

April 30, 2023

Hope Comes from God's Grace

Bible Background • 2 THESSALONIANS 2

Printed Text • 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1–3, 9–17 | Devotional Reading • TITUS 3:1–7

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXPLORE the purpose for which God has called us; TRUST that God has a significant plan for our lives; and PRAY for a clear understanding of God's assignment.

In Focus

Warren and Deloris saw that there was a lot to be done in their church, which was located in the heart of an inner-city neighborhood. In 25 years, they saw several pastors come and go and had witnessed firsthand the financial, personal, and spiritual struggles of the church. It was tempting for them to retreat to the beautiful suburban church closer to their home.

However, one day as Warren studied the Scriptures, he ran across a passage in Luke's Gospel: "But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:30–32).

Warren felt convicted. He knew the Lord had him and Deloris in their current church because there were many who were spiritually sick who could benefit from their biblical wisdom and needed to be taught God's Word. Warren and Deloris learned that God had called them to make a needed and lasting difference in a lost and dying world—in an inner-city church.

In today's lesson, God is calling for commitment to His agenda: saving lost souls and helping to build His kingdom.

Keep In Mind

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2 Thessalonians 2:16–17, KJV)

Words You Should Know

- A. **Bound** (2 Thessalonians 2:13) *opheilo* (Gk.) — Under obligation.
- B. **Salvation** (v. 13) *soteria* (Gk.) — Rescue, deliverance from danger or sin.
- C. **Sanctification** (v. 13) *hagiasmos* (Gk.) — State of purity, holiness.

Say It Correctly

Perdition. behl-SHAZ-er

Incarnation. an-TAI-uh-kuhs

Consolation. Eh-PIHF-uh-neeZ

KJV

2 Thessalonians 2:1–3, 9–17 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

NLT

2 Thessalonians 2:1–3, 9–17 Now, dear brothers and sisters, let us clarify some things about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and how we will be gathered to meet him. 2 Don't be so easily shaken or alarmed by those who say that the day of the Lord has already begun. Don't believe them, even if they claim to have had a spiritual vision, a revelation, or a letter supposedly from us. 3 Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction.

9 This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles.

10 He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them.

11 So God will cause them to be greatly deceived, and they will believe these lies.

12 Then they will be condemned for enjoying evil rather than believing the truth.

13 As for us, we can't help but thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are always thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation—a salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and through your belief in the truth.

14 He called you to salvation when we told you the Good News; now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you both in person and by letter.

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal comfort and a wonderful hope,

17 comfort you and strengthen you in every good thing you do and say.

The People, Places, and Times

Antichrist. Most Bible scholars identify the “man of sin” in today’s Scripture passage as identical to an antichrist written about by Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:3). In his epistles, John describes this antichrist as denying the Incarnation (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7) and denying the deity of Christ (1 John 2:2). The Incarnation is the theological term for the Son of God becoming a human being. Deity is the

truth that Jesus was and is truly God. These two truths taken together show us that Jesus was both fully human and fully God. To deny these two central truths is to be an antichrist. While there is a generic description of an antichrist, Scripture tells us that there will be a specific figure with great influence who will be the ultimate Antichrist.

In Revelation 13:1–8 the description of the beast is often equated with the Antichrist and the man of sin. Jesus also mentioned false christs (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). The Antichrist is prophesied to come right before the great tribulation occurs. Some theologians interpret the antichrist symbolically, i.e., a spirit of unbelief.

Background

Paul, Silas, and Timothy founded the church at Thessalonica on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 17:1–10), but the apostle Paul had to leave in a hurry because of the degree of persecution there. In Paul's first letter to the church, he not only comforted these struggling believers but also offered encouragement because they were still experiencing threats and other types of harassment because of their faith in God. However, false teachings were also causing problems for this infant church because incorrect information about Jesus' second coming spread and caused some to quit their jobs and become idle. Idleness bred the sinful conduct of minding other people's business. Therefore, Paul wrote this second letter to encourage the Thessalonians in their suffering of persecution and to correct the false information. In addition, he wanted to instruct them to get back to work and remind them of conduct becoming children of a Holy God set apart from sin.

At-A-Glance

1. Those Not Left Behind (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3)
2. Those Fooled by the Man of Sin (vv. 9–12)
3. Loved, Chosen, and Called (vv. 13–14)
4. Standing Firm in the Faith (vv. 15–17)

In Depth

1. Those Not Left Behind (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3)

Evidently, someone had forged a letter that was supposed to have come from Paul. The letter said that the day of the Lord had already come. Many novelists, so-called spiritual leaders, and even a few contemporary preachers have given people information that is contrary to what the Bible teaches concerning the second coming of our Lord. Some have even claimed to be the Messiah.

But Paul rushed in to comfort the Thessalonian Christians; Jesus has not yet returned. The Bible gives us many warning signs. Among them is the coming of the man of sin or of lawlessness, also called an antichrist, whom we can read about in Revelation 13. At this time, there will be open rebellion against God. So no, Jesus has not yet returned. And we do not need to worry about being left behind if we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior.

2. Those Fooled by the Man of Sin (vv. 9–12)

This Antichrist is not Satan, but Satan is the power behind him. Satan will be helping him perform all sorts of seeming miracles and evil deeds. People who did not believe in our wonder-working God will somehow believe in the "magic tricks" of the Antichrist. Human beings have a spiritual vacuum inside which can only be filled with Jesus. But those who refuse Him try to fill that vacuum with all sorts of alternatives: drugs, illicit sex, false religions, and even perfectly good deeds; but deeds without Jesus

will leave people just as empty. Because these people have deliberately rejected the truth—Jesus—God will allow them to be fooled by the greatest deception of all: that the Antichrist is God.

3. Loved, Chosen, and Called (vv. 13–14)

Paul affirmed to these struggling Thessalonians that they were loved by Almighty God, Himself. In fact, this great salvation that they had received had nothing to do with their own merit but was because of God's favor. They, as we, could not earn it, but had to accept it as a gift from God. Paul reminded them that from the beginning, God chose them to be a part of His family, and through His Holy Spirit, God made them and all believers like Christ (Romans 8:29). Believers' salvation is not because they have been so good or so kind. It is because a loving God had compassion and mercy on them and chose them to be His heirs. Therefore, believers can never boast in their salvation because they all have to receive the forgiveness of sin through belief on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (John 3:16). No person took Jesus' life, but as Jesus said, "I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:18).

In today's passage, in 2 Thessalonians 2:14, Paul reiterated that God worked through Silas, Timothy, and himself to bring the Good News of salvation to the Thessalonians. Still, their salvation was all about God and His work and not about Paul and his companions, who apart from God's work are like us: "fallible, unfaithful, untrustworthy human creatures" (Life Application Study Bible, 1923). Yet, God can and does take fallible, unfaithful, untrustworthy human beings and uses them for His glory.

4. Standing Firm in the Faith (vv. 15–17)

Now that Paul had built up the Thessalonians by encouraging them in the faith, he moved on to encourage them to stand firm in their faith. He wanted them to commit to faithfulness to God. The apostle knew that one threat to the church was false teaching or doctrine. For the Thessalonians, believing the Second Coming was imminent had caused them to fall into the sins of idleness and being busybodies. Such a display of confusion was a negative witness for a lost and dying world. It did not represent the Holy God well. Paul, therefore, urged them to commit and hold on to the foundational truths that they had been taught from the beginning of their faith and to get back to work. In verses 16 and 17, Paul ended this part of his letter by reminding the Thessalonians that it was God who loved them and has done so with His special favor (grace); this same God gave them "everlasting consolation" and hope through salvation by believing in Jesus Christ. According to John 10:28, Jesus said, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." This means Jesus protects believers from harm forever. All believers can expect to suffer on earth. Yet we have the assurance from God Himself that Satan cannot harm our souls or take away our eternal life that Jesus paid the price for in full when He died on the Cross. Paul then prayed that this same God would both comfort the Thessalonians' hearts in the midst of their struggles as well as give them strength in everything that they did and said.

Search the Scriptures

1. What two things will happen before the day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:3)?
2. Who is the power behind the man of sin (v. 9)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. Why did Paul tell the Thessalonians that first a falling away and then a man of sin would be revealed before the day of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:1–3)?
2. Why would God allow people to believe a delusion (vv. 9–12)?

Liberating Lesson

Not too long ago, a rich Christian man announced via radio, billboards, etc., that the rapture was going to happen, and he gave a date for it. Many non-Christians made fun of him especially as the date passed and nothing happened. How could a careful reading of today's Scripture passage help us avoid deception by such messages? Do you know other Scriptures that would also show that this prophecy was wrong?

Application for Activation

Paul was writing to console the Thessalonians, and his words are God's words for us today. Look again at the key verses to focus on how God gives us hope through His grace. What should be the result of His comfort? Are good words and good works flowing from God's grace in our lives?

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

2 Thessalonians 2:1–3, 9–17

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:1, one Greek word is translated as two—"gathering together" (episunagoge, ep-ee-soon-ag-o-GAY). This word refers to the time mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 when all believers will be raised to join our Savior when He returns to establish His Kingdom. When Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, it was a time of great persecution. The second letter, which was probably written about six months later, found the Thessalonian Christians in the same situation, only now they had been easily duped. It seems they had gotten a forged letter attributed to Paul, that stated that the Day of the Lord was already upon them. Or perhaps someone stood up in the church and claimed to have a divine revelation. The Thessalonians were warned to keep their heads about them, to think clearly and biblically.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

This verse tells us that two events will happen before the coming of the Day of the Lord. The first is a falling away. "Falling away" in Greek is apostasia (ap-os-tas-EE-ah) and means a defection from the truth or a religious rebellion. Another word for this is "apostasy." Paul is picturing a worldwide rebellion against the authority of God.

The second thing that will happen is the appearance of the leader of this opposition to the rule of God, who is called the Man of Sin. Through the ages, people have tried to identify the Man of Sin. Some of the names suggested have been Caligula or Nero. This may be the same as the Antichrist. The Man of Sin may also reflect another person or type of people that are committed to the way of sin.

2:9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

These verses continue the conversation concerning the Man of Sin. Again we see that Satan is behind him. The Greek word for "all" is pas (pas) and modifies "power," "signs," and "lying wonders." "Lying" in Greek is pseudos (PSYOO-dos); it also means "intentionally false," and here it also modifies power, signs, and wonders. The Man of Sin seems able to do great wonders, but they are all shams. Those who have rejected Jesus Christ will not be able to see how false all these wonders are. We see followers of false religions today who seem oblivious to how deceitful these religions are.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Even many well-educated Bible scholars are not sure how to interpret some of the verses in today's passage. For instance, they are not sure if the Man of Sin is an individual or an organization. But we do know that as powerful as Satan is, he can only do what God allows him to do. Even now he is being restrained, but shortly before the Lord returns, God will let go of the restraints, and he will be free to do more evil than we could imagine. Those who have rejected the Lord will believe in him. The Greek word for "delusion" is plane (PLAN-ay), and it means "fraudulence," "straying from orthodoxy or piety," "delusion," "deceit," or "error." This delusion is the man of sin and all he will represent. However, those who follow the Lamb will not be deceived.

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

In this second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul reaffirmed that he and his companions (Silas and Timothy, the founders of the church at Thessalonica) were "bound" (Gk. opheilo, of-I-lo). This word means "under obligation, indebted," to always give thanks to God for these believers. They felt bound because God had "chosen" (Gk. haireomai, hahee-REHom-ahee) these believers to become a part of His family. God also used Paul, Silas, and Timothy to bring them the Good News. The word "salvation" in the Greek is soteria (so-tay-REE-ah), which means "rescue," "deliverance," "preservation," or "saving." God chose to rescue these Thessalonians from the power of sin and the penalty of sin, which is death (that is, eternal separation from a holy God). It is also God at work, through His Holy Spirit, who used "sanctification" (Gk. hagasmos, hag-ee-as-MOS), meaning "consecration," or "purification," to make the Thessalonians holy as He is holy. Their salvation had been all about God doing a work in them; God, by His power, transforming them from sinners to believers. One of His attributes is He is omnipotent, or all-powerful. He used that power to bring the Thessalonians into His fold.

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul also reaffirmed to the Thessalonians that God “called” (Gk. kaleo, kal-EH-o), or “invited,” or “named,” them out of sin to salvation. They believed in Jesus Christ and were delivered from sin and from eternal or everlasting damnation (John 3:16). Their salvation brought “glory” (Gk. doxa, DOX-ah), or “honor,” “praise,” “worship,” “splendor,” or “excellence,” to God. When they were saved, they, too, became a part of His kingdom that will reign forever and ever.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Paul cautioned them to “stand fast, and hold the traditions, which ye have been taught.” The phrase “stand fast” in the Greek is steko (STAY-ko), meaning “to stand firm,” “to persevere,” “to persist” in the faith. They were to hold to the traditions that they had been taught when they first believed. The word “hold” in Greek is kratoo (krat-EH-o), meaning, “to use strength,” “lay hold on,” “be master of.” They were to hold onto, seize, and retain those fundamentals of the faith that they had been first taught. They were not to grab hold of false doctrine concerning Jesus’ Second Coming and become idle in their daily living. This false doctrine contradicted the principles that Paul had taught them and that his life had embodied before them. Because of false teachers and doctrines, it is important that believers study God’s Word in context. We should cross-reference Scriptures to know what the Bible actually says or teaches. Bible study requires knowledge of context. That means we should not just read a given Scripture verse and draw our own conclusions. Instead, we should read the Scriptures surrounding the text. For example, look at the entire chapter, then consider the entire book. Finally, determine whether your interpretation of that Scripture contradicts what the Bible teaches as a whole. Also consider the people, places, and times of that Scripture. All these things bring clarity to the meaning.

16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

Paul concluded this portion of his second letter to the Thessalonians with an earnest prayer for this struggling Church, recognizing two persons of the Trinity, Jesus Christ the Savior and God the Father. The Apostle acknowledged what God had already done for him and them through His salvation and His unconditional love for them. God had given them “everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.” The word “everlasting” in the Greek is aionios (ahee-O-nee-os), which means “eternal,” “forever,” “without beginning and end.” The Greek word for “consolation” is paraklesis (par-AK-laysis), which means “encouragement,” “comfort,” “solace.” In other words, Paul acknowledged that when God saved them through Jesus Christ, He gave them comfort that would last forever and ever. He gave believers “hope” (Gk. elpis, el-PECE), which means “joyful and confident expectation.” When God saved them, He gave them confidence and an expectation that would last forever as well. He gave this to them through grace. The word “grace” in Greek is charis (KHAR-ece), meaning “favor,” or “reward.” God gave believers, therefore, comfort and expectation or hope through His grace. He favored them; they did not and could not earn these gifts.

17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Paul recognized that God would comfort the Thessalonian Christians’ hearts, so he prayed for that comfort. The word “comfort” in the Greek is parakaleo (par-ak-al-EH-o) and it means, “to encourage and strengthen by consolation.” The Greek word for “hearts” is kardia (kar-DEE-ah), meaning “the center and seat of spiritual knowledge and life.” Only an omniscient, allknowing God truly knows the heart—the core, the foundation of our spiritual life. When we are going through dire circumstances,

only God can really come near to our hearts and bring His peace that surpasses all understanding. As Paul wrote, "It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:11–12). This is the confidence and hope that the Thessalonians and all believers should have.

The Apostle Paul also prayed that they might be established in the ways of God. Only God can establish us in His ways, making us firm in every good word and work so He can be honored. If we as believers commit to Him, He will establish us in every good word and work, too. He will bring about His ways in us.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

An Appointed Time
(Psalm 75)

TUESDAY

The Day Is Coming
(Malachi 4)

WEDNESDAY

No Good Thing Withheld
(Psalm 84)

THURSDAY

My Help Comes from the Lord
(Psalm 121)

FRIDAY

The Hope of Eternal Life
(Titus 3:1-7)

SATURDAY

Kept Sound and Blameless
(1 Thessalonians 5:23-28)

SUNDAY

Eternal Comfort and Good Hope
(2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, 9-17)