

Introduction

- On what basis does Paul thank God for the Thessalonians?
 - because he is particularly fond of them? (he may have been)
 - because they were of strategic importance in the mission of the church?
 - because they were particularly rich, a supporting congregation he has reason to be grateful to (and wants to keep sweet?)
- None of those things:
 - it is because of stuff God has done and is doing for them, that has benefitted them
 - he knew how they were, and sees how they are - and it is God who has made the difference
- There is stuff that is once for all, and there is stuff that is on-going, growing and developing
 - and these things all apply to us too!
 - (or they should do!)

Loved

- Do you know you are special?
 - not in the stuck up, I'm the centre of the universe and everything revolves around me sense
 - but with a genuine sense that you are special - in particular to God
 - do you believe God loves you?
 - do you act as if God loves you? (or do you act as if you are trying to win his affections?)
 - do you feel as if God loves you?
 - do you choose as if God loves you? (from place of security)
- This is not an amorphous love for the world or everyone
 - this is specific people, signified by brothers
 - Paul has these specific folk in his mind's eye...
 - God has you in his mind's eye...!
- *We know ... because of the Cross!*

Chosen

- Chosen for what?
 - salvation
 - what is salvation?....!
- Why?
 - nothing you've done (from the beginning...)
 - nothing that we can do to make God love us more, nothing that we can do to make God love us less... (Yancey, What's so Amazing about Grace)
- This is both an act (one-off) and a process (on-going), through Holy Spirit...
 - who took up residence at salvation...
 - who is at work in us sanctifying us, applying his holiness to our living

Sanctified

- God's work
 - changing and transforming you so you are not the same, cleaned up, changed....
- Try out an analogy:
 - PC anti-virus
 - rubbish Windows PC... gets infected...
 - you can take it to someone and get them to clean it, remove the viruses, reset the passwords etc
 - that will help, but will still leave the system open to re-infection
 - there also need to be changes, perhaps adding anti-virus software, perhaps

changing your behaviour when you use the machine so you are less likely to get infected, perhaps external things insulating the machine from the rest of the net (firewall in your router)

- sanctification is not just wiping us clean of our sin, but also the Holy Spirit's work at changing us so that we are less likely to be reinfected...

Called

- Called overlaps with chosen, but also speaks of our response
 - as does belief in the truth
 - God has worked, and he invites us and enables us to respond
 - no fatalism here!
 - response to Paul's presentation of the gospel...

Destined

- Destined for glory
 - the gospel sets us up for glory
 - now, as temples of the Holy Spirit
 - in the future, as those who will spend eternity with Christ in glory
 - I see Christ's glory displayed now as folk respond to Christ, as I see instances of folk forgiving one another, as I see instances of folk going the extra mile, being good Samaritans...
 - and I am utterly confident that those whose funerals I've conducted who have put their trust in him - the likes of Hugh or Moira or Nan or Ellen or the rest - are now sharing in Christ's glory!
 - and someday we will join them, and know the fullness of the transformation he has begun already

Founded

- Able to stand firm because of a sure foundation:
 - "so then" implies on basis of what has gone before (loved, chosen, sanctified, called, destined...)
 - corollary is that this firm foundation comes to us on the basis of the teachings passed on... Scripture... which make those other things clear
 - firm in life's storms
 - firm in spiritual storms and doubts

Encouraged

- Its not mere stoicism:
 - in standing firm we can be encouraged
 - in context of God's love and grace
 - in context of the hope he gives us

Conclusion

- Are you the same person you were...
 - when you came to faith?
 - when I came to Fintry?
 - this time last year?
- Do you know that you are loved, chosen, sanctified, called, destined, founded, and so able to be encouraged?