

Series: **Confident Hope**

Today's Title: ***"Don't Be Deceived"***

July 3, 2022 – 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 – Sermon 23 of 28

Objective: To help Christians learn how to protect against being deceived with false teaching or ideas.

11:00 Service: Comments about having the Next Gen Kids with us in the worship service during the month of July.

Turn to 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5 – p. 989

TKU to JB for his sermon last week – as he shared about the future judgment of God that will be the focus of the 2nd advent of Christ.

When Jesus returns, He will return to judge, not to save.

Opening Prayer

Granted...I have a biased view in favor of Christians / Christianity.

One of the side-benefits of my job.

With that in mind... Do you agree with me in the following statements?

Christians should **love the best** and have **the most intimate** marriages in the culture.

Christians should **enjoy life** more than non-Christians since Christians know **the purpose of life** and what is beyond this life.

Christians should have ***the best families*** due to the understanding we have from Scripture.

Christians should be ***the least stressed-out segment*** of the population, since we know the temporary nature of this life, and the eternal glory, blessings, and inheritance awaiting us.

Christians should be the most ***level-headed people*** in the world because by the grace of God and through faith the followers of Jesus have been bought with the blood of Christ – sealed and secured in our new life and family status by the Holy Spirit – and we know and have experienced the love of God and it has transformed our life!

Unfortunately, we know these statements are not universally true of all Christians.

Why is this not the reality?

- *Why are some Christians so stressed out* – so worried about this life – so fearful of the future?

- *Why are some Christians unhealthy* and dysfunctional in their relationships – instead of being a shining example of spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental health?

I'm a pretty simple guy.

I try and look at life – look at the culture – and try to boil things down to their simplest level.

When I consider the way I believe things should be...

And I consider the reality we see in the lives of some Christian's...

The answer I come up with is:

A failure to know – to understand – to believe God's Word.

A failure to know – to understand – to believe in the person and character of God.

For the Christian...

The key to having joy in all circumstances...

The reason we can have a peace which surpasses all understanding...

The reason we can be hopeful after hearing the doctor say the word 'cancer'...

- Is because we know God loves us.
- We know what God is – we know His character.
- We know that God is sovereign – He is over History – He is providential in all things and His decree cannot be denied.
- We know that the end of history finds itself in God's justice.
- We know at the 'end of time' the followers of Jesus will be in the eternal presence of Christ!

However,

If you wander from the truth of the Bible.

If you try and navigate this life on your own wisdom or according to the world's wisdom.

If you resist the call of God on your life.

If you fail to understand what God has revealed about the end of history and His future judgment of sin.

If you are not sure about the forgiveness of your sins – and your eternal destiny...

You will end up in a place of despair.

When pain and difficulty and loss enter your life – you will be lost and struggle to make sense of it all.

When the end of life is near – you will be unsettled – even if you tell yourself that you’ve lived a good life and you’ve been a good person – there is a God-placed truth deep in your conscience / your soul – that tells you that is not the case...not good enough.

In our passage today – the believers in Thessalonica were worried – they were frightened – because they had wandered from the truth they were taught by the Apostle Paul.

More accurately, they were lied to – deceived – and they fell for the lie – for the deception – and they were losing hope and becoming more and more anxious.

The believers in Thessalonica were losing hope and becoming more anxious because they thought they were in the ‘Day of the Lord’.

A future time of God’s severe judgment on the world and the sin in the world.

They were experiencing severe persecution – which Paul addressed and gave them comfort for in **chapter 1**.

But they allowed themselves to be deceived.

They failed to cling to what Paul had taught them, and they listened to other voices which were not trustworthy.

So, they were panicked – anxious – worried.

vs. 1-2 “Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to Him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.”

Your faith in Christ should bring stability to your life. vs. 1-2

Is this the reality of your life?

Is your life more stable – because of your faith in Christ?

Or...is it more unstable? Is it more anxious?

It comes down to the voices you’re listening to.

Do the voices sound the alarm – or bring a calmness and stability to your life and outlook on life?

Do the voices you listen to cause you to look at the circumstances of life...or to look at Christ and His promises?

There are some Christians who look at the world – and see the movement away from God – away from the standards of God and sprinting toward standards of evil – and they worry – they get anxious.

I understand this to a point.

After all, we live in the midst of this.

Our children and grandchildren might have to live with this in more drastic measures than we do!

But God has not lost control.

He is still sovereign, and He is still over all things.

It is your faith in Christ – your knowledge of God and His promises that should bring you peace and stability in the midst of concerning and troubling times.

John 14:1

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me.”

The key to not having a troubled heart is our faith in God – our faith in Christ – not in fighting and figuring out ways to ‘fix’ the culture.

I’m not saying we shouldn’t work to improve the culture.

It means our success or lack of success in the culture cannot determine our joy and peace.

Paul tells them in **vs. 2**, ‘guard your minds’.

Don’t “...be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed”

“quickly” – how many of us – who have heard the truth of the Bible for years – at the first sound of bad news we fall into panic. We are “shaken in mind or alarmed”.

It's interesting that Paul uses this adverb, “quickly”.

This is so true of our nature.

We can go from ‘peace’ to ‘panic’ in an instant!!!

Are you easily “shaken in mind or alarmed”?

Why?

Why is the peace, confidence, and the power of God in your life – in your mind so quickly set aside in favor of fear, worry, and panic?

We have 2 answers to this question here in this verse.

1) “by a spirit”

2) “a spoken word”

“...by a spirit”

In the next few verses Paul is going to write about the “man of lawlessness” which in other passages of scripture is referred to as the anti-Christ. So, we could say with this phrase, that Paul is alluding to the spirit of the Anti-Christ, or a general ‘spirit’ in the culture that is against Christ or against Christianity and the truths that it claims.

So, we can ask ourselves - if we tend toward panic and anxiety, are we listening to voices or buying into a general spirit that discounts the power of Christ, that minimizes the value, comfort, and peace that each Christian should be experiencing?

“...a spoken word”

For some believers, it's the voices they are listening to.
For some, it's the media they watch or listen to.
It's the information they embrace – news they watch –
books they read – preachers/teachers they follow.
For the Thessalonians, they believed a letter that was a
fake letter.

“...or a letter seeming to be from us”

Somehow, a person / persons – claiming to have a letter
from Paul – gained access to the Thessalonian believers
– and this counterfeit letter taught something different
than Paul's teachings – but since they thought it was
from Paul, they accepted all of it.

3:17

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the sign of
genuineness in every letter of mine; it is the way I write.”

Galatians 1:6-9

“I am astonished that you are so *quickly* deserting Him who called
you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--
7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you
and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a
gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is
preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him
be accursed.”

Are you ‘slow’ when considering truth claims?

Are you ‘slow’, deliberate, and thoughtful when you hear something that challenges Biblical truths you’ve heard before?

Do you realize one of the strategies of the enemy has always been – since the Garden of Eden – to distort God’s Word and/or confuse the understanding of believers about the Word of God?

“Did God really say...” – Genesis 3:1

Be discerning in life and faith. vs. 3a, 5

Jesus said in **Matthew 24:4**

“See that no one leads you astray.”

Why? Why did Jesus say this?

Because there are always people who are intentionally leading others astray - or there are preachers / teachers who don’t know what they’re talking about, and they develop some weird theology or weird interpretation of a passage – and people follow right along.

vs. 3a – “Let no one deceive you in any way.”

The Bereans are the best example for this.

Acts 17:10-12

“The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.”

vs. 3a – “Let no one deceive you in any way.”

The best way to make sure you’re not deceived – is to “examine the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.”

Romans 4:3 - “For what does the Scripture say?”

The Bible is your guide to truth.

The Bible will help you determine if something is worth considering.

40+ years ago – we didn’t need to be as discerning as we do today.

Our current cultural reality demands a Christian live with 24/7 discernment.

There are so many lies and deceptions in our culture about life – love – faith – sex – education – politics – finances – work – marriage – family – and nature.

There are no areas of our daily life where we can just sit back and relax and let information into our brain.

I wish this was not the case.

As a man, one of my favorite things is to turn off my mind and watch some sporting event.

I want to go see a movie – set my ‘Berean Filter’ aside – and relax – be entertained.

I can’t do that anymore – none of us can!!!

There are too many false messages that are being promoted / pushed / idealized - and if I'm not discerning, they will get into my thinking processes.

Daily...regular time examining the Scriptures is the primary way to prevent yourself from being deceived.

Another way is to see if what you're listening to – the voices you're paying attention to – agrees with other Biblically faithful teachers / preachers.

Does what you're hearing agree with the body of faithful Biblical exposition over the decades or centuries?

vs. 5 – “Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?”

What they were hearing from those who claimed to have a letter from Paul, was a letter that contradicted in some way what Paul had taught them when he was in Thessalonica?

“told you these things” – In the Greek this verb indicates that he told them these things often – repeatedly.

Remember...it was not a long time from when Paul was with them to the writing of this 2nd letter.

This was a young church – baby Christians in many ways.

They didn't have the N.T. yet.

They had been exposed to some of the O.T.

But they sat under the Apostle Paul's teaching, yet when they heard another message supposedly from Paul – they didn't stop and question it.

“quickly” – they quickly embraced this new teaching.

- Do you know anyone who follows every wind of teaching?
- They are not grounded in Biblical truths.
- They have this knack to find the most obscure self-proclaimed preacher/teacher who claims they are the only ones teaching the truth – the only ones who have some special insight – and they lead people astray and away from the truth of Christ.

Hold up what you hear to the standard of God's Word.
Hold up what you hear to the established body of Biblical teaching and interpretation that is agreed upon by faithful Christians over time.

God's future judgment brings the believer relief, not fear. vs. 3-

5

We saw this in Paul's 1st letter to the Thessalonians (4:13-18) as they were thinking their deceased loved ones would miss the rapture of Christians.

Paul comforts them and relieves their fears which were based in their faulty understanding of the rapture.

Here, Paul is talking about the 'Day of the Lord' which is not the same as the rapture.

The 'Day of the Lord' is a future and longer period of time in which God will judge evil and sin.

The Thessalonian believers were so deceived that they have been convinced that they are living in the 'Day of the Lord' – a belief which is contrary to what the Apostle taught them.

3 “Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

4 who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?”

Paul is describing what we refer to as the Anti-Christ (see Daniel 7, 8, 9, 11; Zechariah 11:16; Revelation 13).

I don't have time in this message to unfold what the Bible says about this tremendously evil man.

But Paul is reminding them that he taught them about these things.

He taught them that the 'Day of the Lord' “...will not come unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.”

Since that didn't happen yet (and it still hasn't happened), they needed to stop being deceived – and take comfort in God's care and provision for them.

He wrote in his 1st letter:

1 Thessalonians 5:9-11

“For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with Him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.”

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Paul tells us that certain things must happen before the ‘Day of the Lord’ takes place.

The rapture can happen at any time.

But other things must take place prior to the ‘Day of the Lord’ – so they – and we – should be relieved when we think of God’s judgment – not fearful of it – unless we’re not saved.

Unless we haven’t put our faith in Christ.

Apply it...

God’s future judgment brings relief for Christians, and fear for non-Christians.

Test everything against God’s truth.

Romans 4:3 - “For what does the Scripture say?”

What voices are you listening to?

John 14:1 “Don’t be troubled, believe in God, believe also in Me.”

Close in prayer