



**Lawlessness Personified
Yes, You are Being Lied To.
2 Thessalonians 2:1-17**

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We stopped last time in the middle of our discussion about the day of the Lord and how it seems to be such an interesting target these days for deception.

Of course, we were warned by Paul about that. Paul has just warned and given examples of how deception takes place. Then he went right back to basics, remember what it is you have been taught.



Why is it that we tend to forget what we learn in the word? Most likely because we live and operate in the world which is intensely opposed to the word. And when you add in the influence of the enemy, no wonder we at times, must be reminded.

The Hebrew word for forget is also rather revealing. “The Hebrew words for “forget,” shakach and nashah, are also broad in scope. Often they mean to ignore, neglect, forsake, or disregard a person or covenant.” (Tverberg 2018, 74)

Throw some charlatan in on top of that and you have a recipe for disaster.

2 Peter 2:1

“But among the people there were also false prophets, just as there will be false teachers among you. Under false pretenses they will introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, and thus bring on themselves swift destruction.” (CJB)

False teachers are not teaching the word, they are teaching lies. This is much more than simply a disagreement about theology. We must remember that they are not believers. They are deceivers who want to make you think they are serving the Lord, but they are serving Satan. And who is the originator of lies.

The definition of heresy is a “belief or opinion contrary to orthodox religious (especially Christian) doctrine. An opinion profoundly at odds with what is generally accepted.” (Soanes and Stevenson 2004)

Are false teachers heretics? If they continue to insist on what it is they are teaching which is contrary to the Word, yes.

“Of course, not every disagreement in the church is heresy. Having a different opinion is not wrong, but when the opinion is divisive or maintained in defiance of clear biblical teaching, it becomes heretical. The apostles themselves disagreed at times (see Acts 15:36–41), and Peter once had to be rebuked for divisive and legalistic behavior (Galatians 2:11–14).” (Got Questions Ministries 2014-2021) But they wanted unity and worked through their issues exercising grace and repentance.

But the unrepentant false teacher who insists on teaching lies.

John 8:44

“You belong to your father, Satan, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. From the start he was a murderer, and he has never stood by the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he is speaking in character; because he is a liar—indeed, the inventor of the lie!” (CJB)

Let’s pick back up in 2 Thessalonians 2:7 as Paul begins his effort to remind the flock of what they were taught.

He also goes into an answer to the obvious question, why hasn’t this all started yet?

2 Thessalonians 2:5–7

“Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that he will be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is removed.” (NASB 2020)

Paul and the team clearly taught about the day of the Lord when they were there in person. They have the first letter on top of that. In addition, they were taught about the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who is restraining evil and lawlessness right now.



How does He do it? Through Christians, whom He indwells and through whom He works in society to hold back the swelling tide of lawless living. How will He be taken out of the way? When the church leaves the earth in the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way in the sense that His unique lawlessness-restraining ministry through God's people will be removed (cf. Gen. 6:3). The removal of the Restrainer at the time of the Rapture must obviously precede the day of the Lord. (Constable 1985, 719)

Once the rapture of the church takes place. The true church is gone, what is left is a mess of conflicting beliefs which believes they have finally done away with those close-minded one-way advocates and now "the gloves are off. The Lie has come in full force, now that it is claiming political power. The eventual prize—planetary religious and political power—is enormous, and One-ists are eager to grasp their pearl of greatest price, a humanly constructed this-worldly utopia. But there is a price. If the pagan Lie is to be more than an expression of pro-choice, individualistic, ego-building spirituality (typical of the old "New Age"), then the movement must give a coherent account of all human phenomena. It must produce a compelling worldview for the twenty-first century planetary community." (Jones 2010, Kindle Location 528)

Enter the brave new world led by the man of lawlessness. The world of the Day of the Lord, the Tribulation and serious depopulation of the planet. Suffice it to say, you really do not want to be left behind and be subjected to this.

The saints in Thessalonica had been intentionally misled to believe they had missed the rapture and the persecution they were enduring was part of the Tribulation. Satan got them to focus on the area of pressure they were under in order to bypass truth. There is another way to characterize this. Paul clearly taught them the tenants of Pretribulationism according to 1 Thessalonians 4–5, but now, essentially, someone came along and began teaching them Posttribulationism. (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 42)

It was done here intentionally to cause confusion, not to explain a different viewpoint based on how one interprets the scriptures, but to win followers. It was done to mislead. There are those today busy doing the same thing.

Yes, believers can agree to disagree about the timing of the rapture, but many of the arguments today would have you to believe that if you teach contrary to what a certain group says is truth, then you are obviously unsaved and are the false teacher spewing heresy.

What Paul calls the mystery of lawlessness is nothing more than the full revelation of the demonic gospel that takes place post-rapture.

This implies that lawlessness will be a hallmark of the administration of the beast. Part of Satan's scheme is to counterfeit the trinity during the Tribulation with the beast being his version of the Son and then the false prophet being a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. None of this happens though until after the restrainer, the Holy Spirit is removed when the church is removed.

This lawless one though has a future, dropping stone cold dead at the feet of Jesus Christ. Lawlessness though is already in operation today, but it is restrained. Really? It can get worse? Indeed.

One way we know we are in the last days is that the lawlessness increases. Last time we were together we discussed the increasing number of false teachers. Jesus talked about this as well.

Matthew 24:11–12

"And many false prophets will appear and deceive many, and because lawlessness will increase so much, the love of many will grow cold." (NET 2nd ed.)



He is talking about those signs that point to the second coming. And about the lawlessness today, Satan is still in the business of deception, but a lot of what he does today is no longer under the radar but in your face.

We see today, the world and the world system doing its level best to not only destroy the ministry of those who believe, but extreme efforts being undertaken to actively infiltrate and impact the lives of those even in our homes, our children. Love is love, confusion over sexuality and LGBTQ+. This is lawlessness and is no different than what Paul dealt with in the Roman culture of his day.

It consists today of those who intentionally mislead others trying to get them to compromise their morality or their integrity. Lawlessness impersonates as concern, false love, shortcuts to fulfillment and other tropes.

Satan has been in this for the long haul, and we are now reaping the results of past generations making small compromises with the truth here and there. The downward spiral is centuries in the making. George Barna, in his recent book dealing with the infiltration of our churches and families by the enemy, points out the following, graphically showing us where we are as believers here in the United States are doing in reaching our kids for Jesus. The simple answer, we are failing.

The gloves are off and the disguises are now virtually nonexistent.

Dr. Barna surveyed five different primary beliefs that are essential to having a Biblical worldview. The results help to diagnose the problem and show us graphically that without an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in another Jesus revolution today, we are in serious trouble and literally, the handwriting is indeed on the wall (Daniel 5).

He surveyed pre-teen children, their parents, and the children's pastors. The results, which are shocking, are in this data. Situational ethics has invaded the church and the home and is impacting everything today. Lawlessness.

Belief	8 to 12 Year Old's	Parents	Children's Pastors
Jesus Christ is the only way to experience eternal salvation, based on confessing your sins and relying only upon His forgiveness of your sins	36%	34%	54%
The Bible is the true words of God that should be a guide to knowing right from wrong, and living a good life	25%	44%	62%
There are absolute truths – things that are right and things that are wrong, that do not depend on feelings, preferences, or circumstances – those truths are unchanging and knowable	21%	28%	36%
The main reason to live is to know, love and serve God, with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength	27%	33%	56%
Real success in life is consistently obeying God	17%	19%	42%

(Barna 2023)

As these kids grow up, it will be without a Biblical worldview and come the 2030's, they will be voting and impacting the culture. Here at Calvary, we want and need to be all about making disciples of our kids. As we grow, this is an area we intend to address. But we cannot do it all, as parents and grandparents, we must engage in this warfare.

Satan wants our children. He wants to convince them that what the culture offers is good and what God has to offer is not. This is THE LIE that started in the Garden of Eden.



Throughout history, Satan has used the same sugarcoated Lie that suppresses the truth everyone knows—an eternal, powerful God made the universe and is its Creator and Re-creator. Today's version is mouthed by globalist politicians, UN documents on the planet's future, leaders of the world's religions, and self-proclaimed "progressive" Christians (including many Emergent evangelicals). They say we can create a utopia where all people get along, universal justice rules and humans live in unity with nature. Based on delusional fantasy, it will become a planetary nightmare. (Jones 2010, Kindle Location 1216)

That nightmare will be on full display after the church is raptured, removing the Holy Spirit as the restrainer and the man of lawlessness is revealed. Satan and his minions are at large today and are indeed active.

The ongoing events in the Middle East are simple the warmup for the big game which is coming very soon – Armageddon .

1 Peter 5:8.

"Be sober and alert. Your enemy the devil, like a roaring lion, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour." (NET 2nd ed.)

Spiritual warfare is real, it is now, it is 24/7 and the enemy never rests. "Spiritual warfare is an evil issue. Warfare in itself is evil. If evil did not exist there would be no warfare of any kind. Evil is the most perplexing problem ever faced by humanity." (Murphy 1996, 17)

"A few years after Paul's death in ad 66, Tacitus, the Roman historian, described Christians as "haters of humanity," even though Christians were rescuing cast-off newborns. They were "haters" (perhaps more accurately "hated") because they refused to go along with the cruelty and the perversions of the day, justified back then as part of the pax romana, for the common good. So here we are, in 2010, with the world turned on its head. Even in 1969, few would have dreamed that such ancient perversions, recaptured by voyeuristic Hollywood to feed the culture's newly-awakened fantasies, would become culturally accepted realities and even be protected from criticism by the new "hate crimes" law of the land—all for the common good!" (Jones 2010, Kindle Location 198)

And in the 14 years since Peter Jones wrote his study on Romans 1, it has now become epidemic in proportion.

From its founding until the 1960s, American culture was defined by patriarchal, heterosexual and Judeo-Christian presuppositions. In one generation, this worldview has been largely replaced by a radically egalitarian, omnigendered, pansexual, multi-religious (and One-ist) belief system that has turned our contemporary world upside down. (Jones 2010, Kindle Location 210)

It is important for us to remember that we have been talking about deception, the deceiving of believers in all the various forms Paul saw in his day and which we also see today. That is Satan's number one strategy. He deceived Eve into thinking God did not have her best interests at heart by not letting her eat from one particular tree. We discover in Genesis 3 what we will find all through the Bible. "Human sin always has a dual source. It has a human source, one's wrong choices. But it also has a supernatural source, Satan's temptations. He plants the seeds of evil thoughts and imaginations into human minds and hearts, intensifying the evil already there (Acts 5:1-3; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Thess. 3:5; cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Phil 4:8)." (Murphy 1996, 19)

Being aware of the existence of spiritual warfare and Satan's number one scheme of deception is useful, but only as long as we rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the victory because many of us, otherwise, are weak without Him to rely on. Satan's goal is to increase lawlessness and he is non-discriminatory as to who he attacks.



2 Thessalonians 2:8–10

“Then that lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will eliminate with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved.” (NASB 2020)

The next time you hear someone teaching they can predict who the antichrist will be, they simply can't. They do not know who it will be. No one will until after the Holy Spirit is removed in the sudden evacuation of the body of Christ in the rapture.

We see today hints of doing life in the Tribulation, after the rapture, nothing will block the enemy. He will be allowed, for only a short period of time, an almost free hand. And for those earth dwellers left behind, they will all finally obtain what they have wanted for thousands of years, a world without Jesus where they can call the shots. The death toll will be in the billions.

For those who are looking forward to that, Paul provides a major point to remember. The lawless one, the Beast, will drop dead before Jesus...literally. Yes, Jesus will raise him from the dead, and then send him straight to hell. Thank you for playing.

Revelation 19:20

“Now the beast was seized, and along with him the false prophet who had performed the signs on his behalf—signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. **Both of them were thrown alive into the lake of fire burning with sulfur.**” (NET 2nd ed.)

The Beast, the lawless one will be a world leader, not like anyone the world has ever seen. He will be fully aligned with Satan and with what Satan wants to achieve here on this planet. The destruction of the Jewish people, the elimination of those pesky Tribulation believers, and the destruction of the rest of mankind (Matthew 24:22).

When this person shows up, he will do so with all the power of Satan and will perform false signs and wonders. To the uninformed observer it will look like he is a miracle worker. But the operative word is “false” signs and wonders.

“Paul thus clearly understands that “signs and wonders” can accompany falsehood as well as truth. Indeed, that Satan can match the Spirit when it comes to displays of power is a foregone conclusion for Paul. Therefore, by his describing those of the Rebel as stemming from falsehood, he does not mean that they are “counterfeit” in the sense of not really occurring. To the contrary, miracles they are indeed; but they issue from falsehood and as such are intended to deceive, to lead people astray after Satan. In both instances (the true and the false), therefore, the “signs and wonders” are the work of “spirit,” either the false spirit, as here, or the Holy Spirit, as in Paul’s case.” (Fee 2009, 293-294)

Recall that when Moses began his series of meetings with Pharaoh, his miracles were duplicated by the sorcerers until it involved gnats.

To do that would require being able to create life and only God can do that, not Satan. This world ruler will do miracles and so will his false prophet. Those who are perishing will buy all that he is selling. He will show up as a miracle worker, a healer, a worker of wonders, but not one from heaven. He is a deceiver and a liar.



That makes me wonder about some today who allege to be miracle workers, and able to do so on demand. Does God still do miracles today, yes. Does Satan have folks out there counterfeiting them, yes.

Remember, we are in an Acts 17:11 world these days. Test the spirits.

God is about the business, in these last days, of separating the sheep from the goats. Let me tell you, there are a lot of goats out there and some of the sheep smell more like wolves. I am amazed at what highly intelligent people decide to follow rather than follow Jesus.

Why do they do that? Because they have rejected the truth and rejected salvation.

2 Thessalonians 2:11–12

“For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.” (NASB 2020)

When the truth of the gospel is rejected, people will then believe almost anything. This is the lie that Satan started in the garden of Eden. It is the lie that all of us were into at one time or another until we heard about Jesus. As believers, we responded to the truth and rejected the lie, but most of the world today still is answerable to the lie.

This original Lie denies the truth of God’s Word and the existence of a transcendent Creator, whose Word spoke the world into existence. Satan the interloper makes God out to be the intruder rather than the sovereign Creator, responsible for the beauty and the complexity of the creation. The Lie was sugarcoated. Satan dangled before Eve not just eye-catching fruit, but the seduction of a humanly-created utopia. Satan played on the fact that Eden was not God’s last word about creation. (Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 15: 45.) The test would not have endured eternally, and the fruit of the tree of life (some form of endless, “resurrected” life) would have been the reward for Adam and Eve’s faithful obedience. In other words, God intended eternal utopia for His creation, but on His terms, not Satan’s, and not Adam’s or Eve’s. (Jones 2010, Kindle Location 1200)

As we examine Romans 1, we discover that even though many attest to various worldviews in existence today, the deep reality is much simpler, there are only two and they are opposed to each other.

Romans 1:21–32

“They know about God, but they don’t honor him or even thank him. Their thoughts are useless, and their stupid minds are in the dark. They claim to be wise, but they are fools. They don’t worship the glorious and eternal God. Instead, they worship idols that are made to look like humans who cannot live forever, and like birds, animals, and reptiles. **So God let these people go their own way.** They did what they wanted to do, and their filthy thoughts made them do shameful things with their bodies. They gave up the truth about God for a lie, and they worshiped God’s creation instead of God, who will be praised forever. Amen. God let them follow their own evil desires. Women no longer wanted to have sex in a natural way, and they did things with each other that were not natural. Men behaved in the same way. They stopped wanting to have sex with women and had strong desires for sex with other men. They did shameful things with each other, and what has happened to them is punishment for their foolish deeds. **Since these people refused even to think about God, he let their useless minds rule over them. That’s why they do all sorts of indecent things.** They are evil, wicked, and greedy, as well as mean in every possible way. They want what others have, and they murder, argue, cheat, and are hard to get along with. They gossip, say cruel things about others, and hate God. They are proud, conceited, and boastful, always thinking up new ways to do evil. These people don’t respect their parents. They are stupid, unreliable, and don’t have any love or pity for others. They know God has said that anyone who



acts this way deserves to die. But they keep on doing evil things, and they even encourage others to do them.” (CEV)

Or, as Paul summarizes here in 2 Thessalonians.

2 Thessalonians 2:11–12

“For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who **did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.**” (NASB 2020)

When Christ is rejected, truth is forfeit and THE LIE is bought into, hook, line, and sinker.

What is this saying about those who are still here, those who have been left behind but had heard the truth and rejected it? Is it saying that once the man of sin has been fully revealed, they can no longer be saved?

The “powerful delusion” (v. 11) that God will bring on these individuals in particular suggests that few if any then living on the earth will be saved after the Rapture. This seems to be a special judgment from God that will occur at this one time in history. The many saints which the Book of Revelation indicates will be living on the earth during the Tribulation may thus be people who did not hear and reject the gospel before the Rapture (cf. Rev. 7:4). (Constable 1985, 721)

Or is it at the point he is fully revealed when he enters the Temple and says, worship me. The Tribulation is all about deception “in fact, the Tribulation will be a time of satanic deception unlike any other in history. As bad as Satan’s previous deceptions have been, it will pale in comparison to what awaits the world ahead.” (Harris 2005)

But here, we are talking about those who have rejected and rejected and rejected to the point that, just as Jesus with Herod, God will no longer talk to you.

Instead, what we see here is rejection that has now resulted in a generation of those who rejected the truth being unable to ever believe it. They have hardened their hearts and now God, in agreement with that decision, fix them on that path they have decided on. God uses Satan and the Beast as instruments of judgment on those who refuse to believe. This is the Day of the Lord; it is God’s judgment on an unbelieving world and Satan will deceive the totality of unredeemed humanity to believe THE LIE. They will believe that the Beast is God. Those who go with THE LIE, put themselves into this position. They are still culpable for their decision.

We should certainly understand that it is not God but Satan who deceives, but that he does so by the permission of God, who thereby accomplishes his objective to bring to bear on sinners the full consequences of their rejection of his salvation. (Weatherly 1996, 2 Th 2:12)

Let’s take another look at our text. Why is it, in the face of truth, with all that goes on in the Tribulation up to this point, would anyone choose to believe THE LIE. Simple, “because they did not accept the love of the truth so as to be saved.”

2 Thessalonians 2:11–12

“For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.” (NASB 2020)

By this point, 3 ½ years into the Day of the Lord they are rejecting the Lord in the face of:



- The rapture of the church
- Every single living creature, including them give praise to Jesus (Revelation 5:13)
- All the seal judgments
- Global thermonuclear war
- Global famine
- Massive global ecological disaster
- Asteroids hitting the planet
- A demon army
- Depopulation of the planet by about ½ in just 3 ½ years
- The casting down of Satan to earth and all the fallen angels
- The world leader apparently being assassinated but then coming back in a seeming miracle then entering Jerusalem and declaring he is God.
- And lots more.

So, in the face of all of that, THE LIE is believed and “God is pleased to honour the moral choices of individuals. Those who embrace a particular lifestyle will eventually find that God gives them over to the consequences of their choice (Rom 1:24, 26, 28). Prefer lies to the truth of God and you will find yourself becoming hardened, increasingly willing to embrace a way of life which flaunts sin in its ugliest forms. One of the ways in which God punishes us for our sins is that he leaves us to wallow in them, allowing a dissipated lifestyle to take its inevitable toll upon us.” (Arthur 1996, 127)

Those who remain choose, over all the evidence that says otherwise, to believe THE LIE. Why? To seal the court case on them. They did not believe truth, they loved wickedness, they are judged. The rebellion is fully evident at Armageddon when Jesus Christ returns, and the armies of the beast turn to attack Jesus. It does not end well for them. For those of us who have recognized and accepted the truth, we are able to remain unmoved by the culture running headlong into the arms of the lie as we await the coming of our Lord for us.

With that, Paul has concluded his discussion of the Day of the Lord.

Recapping what he has told the church in Thessalonica. They have been lied to intentionally by those who are representative of the lawless one, Satan. They should know better and stick with truth rather than listening to lies. The rapture precedes the day of the Lord. As believers, we will not be here. So, avoid getting into discussions with those who are trying to mislead you into thinking something other than what you have been taught.

That is Satan's goal, to have believers misled and worried about other things in order to draw us away from the task of making disciples.

2 Thessalonians 2:13–17

“But we should always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold on to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.” (NASB 2020)

Paul has completed the reason for the second letter. He has addressed the false belief popping up in the church. Even so, this church has remained faithful even in the face of persecution and in the face of lies, and for this, Paul and the team move to thanksgiving for those who have believed there in Thessalonica.



If any of them are feeling doubts about their salvation, it is time to discard all uncertainty and rejoice in the security of their true relationship with God. (Osborne 2018, 188)

God chose them. Yet God will not overrule our free will. We just witnessed that with Paul telling us the results of rejection. God is sovereign, yet man has free will. Jesus died on the cross for all (John 3:16), but not all will accept what He did on the cross with the result being their name being blotted out of the book of life. "The Book of Life contains the names of every person who was ever born according to Psalm 139:16...Those who believe on the Messiah have their names retained in the Book of Life according to Revelation 3:5...However, in Psalm 69:28, the unsaved have their names blotted out of the Book of Life...To be blotted out of the book of life does not mean losing your salvation. The point is this...the book of life, contains the names of everyone who was ever born. If a person is a believer, he has his name retained in the book of life; if someone dies as an unbeliever, his name is blotted out of the book of life. So then, at the Great White Throne Judgment, if their names are not found in the Book of Life, it will show them to be unsaved and worthy of partaking in this particular judgment." (Fruchtenbaum, The Messianic Bible Study Collection 1983, 6)

That being said, there is another book the Bible talks about that is distinct from this one, that is the Lamb's Book of Life. We learn about this book from a comment made in Revelation 13 about the beast and those who follow him.

Revelation 13:8–9 "and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. If anyone has an ear, let him hear:" (ESV)

And now we realize the tension in the scriptures between free will and election.

This book contains the names of every individual who is born again and only those who are born again. Their names were written into this book before the earth was ever created, according to Revelation 13:8... (Fruchtenbaum, The Messianic Bible Study Collection 1983, 6-7)

Because the church in Thessalonica is saved, beloved of God and called by His grace, chosen from the foundation of the world, we are presented with the tension between free will and election.

Free will exists. Jesus did indeed come and die on the cross for all of mankind. But God knows everything, and He knows those who will, upon hearing the gospel, will respond or reject. Rejection that remains until death, results in that person's name being blotted out of the book of life. My head is beginning to hurt.

The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God's sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind's necessary response (cf. 10:11, 13). (Utley 2000, 163)

But here is the good news, we are not required to understand this in order to be saved or remain saved.

But we are to allow sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth to take place.

As believers, we need to understand that there are three tenses to salvation. First is what takes place the moment we surrender to Christ, we are justified. As believers, except for the moment of salvation, we would use past tense, I have been saved (Romans 5:1). Saved from the penalty of sin.

Sanctification is the present tense of salvation. I am being saved, I am being sanctified, being made more like Jesus and being saved from the power of sin (1 Corinthians 1:18).



Then there is that aspect of salvation we are all looking forward to, that moment we will be saved from the presence of sin, and we are glorified (Romans 8:23). That is what Paul talked about earlier in 1 Thessalonians when he described the rapture of the church and the redemption of our present bodies into those of our resurrected bodies.

Becoming more like Jesus, sanctification, that is Holy Spirit work taking place in each of us. As Christians, we are automatically fruit inspectors as well. As we fellowship with others, we see the fruit of the Spirit in them, and they in turn see Him in us.

The point here is that our salvation is not complete until we have grown in the Spirit and been “set apart” for God. This is always the result of the Spirit’s work in us (Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Thess 4:7–8; 1 Pet 1:2). (Osborne 2018, 189)

2 Thessalonians 2:14–17

“It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold on to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.” (NASB 2020)

The ultimate purpose behind salvation and sanctification is right here in verse 14. It is to “obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul develops this a bit more in Philipians.

Philipians 3:20–21

“But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. **He will take our weak mortal bodies and change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.**” (NLT)

And there is a tension showing up in this statement as well. Yes, we are indeed looking forward to that moment in the rapture that we receive a new body, but sanctification tells us that the process has begun and is indeed taking place right now. We are already growing in glory and await His coming to take us to be with Him.

Paul’s concern has been their allowance of deception to interfere with their walk with Jesus. Persecution is to be expected, but not confusion. Their problems come from failing to remember what they had been taught.

This hasn’t changed in 2000 years either. As we examine our own lives, we see that those times of confusion we encounter, usually are because we simply do not remember what it is He has said, or we haven’t discovered it yet.

The key to success in this current Acts 17:11 world is to search the scriptures.

John 5:39

““You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!” (NLT)

Hebrews 4:12.

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit, and joints from marrow; it is able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart.” (NET 2nd ed.)



For the church in Thessalonica as well as for us, the call remains the same, to stand firm. The word Paul uses here is κρατεῖτε (krateite). It is translated as “hold on.”

The word means to “take hold of (forcefully), get possession of, obtain, hold back, hold fast. (Gilbrant 1991)

The emphasis is on making the decision to hold firm and doing whatever is necessary to make sure of the truth and then hold fast to it. For us, that may mean spending more time in the word and less time listening to the voices of the culture that simply want to draw us away.

At the very least, that is the solution for worry and anxiety. Once we understand who God is and what His word says and how much He cares for us, it becomes difficult to worry about too much. We are to hold fast to doctrine, hold fast to the word, hold fast to what we have been taught. That also may mean to stay away from the teacher de jour on the radio or internet. We need to be like the Bereans, not the Athenians.

Acts 17:21

“(All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there used to spend their time in nothing else than telling or listening to something new.)” (NET 2nd ed.)

Paul then prays for the church in Thessalonica that they would be comforted and strengthened. Both things they desperately need.

What Paul prays for is that Christ and the Father will give present, practical comfort that works into hearts even now the good effect of the comfort He has given eternally, affecting all the details of life. (James E 2008, 2401)

In this world, this is something we all need.



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