

2Thessalonians 12-09-21a

This is Friday, the 21st of September, 2012. We continue our study in the book of 2 Thessalonians. We're in chapter 2 and we'll be resuming in verse 3. We'll take a moment before we start to go to the Lord in prayer.

It's an opportunity to focus our concentration, set aside any mental distractions, seek the blessing of the ministry of God's Holy Spirit to enable both the presentation and the reception of things that are provided for us in this passage. Shall we pray? Father, what a blessing it is to spend time together around the study of your word, recognizing and appreciating the Lord Jesus Christ, the things that he has done for us, the place in history to which we have been assigned that enables us to partake of the grace and truth that come to us through his work on the cross. We thank you for this passage of scripture and we ask that as we spend time meditating on it and seeking a better understanding of it, that your Holy Spirit will guide us and enable us to understand and to put into practice truths and the meaning that it contains for each one of us in our daily life and that it will prepare us for service both now and in the ages to come.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's take a look at our section of this great letter from Paul to the Thessalonians, the second letter that we have preserved.

Timothy has been there and visited and has brought back a report. One of the things that Timothy tells Paul is that there is some confusion with regard to the distress that they are suffering. Now, we don't have any idea what this is like.

We're never confused about why we suffer. We never look around and say, well, why are things so tough? Am I doing something wrong or has God forgotten about me? Have I been left in the backwater? I don't quite understand why everything is not going my way. Where is the great cherry to fire and the innumerable company of angels that are supposed to be accompanying me everywhere at all times in what I'm doing today and tomorrow and the next day? How come I'm having such a hard time? Of course, being somewhat facetious, we all question if we're on the right road or if we have things figured out correctly, especially when adversity strikes.

We have difficulties and it isn't always clear why we are in them. So, Paul is writing this letter in response. Think about it.

These people are getting brutalized. They are being persecuted. They are suffering financial loss, social losses, social consequences.

They are being maligned. They are being bad-mouthed. They are being ostracized.

They are paying a penalty for their Christian faith. And they think, well, when Paul came preaching this Jesus, it sounded like a really good deal. I'd be delivered from my sins.

I'd be connected to the God of the universe, my creator. Finally dispensed with all of this Greek and Roman mythology and all this nonsense and the kind of shallow and inadequate conversations about God that we're hearing down at this Jewish synagogue. We're finally getting plugged into the truth.

This ought to be a good thing. We ought to really start sliding through life on grease skids. And all of a sudden, it seems to be the opposite.

And so there's some natural Thessalonian head scratching. They're saying, did I really do the right thing? Am I doing the right thing? What's up? And so they're trying to go back and remember what Paul said when he was there because they don't have a Bible. They haven't got a New Testament.

They've got no Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They've got no book of Revelation. They don't have Acts.

They don't have Romans. They've got nothing except what Paul told them. They're trying to remember.

But they've missed some of it. Time has passed. Months have gone by, and it's kind of garbled.

And one says one thing, and one says another. And someone says, well, you know, I ran across my cousin who lives in another town, and he got a letter from Paul in his church over there in Corinth or Philippi or someplace. And perhaps there are letters that are lost that Paul wrote to churches he had visited.

We only have the ones the Holy Spirit chose to preserve. So they can't remember what he said, and they're getting confused by their tribulation. This is our problem, isn't it? We have a lot of issues and difficulties.

Circumstances fly up in our face, and all of our spiritual knowledge and our heavenly viewpoint and our hope and faith and I've got treasure in the kingdom and all that kind of fades, kind of goes into the background. And in the meantime, this hurts. This affects me.

This is tearing me down. This is breaking me up. Well, Paul is writing this letter into that situation.

He knows that the Thessalonians are in that same situation such as is common to man. You and I face it almost all the time. So it's helpful to us to listen to Paul's answer.

What does he say to people who are being oppressed and are being distracted away from their Christian faith by the pressure and the deflective power of people and circumstance? What does he say? Well, we've seen in chapter 1 that God is keeping track. God will handle it. God will repay those who are repaying you with tribulation and suffering.

So don't get subjective by thinking you've got to react and you've got to push back. You've got to oppose yourself. Has anybody ever memorized Hamlet's soliloquy, to be or not to be, that is the question, whether it is nobler in mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or by opposing, I'm skipping a little bit, or by opposing, end them.

You're suffering slings and arrows and you have a chance. You can sort of run away or you can push back. The human solution is push back.

I'm going to counterattack. You attack me, I'm going to counterattack. Paul says no.

Commit these things to God. Don't be invested in what these things are taking from you, whether it's people in persecution or whether it is circumstance in tribulation. Don't have such an investment in what they are doing that you give up your birthright, your heritage, your future investment.

Now in chapter 2, and by the way at the end of chapter 1, he reminds them that he is praying for them. And this is an encouragement. When believers are praying for us, it is an encouragement both knowing that they are doing so and seeing the answers to those prayers by God himself.

So he says in verse 11, Therefore we also pray always for you, that God will account you worthy of his calling, that when all is said and done, you will have fulfilled the potential for which he put you in these circumstances. It's kind of like, I know it's difficult, but when you take this test, I'm praying that when God grades the test, he will find that you answered every question correctly. Because you have been faithful.

You've done your homework. You've studied. You've been diligent.

You didn't quit. You didn't panic. You didn't walk out.

You didn't cheat. You didn't quibble at the questions and say, I can't believe you're asking me this question. How do you expect me to answer a question like this? You just buckle down and push through.

All 100 questions on the test. Point apiece. And you get them all.

He says, I pray for that. Because the ultimate result of that is that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified. He is glorified in us and through us.

His glory shines and reflects off of us when we're faithful. The name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you in him, according to the grace of our God. It's only because of God's grace that that is possible for us.

Now we're at chapter 2. Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him. This is wonderful construction. When I taught Plebe English, I've

mentioned this in the past, when I taught what you'd call freshman English at Navy, I used a book and it was called Building Better Paragraphs.

That was my textbook. How do you communicate effectively? And one of the things that is taught in that book for building paragraphs is you need a topic sentence, typically. A topic sentence is either going to be at the beginning of the paragraph.

Here's my point and let me tell you why. Or it's going to be at the end. I've got this and this and this.

With the result that, here's my main point. But you need a topic sentence. Paul puts it at the beginning here.

This is his topic sentence for this paragraph. And it's one of the ways that the Greeks, without chapter and verse divisions, and without a lot of punctuation in the original. Have you ever seen a Greek Unseal manuscript? Unseals are the old, earlier type manuscripts.

It's just a string of capital letters. There's no space between words. There's no space between sentences.

It just strings across. If you want to see one, tell me next time you're at the house. I've got a great, big, wonderful sort of coffee table book that's got full page pictures of Unseal and minuscule manuscripts from the early centuries.

And when you look at that, you think, how could anybody read this? Well, they could. And this is Paul's topic sentence. And the construction, the order of the words, tells you where the emphasis is and what the point is, where thoughts begin and end.

And that's what we're going to see in this passage tonight. So here we go. Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him.

This is a section heading. This is a little topic blurb, like you have in your Bible. If you have a Bible that has divisions into sections, don't you have little headers there? I love this in the Psalms.

You can flip through the Psalms, and it'll say a prayer for deliverance, a song of praise, a song of essence. They'll have little things telling you, well, that's what this is. Now, this section of the letter concerns the coming of the Lord Jesus and our gathering to Him.

Why is this important? Context for interpretation. When we start seeing things that seem a bit nebulous, we say, well, what is this paragraph about? What is he assuming that we know? So, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, that's the paragraph heading. That's the section topic.

It would be in boldface or italics or something in our formatting. We ask you not to be soon

shaken in mind, not easily shaken in mind. It happens real quickly.

If you're going to be shaken in mind, make them work at it. Let not your heart be troubled. Don't be soon shaken in mind, either by spirit, a rumor, by word, or by a letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

Now, the day of Christ, what is the day of Christ? The day of Christ is not a 24-hour day. Many days in Scripture are not 24-hour days. This is not a calendar date.

This is a season. This is a space of time. It's like when old people say, well, back in my day, we would listen to Fibber McGee and Molly.

Well, they didn't just do that one day. It was an era, a time frame, as though the time frame of Christ, or this particular momentous occasion, occasion might be a decent way to describe this, the occasion of Christ, had come. Let no one deceive you by any means.

And this is where we pick up tonight. And this is my sort of interpretive translation, starting at verse 3. No one should deceive you. This is a form in Greek.

It's not a declarative. It's not a perfect or an imperfect. This is a subjunctive.

The subjunctive is the mood of potential. This could happen. This might happen.

It's a possibility. And so if you say, don't let this possibility take place, what would you say? No one should. No one ought to.

This is might with a negative. If he was positive, he would be saying, someone might deceive you. But he's saying, no one might deceive you.

No one should deceive you. You see what I'm getting at? And this isn't really an exhortation or a cohortative. They'll translate a subjunctive as a cohortative, as an encouragement.

And that's what you have in your English translation here. But the idea is, no one ought to do this. No one should deceive you.

And then you have kata as your preposition here. Kata, medena, tropon, which of course sounds like Greek to you because it is. Kata is according to.

Medena is not one. So he's saying, no one should deceive you. Kata, which normally means according to.

It also means by way of or by means of or using. No one should deceive you by way of not one tropos. Tropos is translated means here.

But it comes from trepho in Greek. Trepho is the verb that means to turn. And in other places in

the New Testament, tropos is the new course.

It's the new way. It is the result of a turn. Tropos is the result of a turn.

Okay? What happens when you turn? I'm going in a new direction. I'm headed to a new compass point. Right? So a tropos, it's not just any old means or any old way.

It's a way that is the result of a turn. And what Paul is telling the Thessalonians here is there are going to be these sort of devious mechanisms according to which there will be attempts to deceive us. Deceit, you know, fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me.

If you use the same means to fool me several times, I'm really dumb. And to be successfully deceitful, you've got to find new ways to hide the truth. New ways to obfuscate, new ways to fool me.

If I'm anywhere near smart, you've got to deceive me in a fresh way. So if I'm operating on my computer and you have a pop-up that says, your machine is infected, click here to disinfect. Well, I click that and find out that that was a falsehood and it actually infected my machine.

I say, ah, I'm not, I know about those fake virus warnings now, I won't click that. So I go to a website and it says something different. Hi there, this is Bank of America and you need to click here so we can verify that your account has not been compromised.

And I click that. Well, see, that's a whole different deception. You click that and suddenly all your money's gone.

Say, well, I'm not going to do that anymore. And so the next time I'm going to a website and it says, we will give you the secret key to making something work. We'll give you an app for your phone or we'll give you a free service for a year.

Just put your email address right here. Will you type in your email address? Next thing you know, your account's being used to email everybody you know. And you say, well, I'm not going to let that happen again.

But see, each one is a turn. There's a new deceit. There's a new according to.

There's a new cata. There's a new means by which you're deceived. What is Paul saying here? Look at it again.

No one should deceive you. If you want to take the subjunctive let no one deceive you by means of any new turn, any new trick, any new way. And these are new ways.

It's the result of a turn and it'll be fresh. It'll be inventive. It will be clever.

You know, your adversary is not a dummy and he finds new ways of tricking believers. Paul says,

you shouldn't let yourself be deceived by way. Even if it's a new, even if it's a new lie, even if it's a new way of deceiving, you shouldn't be fooled because that's the next word in Greek because except the departure comes first.

And we spent a whole night on apostasia, the standing away. You say, well, is this an apostasy? Is this a false? You know, what exactly is it? Well, what was the topic of this paragraph? What's the topic statement? Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering together with him. That's the topic of the paragraph.

And Paul doesn't label every paragraph, does he? But he labeled this one. Why? So that he could refer back without a lot of extraneous words. So concerning the standing away, which is the coming of the Lord Jesus and our gathering to him.

That's what the apostasia is, in my view. Others disagree. I say, go with God.

But someday you will see that I am right. So because, and then we have, if not, I may, which is translated, except the departure, the apostasia. By the way, if you look at this, it literally means you leave a previous standing.

Something is standing there. It is a stasis and it is now apa. That's why it's used of a military mutiny type of thing.

You were standing fast, you were serving, you were in place, you were following orders. Now you stand away from that. You walk away from that.

You stand away from it, literally. So, no one should deceive you by way of any new course, any new way, any new means, because except the departure comes first. Now the word comes is from Erkomai and it is active.

The departure comes first. That's active. It doesn't say it's caused to come or made to come or is brought, is carried, is made to happen.

It says the departure comes. That's an active thing. First.

And the man of anomia, namas is law. You have the alpha privily, which means no. If you have gnosis, you have knowledge.

What is agnosis? No knowledge. Namas is law or standards or parameters. Anomas is you don't color in the lines at all.

You take your Crayola's and have you ever seen little kids just scribble all over the page and you say, well, you know, you're supposed to keep the colors in the lines. Well, anomas is hey, whatever feels good, do it. Take your thumb and smear it around.

Pay no attention to the lines. Pay no attention to the standards. Disregard the laws.

These don't apply to me. I'm above it. I'm beyond it.

That's for mental midgets and peons and the hoi polloi, the masses, the huddled serfdom of the lower castes and so on. Not me. I'm intellectually superior to all of this.

I don't need laws. I don't need standards. None of this applies.

I am lawless. I am standardless. I am not constrained or bound by any such moral or ethical boundaries.

The man of anomia, the man of no standard, no law. The son of Apollia. He's given three descriptions.

He is the man of no law. And this is passive, by the way, except there come first the standing away and the lawless one has been revealed. Perfect.

And it's passive. He has been uncovered. You know what uncovers the man of lawlessness? He is the man representing lawlessness that already exists.

It's not a new lawlessness. The rapture hasn't happened. And suddenly there's a whole new innovative, never before seen brand of lawlessness.

No, he is the man of lawlessness. He's going to be the guy that embodies it. In the same way that the Lord Jesus, the fullness of deity in bodily form, this guy is going to embody lawlessness.

Deity has been manifest ever since creation. The angels saw it on the day God scattered the stars in the sky and created the heaven and the earth, right? Jesus summed it up in Himself, in one man. Well, this guy is going to sum up the opposite.

Everything that is opposite God, everything that is lawless, He's going to be the summation of it. That's why He's the Antichrist. Christ is the fullness of deity.

He is the fullness of lawlessness. Doesn't mean lawlessness has never been seen before, but that which restrains is taken out of the way and this lawlessness is revealed. It is revealed by the taking away of something that covers it up, something that holds it down, something that keeps it buried.

So apocalypse is no accident here. And it's passive. He doesn't break forth.

It doesn't say the man of lawlessness breaks forth. The man of sin takes over. The man of sin conquers and dominates.

He's revealed. He's festering there under the surface and His lawlessness has been festering since time began, since the fall, really, and history began. And what happens? The cover is

pulled away.

That which restrains is taken out of the way and you see Him and His embodiment of this lawlessness. So apocalypsis, the man of lawlessness is revealed. Make sense? You've got over and over again coming of the Lord Jesus and our gathering to Him.

Appa standing away. Apocalypse is pulling away of the cover and this man of lawlessness is revealed. He cannot be revealed until the cover is pulled away.

The cover cannot be pulled away until the ones standing stand away. And the ones standing don't stand away until the Lord Jesus comes and gathers them to Himself. You see the links forged in this chain are very logical, very consistent all the way through.

So what does this tell us by way of application? We stop now to take our break. But what conclusion do we draw as we see this? This is one of innumerable examples in Scripture that remind us not to be troubled, not to be shaken in mind. Why? God is in control.

Nothing emerges. Nothing is revealed. Nothing has any power except by God's taking away of what restrains.

God allows certain things into our lives. He is in total, complete, utter control. Anything that is revealed or emerges or comes into our lives by way of testing, by way of challenge, by way of something that might turn us, something that might deceive us, something that might challenge us, something that might cause tribulation or persecution is only there by His permission.

That's why it's so interesting to me that everybody's all boogabooped about the Antichrist and the man of lawlessness, the man of sin, and so on. It's passive. He has to be revealed.

God has to pull something away so that He can even show His ugly face. He's not powerful. He's weak.

He's not in control. He is controlled. And the only way He's going to have any prevalence or any dominance or any exposure or any success is when God pulls away His power and lets Him run amuck for a season.

He has no provenance whatsoever except what God allows. And God will allow it for a space to make a point. But we should be secure.

We should rest in the faithfulness and the power and the plan and purpose of God. Nothing happens that escapes His purview and His sovereignty. Nothing.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to continue this very interesting translation. When we get to verse 4 and 5, it is going to really be an encouragement, I think, when we see the way this lays out.

Let's pause here and take our break.