

2Thessalonians 12-09-07a

This is Friday, the 7th of September, 2012. We're in the book of 2 Thessalonians, and we're picking up in chapter 2, beginning to look at the attempt at deception in verse 3 and the description of the coming of the lawless one in verses 3 and following. Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and we can get started.

Father, thank you for all of the ways that you have sustained us and blessed us and provided for us and watched over us. We're privileged to have this opportunity to spend time together and enjoy fellowship and encouragement and the anointing oil of your Holy Spirit as he moves in our midst to activate our gifts and bless us in ways both known and unknown, visible and invisible. We thank you in particular for the opportunity now to study your Word, to perceive its truth, to meditate on it, to seek an understanding of it, and to find its application and meaning for us as we live day to day in the light of your countenance and with a view toward your kingdom.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will teach us and illuminate this passage for us as we address it together. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. Let's take a look at 2 Thessalonians 2. I will just point out by way of quick survey of chapter 1 that the setting, the background, the frame of reference that has been established so that we can get into this study of the man of sin, the antichrist, the prevailing dominant figure of the tribulation and, of course, associated with that, the timing of the rapture which comes in chapter 2. And this is typically what people come to 2 Thessalonians for.

Let's get to chapter 2. I want to find out about all that eschatology. I want to find out about, you know, losing gravitation and meeting the Lord in the air and getting away from all of this that will happen down here. And we often give chapter 1 short shrift.

But we've spent quite a bit of time on it and I think you remember most of what's in it. I just want to point out, turning things from a slightly different perspective, what does Paul do in chapter 1? He greets everyone, right? He says, this is me, this is Silas, this is Timothy. We're writing to you all.

You remember us from when we were present with you. We are thankful for you. Why? Because you are sticking with the faith.

Your conversion, your conviction, your expression of faith in the Lord Jesus wasn't a flash in the pan. It wasn't a momentary infatuation. Even in the face of pressure, you are sustaining your faith.

And this is a demonstration and a manifestation of God's right judgment in sending the apostles to the Thessalonians. Remember, he passed through a couple of other towns on that big highway and he stopped there. God sent Paul and Silas and Timothy to these people.

And God was right to do so. He says, look, your response and your faithfulness and the

difference this has made in your life justifies and vindicates God's judgment in looking at you and knowing that you would respond to the call. And he says you want to go on so that when the Lord Jesus comes to be glorified in his saints, you will be judged worthy of that call.

Live in a way to finish that. You've started well. You responded to the message.

You're sticking to it under adversity. So Paul says, we encourage you to keep on. Don't worry about these people that are plaguing you.

God's got them in hand. God will deal with them. He will return and repay whatever it is they are returning and repaying to you.

You focus on the kingdom. And these things are of God. And you think about the objectivity that is encouraged by these words.

He says, we thank God for you. He doesn't say, oh, we're just so thankful. It's such a blessing to us that we know you.

And what does he say? We thank God for you. He casts it in an eternal heavenly perspective right off the bat. We have gratitude to God because it was God who brought us together.

It was God who sent us to you. It was God who knew that you would respond when we came. This is of God.

This is a divine provision. It's a divine blessing. It's a divine operation for which we can all be thankful.

You can thank God for sending us. We can thank God for sending us to you. We can thank God for your response.

And we do. We thank God all the time. But right from the beginning, people that are, and we know this, when you are mired in difficulties, when you're facing challenges, when it's grinding and it's a weight that you carry and it's a drag on your progress and a weight on your mind, it is a refreshment.

It is a restoration. It is a strengthening and an encouragement to back up and be reminded of the eternal perspective, the divine orchestration of these things. And this is what Paul, in a subtle way, does.

He begins, you are the church in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. You get that in verse one. You are the group.

You are the church that is in God the Father. You are in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is a secure, unassailable, blessed position.

Then he says, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The same thing. This is the source of grace.

This is the source of peace. And Lord knows, peace is what you're after when you're wading through difficulties, when you're fighting through opposition. And for the third time, in the third verse, God is mentioned again.

And you can just see that Paul is pounding in these pillars. Have you ever seen those cartoons? Of course, they used to put them in all the time. I don't think younger people even know what they are.

But you know what a pile driver is. If you've ever watched a Bugs Bunny cartoon, you know what a pile driver is. Or Popeye the Sailor Man.

When they would build on a shore and they wanted to ensure that the pier or the boardwalk or whatever wouldn't sink out of sight, they would build it on piers, these vertical posts that had been driven down to bedrock or driven down to a solid layer beneath the sand. So they would have pile drivers. And it's this giant pounding machine that drives these blunt posts all the way down to solid foundation.

And you get the idea that this is what Paul is doing. He's setting these firm posts of foundation underneath his message. And he says, You are the church in God.

Grace and peace to you from God. We are thanking God for you. And he says in verse 5, that he mentions the churches of God in verse 4 again.

All of the churches of God are blessed. Then in verse 5, he says, It is a vindication and manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God. Now, five mentions of God in five verses is not insignificant.

There's a reason for this. There is an intention, a plan. And Paul is gently but firmly couching everything in these terms.

It's eternal. The God of heaven is for you. You are in him.

He is providing for you. He is watching over you. We are thankful to him.

He is sending grace and peace to you. It's objectivity. This is the way things really are.

Don't be fooled by the IMAX of life. Don't be fooled by the giant 35-foot screen and the 3D glasses that you're wearing into thinking that this is reality and the shark is actually going to bite your nose when he comes out from the middle. This is what life looks like to us.

It's very realistic. It's 3D, but we will walk away from this. It's temporary.

It is so small compared to our eternal existence, but we think of it as real. We're immersed in it. We're fully immersed and we have trouble remembering how artificial, how temporary, how ephemeral it actually is.

We are souls playing a video game. We think we have this body. We worry about what happens to the body.

It's just like driving an aging car. All right, fine. I will be flying spacecraft when I lose this 77 Volkswagen bus with the handles falling off and the upholstery wrinkling up.

It's just temporary. It's just for a little while. Paul is emphasizing this, and he's doing it gently.

He's doing it indirectly. By referring to God in every single verse, every single sentence in the Greek refers to God. Verse 1, verse 2, verse 3, verse 4, verse 5, verse 6, it's a righteous thing with God to repay these that are troubling you.

Verse 7, and to give you rest when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. In flaming fire, verse 8, taking vengeance on those who do not know who? God. And who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If you count them, that's actually about a dozen references. If you count God and the Lord Jesus separately, that's about a dozen references to the persons of the Trinity in eight verses. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.

It's the presence of the Lord where you want to be. There's the Lord in verse 9. We haven't had a verse yet where God is not mentioned. Not one.

And in several of these verses, he's mentioned twice. When he comes in that day to be glorified in his saints, these pronouns all refer to the Lord Jesus. Therefore, verse 11, we pray for you that our God would count you worthy.

Verse 12, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, every single verse in chapter 1 directly references God. It's not an accident. This is how under pressure, in adversity, in persecution, facing tribulation, we gain and maintain objectivity.

It's not about you. It's about God. We are in God.

And to that extent, it's about us. If you're outside God, God is going to come in flaming fire and rectify that situation. Those who reject, those who have no relationship with God, will be dealt with.

Concentrate on cultivating, improving, intensifying relationship with God. Every single verse. This brings us to chapter 2. Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, there's yet another verse, and our gathering together to him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or

troubled either by spirit or by word or by letter.

This is by rumor, by anecdote, or by something purporting to be an actual letter from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Or the day of the Lord, depending on the manuscript tradition behind your English translation. Day of Christ, day of the Lord.

The Lord is Christ. Christ is the Lord. So, although knowing the actual word would be significant for our purposes, we understand the meaning.

What is the day of the Lord? What is the day of Christ? Everybody that thinks it's the rapture, please don't raise your hand because I don't want you to embarrass yourself. It is not the rapture. What is the day of Christ? What is the day of the Lord? This is the day of judgment.

This is the second coming. This is the resolution of the tribulation. This is the resolution of the battle of Armageddon.

This is the inception of the Millennial Kingdom and the ensuing government and just rule. That's the day of the Lord. That's the day of Christ.

It is the overturning of the principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age and the instigation of the rule of Jesus Christ and the Davidic kings in Israel, in Jerusalem, on the throne of David himself. That's the day of Christ. So be clear.

Don't be tripped up. Don't get confused. The day of Christ, the day of the Lord is not the rapture.

The rapture precedes the day of Christ. So when he says don't be shaken in mind or troubled by some false message of any level of substance, spirit is the least substantial. It's just a rumor.

Somebody says, well, I heard somebody say that somebody said that somebody said that Paul said that's a spirit. That's just a wind. It's a breath or a word.

Well, I heard him say or I understood him to say I was there or a letter. This is what Paul actually wrote. Read it for yourself, but he didn't write it saying that the day of Christ has come that the day of judgment has come and hey, where's how come I'm not with Christ? Paul said when Christ came, I would be with him that we would be glorified that we would be delivered that we would be vindicated that our enemies would be dealt with and look at us.

We're still here. We've been left out. Is it because we're Gentiles to were we wrong? Did we really need to convert and become Jews in order to be saved? Maybe those guys at the synagogue were right and and we got left out the Messiah has come and and we didn't get included because Paul was wrong or Paul says the day has come.

He told the other people the day has come and we didn't we didn't get included. We're not on the list. What happened? Don't be troubled.

Don't be shaken in mind. Don't let people unseat your faith with a message of that nature. Verse 3, let no one deceive you by any means and he has given three typical means up above.

How do people typically deceive? They will misquote an authority. This happens in debates all the time. People will cite a study or cite a source or take a quote out of context take Scripture out of context and use that as an authority.

They don't have any authority themselves. They don't have expertise themselves. So they will appeal to an authority fallaciously and say well, you know, I had a guy trying to tell me that there was a bunch of egregiously unnecessary surgery being done in the United States and referenced a study that had been done.

Well, I went back and read the study and he was full of old tennis shoes. It didn't say any such thing. In fact, he referenced four studies and one of the studies actually said the opposite and talked about how great it was and how effective these surgeries had been.

So this is a false appeal to authority. It is a false message bolstered with a false reference, a false authority. Let no one deceive you.

Now, this is a command. It was a command to the Thessalonians. It is a command to us.

There is a lot of, shall we say, wayward theology. There is a lot of wrong-headed Bible interpretation. There is a lot of bad eschatology.

There is a lot of bad pneumatology. There is a lot of bad soteriology. There is a lot of bad hamartiology.

There is a lot of bad ecclesiology. Any ology you want to name has been perverted and distorted. Why would I say bad ecclesiology? What are we doing with woman pastors? What are we doing welcoming with open arms people that are engaged in an openly perverse and unbiblical lifestyle? What are we doing blinding ourselves to the necessity to understand and receive the teaching of the Word of God and instead seek sort of an emotional high, seek an experience, base our fellowship on each other instead of on God, go through 14 verses of a song and never have God mentioned once or haven't mentioned superfluously or shallow references to Him instead of learning who He is.

These references are not just vain repetition, are they? When Paul references God, what does he talk about? God is the source of grace. God is the source of peace. God is the source of justice.

God is the source of righteousness. God is the source of provision. God is the source of recompense.

God will judge. God will return. God will unite us.

God will bless us. God will take us to Himself. There are doctrines and principles and promises in each of these references to God.

It is the character of God. It's the plan of God. It's the kingdom of God.

It is the righteousness of God. It is the peace of God. It is the grace of God.

It is the Son of God. Each of these has beef. It has meat.

It has substance. And it builds strength in our souls. This is what fellowship ought to be.

And there's a lot of bad ecclesiology. There is bad eschatology. Our millennialism is making a resurgence where there's a renewed idea and renewed numbers of people and increasing numbers of people who have now been convinced that the millennial kingdom is not literal.

That God's kingdom is in your heart. And you've just got to wait for the millennium to happen in your heart. And there will be lions and lambs and children and snakes and Levites who sweat and all that in your soul, apparently.

I don't understand it. But they just spiritualize everything. You know, sheep and goats and angels weeding out tares and good and bad fish and so on.

I guess that's all just in my soul. And it's not actual. There's not a physical return of the Lord Jesus.

Listen, it's just like Paul said. If Jesus is not resurrected, then your hope is vain. You are yet in your sins.

And we are of all men most miserable. Why is Jesus resurrected? The resurrection does us no good if we never see him. Have you thought about this? The fact of the resurrection is meaningless to you and it's meaningless to me if we never see him.

Well, yeah, he was raised, but then he went to, you know, Alpha Centauri somewhere. And, you know, that's it for that deal. You had to be there.

You had to be in the garden or be one of the apostles. But the fact of the resurrection becomes moot and meaningless if he does not come back and we do not see him as he is. Job knew this.

I know that my Redeemer is alive and I will see him, not another. I will see him from my flesh. I will stand and I will see him.

Job understood this, what, 3,500 years ago or more. And it has been true for every saint since then, Old Testament. And we will see him.

He will be raised. So do not be destabilized by false theology, by false messages. In this day,

nobody expects to get a fresh letter from Paul, although every once in a while they dig up something and say, oh, look, the Gospel of Judas.

This is better than your Bible. Let's read this. And it's nuts.

But it's false theology. It is misconstruing and misinterpreting and misapplying scriptures, taking them out of context. It's a spirit.

It's a word. It's a letter purporting to be from an apostle. And it's not.

Saying that the day specifically of Christ has already come. Let no one deceive you by any means. And we must be on our guard.

This is an imperative to you and to me. I love it when we get a nice, straight forward, unambiguous command of Scripture. A lot of times things are interpretation and, you know, love your wife.

Well, what does that mean? It's open to interpretation. Does it mean I should have a warm, mushy feeling? Does it mean I should buy her a lot of things? Does it mean I should... What is the exact... You know, you can try to figure out love is kind of a mushy, ambiguous, nebulous, no hard edges word. I love pizza.

I love my wife. Is there a qualitative difference? Well, yes. But this is a nice, unambiguous, easy thing to understand.

Don't let anybody fool you. Don't let anybody feed you false information. Now all we have to do is find the criteria for determining what is true and what is false.

Don't accept a bad check. Well, I look at a check. I can't tell by looking if it's bad or not.

How do I know if it's a hot check? I call the bank. I don't deliver the goods until the check clears the bank. Then I say, ah, obviously that was a good check.

Now you can have your stuff. How do I know if information is valid or not? Let no man deceive you. Well, how do I know if this letter is from Paul or not? How do I know if this second-hand account of what he said is valid or not? Well, Paul goes on to say, test it against this standard.

This letter is for me. You recognize it as for me. There's no doubt about this letter.

We are not to be deceived. Let no man deceive you. It doesn't say try not to be deceived.

It doesn't say hope that you're not deceived. It says let nobody deceive you. So this is a responsibility.

It is now incumbent on us anytime we hear teaching. If you hear me teach, you hear a guy in the

radio teach, you read it in a book, you see it on television, somebody speaks it in a conversation, and it has to do with God's plan, God's purpose, things that impinge on our life as believers. We have an obligation to ensure that nobody deceives us and that we don't believe something false.

Let no one deceive you for... Then you notice you get three words in italics. Actually, four. That day will not come.

That's five words. That day will not come. It's all in italics, right? So if you leave that out, which I like to do, just to see why they added them in the first place, let no one deceive you by any means for unless the falling away comes first.

That's pretty close to what it says in Greek. For unless the falling away comes first. Well, what is the falling away? Is the word fall in there? Do you remember the Greek word for fall? I wish one of Dan's girls was in here.

I wish Kristen was here. Daniel, do you remember the Greek word for fall? It's pipto. So if something was going to fall away, it'd be something like apopipto, right? It fell off, it fell away.

It was an apple hitting Newton on the noggin or something. It fell away, it fell down, it fell off. It's not apopipto.

It's apostasia. Apostasian. Apostasian.

Well, what does this word mean? Well, it's time for us to pause and take our break, so I'm going to come back, but just in case you are tempted to leave during the break, we've got the 105-millimeter howitzer here, and we've got the 8-inch howitzer here, and we will know next session what apostasia means. We will know everything that these guys know about it. So let's pause and take our break.

When we come back, we will nail down this word, because obviously the choices are the rebellion, the apostasy, meaning that there will be some sort of worldwide departure from Christian faith, or does it mean something else? That's what we'll look at when we come back.