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a ***Grace Notes*** course

## **2 Thessalonians**

an expositional study  
by Dr. Grant Richison

Lesson 9

### **2 Thessalonians 2**

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## 2 Thessalonians

### Lesson 9

#### 2 Thessalonians 2

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## 2 Thessalonians 2:1

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you..."

Chapter 2 transitions from more general subjects of prophecy to a specific subject--the Day of the Lord. The Thessalonians misunderstood some things about prophecy so Paul corrects these errors in the first 12 verses. Nowhere else in the Bible can we find a similar consideration of this subject of Scripture.

In 1 Thessalonians Paul taught the Thessalonians that the Day of the Lord would come as "a thief in the night" (5:2). They falsely drew an implication from the imminent coming of Christ that He was coming immediately. Because of their severe persecution, they thought that they were now in the Tribulation. Paul shows in the first five verses how the church will escape the wrath of God's Tribulation on earth.

### Now, brethren,

Paul softens his correction of the Thessalonians with the word "brethren."

### concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

Paul shows that the Lord will not come until there first come three events: 1) a falling away of the church in apostasy, 2) the removal of the restrainer of the man of sin, and 3) the manifestation of the man of sin.

Paul used the word "coming" for the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 2:9 and 4:15 before the coming Tribulation. The New Testament also uses the word "coming" for the Revelation [Second Coming] of Christ at the end of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:27, 37, 39). Our context indicates that the Rapture is referred to by the clause "our gathering together to Him." Paul is speaking to the church at Thessalonica.

The chapter as a whole deals with the Day of the Lord, that is, the period beginning with the Rapture, including the Tribulation and the

Second Coming. The next verse shows that the Thessalonians bought into erroneous doctrine about future events. They concluded that they would have to go through the Tribulation before Christ would come back. Since the Thessalonians were experiencing persecution, they thought that Jesus' coming was near.

### and our gathering together to Him,

The "coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" and "our gathering together to Him" are one and the same event because both phrases are governed by the definite article "the".

One day all Christians will come together as a single group at the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:17). We will all be one then. There will be no doctrinal differences. Every nuance of truth will be perfectly clear at that time. Jesus is the grand meeting place around whom the church gathers. He is the focal point of our accord.

"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 ).

The only other occurrence of "gathering together" in the New Testament is in Hebrews 10:25 referring to a church gathered together in assembly worship.

"...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25).

### we ask you

Paul corrects the Thessalonians by appealing to their own logic--he "asks" them [entreat]. This is the idiom of grace. He does not use a condescending approach or a stern reprimand. This is the first approach to people who fall into error. If this does not work, you must use an approach like Paul used with the Galatians [castigation] because they entrenched

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themselves in error. When it comes to a subject like prophecy, there is room for a more moderate approach to truth.

### **Principle**

The best is yet ahead.

### **Application**

The Bible teaches that there will be an unprecedented period of tribulation on the earth of seven years. Jeremiah calls it "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7). This is a time of trouble for Israel and Gentiles, not the church. Confusing Israel with the church is a great error of interpretation. The Rapture has to do with the church but the Tribulation has to do with bringing Israel back to God (Daniel 12:1).

The best is yet ahead for the church. One day Jesus will come to snatch us into heaven. We call this the Rapture or the translation of the church. This is our "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).

Note the distinctions between the Rapture and the Second Coming:

#### **Rapture**

The Rapture is for the church only Jesus comes in the air Jesus comes for the church He rewards believers Physical body becomes immortal Christ as Bridegroom Comfort Translated to Heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18) Mystery (1 Corinthians 15:50f)

#### **Second Coming**

The Second Coming is a worldwide event Jesus comes to the earth Jesus comes with the church He judges unbelievers Environment changed Christ as King and Judge Terror Taken away in judgment (Matthew 24:37f) Known event (Zechariah 14:4)

### **2 Thessalonians 2:2**

"...not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come"

Verse 2 gives us Paul's occasion for writing chapter 2. The Greek shows that this is a purpose clause--"that you not be shaken in mind."

It is Paul's purpose that the Thessalonians not be shaken in mind or troubled about going through the Tribulation.

### **not to be soon shaken in mind**

The teaching that the Thessalonians were currently in the presence of the Day of the Lord shook the Thessalonians to the core. It destabilized their hope of the Rapture. The Day of Christ [Rapture] would keep them from the Day of the Lord [the Tribulation] because the Lord will translate them to Heaven before the Tribulation begins.

The Thessalonians were like ships in a calm harbor when suddenly violent waves come crashing on them. False teaching can shake our minds as a violent wind shakes a ship tossed with great waves at sea. The word "shaken" can mean to render insecure, stir up, to agitate, unsettle, cause to waver. Some teaching can so shake us up that it undermines our sense of security, composure and happiness (Acts 2:25; Hebrews 12:27).

The Thessalonians developed security in the future by 1 Thessalonians but they lost their settled conviction about the return of Christ before the Day of the Lord due to fakers who changed Paul's teaching. They wavered about their position and this created a deep distress. They needed stability in prophetic truth.

The word "soon" shows the difference between mature and immature believers. Immature believers go into instability very quickly. If they hurriedly latch onto doctrine without careful examination, it will impact their perspective and emotions. All of us have triggers that exaggerate our reactions to truth. Once we experience this, we open ourselves to any faker that may come along. Our emotions dictate our response to a teaching rather than the Word governing our beliefs.

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### **or troubled,**

"Troubled" means to make an outcry, be inwardly aroused. The Thessalonians were disturbed inwardly and frightened about the Day of the Lord. Once we leave the sound teaching of God's Word, we emotionally trouble our souls.

### **either**

Three separate sources introduced the false teaching that the Day of the Lord had already come: 1) spirit, 2) word and 3) letter. When false doctrine comes from a number of sources then there is an inclination to believe it. Imposters can come from any angle.

### **by spirit**

First, some people claimed direct disclosure from the Lord by direct prophetic utterance. This was a fake utterance that affirmed that the church was in the Tribulation.

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

### **or by word**

Secondly, others recounted what they heard from others by some discourse they heard by word of mouth. Some teachers pronounced that the church was in the Tribulation in their public and private meetings.

### **or by letter,**

Finally, someone forged a letter from Paul. They claimed that they received a letter purportedly from Paul's gospel team indicating that the Thessalonians were in the Tribulation. Paul made sure that they knew 2 Thessalonians was a genuine letter in 3:17.

"The salutation of Paul with my own hand [handwriting], which is a sign in every epistle; so I write" (2 Thessalonians 3:17).

### **as if from us,**

False teachers represented their teaching as if it was from Paul's gospel team. This was a forged letter misrepresenting the true teaching about the Day of the Lord. Prophetic fakers were in the church from the very beginning of the church.

### **Principle**

We anchor our souls in the study of prophecy by significant study of God's Word.

### **Application**

False doctrine can disturb our spiritual stability and spark uncertainties in our souls. Are you anchored in your understanding of biblical prophecy? Many fakers are out there today. Some are sensationalists. Others are inept in their understanding of Scriptures. Any of them can make a child of God disheartened and confused. Anchor your soul in the teaching of Scripture rather than in phony proclamations of men.

Immature Christians are vulnerable to people who prey on untaught Christians. People believe what they want to believe when they operate on their emotions.

### **as though the day of Christ**

Some manuscripts read "the day of the Lord." If the phrase "the day of Christ" were the right text then the meaning would be that the Rapture had already come. If the phrase "the day of the Lord" is the right reading, then the meaning is the Tribulation had already come. In either case, the teaching is false.

The words "as though" point to something alleged. Neither the Rapture nor the Day of the Lord has occurred; it was something alleged.

### **had come**

The Thessalonians knew that the Day of the Lord would come but they did not understand the sequence in which it would occur. They thought that it already had come upon them.

The word "had come" mean to set in, to stand in. The Thessalonians thought that the "day of Christ" was present. The Greek tense indicates

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that they thought that the "day of Christ" had already come and remains with them. Paul categorically repudiates that the Tribulation has come by this statement. Paul taught a pretribulational rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 1:10) and that the church would not go through the Tribulation (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Paul proceeds to show in the following verses that the Rapture [coming of Christ] for His church would launch the Day of the Lord [the Tribulation period, the Second Coming and the Millennium]. In doing so, Paul describes certain features of the Day of the Lord that are obviously not present yet.

### **Principle**

A correct understanding of prophecy prevents phonies from passing on their fake understanding and destabilizing believers.

### **Application**

Many Christians today negate the importance of teaching about end-time events yet the Bible places great emphasis on it. These people make their followers vulnerable to the phonies who come along because they neglect this vast area of God's Word.

Any faker who comes down the pike usually emotionally disturbs those who follow these teachers. Paul went into great detail about the Day of the Lord to explain the sequence of events of the last times. The Bible is our final authority, not some spirit, message or letter.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:3**

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition..."

Paul now turns to warn the Thessalonians against deception by a religious system. The year-old church underwent severe persecution.

Some religionists of that day spread the error that they were in the Tribulation [the Day of

the Lord]. They said that the Day of the Lord was already present (2:2).

With this verse, he begins to give the reasons that the Day of the Lord has not come yet. He gives three preconditions for when the Day of the Lord begins: 1) a worldwide apostasy, 2) revelation of the man of sin and 3) the restrainer will be taken away. All three must occur before or at the beginning of the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is a series of events: the Tribulation, Second Coming and the Millennium.

### **Let no one deceive you**

The word "deceive" is a strong term for deception. It is an intense word combining two words: deceive, cheat, beguile and out. The idea is to deceive thoroughly. This is Satan's core methodology.

"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3).

"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Timothy 2:14).

### **by any means;**

The word "means" signifies a turning, a manner, character, way of life. People can deceive us in any number of ways (2:2). Paul lists three of these devices in the previous verse. Here he says, "Do not let anyone deceive you thoroughly in any manner." The word "any" indicates that we are not to allow ourselves to be deceived in anything--no exceptions.

There are many religious systems that appear credible but are nevertheless false. Many people are suckers for flashy personalities. People will pretend that they have some new revelation from God. Others will forge documents giving a formal appearance of credibility.

### **Principle**

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Christians should be on their toes when it comes to phony systems of religion.

### Application

Jesus warned against false prophets.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

See also Matthew 10:16.

"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matthew 24:11-12).

The Devil is behind all religious deception.

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9).

Paul warns the leaders of the church against false teachers.

"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:29-30).

False teachers like to transform themselves into something that is religious and righteous. Some people have the naive belief that if it is religious, it is right. These people fall into the trap of Satan's religious systems. Many people claim to be Christian while at the same time claiming that the Bible is not inspired or that Jesus is not God.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of

righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

### **for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first,**

The Rapture is a signless, imminent event; it could occur without any preceding indication of its occurrence. The Day of the Lord has a number of signs indicating its coming. We find two signs in this verse and one in verses 6 and 7.

The first sign of the Day of the Lord is a worldwide, general apostasy of the church from its biblical moorings.

The words "falling away" come from the Greek for apostasy. It means defection, revolt, apostasy. The New Testament always uses this term for some form of religious defection. The idea is to openly defy God's authority and act in complete opposition to His plan. One day a general apostasy will occur in the professing church.

The definite article "the" before "falling away" indicates that this is not just any apostasy but "the apostasy."

Paul's proof in this verse that the Thessalonians are not in the Day of the Lord is that 1) a general apostasy has not occurred yet and 2) the man of sin has not yet been revealed.

Though Paul does not refer to the Rapture per se, he argues for the time of the Rapture ("the coming of the Lord," verse 1). The Rapture must begin by the beginning of the Day of the Lord. The idea that the Thessalonians had missed the Rapture shook them to the core.

The word "first" says something about the order of events in this chapter. The apostasy of Christendom must occur either just before the Day of the Lord or at its beginning.

### Principle

One day Christendom will move into acute apostasy.

### Application

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Some people believe prophetically that the world is going to get better and better. When it gets good enough then Jesus will come back. The Bible teaches the opposite. The church will get worse and worse until finally she goes into profound apostasy.

The apostate church will become a worldwide movement. People will jump on the bandwagon because of the massiveness of the movement.

### **and the man of sin is revealed,**

The second sign of the Day of the Lord is the revelation of the man of sin. A wide-ranging apostasy will take on its rise from the emergence of the man of sin. One day he will put in an appearance. No one knows who he is now.

The man of sin will come on the scene at a decisive moment in time (vv. 6,8). He will come out of hiding and the whole world will acclaim him. He is Satan's key agent in leading the world in rebellion against God.

The word "sin" should be lawlessness because better manuscripts so indicate. The literal meaning is without law for the word "lawlessness" is a Greek word that combines the negative "without" and the word "law." The usual translation is "iniquity." This man of lawlessness will fly in the face of God's authority. His essential characteristic is lawlessness. He operates with complete disregard to God's operating principles. He lives without regard to law (Acts 2:23).

### **the son of perdition**

Paul describes the "man of lawlessness" as "the son of perdition." The word "perdition" indicates loss of well being, not of being. This "man of sin" is here the son of eternal perdition. He is the son of eternal ruin, not annihilation. This is his proper destiny (Romans 9:22; Philippians 1:28; 3:19; Hebrews 10:39; 2 Peter 2:1,3; 3:7,16; Revelation 17:8,11). He is a man doomed to eternal damnation. It is the opposite of a saved person.

The "son of perdition" has complete disregard for God and His values. He will remove the restraint against lawlessness. He will lead a rebellion against God in the professing church (1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 4:3-4; James 5:1-8; 2 Peter 2; 3:3-6; Jude). Saddam Hussein said that he would fight the "mother of all wars." The idea of mother in his statement is equivalent to our word "son." This antichrist is the essence of one who is not a Christian, who represents a person damned to hell.

The son of perdition will make a covenant with Israel at the beginning of the 70th week of Daniel but he will break the covenant three years later (Daniel 9:27). This person is in other places called "the antichrist."

"Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18).

Daniel's other names for this person are the "little horn" (Daniel 7:8), the "prince that shall come" (Daniel 9:26), and the "willful king" (Daniel 11:36). See also Revelation 13:1-10.

### **Principle**

People not properly established in God's Word tend to be susceptible to false teaching.

### **Application**

Faulty doctrine leads to a weak faith. People who do not have maturity of mind formed from the understanding of the principles of God's Word and the application of those principles to their lives will be vulnerable to deception. Faulty doctrine will lead to a weakened faith. People with a weakened faith fall prey to further false teaching even to the point of joining the final apostasy.

We live in a day when Christians minimize the Word of God. They do this to their ultimate harm. They make themselves vulnerable to apostasy.

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word



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with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Evangelicals today are bankrupt in knowledge of Scripture. Unless we get back to learning solid Bible exposition and applying its principles to our lives, we will be vulnerable to apostasy and spiritually bankrupt.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:4

"...who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God"

Our passage describes the true disposition of the coming world dictator, the antichrist. We saw in verse 3 that he was lawless and headed for hell. This verse shows his purpose to conquer all religion and exalt himself as "God."

### who opposes

The man of lawlessness has two distinctive functions: he 1) opposes and 2) exalts himself above all religion.

The man of lawlessness opposes God as an adversary. The word "opposes" means to be set over against, lie opposite [not only in attitude but also in behavior]. The idea is that this person is hostile and wants to show his hostility. He is the last world dictator, the antichrist (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3). In such a role, he takes a position in opposition to God and all religion.

### and exalts himself above all that is called God

One definite article ["the"] occurs in the Greek before both "opposes" and "exalts." He opposes all that is called God because he wants to exalt himself above all religion.

The word "exalts" comes from two words: to raise and over. Here it means to exalt oneself exceedingly over others. The man of lawlessness wants to climb over all religion. He wants to outflank God by manipulation of

people religiously throughout the world. The fact that men exalt themselves is not new but doing it on this scale is revolutionary. He exalts himself above every religion in the world.

### or that is worshiped,

The word "worshiped" denotes an object of worship. This man of lawlessness is out to conquer both the true Christianity and pagan places of worship--any kind of worship. No religion will escape his domination.

### so that he sits as God in the temple of God,

The man of lawlessness will assume God's place in the innermost sanctuary of God's temple. The antichrist will reign for three and one half years and will sit in the temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 7:25). The Greek word "temple" indicates that he invades the place designed for the very presence of God, in the "Holy of holies." The Bible calls this "the abomination of desolation."

"And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation" (Daniel 11:31).

Jesus spoke of this event.

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand)..." (Matthew 24:15).

"So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not" (let the reader understand), "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains" (Mark 13:14).

There is no temple in Jerusalem today. The Muslim mosque, the Dome of the Rock, sits on the site of Herod's temple, the temple of Jesus' day. Titus destroyed that temple in A.D. 70. Apparently, the man of lawlessness will allow the Jews to build a new temple in the first part of the Tribulation possibly as part of the covenant the man of lawlessness makes with

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Israel at the beginning of the Tribulation. Imagine the havoc this will cause with the Muslims.

His objective is to neutralize Israel as God's chosen people. The purpose of the Tribulation is to bring Israel to acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah.

"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate" (Daniel 9:26-27).

The man of lawlessness will assume his place in the temple mid-way through the Tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27).

"And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days [3 ½ years]" (Daniel 12:11).

### **showing himself that he is God**

The word "showing" literally means to point out, to exhibit, to show forth, put on display. The man of lawlessness will prove by demonstrating supernatural power (Satan's) that he is "God" and so bring about the approval of his followers (Revelation 13:5-8). This man is a mighty evangelist for his cause. He is in the business of pointing out the worth of worshiping him. He puts on display the credibility of his man-made religion by miracles, argument and reason.

Satan exalted himself as God before the creation of man (Isaiah 14:13-14). Now his surrogate exalts himself over all religions of the

world. Satan has not changed his plans. He is still the same old person. He opposes God in order to exalt himself.

### **Principle**

The Christian must stay on his spiritual toes because he has a supernatural adversary.

### **Application**

Christians today need to keep on their spiritual toes because the Devil is on their case. Since God has an adversary, so does the Christian. Because of the Christian's relationship to God, he attracts supernatural adversity.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour [gulp down]" (1 Peter 5:8).

### **2 Thessalonians 2:5**

"Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?"

Paul taught prophecy to brand new Christians just one year prior to his writing 2 Thessalonians. He taught them about The Day of the Lord.

Paul did not regard prophetic teaching as controversial, irrelevant or unimportant for new believers. He made sure that he taught it to new believers so that they would be oriented properly to the future. Their spiritual welfare depended on it.

The word "told" is in a tense that indicates that he frequently told the Thessalonians about these elements of prophecy while he was with them a year ago. This is a very different value than in evangelicalism today. We minimize and render prophecy into a void of truth that we cannot understand. Paul put great emphasis on it.

### **Principle**

New Christians should learn prophecy as well as mature Christians.

### **Application**

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Prophetic truth has an important place to play in the maturation of the believer. It will make us aware of the strategies of Satan in the world and in our lives in particular. All of us need reminders of prophetic truth.

## 2 Thessalonians 2:6

"And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time"

In verses 6-12, Paul continues correcting the Thessalonian thinking that the Day of the Lord [the Tribulation] had already come. He shows that the Tribulation could not have come because there is now a restrainer keeping the man of lawlessness from manifesting himself.

This verse continues the third of three arguments to show that the Thessalonians were not in the Tribulation: there had not been 1) a falling away of the church in apostasy, 2) the removal of the restrainer of the man of sin, or 3) the manifestation of the man of lawlessness.

The Day of the Lord cannot come until the man of lawlessness is revealed but the man of lawlessness cannot be revealed until God removes the "restrainer."

## And

Paul continues the subject of the man of lawlessness by the word "and." He shifts the emphasis to what is presently restraining the manifestation of the man of lawlessness.

## now

The word "now" means that at the time of the writing of 2 Thessalonians God was restraining something.

## you know

They "know" something so this is no mere speculation. It is not religious guesswork that the man of lawless is restrained.

## what is restraining,

God is currently "restraining" the man of lawlessness. The word "restraining" comes

from two words: to hold and down. Acts uses this word for holding a ship on course. The idea here is to hold down or back, to check, restrain, control. In verse 7, Paul uses the term "the restrainer," so this may refer to an individual or a group of people. Someone or something is currently keeping the Day of the Lord from coming.

## that he may be revealed in his own time

God will not reveal this restrainer until the proper time and not one minute sooner. He will not allow Satan's activities in the Tribulation to occur until God is ready.

The word "time" does not look at the length of time but the quality of time. It looks at time from the characteristics of time. We cannot know the date of the Tribulation but we can know the characteristics of the Tribulation period, the "mystery of lawlessness." The Old Testament extensively describes the Day of the Lord, as does the book of Revelation.

## Principle

Satan is not completely free to execute his will on Christians today.

## Application

By God's providence, He restrains Satan from unleashing lawlessness on the world today. God has not chosen to tell us who or what "the restrainer" is. All we know is that God is presently keeping this from happening and that the restrainer is now working.

Paul does not exclusively aim his correction of prophecy at the Thessalonians; he aims it at believers in the twenty-first century as well. The Lord will come to snatch the church away before the Tribulation begins. He will restrain lawlessness from breaking out in full force until then. After the Lord Jesus takes His church in the Rapture, then God will reveal the man of lawlessness. The Devil will be free to do as he pleases without restraint.

Today, the filling of the Spirit restrains the work of the flesh in the Christian (Galatians

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5:16-17). The supernatural power of the Holy Spirit restrains the power of the flesh. Christians can be a mighty force if they would allow the Holy Spirit to control their lives.

## **2 Thessalonians 2:7**

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way"

### **For**

Verse 7 explains verse 6.

### **the mystery of lawlessness**

The word "mystery" does not mean something spooky or an enigma in its New Testament usage. It is a truth not revealed by God up to this point. We cannot know a "mystery" by natural means; we can only know it by divine revelation. In the New Testament, the word "mystery" always refers to some relationship to the church. God never revealed the mystery of the church in the Old Testament (Ephesians 3:1f). We need God's Word to know the content of the "mystery." The unleashing of the man of lawlessness is not known yet.

The definite article "the" points to a special "mystery of lawlessness." It is not just any lawless outbreak in society. The Tribulation will be a time of tyranny where principles of marriage, government and civility will collapse.

### **is already at work;**

Lawlessness was at work in the first century but it was under control to some extent. The persecution that the Thessalonians faced was not the Tribulation. They suffered persecution because of lawlessness but not the kind of lawlessness in the Tribulation, which will be pervasive.

The New Testament always uses the word "work" for supernatural work. Here it is satanic supernatural work. Present day lawlessness is satanic and it is supernatural. We may be tempted to think that lawlessness is merely a social problem. It is far more than that. It is a satanic problem.

### **Principle**

A pervasive breakdown in law will occur in the Tribulation.

### **Application**

We can get foretastes of the breakdown of law in our society. The lawlessness of our time is the seed for the destruction that will come in the Tribulation.

When God takes the church indwelt by the Holy Spirit in the Rapture, all restraint against law will break down. Children will hate parents and parents hate children. Order and trust in business will break down. Great numbers of people will revolt against government. Anarchy will be the norm. Above all, revolt against Jesus Christ will be the most important value in society. Jesus is the target of Satan. He has been Satan's target since the fall of man (Genesis 3:15). Satan will attack the Word of God and all that it represents.

### **only He who now restrains will do so**

The question as to who does this restraining is difficult to answer. Some argue that it was the Roman Empire that restrained lawlessness from breaking out into full bloom during the day of the Thessalonians. This cannot be true because the Empire ceased to exist yet God restrains Satan's activities to our day.

The best explanation for the identity of the restrainer is the Holy Spirit because He is the only one powerful enough to restrain the satanic system on earth. One day He will stop restraining lawlessness when He raptures the church. The removal of the presence of the Holy Spirit at the Rapture is a strong case for the church's rapture before the Tribulation.

### **until**

"Until" the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, the lawless one will not be revealed and the Tribulation will not begin (2:8). Note the word "then" in verse 8 indicating sequence.

"And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath

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of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

### **He is taken out of the way**

Paul argues that the Thessalonians are not in the Tribulation because the Rapture has not occurred and the Holy Spirit still indwells the church. It is not until the Holy Spirit leaves this world that anarchy will become the norm in society.

This phrase literally reads, "until He becomes out of the midst." This does not say "He is taken out of the midst." When God translates the church to Heaven by the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will no longer permanently indwell believers on earth (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

In one sense, the Holy Spirit will leave with the church. The Holy Spirit cannot leave the world in the sense that He is everywhere present [omnipresent]. He will move out of the midst of the world in that His indwelling presence in the church will leave with the church.

This will free Satan to move unhindered throughout the world. Lawlessness will cause great chaos in the world. God will still maintain His sovereignty but in the Tribulation He sovereignly allows Satan to move in an unrestrained manner. Many Gentiles and Jews will come to Christ in the Tribulation by the sovereign ministry of the Holy Spirit.

One day, rebellion against God will reach an all time high. Rebellion against Him will be worldwide. It will be difficult to make a decision for Him or walk with Him because of enormous pressure from society as a whole.

### **Principle**

Satan is behind all lawlessness.

### **Application**

Satan is at work in all lawlessness today. The Christian's true battle is a spiritual battle.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to

stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:10-12).

Satan deludes people through both real and counterfeit miracles. He uses these means to break down divine institutions such as marriage and government. Drunkenness, drugs, sexual perversion and other collapses in society will become rampant in the last days. Freedom that initially looks great becomes the very thing that destroys people. This lawlessness is already at work in the world today. We see social breakdown everywhere.

The foundational reason for social breakdown in our society is the satanic system. We try to correct social problems with psychology and sociology. This will never resolve the problem because it does not deal with the true root of the problem.

Why do Christians fly in the face of God's Word? Why do they do what they know is wrong? Satanic-inspired lawlessness. The spirit of lawlessness is still at work even in Christians. On an individual basis, the Christian's answer lies in the filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The word "filling" means control. Unless the Holy Spirit controls us, we will revert to type--someone autonomous from God. We will use the satanic system as our source for life.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:8**

"And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming"

With this verse, Paul returns to a discussion about the career of the "lawless one" [the antichrist]. This one verse embraces his entire career and its total destruction. We find both the unveiling of "the lawless one" and the Lord Jesus destroying him and his career in this one

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verse. Verses 9-12 develop the theme of his career further.

### **And then**

After God removes the restrainer [the Holy Spirit indwelling the church], then "the lawless one" will come on the scene (Daniel 9:26-27; 11:36-12:1). The Day of the Lord [beginning with the Tribulation] will start closely after the Rapture of the church.

### **the lawless one will be revealed,**

The "mystery of lawlessness" will manifest itself in the "lawless one." The world will know him by his spirit of lawlessness. When God raptures the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church, the "lawless one" will come on the world scene.

The church itself restrains evil in the world. When Jesus raptures the church, this leaves a great vacuum in the world. The "lawless one" will come to fill that vacuum. This "lawless one" is Satan's superman of the Tribulation.

### **whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth**

The Lord Jesus will "consume" the "lawless one with the breath of His mouth." The idea of "consume" is to condemn, abolish, kill or slay. Jesus will condemn this man with a word. The Lamb moves into His role of the Lion. Jesus condemns this man to eternal damnation.

"And I saw the beast [the lawless one], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19: 19-21).

### **and destroy**

The word "destroy" means to render inoperative. Not only will Jesus kill the "lawless one" but also He will render inoperative his agenda for the world.

### **with the brightness of His coming**

We get our English word "epiphany" from the Greek word for "brightness." Literally, it means shining upon. The New Testament uses this word for the coming of Christ in a number of passages with the idea of a splendid appearing. The shining forth of the presence of Jesus will manifest the gleam of His wonderful person.

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom..." (2 Timothy 4:1).

"...looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

Christians should acquire a love for the appearing of Christ.

"Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8).

### **Principle**

The influence of the church in the world puts a lid on lawlessness.

### **Application**

The church's influence extends far beyond its work of evangelism for it reaches into society itself. We should never undervalue this. Hospitals, the rise of the status of women, education and free enterprise all stem from Christianity.

The presence of the church also puts a monitor on lawlessness. If it were not for Judeo-Christian values in society, the world would break out in anarchy. Today, the central value

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of democracies is liberty. Liberty in itself is not adequate for society. Societies and nations must hold transcended values if they are going to carry on with order.

When the church wins significant numbers of people to Christ, it makes a further impact on society. These new believers will live changed lives.

## **2 Thessalonians 2:9**

"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders..."

### **The coming of the lawless one**

Satan will submit a substitute for the coming of Christ in the Tribulation, a parody of Christ's coming--the "coming" of the "lawless one"--the superman of the Tribulation.

### **is according to the working of Satan,**

When the superman of the Tribulation comes, he will come as an agent and with the power of the spirit of Satan. The word "working" in the phrase "the working of Satan" means energizing operation. The superman will come with the energizing operation of Satan, with demon-possession powers.

Those who follow this superman will engage in satanic activity and function, operating with his energy and force (Revelation 13:11-18). This may mean that the superman and his followers will operate under demon possession.

### **with all**

The word "all" indicates that the "lawless one" uses many different kinds of supernatural methods. Satan has a big bag of tricks by which he will deceive the world.

### **power, signs, and lying wonders**

The world will buy into Satan's bogus systems by three schemes of imitation: 1) "power" [miracle], 2) "signs" [a miracle that makes some specific point] and 3) "lying wonders" [the impact of awe upon the world as they see these miracles].

It will be obvious to the world that the superman operates under the supernatural power of Satan. This power transmits falsehood at its heart (John 8:44).

Many people do not recognize that Satan can execute miracles. He does it today by religious miracles. The only thing that will save people from his deceptive miracles is the bald, plain, unvarnished Word of God. People who depend on their feelings to determine truth are vulnerable to his trickery. Just as we are subject to optical illusion, so we are at risk to the illusions of the Devil if we depend on our own resources.

The New Testament always combines "signs and wonders" because these miracles make people marvel at their spectacle. The design of all this is satanic deception so that the world will buy into his program.

We might wonder why the world en masse would follow a world dictator. The answer is in his satanic deceptive power. He has a great spin machine. His propaganda will be powerful and extensive because it will be religious and with spiritual emphasis. This power will convince nations throughout the world to follow him and his system of government.

"And all the world marveled and followed the beast. So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?'" (Revelation 13:3-4).

God established the credentials of Christianity by power, signs and wonders. Satan subtly uses the very same means to deceive the world. The restraining power of the church indwelt by the Holy Spirit is gone in the Tribulation so satanic powers have free reign in the world.

### **Principle**

In our fallen nature, error draws itself to us quicker than the truth.

### **Application**

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People have a proclivity to believe a lie quicker than the truth. Error draws people for the insidious reason that it appeals to their fallen nature. That is why many people today fall for heresy.

"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

### **2 Thessalonians 2:10**

"...and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved"

#### **and with all**

The lawless one will not only use some but "all" "unrighteous deception," deception that comes from unrighteousness. Satan will employ many forms of deception some of which are propaganda, spin, portraying himself as religious, etc. These things appeal to people but they will destroy their eternal future.

#### **unrighteous deception**

The word "unrighteous" means injustice or a falsehood. Everything that the "lawless one" does misrepresents the truth. He will have every appearance of God. He is a religious fraud making him even more dangerous. Paul characterizes religious fraud as "unrighteous deception."

"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3 ).

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9).

#### **Principle**

Unrighteousness always begins with some falsehood or injustice.

#### **Application**

Unrighteousness always begins with a falsehood or injustice. A person who loves truth inevitably always has a sense of fairness, of truth. Unjust people always inevitably reject the gospel. Injustice always has an element of tyranny.

#### **among those who perish,**

The idea of "perish" is not extinction but ruin, not loss of being but loss of well-being. We can see this from the parables of the lost items in Luke 15 that the idea is not extinction but ruin. The phrase "among those who perish" refers to the condition of those without Christ. If we do not embrace Jesus' work on the cross, we lose everything. False religion always trashes the cross as the only way of salvation.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18).

"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

#### **because**

The word "because" means in requital for. They will get just retribution for rejecting God's truth as it exists in Christ.

#### **they did not receive**

The word "receive" in the Greek is the word welcome. They did not welcome the love of the truth. They were not cordial to truth but treated it roughly. They were more interested in lies than truth. Negative volition, choosing against God, makes it harder to receive the truth.

#### **the love of the truth,**



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The reason people perish is that they do not "love the truth." Some will believe the lies of the man of lawlessness and some will believe God. They heard the truth but they did not embrace it. They view the Word of God as so much drivel.

"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

### **that they might be saved**

The main reason people do not come to Christ for salvation is that they do not love the truth. They have vested reasons for not believing it.

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God" (John 3:18-21).

Millions will come to Christ in the Tribulation but it will be very difficult because of the dissemination of lies throughout the world. Negative volition opens people to lies and deception.

It is difficult to persuade a person that they are headed for hell. When a person is religious and moral, they do not deem that they need salvation. Only the Holy Spirit can convince them of this.

### **Principle**

The best defense against error is the love of the truth.

### **Application**

No one ever comes to God without a love for the truth. No one can become a Christian without first understanding the claims of Christ. The foundational claim is that He died on the cross to pay for our sins. When we trust His work on the cross as our only hope for eternal life, we have eternal life.

There is no such thing as being a little lost. Either we are lost or we are not. Either we are completely saved or we are completely lost. There is no middle position. If you are almost a Christian, you are totally lost.

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 ).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Are you "saved?" Have you come to the place in your life where you embrace Jesus' death on the cross as your only hope of salvation?

### **2 Thessalonians 2:11**

"And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie..."

### **And for this reason**

Because people did not love the truth that God might save them (2:10), God sends them a "strong delusion." God will not send them a "strong delusion" until they make it clear that they have gone into negative volition toward the gospel. The choice of error over truth is serious business because it leads to deep delusion.

### **God will send them strong delusion,**

The word "delusion" means wandering. These people wander off the right path of truth into paths of religious invention. The people led astray roam all over the place in religion.

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"Delusion" is stronger than deception. Deception means that a person can be fooled about something. Delusion is a way of life in which one is perpetually deceived. People under delusion harden their heart permanently.

The word "strong" is the same word we found in 2:9 in the phrase "the working of Satan." The New Testament always uses this word for supernatural working.

### **that they should believe the lie**

When people "believe the lie," God consigns them to a state of delusion. This is the lie of verse 4 that the man of lawlessness is God. People in the Tribulation cannot take a neutral stand. Either they believe God or they believe the lie. God will ultimately give people in the Tribulation exactly what they want--to believe the lie. "The lie" is the opposite of the truth of Jesus and His death on the cross.

### **Principle**

Ultimately, God will give non-believers what they want.

### **Application**

People given over to lies will enter strong delusion. God will give them over to their volition, their heart's desire of believing the lies of Satan. People say they want truth but they really want Satan's lies. They have a vested interest in believing lies.

God gave Pharaoh what he wanted (Exodus 7:14; 9:12). God will give us over to what we truly want (Romans 1:18-32). If we truly want hell, God will give it to us.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:12**

"...that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"

### **that they all may be condemned**

The word "that" indicates result. God will execute justice on those who do not believe the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness.

Paul does not indicate the nature of this judgment in this passage.

### **who did not believe the truth**

There is a great accountability in freedom. Non-believers in the Tribulation will pay a heavy price for their unbelief. They will have no excuse.

### **but**

The word "but" in the Greek indicates strong contrast. In strong contrast to believing the truth, their true motive is pleasure in unrighteousness.

### **had pleasure in unrighteousness**

The antithesis of believing the truth is having pleasure in unrighteousness. "Unrighteousness" is literally "unrightness." There is an outcome of not believing the truth. Non-belief leads to paying a price for our thinking and attitude. It ends in something that is not right, an unjust

system of thinking. Rejection of truth is a precursor of injustice and taking pleasure in unrighteousness. This is the unjust system of the lawless one in the Tribulation.

### **Principle**

A great obstacle to believing the truth is love of unrighteousness.

### **Application**

A central reason for unbelief is pleasure in unrighteousness. God places responsibility on everyone because He gives everyone the freedom to accept or reject Christ. Those who reject Christ will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

People go to hell because they reject God's remedy for sin--the death of Christ on the cross as a substitute payment for sin. If people reject that provision for salvation, then there is no hope for them. They consign themselves to the Lake of Fire.

People love unrighteousness over the truth. There is no sense rationalizing as to why

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people reject the gospel for it is not because they do not understand, were born in a different religion, are confused, etc. It is because of the bald fact that they take "pleasure in unrighteousness." They love their life and they do not want anyone to change it.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:13**

"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth..."

With this verse, Paul shifts from dealing with the Day of the Lord to a prayer of thanksgiving (2:13-15) followed by exhortations to walk with the Lord because of the teaching of the first two chapters.

#### **But**

In contrast to the unbelievers of the previous verse, Paul carries a sense of thanksgiving for the Thessalonians because they have a radically different future than non-Christians do.

#### **We are bound to give thanks to God always for you,**

Paul is "bound" to give thanks to God for the Thessalonians. He views himself as under a sense of obligation to do this because of the dynamics in their faith. Paul had a sense of duty to thank God for His work among the Thessalonians. He knew that his ministry there was not due to his intelligence, determination or strategy. It was due to the unadulterated grace of God at work among them.

"...giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (Colossians 1:12).

#### **Principle**

The function of our thanksgiving depends on our capacity to appreciate God's grace.

#### **Application**

Have you considered it your duty to thank God for your fellow Christians? God brought the blessing of their lives into your life. He deserves the credit. If God did the doing, then He deserves the glory.

#### **Brethren beloved by the Lord,**

The Thessalonians possess an undying, unadulterated, undiminished love from God. They did not earn or deserve this love because God chose them from eternity. The Greek tense of the word "beloved" indicates that God loved them in the past with the result that He persists in loving them (Romans 5:8; 8:39). He never gives up loving His own.

#### **Principle**

God loves us with an undying, unadulterated, undiminished love.

#### **Application**

Many people find it difficult to believe that anyone could love them. We hide our sin from ourselves, and from others. "How could God love me since I do not even respect myself?" This misses the point that God loves me because of who He is, not because of who I am (John 3:16).

Would you rather be loved by God more than the apostle Paul? Would you rather be loved by God above fellow Christians? No human being can love us as well, as persistently and as indefatigably as God can. You cannot be better loved or more extensively loved than you are. No one on planet earth can love you this much.

"Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jeremiah 31:3).

"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or

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persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"...to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:19).

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..." (Ephesians 5:25).

"...and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood..." (Revelation 1:5).

### **because**

The word "because" indicates the incentive for Paul's thanksgiving: God chose the Thessalonians for salvation. Paul is thankful that God takes the initiative in salvation. His thanksgiving centers on what God does, not man.

### **God from the beginning**

The word "beginning," primarily, denotes an offering of firstfruits—"God chose you as firstfruits." This referred to setting aside the first portion of something and offering it to God before using the rest. The "firstfruits" were the first of a set. The New Testament uses this

word for foretaste, pledge and pledge of blessing to come. Our salvation has an eternal date. God chose us from eternity. The origin of our salvation began in eternity past.

### **chose you**

God chose us for Himself. The word "chose" means to take or pick. God picked the Thessalonians, not because of any merit on their part, but because of His sheer, unadulterated grace. We do not initiate salvation. God does all the initiating. He loved the Thessalonians based on His character. He loved them because of who He was, not who they were.

The New Testament uses this Greek word for "chose" only three times in the New Testament (Philippians 1:22; Hebrews 11:25). The other two times, it is a person who does the choosing. This is the only usage whereby God is the chooser. God selects certain people for Himself; they are God's aristocracy. These are His privileged people.

### **Principle**

God chose us for a reason known only to Himself.

### **Application**

Why did God select you? Why are you so special? He could have selected someone smarter and with better qualities of character but He didn't. He chose you. God chose a rascal like you. As God went over the list of those whom He would choose, He did not bypass you; He picked you out from a number of people.

God never explains why He chooses some and not others. This is especially difficult when we think of some of the scoundrels He does choose. "Why did God spare my life in that accident? He spared me because He wanted to save my soul." God takes great interest in you. He shows enormous concern for you.

God did not choose us because He knew beforehand that we would receive Christ. He chose us then He foreknew. As human beings,

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we cannot know that something is going to happen unless we make a choice that it is going to happen.

"...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love..." (Ephesians 1:4).

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).

### **for salvation**

This phrase states the purpose of God's choosing us—eternal salvation. He saves us from the penalty, power and, ultimately, from the presence of sin. We do not have to pay the penalty for our sin because Jesus paid that price for us.

### **Principle**

Salvation is a present possession.

### **Application**

Either we have salvation or we do not. There is no in-between state. God will give it to you as a present possession. You can know now that you have life with God eternally.

It is impossible to be married and not know it. If you have salvation, you will know it and show it.

God cannot wink at your sin. If He did, He would not be just. Because God must maintain His integrity, He must deal with the sin issue. He chose to deal with it by the death of Christ. He chose to accept Christ's death as our substitute for hell. Jesus took our hell and gave us His heaven. We do not have to reform ourselves; we simply accept the regeneration of Christ. He is the Author of our salvation. The only thing we offer Him is our sin; He offers salvation in Christ.

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures..." (1 Corinthians 15:3 ).

"He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

"...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit..." (1 Peter 3:18).

If you operate under the delusion that you do not commit gross sins, this could cost you your soul. The standard for salvation is the "glory of God" (Romans 3:23). None of us measures up to being as good as God is good. Therefore, there is no hope in ourselves. Our only hope is that Christ's death on the cross is sufficient for our salvation.

"So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household'" (Acts 16:31).

### **through sanctification**

Paul now shows how God chose us by two dynamics: the divine and the human, the dynamic of the sanctification of the Spirit and the dynamic of trust in God's provision through Christ's death on the cross.

First the divine side, God set us apart from others for salvation by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11; Acts 1:8; 16:14; 1 Peter 1:2). This is the Divine responsibility in salvation.

The basic idea behind the word "sanctification" is set apart, separation. God sets us apart for a special purpose. The Holy Spirit separated the Thessalonians unto God by their belief in the truth.

Sanctification is the eternal state God predetermined for believers (1 Corinthians 1:30; 1 Peter 1:2). He calls people so designated "saints" [separated ones unto God]. As saints,

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Christians are to live a course of life befitting those separated unto God (Romans 6:19, 22; 1Thessalonians 4:3, 4, 7; 1 Timothy 2:15; Hebrews 12:14).

### **by the Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the agent of sanctification (Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Peter 1:2). The sanctification of the Spirit both elects us to salvation and progressively sanctifies us.

"And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

"...elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ..." (1 Peter 1:2 ).

### **Principle**

The Holy Spirit sanctifies us eternally and thereby seals our salvation.

### **Application**

There is both a positional, progressive and ultimate sanctification. Positional sanctification is our eternal position of being set apart unto God. This is the idea in our verse. Progressive sanctification is the daily-dealing-with-sin issue. One day, God will completely set us apart from the presence of sin in the eternal state.

Because Christians hold the unchanging position before God of being completely set apart for Christ, they should sanctify themselves. It is God's will (1 Thessalonians 4:3) and the purpose of their calling by the gospel (1 Thessalonians 4:7). The Christian is to pursue sanctification earnestly with undeviating determination (1 Timothy 2:15; Hebrew 12:14).

The Holy Spirit seals the Christian's salvation until the day of redemption.

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

### **and belief in the truth**

The second way whereby God chose us for salvation is "belief in the truth." This is the human side of salvation. However, God ordained even the human side of salvation by giving us the capacity of faith. It takes two simultaneous actions for salvation to occur: 1) the ministry of the Holy Spirit and 2) the execution of our faith in the finished work of Christ.

We enter into the state of sanctification by faith in Christ (Acts 26:18; 1 Corinthians 6:11). Our sole entitlement to sanctification is through faith in the cross of Christ (Ephesians 5:25,26; Colossians 1:22; Hebrews 10:10,29; 13:12).

We see in this passage both the responsibility of God and the responsibility of man in salvation. While Paul's team preached the gospel, the Holy Spirit convicted the hearts of the Thessalonians that the cross of Christ is the only means of salvation. That work of the Holy Spirit launched their faith.

### **Principle**

God places responsibility on the individual to believe in the death of Christ to forgive sins.

### **Application**

The Bible offers salvation to "whomever." Although God elects certain people for salvation, He extends the offer of salvation to everyone.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16 ).

Dwight L. Moody, the founder of Moody Bible Institute used to say, "The whosoever wills are the elect and whosoever wont's are the non-elect."

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

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"...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began..." (2 Timothy 1:9).

If you make a decision to receive Christ death as your only hope of salvation, you will know that you are elect! Why not come to Christ now? Settle the issue once for all. God has allowed you to continue to live for this moment, the decision to receive Christ as your Savior. God from eternity providentially brought you to this point. What will you do with this decision? You have everything to gain from embracing Jesus as Savior.

#### **2 Thessalonians 2:14**

"...to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ"

#### **to which**

The "which" here refers to the word "salvation" of the previous verse.

#### **He called you**

Verse 13 says that God "chose" us. This verse says that He "called" us (Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 23,24; Galatians 1:15,16; Philippians 3:13,14; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 2:9; 5:10). God "called" us [past tense].

The gospel flies in the face of the prevailing philosophy of the world. It does not make any sense to those without Christ. They cannot understand why people need salvation.

"...but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks [Gentiles] foolishness..." (1 Corinthians 1:23).

God has a purpose and program for each child of His. He providentially organized His program from eternity. He has not overlooked any detail of your life. He arranged every thing that happens to you and every person you meet.

"...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but

according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began..." (2 Timothy 1:9).

#### **Principle**

Christians hold the high privilege of representing King Jesus on earth, so they should carry the dignity of being children of God.

#### **Application**

The Christian has a high and heavenly calling. It is a high privilege to represent the King, to be a child of the King. That is why we do not think or act like those who do not know Christ. We hold a high privilege. We carry a dignity by our association with King Jesus.

Some things are beneath the dignity of the child of the King. We choose not to indulge in certain things, not because they are wrong, but because they are simply beneath the dignity of someone who represents the Lord of lords.

#### **by our gospel,**

God calls the Thessalonians to Himself by the gospel that Paul's team preached to them over a year ago. The gospel in essence is that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and rose again (1 Corinthians 15:1-5). Verse 13 speaks of God's election and this verse speaks to how God brings His election into reality in time.

#### **Principle**

God calls people to Himself by the gospel.

#### **Application**

Every time people hear the gospel, he hears the voice of God calling them to Himself. Satan tries to blind them to the truth. He says, "Don't believe that. You are a good person; you go to church." There is always supernatural opposition to the gospel.

"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of

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Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

God calls people to Himself by the gospel. If people land in hell, it is because they ran every red light God put in their path. God calls us by the gospel. God wants each and every person to have eternal life.

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

The word "gospel" means good news. The worse the sinner, the better the news! God will save you whether you are religious or not, whether you are a good person or not, whether you are cultured or not.

### **for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**

The third basis of Paul's prayer of thanksgiving is that Christians will share in the eternal glory of Christ. The word "obtaining" is literally a making around. It denotes obtaining our salvation in its completeness by God's call through the gospel. Since Jesus acquired our salvation, He gets the glory. He acquired our salvation at great cost. This is why He should receive great glory.

The gospel obtains eternal glory for the Christian as well. Christians will obtain that glory through Christ. It is by God's grace that we get glory. We will share in the glory of Christ's victory in His Second Coming [not the Rapture].

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:16-18).

"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2 ).

### **Principle**

Believers have a grand and glorious future because God will bathe them in His very own glory.

### **Application**

The Christian has a glory in time and a glory in eternity. The glory in time is in progressively becoming more like the Lord Jesus.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory [progressive sanctification], just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The glory in eternity never fades. It is eternal (1 Peter 5:10). God will clothe us with the wonder of His character, plan and actions. This glory transcends the glory of time.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

In the eternal glory, God will take away believers' sin capacity. They will never face temptation again. Our bodies will never submit to cancer or any other illness. No one will ever enter depression again.

### **2 Thessalonians 2:15**

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle"

**Therefore,**



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The "therefore" draws an inference from Paul's arguments for stability throughout this chapter (2:2). This is the punch line—"stand fast and hold the traditions." Both of these terms relate to stability. The doctrines of future things do not cause Christians to become inert in their Christian lives. Far from it. Prophecy always leads to practical incentives for Christian living.

The word "therefore" is very strong in the Greek, drawn from two Greek words. There is both inference and exhortation implied in this word. Although the Thessalonians are not in the Day of the Lord, they are nonetheless living under the possibility of satanic deception. The only thing that gives us stability against supernatural deception is the Word of God.

### **brethren,**

Paul once again uses the term "brethren." He wants to remind them of their common heritage in Christ because of their tendency to move to instability. If they stick with their commonality in the Word, they will maintain their stability.

### **stand fast**

The idea of "stand fast" is to take a firm stand on something (1 Corinthians 16:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:8), to be steadfast. Here it is to take a firm stand on the Word of God. Without spiritual stability, Christians will sink into the quicksand of the prevailing human philosophy.

Paul argued from verse 2 the importance of spiritual stability. He shows them how not to be "shaken in mind or troubled."

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1 ).

### **Principle**

Christians are to take their stand on the Bible so they will not yield to the prevailing philosophies around them.

### **Application**

Christians today live in a very unstable environment. In Christian circles, people pass off their ideas as God's thoughts. This is satanic deception. Thousands of true believers have bought into satanic lies. Many pseudo pressures lead them into these ideas. Just because many other Christians fall for this, why should you?

"Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8).

### **and hold**

The word "hold" carries the ideas of to be strong or mighty, to prevail, to hold on to something. Our context indicates that "hold" refers to holding on to the transmission of truth from the apostles.

### **Principle**

It is not enough to know truth; we must hold on to it.

### **Application**

When it comes to the teaching of God's Word, it is not enough to put it into our minds. We must hold on to it. "Don't let truth go," Paul says. The idea is that we hold on to the teaching of truth to such an extent that it possesses or apprehends us. We must master the Word if we are going to be strong in the faith.

"But hold fast what you have till I come" (Revelation 2:25).

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).

Few Christians take stands on truth today. The reason is that they probably have little stability in the Word themselves (Ephesians 4:14). Those with greater convictions about God's Word take greater stands. They can be firm about what they believe.

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### **the traditions**

The word "traditions" is something handed down or over. The idea is transmission of truth, the institutions of truth, the teaching of the apostles (1 Corinthians 11:2,23; 15:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:6). This is not the tradition of men but the content that Paul and his gospel team taught when they were in Thessalonica. The team handed over divine truth to the Thessalonians for their possession and protection.

"Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions [instructions] just as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2 ).

### **Principle**

Christians should be diligent to keep their spiritual moorings.

### **Application**

Are you getting looser with your theology? Is syncretism taking hold of you? Has the idea of tolerance-at-all-costs seized your soul as an all-encompassing approach to life? If it has, then you are headed for spiritual doom, not eternal doom, but spiritual destruction in your life.

The principle of this verse demands that we stand fast and hold fast to God's Word, not loosen our grasp of it. If you abandon your Bible-based beliefs, you will head into spiritual distortion or at least spiritual immaturity. Dr. Harry Ironside, pastor of Moody Church, years ago used to make this statement about interpretations about the Bible, "If it's new, it's not true, and if it's true, it's not new."

"...holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict" (Titus 1:9).

"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).

### **which you were taught,**

Christians will remain spiritual babies if they do not submit to the sound teaching of God's Word. Spiritual pigmies fill churches today because 1) they do not get solid teaching in the pulpit or 2) they have little interest in what God says to them through His Word.

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers [one gift in the Greek], for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..." (Ephesians 4:11-12).

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 2:6-7)

"A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach..." (1 Timothy 3:2).

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine [teaching]" (1 Timothy 5:17 ).

"But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:23-26).

### **Principle**

Christians suffer arrested spiritual development because they do not present themselves to solid Bible teaching.

### **Application**

Many Christians suffer arrested spiritual development. They do not apply the principles

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of God's Word to their experience. Whether your problems are spiritual, domestic or financial, you can address them by God's Word. It may take time. It will take growth in maturity. If you expose yourself to God's Word, it will change your attitude and actions.

Growth in God's principles for life cannot be hit and miss. You must daily expose yourself to the line-upon-line, precept-upon-precept study of the unadulterated Word of God.

"...as newborn babes, desire the pure [unadulterated] milk of the word, that you may grow thereby..." (1 Peter 2:2 ).

The Word of God will give us an apparatus for living. However, if we try to grow by a "do-it-yourself-kit," we will never mature in Christ. We may develop some skills in life but these will not enable us to deal with spiritual battles.

"How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!" (Psalm 119:9-11).

It is not enough to learn facts about the Bible. It is critical to learn the principles of the Word. If we learn principles, we will be able to apply them to our experiences. Principles transcend isolated information. Only the Holy Spirit can impress these principles on our hearts.

Principles come from teaching, not from exhortation. An exhortation is a challenge to do a specific thing. Principles show you how to appropriate God's way of handling that specific thing.

We get these principles from sitting under a pastor who faithfully exposes God's Word for what it actually says. This kind of pastor understands overarching principles of life that will govern the spiritual life of the people in his congregation. God wrote three books to pastors [1 and 2 Timothy and Titus (the pastorals)]. The key word in all three of those epistles is

"teach," sometimes translated "doctrine." It is doctrine that forms solid principles for living.

One of the reasons why there are so many spiritual pigmies in evangelicalism today is that Christians do not know doctrine. If they do not know doctrine, they will lack discernment. The lack of discernment gets many people into spiritual hot water. They fall for much of the cultic teaching in evangelical circles today. They cannot identify error because they do not recognize truth! Everything sounds good to everyone.

We live in a day of syncretism where all truth is one big glob of grease. We cannot distinguish truth from error. "It sounds good to me. What's wrong with that teaching? It's spiritual isn't it?"

### **whether by word or our epistle**

The Word of God is something transmitted to Christians whether by oral or written means. Christians get stability and perseverance in their faith either from the teaching of Scripture or from reading the Scriptures themselves. Whether it is sitting in church receiving oral teaching from your pastor or at home reading the Word, hold onto these practices.

Before the Holy Spirit completed the canon [the list of books that belong in the Bible], God gave certain prophets the ability to know the contents of Scripture before it was written. Before the New Testament was completed, certain prophets communicated the truth of the New Testament orally. People could confirm their authenticity by the miracles they performed. When the Holy Spirit completed the canon, there was no need for any further oral transmission of New Testament revelation.

Many cults and distortions of genuine Christianity have come on the scene today because of not holding on to the unadulterated Word of God. The only trustworthy teaching that we can trust is the Word of God. We cannot trust modern day prophets or anyone who speaks from their own authority.

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<p>"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3 ).</p> <p><b>Principle</b></p> <p>There is an onus upon the believer to rightly divide the Word of God.</p> <p><b>Application</b></p> <p>Christians who are serious about the Word of God uphold apostolic tradition. No Christian is able to stand in his Christian life without constant application of the principles of Scripture to experience. Christians who leave the principles of the Word of God head for instability in their convictions and in their walk with the Lord. They will be weak in their Christian life.</p> <p>"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).</p> <p>Many formerly stable Christians fall for satanic lies. There are more fakers in religion than in business. God's people are so naive and gullible that they are susceptible to every spiritual disease that spreads across Christendom. Satan quickly sweeps them into error and they are lost to the cause of Christ.</p> <p>All cultic fakers use the Bible. They quote the Bible but they take it out of context. They do not rightly divide the Word making the distinctions necessary to correctly understand it. We must study the Bible in its context, line upon line, to be faithful to what it says.</p> <p>"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).</p> <p>God holds us accountable for what we hear. He also holds us accountable for what we believe. God expects us to rightly discern the truth after having heard the faithful exposition of His Word.</p>	<p>All of us know more than we convert into our lives. Our lives are always in the process of catching up to what we know. There is a danger in simply learning principles without translating truth into experience. Either error is wrong.</p> <p><b>2 Thessalonians 2:16</b></p> <p>"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace..."</p> <p>Paul breaks forth in a benediction in verses 16 and 17. He prays that the Thessalonians would have sustaining grace during their troubles.</p> <p><b>Now may our Lord Jesus Christ</b></p> <p>Paul addresses his prayer to two members of the Trinity.</p> <p><b>Himself,</b></p> <p>The word "Himself" is emphatic in the Greek. The Lord Jesus Christ [full title] will guarantee by His very own might, as contrasted to our frailty, the effectiveness of our prayer.</p> <p><b>and our God and Father,</b></p> <p>Paul views both the Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father operating as one in sustaining the Thessalonians.</p> <p><b>Principle</b></p> <p>The Son and the Father team up to answer prayer.</p> <p><b>Application</b></p> <p>Both the Son and the Father answer prayer. The Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father personally guarantee to answer prayer.</p> <p>No one can know "God" as "Father" unless he is born into God's family. Otherwise, he is an outsider. God is our Creator by physical birth but not our Father. When we are born the second time by spiritual birth, He then becomes our Father.</p>

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"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26).

The universal brotherhood of man is a lie. There are two supernatural fathers. One is God the Father and the other is "your father the devil."

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. "But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me" (John 8:44-45).

Have you been born into the family of God?

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7).

### **Who has loved us**

The love of both the Son and the Father is the motivation behind our consolation and hope. Jesus loved us enough to go to the cross for us (Galatians 2:20). God the Father loved us to the extent that He sent His Son to the cross (John 3:16). God loves us whether we are carnal or spiritual. He loves us when we're discouraged.

Paul wanted the Thessalonians to know that God loved them. They may not feel loved due to their persecution but it is true nevertheless. It is a matter of belief in God's Word, not an issue of feeling. We know God loves us because God says it in His Word. We know it, no matter how defeated, how discouraged or how handicapped we might be. Trust in God's Word in the face of difficulty shows spiritual maturity.

### **Principle**

We know God loves us because the Bible says so.

### **Application**

How do we know that God loves us? Because He said it in His Word. Trusting in what God says in His Word is what separates men from boys spiritually. People who operate strictly by their feelings will end up dreadfully bewildered because they will never know for sure if God loves them. They measure everything by their emotions. The only sure way we can know whether God loves us is by faith.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Neither can we can know that God loves us by our intelligence or reason. If we look at the world around us, there is very little evidence that God is a God of love. There is pain, confusion and mystery everywhere. The only way we can know God loves us is that He says it in His Word. God knows what you are bearing right now and He cares (1 Peter 5:7).

### **and given us**

God is a giver. Paul has the capacity to recognize God's gifts to him and others.

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly. O LORD of hosts, Blessed is the man who trusts in You!" (Psalm 84:11-12).

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

### **everlasting consolation**

Temporal consolation is one thing but everlasting consolation is something else. God's consolation does not diminish or die. Man operates on transitory consolation; God operates on everlasting consolation. God's consolation begins in time and moves into eternity (Romans 15:4; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

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His capacity for consoling us is eternal but it functions in time.

The word "consolation" is the word comfort. Literally, it means to call to one's side. The idea is encouragement. God gives "everlasting encouragement." God calls us along side Himself to encourage us.

### **Principle**

**God specializes in consolation.**

### **Application**

We do not always need encouragement but God will supply it when we need it. He is a great specialist in encouragement. He knows exactly how to give it if we are open to receive it.

"Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus..." (Romans 15:5).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Life is not always a big plus; sometimes minuses come into our lives. If lemons come into our lives, we do not make lemonade but we draw on God's consolation. God providentially provides that consolation exactly at the time we need it.

"Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus, and not only by his coming, but also by the consolation with which he was comforted in you, when he told us of your earnest desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more" (2 Corinthians 7:6-7).

God's consolation is not like a mother who consoles her child. God never says, "Now, there, there, it will be alright," for God's consolation has content. He consoles us with His promises.

### **and good hope**

God is the source of hope. Hope in the New Testament is not a "wish"--"I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow." There is uncertainty in a wish. The Greek word carries the idea of confident prospect. The Christian is confident of God providentially working in time and eternity.

Our hope is "good." The word "good" is the good of intrinsic value, of practical value. Some people promise things that will never happen. God always comes through with His promises. The Christian's future is invincible.

### **Principle**

The Christian has confidence in time and eternity because of God's promises.

### **Application**

Not only does God give us consolation but He also gives us "hope." He not only gives us hope but He gives "good" hope. God is always true to His promises. He never goes back on them. We draw on them from His Word.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

"We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel..." (Colossians 1:3-5).

"...in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began..." (Titus 1:2).

"Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. This

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hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 6:17-20).

### **by grace**

Grace is what God provides for us without strings attached. It is what God gives without our merit or desert. God gives to us because of the work of Christ. God saves us by grace (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:7), not by good works or by belonging to a church denomination.

Grace depends on who Christ is and what He did for us on the cross. It is all of His works, not ours. All we merit under God's standards is eternal hell. The only thing we contribute to our salvation is our sin so we can take no acclaim for our salvation.

### **Principle**

God provides for us because of who Jesus is and what He did on the cross.

### **Application**

Everything that the Christian is and has is by grace. We do not earn or deserve anything from God. We cannot merit eternal salvation. We do not receive God's consolation in time because of what we do. The Christian can have confidence in God because our consolation and hope do not depend upon us but upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

The greatest resource for the believer is God Himself and what He did in Christ. When Christians are under duress, they know God superintends and providentially manages everything in their life. Christians have power to do what they have to do. There is no excuse for plunging into addictions. Addictions imply that we are trying to control our situation. When we turn our problems over to God, we trust in His providential care.

There is a persistent problem with man: we believe that we accomplish salvation by "Christ plus me." God's system of salvation is Christ plus nothing. He gives eternal life to us because of Christ's death on the cross. Our built-in desire is to take the credit for salvation (Ephesians 2:8,9).

### **2 Thessalonians 2:17**

"...comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work"

Paul's desire in this verse is to comfort and establish the Thessalonians.

### **comfort your hearts**

Prophecy always settles the heart. The Thessalonians were worried that they were already in the Tribulation but Paul prays that the writing of 2 Thessalonians will comfort their hearts. The word of God always encourages our heart. When Christians are down and defeated, they ought to get into the Word.

"Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

### **and establish you**

The word "establish" means to fix, make fast, to set. Paul wants to make the Thessalonians stable in the Word so that their hearts will be firm in the faith (1 Thessalonians 3:13). Saints need strength and support. Some wavered in the faith and were unstable so they needed to fasten their soul to the Word. Those not solid in the Word go off on tangents. The children of God are of little use to Him when they wander off into the blue.

"As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (Corinthians 2:6-7).

### **in every good word and work**

The area where Paul wants to comfort and establish the Thessalonians is in the sphere of

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"every good word and work." A lot of us are good at talking but not good at walking. Paul wants our walk to match our talk. May no one say of us, "He talks a good game but his life does not match his mouth."

### **Principle**

Our walk must match our talk; we need encouragement and stability in both.

### **Application**

Christians need comfort and stability in their talk and walk. God can do this for us but it will take mature believers willing to make it happen. There is a lot of loose talk among the Christian community. Loose talk is usually the source of great harm.

We need to pray that God will "comfort and strengthen" Christians in our church so that their talk and walk would match what Christianity is all about. Our lip and life, talk and walk, "word and work" must match each other. There needs to be consistency between them otherwise people will think that we are out of sync with what we believe. "What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

We preach a sermon each day with our lives. As others observe us, they know us well. They watch how we react to problems. They want to know if we live consistently with what we believe.

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart Be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

I could write a check for \$50,000 but if I do not have money in the bank to back it up, then I have a problem. It would be better to write a check for \$1,000 if I had the money in the bank. Most of us are more talk than walk. We need more walk than talk.

Paul writes both 1 and 2 Thessalonians from Corinth, a major port city in southern Greece. It was the Paris of antiquity. Paul went there with

his gospel artillery (Acts 17,18). His team needed prayer for such a daunting task. He needed intercessory prayer to penetrate that pleasure-loving city. God answered the prayer of the Thessalonians.

"Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized" (Acts 18: 8).

The Thessalonians get some of the credit for the Corinthians coming to Christ. With little fanfare, they went to prayer for their native Greeks, the Corinthians. Satan could not bind God's Word in that wild city for some of them came to Christ.

### **Principle**

God wants us to run with the gospel, not walk.

### **Application**

It is one thing for the gospel to walk and it is another for it to run. We should each have a burden to spread the gospel widely.

"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

The Word of God is effective when we communicate it to those without Christ. The gospel is not effective if we do not share it. The Word and the gospel do not function like a religious rabbit's foot. They are not magic. If we preach the gospel and share the Bible, it will dash, not jog or trot, toward its end.