**Stand Fast with God**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**2 Thessalonians 2:6-17**

**Wednesday Evening**

**December 1, 2021**

**2 Thessalonians 2:6-17**

6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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.

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. 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. 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.

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

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

**6 And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. 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.**

Saints, 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. 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.

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.**

Saints, 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.”

Saints, 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.

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?**

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:

**Matthew 24:24**

“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”

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.

But 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.

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.

Saints, 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, 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.**

Saints, 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.

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 a plan into their minds, a plan that will carry out his purposes. They will mutually agree to give their authority to the scarlet beast, and so the words of God will be fulfilled.”

Saints, God will use the people’s rebellion as a judgment against them. By their own free will, they will choose to rebel. As condemnation on their sin, God will harden their hearts in unbelief.

**Romans 9:18**

“Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens”

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,**

Saints, once again, Paul and his companions paused to thank God for what he had done and was continuing to do through the Thessalonian believers.

In contrast to people who will rebel against God and face eternal destruction, those who believe have a glorious future. God chose the Thessalonian believers to be among the first to experience salvation; they were among the early believers, the first in Thessalonica, and they had been chosen by God for that special privilege.

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.**

God’s “call” came to these Thessalonians through his human emissaries, Paul and his companions.

God worked through Paul, Silas, Timothy, and others, who brought the Good News to the Thessalonians so they could share in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Thessalonians were facing persecution for their faith; Paul had just finished describing a time on earth of even more intense persecution. There was no doubt about the outcome. Those who believe would share in Christ’s glory when he comes to restore justice on the earth.

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

Saints, 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. 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.**

**In Closing:**

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.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**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!**