

## 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 — Comfort For The Brokenhearted

October 20, 2024

Good morning. We have been studying through 2 Thessalonians 2 and looking at what the Bible says about the Antichrist. Paul calls him the man of lawlessness. In Revelation, he is referred to as the Beast. I like to call him Satan's Superman. That is what he is. He is only a man, but he is the most satanically possessed man ever to walk the planet. He is a superman filled with satanic power. Satan's goal is that this man will do his will as thoroughly and completely as Jesus did his heavenly Father.

This morning, we will finish our study of the Antichrist as we look at 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17. Before we go there, since the topic of the Antichrist is new to most of us, I want to review a little of what we learned in the last two weeks and connect it to life.

### Background On The AntiChrist

The Apostle John tells us there will be one great and final Antichrist at the end of history. Before that time, many lesser Antichrists will appear on the timeline of history.

...as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come... 1 John 2:18 (ESV)

John calls this man the Antichrist. Paul calls him the man of lawlessness. Like John, Paul says that while the ultimate man of lawlessness is yet to come, the spirit of lawlessness, is already at work in the world.

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work... 2 Thessalonians 2:7 (ESV)

Last week, we learned that Satan and the men he is trying to work through to lead the world astray are constantly finding their plans for lawlessness in this world frustrated. That is because right now, God has a restrainer in place. The restrainer is holding Satan and his man or men of lawlessness from successfully bringing lawlessness and deception to their logical conclusion in the world.

...the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed,... 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8 (ESV)

One day, in God's good timing and purposes, God will take the restrainer away. Satan and his man of lawlessness will thrive and lead the world astray in far greater ways than they do today.

We don't know the identity of what or who God is using to restrain Satan at this time. It could be Michael the Archangel. Others of you pointed out it could be the Holy Spirit. Either of those could be right. We don't know. Some day, God will remove that restraint, and Satan will be able to work his plan of lawlessness to its logical conclusion. He will be successful at raising up the great and final Antichrist to lead people astray.

Since Satan is restrained right now, and he can not bring his ultimate plans for lawlessness to their ultimate conclusion, what is he doing now? Satan is at work in the world to keep people from turning to Jesus. He is working hard to keep people from accepting Jesus so they won't be saved by Jesus. He wants to keep the world sufficiently deceived away from the true Christ until the restrainer is taken away then he will be successful at raising up his false Christ, called the Antichrist. Satan's goal right now is to deceive people from Jesus. When the

restrainer is taken away, his goal will be to deceive people into following the Antichrist instead of Jesus.

How will he do this? As we saw last week, Satan will empower his Antichrist to perform miraculous signs to deceive people. The satanically empowered counterfeit signs will lead people to think the Antichrist is the true Christ because of his miraculous powers.

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10 (ESV)

As we saw last week, there is nothing new about this. Satan is at work even now empowering his false prophet and false christs with miraculous powers for signs and wonders to deceive people and lead them astray.

For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Matthew 24:24 (ESV)

The Bible describes Jesus as the truth. If you want to know the truth, you turn to Jesus. You follow Jesus. Jesus is the embodiment of the truth.

The Bible describes Satan in the opposite way. He is a liar. He is a deceiver. He wants to lead you astray.

You are of your father the devil, ... does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. John 8:44 (ESV)

To lead people astray, Satan does not appear evil. He disguises himself as good, but he is a counterfeit. His intent, and the intent of his Antichrist, will be to look like they are good, but they are leading people away from the truth. He intends to get people to follow lies, which will lead them to join him in the destruction of the lake of fire.

And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness...  
2 Corinthians 11:14–15 (ESV)

Satan disguises himself as wearing a white hat, not a black one. He will look like a good guy, a religious guy. His servants—those working for him on this earth—do the same thing. Satan's best workers will not look like demon-possessed drug dealers. They will look like good guys. They need to look good so they can deceive you away from Jesus, who is the truth, and the only way to be saved.

...many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.  
2 John 7 (ESV)

John says there are many people in the world who are trying to deceive us. 2 Corinthians says that Satan and his deceivers usually disguise themselves as angels of light. They try to look like good guys, but they are trying to take you away from Jesus so you can't be saved by Jesus. John says anyone who denies Jesus is God in the flesh who came to die in your place to save you from your sin is being led by the spirit of the Antichrist. That is a strong statement, but it is what the Bible says! Remember, Jesus is the truth. Anything other than Jesus is false. Jesus is the only right answer. Everything else is the wrong answer. Do you understand what this means?

All religions, other than those who are worshipping Jesus for who he is and are trusting in Jesus to save us by what he has done on the cross and with the empty tomb, are wrong! They are lies of the devil! We live in a pluralistic world where we think all religions are the same. They are worshipping the same

God, just in different ways. That is not what the Bible says! The Bible says there is only one way to be saved, and that is through Jesus!

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV)

All other religions in the world that deny who Jesus is and what he has done are empowered by Satan and his workers. The religious leaders of those religions are working for the devil. They are masquerading as angels of light to lead you away from Jesus, who is the only way to be saved. All other religions are satanically derived and demonically empowered. Their purpose is to masquerade as angels of light to deceive people away from Jesus to a counterfeit substitute of Jesus so they will not be saved. Let me show you.

**Look at the Jehovah's Witnesses.** They come knocking on your door. They masquerade as a Christian religion. They are a demonic counterfeit. What do they believe about Jesus? They claim Jesus is not God in the flesh who died to save us. They say Jesus is the first created being of God. Jesus is just an angel. That belief will not save you. It will send you to hell.

**Look at the Mormons.** They also masquerade as a faithful Christian religion. They are a demonic counterfeit. What do they believe about Jesus? They claim Jesus is a conceived child of God the Father and an earthly mother. He is not God. He has not always existed. He was created. They believe Jesus and Satan are brothers. That is a lie. If you believe that, you are on a one-way trip to hell. Satan masquerades as an angel of light. Many Mormons are nice people, but they are not saved people.

**Look at the Muslims.** They also believe in Jesus. They believe Jesus was nothing more than a prophet, like Mohammed. To say Jesus is God in the flesh is blasphemous in their mind. As a result, according to the Bible, they will not be saved. Satan and his Antichrists will always attack the truth about who Jesus is and what he has done for us. If they can deceive people away from the truth, they win.

Some of you think I am overstating the case. You think I had too much sugar on my Corn Flakes. If you think I am wrong about my claim that Satan is behind all other religions and that anything miraculous in them is demonically achieved, simply look at what the Bible says.

No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. 1 Corinthians 10:20 (ESV)

While Satan is behind the deception of all world religions that are not worshipping Jesus, the only one who can save us, Satan's greatest religious deception is yet to come. That will be the Antichrist. He will be the greatest religious deceiver the world has ever seen. When he comes, he will be the ultimate enemy of Jesus and His church. He will lead the entire world to worship him instead of Jesus.

Much of what we taught in the last two weeks of our studies in 2 Thessalonians 2 is paralleled in the book of Revelation. I stayed out of Revelation because diving into it would make the sermon longer.

For a few minutes, lets look at Revelation. You will see the same themes showing up.

And they worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" Revelation 13:4 (ESV)

The dragon is Satan. He gave his authority to the beast, who is his Antichrist. People worship Satan by worshipping the beast. The beast set himself up as the one object of worship in the world. He is in charge of the world. Nobody knows how to resist him or fight against him.

Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation,... Revelation 13:7 (ESV)

Who is the beast going to fight against once he holds a position of world-wide authority? Christians! As we learned last week, only those who love Jesus know the truth. They are the only ones the Antichrist is not able to deceive with his lies. That is why he fights against Christians. Everyone else—all other world religions—will follow and worship him as he rules the planet.

and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. Revelation 13:8 (ESV)

They will follow the beast and worship him. Only Christians, described as those whose name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world, will not be deceived. We saw the same thing in 2 Thessalonians.

The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan... with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:9–10 (ESV)

We find the same thing in Revelation 13 if we go further into the chapter. Satan, working through the Beast, who is the Antichrist, and through the false

prophet, who is his henchman, will perform deceptive signs to increase their attractiveness to people to lead the whole world astray.

It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people, and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth,... Revelation 13:13–14 (ESV)

So the final Antichrist is a man, a human being, who is energized by Satan. That power enables him to perform astounding miracles, even calling down fire from heaven. He does this to pull off the ultimate deception, to lead people away from the truth, who is Jesus. The Beast even sets himself up in the temple of God and claims to be God. It is when it looks like all hope is lost. It is when it looks like the truth is gone, and everyone in the world is believing a lie. When Satan, his Antichrist, and his lies have replaced the truth in this world, Jesus shows up.

Jesus talks about his return in Matthew 24. In that chapter, Jesus talks about the destruction of Jerusalem that happened in 70 A.D., but he moves beyond Jerusalem to the destruction of the Antichrist at the end of time and Jesus' return to put an end to his deception.

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” Matthew 24:29–30 (ESV)

Jesus returns. He comes back in all of his power and all of his glory. It is obvious that the Antichrist is a cheap counterfeit imitation of the real Christ.

What will Jesus do with Satan and his Antichrist?



...the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Revelation 20:10 (ESV)

What about all who were deceived by the Antichrist, which is the entire world except for Christians who have believed the truth about Jesus?

...all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. 2 Thessalonians 2:12 (ESV)

## **The Outline of 2 Thessalonians 2**

The Antichrist is an important person in history. Why was Paul teaching the Thessalonians about the Antichrist in this chapter? They were confused and deceived. When Paul was with them in person, and when he wrote his first letter to them, he taught them about the return of Jesus. They had nothing to fear. Jesus was coming back to save them before Jesus came back to judge the world. As Christians, they wouldn't experience Jesus' judgment. They would experience his saving grace.

Something happened when Paul left. False teaching slipped into the church when Paul was gone. The false teaching told the Thessalonians that they missed Jesus' return to save his people. All that was left for them was Jesus' wrath against sin. They were left behind!

This was upsetting. Why did they believe this bogus teaching since it was contrary to everything Paul taught them?

This false teaching came to the Thessalonians either by a false teacher who claimed he had Paul's endorsement or by a false letter with Paul's name attached to it, even though he didn't write it. This false teaching left The Thessalonians in a panic. They thought they were left behind.

Paul brought up the Antichrist to remind them that they shouldn't have been deceived. When he was with them, he taught them that before Jesus returned to save his people, the man of lawlessness would show up to lead the world astray. Since the Antichrist hasn't appeared, Christ could not have returned.

This brings us to the outline of this chapter I gave you in the first week.

### **1. Crisis v.1-2**

In verses 1 and 2 Paul explained the crisis.

### **2. Correction v. 3-12**

In verses 3 to 12, Paul offered the correction. The Antichrist has not shown up in this world. Since that event has not taken place, Jesus could not have returned.

That leaves three more sections in the chapter that we will examine this morning.

### **3. Comfort v. 13-14**

### **4. Command v. 15**

### **5. Closing v. 16-17**

## **Comfort — You will not miss the great day of Jesus' return.**

When I was growing up, one of the questions we asked our youth leaders was, "If Jesus returns and I am in the process of committing a sin, will I go to hell?" Another question we would ask is, "What if Jesus returns and I have unconfessed sin in my life?" Will I go to hell?

In other words, as a Christian, if I am not on perfect terms with Jesus, will Jesus give up on me? At the last minute, can I fail Jesus and fall away from Jesus? Those are good questions. What do you think is the answer? These are the types of questions we deal with in verses 13 and 14. Let's get some answers.

First, if we think we need to be in a perfect relationship with Jesus to be saved by Jesus, we misunderstand our sinfulness. Look what the Bible says.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8 (ESV)

He said if we say we have no sin, we lie to ourselves. At every moment, our sinfulness is evident in some way. We might not be out Friday night stealing cars, but our hearts will not always be pure, our thoughts are often sinful, and our attitudes are often selfish. All of us are sinful all the time. If we have to be perfect when Jesus returns to be saved by Jesus, nobody will be saved by Jesus.

Something like this got into the minds of the Thessalonians. They thought Jesus had returned, but something happened. They missed it. Maybe they sinned too many times, so Jesus crossed their names off His salvation list. Maybe their sin was so bad that Jesus decided not to forgive them. Paul doesn't want them to think like that, so he comforts them.

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 (ESV)

Paul says, "You are afraid that Jesus gave up on you. That isn't the case. It can't be the case." In these verses, he tells us how our salvation from God

works and why we never need to worry about God overlooking us or giving up on us. Let's walk through the steps of salvation from these verses.

**My salvation depends on God, not on me.**

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you... 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

In other words, we are thankful to God for your salvation. We are thankful to God that God saved you. The thanks go to God because saving you and making you right with God was all his work, not your work. We are not thanking you for being smart enough to save yourself. We can't do that. We are thanking God for saving you because because none of us can save ourselves. Next, he shows us how God carries out the process of our salvation.

### **1. God loves me!**

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, **brothers beloved by the Lord**,... 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

This is where our salvation began. Our salvation began in eternity past when God decided to set his love upon you. God's love for us was uninfluenced. It was undeserved. It was completely initiated by God and undeserved from God. Without any influence outside of himself by anyone or anything, God chose to love us. He chose to love us not just before we were born but even before he created the universe. He already knew all about us and chose to love us.

...he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace,... Ephesians 1:4-6 (ESV)

Even before the world began, God knew all about you. He chose to love you. Why did he do this? We don't know. The Bible just tells us that he determined to love us. Our salvation is all from God. It started in eternity past

when, even before the world was created, God decided to set his love on some of us.

**God chose me.**

Flowing out of God's undeserved love for us was a choice God made for us.

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved,... 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

God's undeserved love for us led to him making the choice to save us from sin and eternal damnation. The ESV translation says "as the firstfruits." There is a textual variant in this verse in some ancient manuscripts. The NASB uses the textual variant in its translation, which reads...

...God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation... 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB 95)

I like that translation. It captures the essence of what Paul is telling us. God loved us. Why? We don't know. His love results in choosing to save us. When did he choose us? From the very beginning, before the foundation of the world.

The book of Revelation confirms this.

...And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast,... Revelation 17:8 (ESV)

The only ones not deceived by the beast are Christians. When were their names written in the book of life? It was before the foundation of the world! Before you were born. Before the world was made. God loved you. God chose to

save you. God put your name in the book of life before the foundation of the world.

God's choice to save us is not a recent matter. It is not God went to Bomgaars and was forced to pick three chickens out of the mesh cages to take home. No. In eternity past, before anything existed, by God's sovereign pleasure and will, he knew all about us before anything came into being. He chose to love us. He chose to save us. He wrote our name in the book of life before he created the world.

This is why Paul tells the Thessalonians, they do not need to worry. They don't need to worry that Jesus will forget about them when he returns. They don't need to worry that if they sin too much, Jesus will give up on them. God's choice to save them was fixed in eternity past and nothing can change that!

Look what Paul says to the Romans.

Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Romans 8:33 (ESV)

If God knows everything there is to know about us, if he chose to love us anyway, he chose to save us anyway, and he chose to put our name in the book of life before the world was created, who is going to march into heaven with an accusation against you or me about or sin and force God to take our name out of the book of life? No one. God is the one who chose to save us. It was his choice, and his choice will be fixed forever. Jesus says it this way in the Gospel of John.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit... John 15:16 (ESV)

Why is this important?

**1. It crushes our pride.** If you think you are smarter or better than other people because you chose Jesus and they didn't, you are missing the big "E" on the eye chart. We are no better than other people. The only reason we know Jesus is that he chose us. We were not smart enough to choose him.

**2. It gives us joy.** How good to know that the God of the universe chose to set his love on us. He chose to save us. He chose to rescue us from Satan's deceptions in this world, from the deception of the Antichrist, and the lake of fire.

**3. It gives us security.** God is the one who chose to save me. At its core, my salvation is not about how tightly I can hold onto Jesus but about the rock-solid grip he has on me. I am secure. God will not give up on me or overlook me.

This is why Paul says these words of encouragement.

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

I don't know about your Christian life, but if it is anything like mine, it is three steps forward and two steps backward. Sometimes it feels hard to make progress. Thankfully God will not give up on the work he began in me!

**God transforms me.**

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (ESV)

God's love for us and his choice to save us show up in our lives in two ways. We believe the truth about Jesus when we hear it, and we find ourselves transformed by the Spirit of God.

**Belief in the truth.** When we hear the good news about who Jesus is and what he has done, because God loved us in eternity past and chose to save us

before the foundation of the world, when we hear the truth about Jesus, we recognize it as the truth. We believe it.

All of us know that when some people hear about Jesus, they reject it. They can not comprehend it. It makes no sense to them. Yet, to Christians, it is the key that makes sense of the world and handles the problem of sin in their lives. God's choice of us in eternity past is seen in the present by our ability to recognize the truth of Jesus when we hear the truth of Jesus.

And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." Acts 16:31 (ESV)

**Transformed by the Holy Spirit.** The second thing that happens when we are saved is we are transformed by the Holy Spirit. When we trust in Jesus to forgive our sins, God's Spirit comes into our hearts, transforming us into a new person from the inside out. He convicts us of sin and gives us the strength to turn away from it. He makes us more and more like Jesus. Instead of trying to please our friends in the world, we want to please Jesus in this world. God's spirit keeps this process going throughout of lives. The Holy Spirit continually refines us to make us more like Jesus.

There is another point. How do we go from being loved by God and called by God in eternity past, to believing the truth about Jesus, and being transformed by the Holy Spirit?

**God calls me through the message of the gospel**

To this he called you through our gospel,... 2 Thessalonians 2:14 (ESV)

How does God move from his election in the past to believing the truth about Jesus in the present? How does he surface our decision to save us in



eternity past to the transforming work of God in the present? He does that through the gospel message.

Theologians call this an effective call or an efficacious call. In other words, it will work. This is sometimes called irresistible grace. You hear the gospel, and God calls you to Himself through the gospel message. Ultimately, you can't resist it.

Some people will hear about Jesus, but they have no interest in Jesus. They will not be able to understand Jesus. For those who God chose to love in eternity past and call to Himself when they hear the good news of Jesus, it will make sense to them. God uses the gospel message to call people to Himself so they are born again.

**God did this so we may obtain glory.**

To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:14 (ESV)

God's ultimate purpose in all of this is to bring you and me to glory, that we may not just see the glory of the resurrected Jesus, but that we may obtain that glory. When the process of saving us in eternity past became with his undeserved love for us, the purpose of his love is not that we would be born again in the present. It is all to achieve God's purpose of bringing us to glory with Jesus. He chose to love us in the eternity past all for the purpose of bringing us to glory with Jesus in the future. He chose to save us not just for this life, but to bring us to glory in the next one.

Hear me. Nothing can thwart God from achieving the purpose for you and me. He chose you in eternity past from before the foundation of the world. He

wrote your name in the lamb's book of life in eternity past so he could bring you to glory with the lamb. Our comprehension of the gospel message and responding with faith and trust in the gospel was only one point on the timeline of salvation. Glory with Jesus is the ultimate purpose of our salvation.

Think of it this way. We have several farmers. In the spring, farmers plant seeds. The moment we see the seed sprouting above the ground is not when the farmer's purpose for the seed began. The farmer's purposes and plans for the seed began a year or two before. That is when the farmer bought the seed. They eventually planted the seed. Then, they fertilized the seed. They sprayed for weeds around the seed. Finally, the seed germinated. Germination was not the goal. The goal is to bring the seed to harvest. The goal is to bring the plant to full glory.

Weather may keep the farmer from achieving his ultimate plans for the seed, but nothing will keep God from achieving his purposes for you and me. Nothing will frustrate him or prevent him from bringing us to glory with Jesus—absolutely nothing!

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? Romans 8:35 (ESV)

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38–39 (ESV)

Absolutely nothing can derail God's plans to bring you to glory. You say, "Well, I am not deserving." That is true. You are not now and never will be. You weren't deserving when God chose you in eternity past. There is no need to be worried about missing the return of Christ, of being left behind, or thinking that

somehow God forgot you or gave up on you or let go of you or that he doesn't remember you.

There is no need to worry. We are not destined for judgment. We are destined for glory. Nothing can change God's purposes and plans for you. Be comforted.

### **Command v. 15**

**So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 (ESV)**

Now that Paul comforted them, he inoculated them against self-proclaimed end-times prophets who would try and lead them astray in the future. This applies not just to them but to us. Stand firm and hold on! Hold on to what we taught you either by spoken word or by our letter. Don't forget the truth we told you.

The words "stand firm" and "hold on" remind me of my YMCA fitness class. They have a timer on the wall. The timer tells you how long to perform and exercise. Sometimes, the timer is set for 20 seconds. That is easy. Sometimes, the timer is set for a minute. A solid minute is hard. I keep saying to myself. Hold on. Don't give up. Stand firm.

That is what Paul is saying to the Thessalonians and us. Satan is alive and at work in this world. He deceives people now. He will be the ultimate deceiver through his Antichrist later. As we follow Jesus in this world, don't give up. At times, it will be hard. Hold on! Stand firm! Don't leave the truth for a lie.

What is the truth they need to hold onto? It is what they confidently know Paul wrote to them and Paul taught them, not the latest theological speculations to come into their world.

The same is true for us. This is why I always tell you to keep your finger in the text. Read the Bible on your own every week. The Bible is the only book that contains the truth. Don't be tricked by the latest cultural fads, so you either forget the truth or leave the truth. If you do, you will find yourself confused and led astray, just like the Thessalonians. The importance of holding onto the truth of Scripture and not drifting away from it is stated repeatedly in the Bible. Look what Paul said to the Corinthians.

...maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. 1 Corinthians 11:2 (ESV)

Look what Paul said to Timothy.

O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you... 1 Timothy 6:20 (ESV)

### **Closing v.16-17**

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 (ESV)

Paul closes in prayer. He asks God the Father and Jesus the Son to comfort the unsettled Thessalonians. May God comfort their hearts so they know they have nothing to fear.

God loved them in eternity past. God chose them to be saved, even before they were born. He wrote their name in the lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. He germinated their salvation in eternity past into the present through the gospel message. They heard the truth of Jesus. They

recognized it as the truth and believed it. The Holy Spirit came into their life and began transforming them. All of these things are just steps along the path of God, bringing them to the ultimate goal he has for them and us, that is, bringing us home to glory with Jesus. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can change God's good purposes and plans for you and me. That is the comfort we need to hear and need to know.



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