that it remains unmovable”, hence, to “firmly-fix”, “to-make-stable”, “establish”, “strengthen” or “support”. It means “to make constant, consistent, steadfast”. Another lexicon says it means to “cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief.” **GOD is the One who is able to “firm us up” in our faith, in our emotions, and in our spiritual walk. THIS IS HUGE!**

Do YOU want to become more stable, consistent, strong-in-Christ, steadfast and immovable in the face of temptation or spiritual attack? Well, now you know where to go to get stabilized, confirmed, consistent, firmly-fixed and established in your spiritual walk. **Go to GOD! HE is the One who is able to make you strong.**

In 2 Thessalonians 3:3, Paul wrote, “**God is faithful; He will strengthen/establish you and guard you from the evil one.**” GOD can give us strength when we are being attacked. He can stabilize our emotions and solidify our thinking, so that we are not just walked over by the enemy. **God will help strengthen us and enable us to stand our ground.** He also will guard or protect us.

In the chapter before, Paul wrote, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word” (2:16,17). Again, if you remove all the extra verbiage, the sentence comes down to “May Jesus and the Father comfort your hearts and strengthen/establish you in every good work and word.” In other words, Paul recognizes that **God is able to strengthen us in developing acts of service and to learn to share verbally with others.**

Note what Paul says, back in Romans 16:25-27: **This truth (that God is able to strengthen and establish us), is “in accordance with the gospel; ...the preaching of Jesus; ...the revelation of the mystery that had been kept silent for long ages past; ...and the revelation made known through the prophetic scriptures; ...and now, by God’s decree has been made known to the nations, leading to the obedience of faith.” What does he mean?** Isn’t *this* truth (that God is able to establish us) consistent with the gospel message that we need a Savior? Don’t we *still* need Jesus? Basically, this is what Paul was trying to say in Galatians 3? The Galatian Christians had heard and believed the gospel

message, but had fallen prey to a subtle and pernicious false teaching. They were now trying to keep the Jewish laws, thinking that maturity must come to those who are “striving to do good”. Paul says, “No! Are you so unperceptive? Beginning in the Spirit, are you trying to mature yourself by keeping rules? The one supplying you with the Spirit, and answering your prayers with miracles, did He do so because of works of the Law, or simply because you heard the truth and believed?” (Gal. 3:2,5). In other words, we *still* are to look to God’s provision of life, power, and His working in our life based upon HIS GRACE. **This is the gospel message, that God loved us enough to save us when we had no ability to save ourselves. Just as we trusted Him to save us in the first place, in the same way we are to trust Him for the power to change, grow, become stable and strong,** and to develop a ministry of service and helping others.

What Paul is saying is that the belief that *God is available, and working to help us grow, is just an extension of the same grace God showed us in the first place.* We couldn’t save ourselves by our own works. In the same way, *we cannot live out the Christian life by ourselves,* either. So Paul’s counsel is, “As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, in Him walk out your life” (Col. 2:6). **We are to receive the empowering life of the Spirit in the same way as we received the saving life of the Spirit when we first came to Christ.** The *life, the empowering, the fruit and gifts of the Spirit, the stability, firmness, strengthening, and consistency* are all *gifts,* provided by God’s gracious heart, and available to be received by faith.

Does this mean that God always does this directly, ...that He “zaps” us with Holy Spirit power, and we automatically get strengthened, stabilized or made-firm? NO! Here where people sometimes get off track! We want God to simply “do it to us”, and the results would just magically happen. But it is not that simple, or direct. It certainly does not just “happen to us” without our choice to cooperate with God. God uses “means” to communicate with us, teach us, encourage us, support us, make us strong and consistent.

Note the “means” God used in these passages: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift y’all like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Lk. 22:31,32). Here, **Jesus appointed Peter to be the agent of God to “strengthen” the other disciples,** when he got his perspective back.

In Romans 1:11, Paul himself is that agent to strengthen others: “For I want very much to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you.”

“And we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s co-worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you concerning your faith” (1 Thess. 3:2). **Timothy became the “means” through whom God ministered** to the Thessalonian believers. His teaching, words of encouragement, example and prayers all became ways through which God ministered to the Thessalonian Christians.

Check out *this* passage: “And may the Lord cause *you* to increase and overflow with love for one another and for everyone, just as we also do for you, toward the end that your hearts might be established without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints” (1 Thess. 3:12,13). In this verse, it is our love for one another in the Body that is the means of establishing our hearts in holiness. **WE are to be the means God intends to use to build one another up and establish one another’s lives in our faith walk.**

In James 5:8, **WE are clearly told to take responsibility to strengthen OUR OWN hearts.** “You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.”

The point of these passages is to illustrate that **God does use means other than just directly speaking to us, or coming on us, or giving us some kind of personal experience,** ...although He is perfectly capable of doing *those* things, as well, if He chooses to. **BUT, if God desires to give human beings the responsibility of being the means, or utilizing the means He makes available, then we are to actively utilize these means,** if we want to become strengthened, established and consistent. For example, if one of the disciples refused to talk to Peter, how could he “strengthen” that brother? Or, if people chose to not listen to Paul, or Timothy, *they would miss out* on what God could have done for them, had they come and shared in the meetings where these men were ministering. In the same way, **if in our church gatherings, we do NOT develop a growing and overflowing love for one another, and we do NOT interact with each other in an intentional way, how can we build one another up,** or establish one another’s hearts?

GOD is the One who is capable of strengthening and establishing our spiritual lives. HE is the Source, but HE uses other resources to “firm-up” our lives. The *first thing* we should do is COME TO HIM. *Ask* for His help. **He set things up so that we would partner with Him in growth, as well as service.** He already deserves the glory, because of His great grace. **As we partake of His grace, the impact of His provision becomes visible, and He gets the glory for what He produces in us.** “...to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.”