

Be Unshakeable, Untrickable Lovers of Truth and Haters of Unrighteousness

Thursday, July 7, 2022 • Read 2Thessalonians 2:1–12

Questions from the Scripture text: Concerning what does the apostle now write (v1)? Where had he explained this before (cf. 1Th 4:13–5:11)? What is he concerned they might soon do (v2)? What had another letter apparently pretended to be? What had that letter said about the day of Christ? What does he now tell them not to allow in v3? But what must come before that day? And who must be revealed? Of what is he called “the son”? What does he do (v4)? Above what does he exalt himself? And where does he exalt himself? How do we know that this isn’t new information to them (v5)? What was restraining the man of sin’s revelation (v6)? But what is already at work (v7)? And how long will the restraining occur? When the man of sin has been revealed as the lawless one, how is he consumed (v8)? How is he destroyed? How did this lawless one come in the first place (v9)? What does he have at his disposal? What happens to those whom he deceives (v10)? What did they not receive, that resulted in their gullibility? By not receiving love of the truth, what doesn’t happen to them? Who sends them what in v11? What do they believe instead of the truth? What ultimately happens to them (v12)? In what did they have pleasure?

What should believers watch out for, with reference to reports about Christ’s return? 2Thessalonians 2:1–12 looks forward to the second serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord’s Day. In these twelve verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the unpredictable and sudden return of Christ comes in its own time, so that the elect may be saved, the reprobate hardened, and the great enemy of Christ devastatingly destroyed.**

Don’t be troubled. The church has always had its share of troublemakers. In this particular case, the apostle’s encouraging words about Christ’s return and believers’ resurrection (cf. 1Th 4:13–5:11) seem to have spun off various “prophetic” claims (v2—“by spirit or by word” claiming the same authority as Paul’s “as if from us”). Some may have been self-deceived, and others were frauds, declaring that the day of Christ had arrived. Indeed, the implication is that someone even circulated a forged apostolic letter that lacked Paul’s signature closing (cf. 3:17).

A cursory glance at the shelves of “Christian” bookstores in late 20th or early 21st century America would have been enough to know that the same sort of troublemakers still trouble the church. So the apostolic request at the end of v1 and beginning of v2 is one that we would still do well to heed: do not be shaken in mind or troubled.

Don’t be deceived. There are two events that had not occurred by the time of this letter, making it a certainty for its recipients that Christ would not yet return: the falling away and the revealing of the man of sin (v3). Now, the warning not to be deceived cuts doubly. For the man of sin himself is a deceiver (v10).

The apostle is confident that his readers know what he means, because he has spoken to them about this in person (v5). Indeed, this clues us in to the fact that it is a teaching that the church already had, almost certainly in Matthew 24:9–14.

But the falling away described in Matt 24:9–13 is one that has marked various parts of the church almost continuously for two thousand years now. And *it must be within the church*. For, they are offended and betraying one another because they are hated for Jesus’s Name’s sake (Mt 24:9–10). And false prophets, who promote lawless living in the church, lead even to the backsliding/cooling of the love of many (Mt 24:11–12). Certainly, in the Matthew context, there was a particular falling away in connection with destruction of Jerusalem (Mt 24:15–22), and this is probably the falling away to which the apostle refers now in v3. But even after that, Jesus Himself (Mt 24:23–26) warns against the same deception as the apostle is here warning against.

So, it has often been this way in parts of the church, and the vigilance that Paul called for then is still called for today: do not be deceived! Don’t get caught up in predictions or announcements of the end. Keep living for Christ. Don’t let following God’s law slide. Don’t let love grow cold. He is still coming. Endure to the end (cf. Mt 24:13). And the days of being in danger of deception will continue until the gospel has been preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations (Mt 24:14).

Love the truth; hate unrighteousness. It’s not difficult to figure out how the man of sin will tempt people to live. To begin with, he is called the man “of sin” in v3 and “the lawless one” in v8. And those who are taken in by him have “pleasure in unrighteousness” (v12). He tells “the lie” (v11), which is in keeping with that first great lie, “you shall not surely die.” And there have been preachers throughout the ages who assured people that they might sin safely.

With respect to the man of sin himself, much of the language here is borrowed from Daniel 7 and 8, and must be harmonized with Revelation 13 and 17. The man of sin cannot be the same as John’s one beast, who is a composite of Daniel’s four beasts, which are themselves kingdoms. But, he is an actual man as Daniel also had described; he opposes Christ, exalts himself, sits as if God in the temple of God, is personally destroyed by Christ. These are all personal actions. There is a “mystery of lawlessness” already at work at the time of Paul’s writing (v7), just as there were already many antichrists at the time of 1John 2:18.

The fact that many conservative, Reformed ministers and scholars disagree about the identity of this man leads to what this author thinks is a clear deduction: he hasn’t been revealed yet. Our passage describes not his coming so much as his being revealed. And the apostle assumes that it will be obvious when he is revealed, because his not having yet been revealed is the basis for the impossibility of the day of Christ having arrived.

So, how do you prepare for a day that you don’t know when it’s coming? In at least two ways. The first is directly from v10: love the truth. If you love the truth, you will not be pulled in when the man of sin is exalting himself above God from within the church (v4b). If you love the truth, you will be saved. And if you love the truth, you will follow the second way: hate unrighteousness. For, v11 tells us that it is those who do not believe the truth, and who therefore have pleasure in unrighteousness, who will *all be condemned*. Love the truth and hate unrighteousness, and you will be prepared for the revelation of the man of sin. Love the truth and hate unrighteousness, and you will be prepared for the return of Jesus Christ.

The Lord sends strong delusions (errors/wanderings) into His church (v11), which exposes those who are in the church but not of it (cf. 1Jn 2:19). Be prepared for that too. Love the truth, and hate unrighteousness.

How have you been tempted to focus on when Christ might return, rather than upon preparing for His return and desiring His return? What are you doing to foster love of the truth? What are you doing to maintain and foster hatred of unrighteousness?

Sample prayer: Lord, just as You did not want the Thessalonians to be troubled or deceived by false prophecy, so also You do not want us to be troubled or deceived by false prophecy. But we are easily impressed by spiritual-sounding things and easily distracted by predictions about Your return. Forgive us our gullibility. You told the Thessalonians that love of the truth would protect them from being shaken in mind or deceived, but we confess that our love of the truth is small. O forgive us! And do not let us have pleasure in unrighteousness, lest we be condemned with those who are consumed with the breath of Your mouth and destroyed with the brightness of Your coming. Preserve us for that day, so that Your Name would be glorified in us, and we would be glorified in You, which we ask in Your Name, our Lord Jesus Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP98 “O Sing a New Song to the LORD” or TPH98A “O Sing a New Song to the LORD”

For more Hopewell @Home devotionals, please visit bit.ly/harpCHAH

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Second Thessalonians, chapter 2, verses 1 through 12. These are God's words. Now, brethren concerning the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ. 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 as if from us.

As though the day of Christ had come, let no one deceive you. By any means for that day will not come, unless the following way comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped.

So that he sits as God in the temple of God showing he himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you? I told you these things and now you know, what is restraining? That he may review may be revealed in his end time four, The mystery of Lawlessness is already at work only.

He who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. And then the law is not one will be revealed him. The Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming. The coming of the lawless one, as according to the work of Satan, with all power signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception, among those, who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, they might be saved.

And for this is in God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure and unrighteousness

So far the reading of God's inspired in an Aaron fort.

So the church has had some of the same problems for thousands of years and that is one of these problems is when something true is taught in the church than people who want to be something. Or to be dramatic at least start to make a big deal out of things as if they have an inside track on, what has been taught.

Now, the apostle taught them in first Thessalonians, which we went through, not too long ago. Chapter 4. Chapter 5 about the return of Christ, the Lord. And as often happens when the Lord teaches us, something in his word, People make distractions by themselves, or about themselves, or centering upon themselves.

And so verse 2, they either claim the spirit or a special word from the Lord, it just came to me and apparently, even there has been a forged letter as if it has come from Paul or Paul Sylvanus. And Timothy, you see all that in verse 2, Do not be soon.

Shaking in mind or troubled, either by spirit, or by word or by letter. Is it from us as the day of Christ had come as if the day of Christ had arrived. And at the end of this letter, he's actually he's actually going to right in his own handwriting.

The closing greeting to which he says to where she adds that he does this with all of his letters. So there's a specific pulling handwriting signature that the churches were supposed to recognize for recognizing those letters that were truly apostolic. This goes along with him saying that he has the spirit of God as he writes in first Corinthians chapter 7 and him saying that if anyone is spiritual has revelatory gifts of the Spirit is what he means there and the context.

First Corinthians 14 coming on the heels of chapter 12, 13 and 14 that they will recognize that all has a spirit of God. Very important for us to realize that the New Testament itself teaches that the churches were recognizing spirit inspired writing as it was being written. The Canon was not something that was decided by a council of men.

300 years later a year lies like that all the time. And if you quote unquote, do your own research on the internet and you are led away, let astray by your flesh. You will get sucked into such lies. Many people who grow up and faithful churches and faithful ministers.

Families. Get sucked off by such lies later. Let God's word testify against you that you have heard opened from the scripture, not to be shaken in mind or troubled. And in particular, in this case, not to be shaken in mind or troubled by the people who try to appear ultra-spiritual and tuned into God in the church, especially in churches, that make the charismatic error that make the the ongoing special revelation error.

You'll get people who say, well, the spirit told me or I had a word from God, You know, often get forged letters, although, you know, Joseph Smith and his golden plates in the desert or Muhammad having, you know, schizophrenic demonic fits and uttering, gibberish. He himself was a literate, it would be recorded later, etc.

Even the forge writing things, still happens to some extent. Well, in this case, the thing that they were claiming the the revelation about was the idea that Jesus's the day of the Lord has. It's here. Problem is there were two things that were still future at the time that the day of the Lord could not come until those things had happened.

The first one was the falling away. Now what he talks about here, Jesus also talked about and

Oh, dear. All of these 14s in the booklet, should be 24. So, I will fix that before I before I leave for the gym this morning, but in Matthew 24, remember the Lord Jesus had been telling them about the fall of Jerusalem and things that would happen in conjunction with the fall of Jerusalem.

And one of the one of the things that that would happen is that brother would turn upon brother under a persecution that came on account of his name and so forth. This is not something that just happened. Ahead of the fall of Jerusalem. This is something that has been happening in the church over.

And over again, for 2,000 years, rarely has the church been without persecution. And in every time of persecution, there have been those who buckled under the pressure out of fear. And who many of whom are revealed as being unbelievers? And the time of persecution and tray one. Another Now certainly there is a great following way.

It falling away. A specific example of this that does and did take place and the context of the fall of Jerusalem, but that hadn't happened yet at the time of the Thessalonians. So that is probably what is described as the falling away in verse 3 of our, our passage, the following away comes first.

Now, it seems to us, 2,000 years later silly to say, well, obviously Jerusalem had to be destroyed, first, Jesus and prophesied it. The stone wouldn't be left of unstone and then even that wouldn't be the end and Jesus is great theme in Matthew 24 isn't so much to predict the fall of Jerusalem, but to say that what he had been talking about when he said one stone was not would not be left up on the other was the fall Jerusalem, but even then they would not be able to

predict the end things that looked like the end of the world, things that looked like great cataclysmic, catastrophes on the church and in the church that those kinds of things would happen, continually throughout the, throughout the age of the gospel, throughout the age of the Spirit.

And so don't be easily shaken. Don't be troubled. Don't let the the prophesiers of end timesy stuff knock you off of two things. And the two main things are loving the truth and hating and righteousness. And that brings us to the second thing that that meant that Jesus couldn't the day of the Lord.

The day of Christ had not come yet. And that is that the man of sin would be revealed. They would see the guy who arose within the church in the temple of God, claiming to be God and opposing the truth and making people comfortable with unrighteousness. Now, it is quite possible that this is a particular pope and every generation since the Reformation have had at least as had among it at least a few faithful.

Reformed people who read this and they say, oh we know exactly who that is. That's our Pope, but none of the popes thus far although Francis is Looney Tunes enough. And if he is given ability to do satanic signs, we may end up concluding or discovering that he was this man of sin.

This man of lawlessness. But a few things about the man of lawlessness. First of all, He's a man of sin and lawlessness. That's his name. So the primary thing he does is make people feel okay about sinning. Now it can't be one of the grace boys in the Reformed ghetto.

Julian Travidian guys like that. They're simply not famous enough or great enough. As far in the eyes of men, they haven't been able enabled by Satan to do miracles and so forth, but they do the kind of thing that the man of sin and lawlessness will. Do they make people who?

At the end of this passage? You see at the end of verse 12, have pleasure in unrighteousness, feel okay about that, okay? So that's the first thing. He's a man of sin, and a man of lawlessness, whatever else he does. Or says he makes people feel okay about sinning.

If I preach the true gospel of Jesus Christ in such a way that makes you feel like it's no big deal, that you are sinning. Then I am participating in this spirit of Lawlessness. And so he says, for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, Okay? So this teaching just like, John says, in 1st John, that already, there are many antichrists, the teaching, the falsehood that this Eschatological, this great last man of sin, or man, of lawlessness, will will teach that teaching already exists?

It's not like Satan is waiting until the end start telling the lie that the man of lawlessness will tell. At the end know that lie is has been told, and is being told by many the entire time Whoever. This is however, he will be obvious, maybe not to everyone, but to a Bible believing Christian.

At least he will be, he will be obvious. And that's why I personally don't think that this, that this particular individual has been revealed. Although I'm glad to be proven wrong if the Lord Jesus appears in the sky. I'll say, aha, it was Pope Francis after all, although he does not seem to me to have verse 9 fulfilled.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the work of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders. Okay? So, and the main reason why I don't think he's come yet is because whoever it is is supposed. He's supposed to be obvious, okay, so you have the following way, I think the the following way, if you're going to teach capital T capital F capital A, That was obvious, you know, the fall of Jerusalem.

And, and those, who betrayed one another in, in order to escape persecution at that time. But then, he talks about the revealing of the man of sin. Not the really subtle and secret and almost undetectable. So that you have theologians and non-theologians arguing about who it is or who it might be and nobody can make a compelling argument for theirs.

No, a sign works as a sign especially if he's talking about something that's reeled because it's obvious. Now at the same time that it's obvious to those who are like, well this guy opposes the truth of the gospel and makes people feel okay about being unrighteous, I don't care how many signs he's doing.

Those signs are from the devil because his message is from the devil, Okay? So believers by, you know, converted people who read the Bible, who read sick of Thessalonians 2, and understand what the guy's teaching will be like, they'll be like, no, I'm gonna lay hold of the truth about Jesus, that our sin is so bad that it required the cross, and it is so offensive to God that not a particle of sin is permissible in heaven.

And so everybody who hopes for heaven hates sin and purifies themselves. And God brings us to heaven by means of or, by way of the path by which he brings us to heaven is through sanctification unto glorification. I will hold on to that truth and I will hate unrighteousness.

But even though the man of sin is obvious, and his lies are obvious and his making you feel okay? About unrighteousness or is obvious. Guess what People are stupid and people are wicked and they are deceived anyway. So he says, and with all unrighteous deception, among those who perish verse 10, They choose to be impressed by the signs and the wonders.

Because they want to reject the truth of the gospel because they love their sin. And so with all unrighteous deception, among those, who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. So which truth especially there the gospel truth and for this reason, God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the law.

He gives them up to their hatred of the truth and their love of unrighteousness that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure and unrighteousness sound familiar, because it's Romans chapter 1, and Romans chapter 2, which we've been hearing in the midweek, sermons, they hated the truth.

They pushed down on the truth and unrighteousness, they believe the lie. God gives them up to their hatred of truth and their love of sin. Remember that? And Romans 1:24 26 28 God gave them up, God gave them up. God gave them up and he's righteous to do. So, and there is a great and cataclysmic way in, which he does this at the end.

When this man of sin is revealed and biblical Christians who hates sin trust in Jesus and are being saved, say aha, he checks all the boxes, not just some but all the boxes of second Thessalonians 2. But other people in the church, or say, oh, look at those signs and wonders, and I, like the way he preaches, the gospel, it doesn't make me feel bad.

So,

Do not be shaken or troubled by people who make these end timesy predictions. There is an end time coming but we will know it. When we see it, you don't have to wonder about it or be obsessed. Just love the truth. Hate unrighteousness. Trust in Jesus, kill sin and then even if you hadn't figured out with a medicine was still, wouldn't believe in him.

It still would be saved. You don't have to know when the end is it comes upon a suddenly. Anyway, let's pray.

Our Father in heaven. We thank you that you not only gave Christ for us but you care enough about us that you don't want us to be shaken and troubled by the false falsely hyper, spiritual people who think they have words from you or who don't. But to try to make us think they have words from you.

Help us Lord to love the gospel to love the truth by which you save us and to hate our unrighteousness. For, we ask it in Jesus name. Amen.