**The Lawless One Will Be Revealed**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**2 Thessalonians 2:7-17**

**Wednesday Evening**

**March 11, 2020**

**7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.**

In the present world—the world of the Thessalonians and the world today—two simultaneous events are happening. First, this lawlessness is already at work secretly, although it may not be clearly seen for what it is.

The work that the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, will do is already going on. “Secret” means something hidden, behind the scenes, but something God will reveal. “Lawlessness” is the hidden, subtle, underlying force from which all sin springs.

**Matthew 15:10-11**

10 When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "Hear and understand: 11 Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

**Jeremiah 17:9-10**

9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

Second, even though this power is working, so is the one who is holding him back.

Civilization still has a modicum of decency through law enforcement, education, science, and reason. Although we are horrified by criminal acts, the world has yet to see the real horror of complete lawlessness.

This will happen when the one who is holding it back steps out of the way.

**Matthew 24:12-14**

12 And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Who (or what) “holds back” the man of lawlessness? It seems that the Thessalonians knew that answer (you know) from Paul’s previous teaching. So Paul referred to it here, but did not repeat it. Commentators have considered three possibilities for the identity of this “restrainer”:

**1. Government and Law, which help to Curb Evil**

**2. The Ministry and Activity of the Church and the effects of the Good News**

**3. The Holy Spirit**

Saints, the Bible is not clear on the identity of this restrainer, only that he will not restrain forever. Then the man of lawlessness will be revealed and will do his evil work.

**Why will God allow this evil man to act with unrestrained wickedness?**

To show people and nations their own sinfulness and to show them by bitter experience the true alternative to the lordship of Christ. People totally without God can act no better than vicious animals.

**8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.**

After the one who restrains rampant evil is removed, then the man of lawlessness will be revealed. For a period of time, he will have great power and act with notorious evil.

Just as this man of lawlessness will be revealed in God’s timing, however, so he will also be destroyed. There will be an end to this man’s evil. Indeed, when the Lord Jesus returns, he will consume the Antichrist with the breath of his mouth. This picture comes from

**Isaiah 11:4**

“He will rule against the wicked and destroy them with the breath of his mouth.”

No matter how powerful this evil man may become, he is no more than a flame to be blown out by the breath of the Lord.

**Revelation 19:20-21**

20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Saints, a further picture is seen in the description that the man of lawlessness will be destroyed by the splendor of Christ’s coming. As a mere breath renders the Antichrist powerless, so the very appearance of Christ on the scene will ruin him.

**9 The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, 10 and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.**

Saints, this verse answers the question that might have been plaguing the Thessalonians, and even modern readers.

**How will this one man become so powerful?**

**How will he attain such notoriety and loyalty from the masses?**

Saints, the answer is that this man will be Satan’s tool. He will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. Jesus had warned that “false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and perform great miraculous signs and wonders so as to deceive, if possible, even God’s chosen ones” (Matthew 24:24).

**Matthew 24:24-25**

24 For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. 25 See, I have told you beforehand.

Saints, if even the numerous antichrists will have extraordinary powers, this one, who will be filled with Satan’s power, will do signs that are even more extraordinary.

**1 John 2:18**

“Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour”

Saints, while Jesus and his followers did miracles of compassion for the purpose of bringing glory to God, the Antichrist will do miracles characterized by evil and deceit for the purpose of bringing glory to himself.

**Revelation 13:13-14**

13 He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

**Revelation 16:14**

“For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty”

**Revelation 19:20**

“Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone”

Saints, it will be this power that will fool those who are on their way to destruction—those who refused to believe the truth that would save them.

But true Christians will stand firm because they understand what is happening and will not be turned away. The statement that they “refused” the truth shows that, at that point in time, God’s offer of salvation will still be available.

The evil let loose upon the world will be used by God as a last chance for many. The choice will be crystal clear. Because the Antichrist will have taken over every other religion (2:4), the only two options will be to worship Christ or to worship the Antichrist.

The unbelievers in the world will be so enamored of this powerful person that they will choose to follow him—away from God and into eternal death.

**11 And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

Those who make the choice to follow the Antichrist will be confirmed in that choice by God who will send great deception upon them, and they will believe all these lies.

**Joshua 11:20**

For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the LORD had commanded Moses.

**Romans 9:13-26**

13 As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." 14 What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! 15 For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion."

16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.

19 You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" 20 But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?

22 What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, 24 even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?

25 As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." 26 "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

They will continue to be deceived further and further—beyond simply believing the delusion—actively forwarding its cause.

Again, the choice is made clear: over against “the truth” of the gospel is “the lie” of the Antichrist. The truth that God is God versus the lie that the Antichrist is God.

That “God sends” this delusion shows his sovereignty in this entire event. At no point will God be out of control, even as Satan unleashes his power through the Antichrist. God’s sovereignty is displayed in this way in:

**Revelation 17:17**

“For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled”

Saints, the result of the choice for “believing the lie” is that they will be condemned. The path toward condemnation is downhill and slippery. It begins with fascination with evil and leads to an acceptance of the lie and simultaneous rejection of the truth, powerful delusions that lead one deeper into evil so that it is accepted and even enjoyed. At that point, people’s hearts are hardened against God and his Word, for they do not feel any need for it.

**13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,**

**John 15:16-17**

16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. 17 These things I command you, that you love one another.

Saints, Paul consistently taught that salvation begins and ends with God. The Thessalonian believers had been chosen by God from the beginning. Present and future persecution and suffering should not lead to panic. Instead, believers should stand firm.

**14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1 Peter 1:13-16**

13 Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

**15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.**

Paul knew that the Thessalonians would face pressure from persecutions, false teachers, worldliness, and apathy. They would be tempted to waver from the truth and even to leave the faith. With all these things in mind, Paul urged them to stand firm and keep a strong grip on everything that Paul and his companions had taught.

**Galatians 5:1**

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage”

The Thessalonians had received much teaching in person, and they had Paul’s letters. They would need to hold on to the truth they had been taught.

**16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.**

Through his special favor, God and Christ gave the believers everlasting comfort and good hope. Christianity is not a faith of questions and worries—not a faith in which believers must wait until the end to see if they will make it.

Instead, believers are given hope and encouragement of the certainty of God’s promises. It always helps, however, to pray for believers everywhere—especially those facing persecution for their faith—that God would comfort them and give them strength to continue to do good.

**1 Peter 5:6-11**

6 Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, 7 casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 11 To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**Let’s Pray**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**