



2 THESSALONIANS

A Study of Paul's Letters to a New and Growing Church with a Hopeful Future

◆ **Wednesday, May 27, 2009**
(2 Thessalonians 2:13 – 3:18)

Review from 2 Thessalonians 1-2:13

1. Paul spoke with a pastor's heart as he writes to a suffering church, emphasizing thanksgiving, spiritual growth, prayer, perseverance, and love. These are the marks of a true believer.
2. Christians should expect suffering and persecution in this fallen world, while at the same time they should live knowing that God's relief and comfort for the righteous and a horrifying judgment on the wicked awaits.
3. Paul corrected the erroneous view that the Day of the Lord (Judgment) had already come, and stated that it would not happen until a worldwide rebellion takes place whereby the Anti-Christ would be revealed.
4. The Anti-Christ has not yet been revealed because the timing is not right in God's sovereign plan, and thus this wicked man is "restrained" by God until the proper time. This however, does not mean that evil itself is fully restrained.
5. When the Anti-Christ comes, he will claim to be God, will set himself up in the temple of Jerusalem as a religious geopolitical ruler, be empowered by Satan, and will be a dynamic deceiver.

² THESS 2:9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders,¹⁰ and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved

v. 10b – The Anti-Christ will be a master of evil, **deceiving those who continue to reject the Gospel**

¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie¹² and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Human accountability – these verses clearly speak of the fact that even though non-believers in the tribulation will be deceived by the Anti-Christ, nevertheless they will be held accountable because they **willingly reject** the Gospel. They refuse to love the truth.

The problems with v. 11 – at the surface this looks like God is doing an evil thing, by purposefully deceiving them all the more and so condemning them. **But this is not so.** God is only sealing the fate of those who have already fully rejected the Gospel in a permanent sense (something only God knows).

An example of this happening in biblical history is in Exodus 8-10, regarding Pharaoh and Moses.

EX 8:15 But when Pharaoh saw that there was relief, he hardened his heart and would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said.

EX 8:32 But this time also Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the people go.

EX 9:12 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses.

EX 10:20 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go.

CONCLUSION – God’s purposes are sovereignly and mysteriously accomplished through the evil choices of evil people. Somehow, in a way not known to us, their choice was part of God’s plan.

AC 4:27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

Biblically speaking – God’s sovereignty and human responsibility are compatible and must remain side by side.

PAUL STAYS ON THE THEME OF GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY

^{2TH 2:13} But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

^{2TH 2:16} May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

Key themes

1. Thanksgiving as an obligation (see 1:3)
2. Love
3. Encouragement by reminding them of God’s sovereign choice in saving them. (v.13)

^{1TH 1:4} For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.

Paul says (v.13) that the Thessalonian believers were chosen “from the beginning.”

^{EPH1:4} For he chose us in him before the creation of the world...

4. Salvation is a divine calling, a work of the Spirit of God, brought to the believing sinner who embraces the truth (the Gospel). It will always result in a future glory.
5. As Christians we are called to be faithful, while standing firm in faith, while holding on to the truths and promises of Scripture (sound teaching).

Pastoral Application Questions:

1. We are “loved by the Lord” and “chosen by the Lord” and will one day “be glorified like the Lord.” How should knowing these truths effect us in the middle of our suffering?

ANSWER: see v.16-17

2. How does the “sanctifying work of the Spirit” and “belief in the truth” go hand in hand?

ANSWER: John 17:17

3. Similarly, how does Paul say we should stand firm (v.15)? By doing what?

2TH 3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. ² And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. ³ But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. ⁴ We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. ⁵ May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance.

HOW A CHURCH SHOULD PRAY:

- 1) For the Gospel to Spread
- 2) Deliverance from evil

In what ways does this sound like elements of the Lord’s Prayer in the Gospels?

WHAT WILL THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD BRING FORTH?

v. 3 – “Strengthen and protection”

Strengthen – on the inside
Protect – on the outside

Read 1 Thess 5:23

v. 5 – “Direction (a leading) into a life of love and perseverance

LAZY CHRISTIANS

2TH 3:6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. ⁹ We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat."

¹¹ We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. ¹² Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. ¹³ And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

2TH 3:14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Pastoral Application Questions

1. According to Paul's commands in v.6, when is it necessary to disfellowship someone?
 - A.
 - B.
2. What would that disfellowship look like today? (especially in light of v. 15)
3. What principles does Paul lay down regarding a Christian's way of life?
 - A. That we should be seek to be diligent, hard workers in the workforce.
 - B. That we should be responsible for ourselves and not mooch out of laziness (a loafer).

^{2TH} 3:16 Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.
¹⁷ I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write.
¹⁸ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Paul closes his letter the way he opened this letter by a prayer for grace and peace. (see 1:2)