

(Through the Bible) 2 Thessalonians 1-3

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, love, and perseverance in the face of persecution, and warns of the coming judgment and the role of apostasy and the Antichrist.

Duration: 1:22:31

Scripture: Matthew 25:32

Topics: "End Times", "Tribulation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the book of Revelation and the events that will occur during the end times. He explains that John, the author of Revelation, is representative of the church and is caught up into heaven at the sound of the trump of God. The preacher compares the trumpets in Revelation to bugle calls in the army, each conveying a distinct message. He also mentions that Jesus is the only one found worthy to open the scroll in heaven, which represents the title deed to the earth. The preacher emphasizes that there will be a time of great tribulation, resulting in the death of a quarter of the earth's population, but assures that the fairness of God will be revealed as the character of those destroyed is exposed.

Transcript

Shall we turn now in our Bibles to 2 Thessalonians. Paul had come to Thessalonica with the gospel of Jesus Christ from Philippi, where as the result of his preaching he had been imprisoned, beaten, and really ordered out of the city. There in Thessalonica, he went into the synagogue for three Sabbath days, reasoning with him out of the Scriptures.

And the interest became so intense that on the third day, almost the whole city had gathered together, which created a jealousy by some of the Jews that were there. And so they began to stir up trouble against Paul. And they came to the house where Paul was staying to arrest him.

And Paul had already got word of the problems and so he had left and gone towards Berea. Trouble also developed in Berea after a few weeks. And so Paul's companions, Silas and Timothy, stayed in Berea to strengthen the brethren while Paul went to Athens.

When they joined Paul in Athens, Silas and Timothy, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to encourage the brethren, find out how they were doing. And he and Silas and Luke headed on down to Corinth. While Paul was in Corinth, and Paul was there for about two years, Timothy came with word concerning the

church in Thessalonica, which prompted Paul's first epistle, some of the problems that were there.

And so Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica with the first letter. And still other questions were unresolved or problems still existed that Timothy told Paul about when he returned again. And so Paul wrote this second letter, probably within a year from the first letter.

These are the first two letters of Paul, written from Corinth in his second missionary journey, back to the church that had been established in Thessalonica. And so because Silas and Timothy were with Paul in the establishing of the church, Paul joins their names with his in the greeting to the church. Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus, or Silas and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This salutation is identical to the salutation in his first epistle, which we commented on last week. We are bound, Paul said, to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly and the love of every one of you toward each other abounds.

And so Paul, giving thanks unto God, he felt it was necessary to give thanks unto God for two very positive traits and characteristics in this church. One, their faith was growing exceedingly. Secondly, their love for all of the brethren was just abounding.

What tremendous characteristics to mark a church. A church of great faith and a church where God's love among the people was just abounding. So that we ourselves, Paul said, glory in you in the churches of God.

So Paul is saying that we are actually, we glory in you when we go around and share in the other churches. We glory in what God has done in you. We love to share what the Lord is doing there for you.

For also the patience and the faith in all of your persecutions and tribulations that you endure. So this church was a church that was experiencing a lot of persecution. It is interesting as you study church history, persecution never hurt the church.

The church always thrived in persecution. The church in China has been severely persecuted as the result of the communist takeover. And yet during this period of great tribulation, when in some of the provinces they have only one Bible for every hundred thousand believers, yet the church has grown and expanded tremendously until there are some who estimate that there are as many as a hundred million believers within the home church in China.

We had Mama Kwan with us a while back, who was one of the leaders of the home church in China. And she was sharing with us of the millions that are coming to Jesus Christ, even in the face of great persecution. You see, the effect of persecution of the church is really separating the wheat from the chaff.

And it causes the true believers to really make their stand and their faith grows. So in a church that was being persecuted, the faith was increasing exceedingly. And of course, it really brings you together.

Persecution, you know, brings the body close together, the support of one another and the love of one another. During the early period of the church history, from the book of Acts, the result of the first persecution against the church in Jerusalem is that the church was scattered throughout the whole area. But the result of the church being scattered, churches opened up all over the area, wherever they went,

they started sharing their faith in Christ.

And the result of the persecution was actually just an expanding, a rapid expanding of the ministry of the church. And the church grew exceedingly under the persecution in the first century, second and third. The church began to wane when the persecution ceased.

The influence, the power of the church, as the church began to be an accepted institution within the society and as they began to be embraced by the world and accepted, the effect was a diminishing of the power of the church, of the faith in the church, of the effectiveness of the church. And so persecution has never really hindered the work of the Lord, but often time has had the opposite effect of really expanding. So here in Thessalonica, persecutions and tribulations, they were enduring them with patience, but the net effect of them in their lives was this increasing faith and the abounding love.

Now these persecutions and tribulations that they were enduring was a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God. In other words, Paul is going to talk here a little bit about a period of time that is coming in which God is going to judge the world. There's going to be a time of tremendous tribulation that's going to come to pass upon the earth.

I believe that it isn't far off. This period of great tribulation is described in details in the book of Revelation, beginning with chapter six, the opening of the seven seals, and then the sounding of the seven trumpets, and then the pouring out of the seven vials of God's wrath. And as God's judgment comes forth upon the earth, it is going to be so severe that people will be prone to challenge the fairness of God, the righteousness of God.

But God will indeed be righteous in his judgment. And the persecution that they were going through when God's judgment came upon the unbelievers, it would be a manifest token of God's righteousness. It is interesting to me that during this period of great tribulation, as the vials of God's wrath are being poured out upon the earth, voices come from the altar of God declaring, holy and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord.

God is going to judge the world, a great time of tribulation, and people are going to be prone to challenge the righteousness of God because of the severity. We're studying the book of Revelations on Thursday night, so we'll get to these things and the details that are given to us in the book of Revelation as we move along in that on Thursday night. But Jesus said, there's going to be a time of great tribulation such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again.

In the first four seals that are open, the ensuing judgments upon the earth will bring death to one quarter of the earth's inhabitants, which is estimated to be a little over four billion people. Can you imagine devastation coming upon the earth, wars and famines and all that will wipe out one quarter of the earth's inhabitants? We're prone to say, God, that doesn't seem fair to destroy that many people. But the fairness of God will indeed be manifested as the character of those that are destroyed is revealed.

And then later on, in another series of judgments, one third of the earth's inhabitants will be killed when the abuso is open and these creatures go forth upon the earth. So a time, as Jesus said, great tribulation, an earthquake that will be second to none. God said, and I'm going to shake the earth once more until everything that can be shaken shall be shaken until the only that which cannot be shaken shall remain.

Great tribulation, but God will be fair. God will be just. He will be righteous in it.

And the attitude of the world toward the true believer was only going to be a manifest token of the righteousness of the judgment of God that he is going to bring upon the earth, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which also you suffer. Now, when Jesus was talking to his disciples concerning the great tribulation that was going to come, telling them of some of the cataclysmic events that would be taking place, he said to his disciples, pray always that you will be accounted worthy to escape all these things and to be standing before the Son of Man. When these cataclysmic judgments began to happen, when the stars began to fall, meteorite showers striking the earth, tremendous devastation, pray, he said, when these things happen, pray that you'll be accounted worthy to escape all of these things and to be standing before the Son of Man.

Now, here Paul speaks of them as being worthy to be there in the kingdom of God. And it is for this kingdom that they are suffering, seeing that it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them which trouble you. But it would not be a righteous thing with God to bring the tribulation upon his children.

That was the whole premise of Abraham in dealing with the Lord over the destruction of Sodom. Shall not the Lord of the earth be fair, be just, be righteous? Would you destroy the righteous with the wicked? That wouldn't be fair, Lord, to destroy the righteous with the wicked. And so God delivered Lot before the destruction or the tribulation or the judgment came.

It's a righteous thing with God to recompense the tribulation to them that trouble you. And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels. Rest in this fact, the Lord is coming for you with his mighty angels.

He may mention of this in the first letter, for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, the trump of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first and we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord. So you that are troubled over this great period of tribulation and judgment that is coming, rest with us for the Lord is going to be revealed with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God. Notice upon whom the vengeance is going to be taken.

Not upon the children of God, not upon the church. He's going to be taking the vengeance upon those who know not God and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is a that they are the ones upon whom this great judgment shall fall.

And I'll tell you what I surely wouldn't want to be around when God's wrath begins to be poured out. As again, when we get to the details in revelation, I'm certain that you won't want to be here either, but he's taking vengeance on those that obey not the gospel who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power eternally separated from God. I cannot think of anything more awesome than that when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all of them that believe, because our testimony among you was believed in that day.

So the Lord is coming as far as the sinner is concerned to take vengeance, to bring judgment. As far as the saint is concerned to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe. And so he's coming to receive the glory and the honor and the power and the authority and the dominion that is rightfully his.

Again, revelation chapter five, thou art worthy to receive glory and honor, dominion, authority, thrones, the worthiness of Jesus to receive the glory, glorified in his saints, admired in all them that believe because of our testimony among you. Wherefore, also we pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling. Now Jesus said, pray always that you will be accounted worthy to escape these things.

Paul said, I'm praying always that you will be accounted worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power. So these are the things Paul was praying for them. First of all, they'd be accounted worthy that the Lord will account them worthy of being in this heavenly company.

That he might fulfill all of the good pleasure of goodness in them and his work of faith with power that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you in him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. And so the whole glory that shall be revealed in the church through the church and in Christ at his coming. Now we beseech you brethren by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in virtue of this, because of this and our gathering together unto him that you be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled neither by spirit nor by word nor by letter as from us as that the day of Christ is already present.

Now there were some there who said, well, this persecution that we're going through is the great tribulation. This is the day of God's vengeance. It's already here.

And they even produced letters supposedly written by Paul saying, yes, these fellows are right. This is the day of vengeance. This is the great tribulation.

And so Paul is writing to correct this. Don't don't believe any supposed letters from me. At the end of this epistle, Paul makes the note that I have signed this in my own hand, which I do with all of my epistles.

These false epistles that they had been receiving weren't signed by Paul's own hand. And so he makes reference to the fact that he, he personally signs those epistles that he writes. It's a mark of Paul's epistle, though he dictated and someone else wrote them.

He would sign his name to the end that they might have the authority and know that indeed it was from Paul. So don't be troubled in your spirits by someone's word or by a letter that was supposedly from us in believing that the day of the Lord is already present or is now present. Let no man deceive you by any means for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed the son of perdition.

So two things must precede the day of the Lord's vengeance and wrath that is coming upon the earth. Number one, a great apostasy. Now this word apostasy has been argued by some as meaning departure.

And there are some who try to relate it to the rapture of the church, referring to the departure. There are problems with that. And rather than trying to take a position on that, we only mention it as definitely a possibility.

However, we do know that Jesus in speaking of his coming again said when the son of man shall come again, will he find faith on the earth? He questioned. And then again, he said, and because the iniquity of the earth will abound, the love of many will wax cold. So Jesus seemed to indicate an apostasy.

I personally believe that that apostasy is upon us. As I look at the general condition of the church of Jesus Christ, there is great apostasy. When I see these churches ordaining avowed homosexuals, when I see

the homosexual church, the metropolitan church and all, when I read the statements of some of these ministers who join the fight against anything that is good and decent, there is a tremendous apostasy.

Churches such as ours are the exception, not the rule. There is a great apostasy today. But then there is a second thing that must happen before the great tribulation.

And that is that the man of sin, the son of perdition must be revealed. This man of sin, son of perdition is commonly called the Antichrist. This title son of perdition is an interesting title because it is really son of Satan.

And even as Jesus was God incarnate in flesh, so the Antichrist will be Satan incarnate. Satan will take on a body or take over a body, probably more literally. And even as demons are able to possess bodies, so Satan himself will take residence in a body.

And thus he is titled the son of perdition. Now, there is one other person that we know where Satan took over his body, and that was Judas Iscariot. The Bible says, and Satan entered into him.

And it is interesting that Jesus called Judas Iscariot the son of perdition. Now again, Satan taking over a body. And in Revelation chapter 13, he tells us that he gives to, Satan gives to this Antichrist all of his power, all of his authority, all of his throne.

Now, he gives the world over to him because the world belongs to Satan. You remember Jesus came to redeem the world to God. And Satan took Jesus up into a high mountain and he said, look at all of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.

I'm going to give them to you if you'll just bow down and worship me. For they are mine, Satan was bragging. And he said, I can give them to whomever I will.

Jesus did not dispute that, but Jesus refused it. He came to redeem the world, but not by bowing down to Satan, but by paying the price of redemption upon the cross. But Satan is going to give to this man of sin, the son of perdition, his throne, his authority, his power.

And he is going to rule over the world. And the first three and a half years of his reign are going to be very prosperous times upon the earth. They're going to be singing happy days are here again.

This man is a miracle worker. This man has brought marvelous solutions to troubling world situations. This man has brought an end to the economic difficulties and the economic malaise that the world is in.

This man has brought an end to all of these horrible wars and all, and he's brought peace and he's brought prosperity and everyone has jobs and, uh, you know, things are going great and the world is going to hail this man as its savior. One of his exploits will be to bring a peaceful solution to the problem of the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Now, many devout Orthodox Jews desire fervently to rebuild the temple.

Many other Jews really don't care, but those Orthodox Jews are really determined to rebuild the temple. A major problem exists, mainly that the temple mount is under Muslim control. And there, almost in the middle of the temple mount, stands the dome of the rock, a sacred site to the Muslims, for they feel that it was from this rock that Muhammad ascended into heaven after his overnight ride from Medina.

Recently, there were Jews who were apprehended as they were trying to slip onto the temple mount site with explosives to blow up the dome of the rock. And there are many who are crying for a return to Israel of the temple mount. This has the leaders in Israel deeply concerned, for they have enough problems already and don't wish to compound them with religious problems.

And they know that if any overt action is taken against the Muslim control of the temple mount, that it will precipitate a holy war by the Muslims against the Jews. And though the Jews have been able to hold their own in their battles against Egypt and Jordan and Syria in the past, they don't want to deal with the fanaticism of the religious Muslims coming with religious fanaticism to destroy the nation of Israel. They just don't want to face that.

That's a problem they believe that they can live very well without. And so the official government view is to let things be. Don't create any waves.

But there is that fanatic element that are determined to create waves. So it remains a very sensitive issue. But this man of sin, the son of perdition, when Satan turns over to him the control of the world, one of the things he is going to have is a tremendous solution for the problem, for he is going to offer a covenant to Israel.

And he will say, now look, there is plenty of room here on the north side of the temple mount, and you can rebuild your temple here on the north side of the temple mount. All we have to do is put a wall right across the center of the temple mount, leaving the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque on the south side. And you can have this whole 10 to 15 acres out here on the north side, and you can build your temple here.

The Moslems will be satisfied because they have retained the title to their holy sites. The Jews also will be satisfied because now they have a place to build their temple on the temple mount. And I do believe that it is going to be shown and proven soon that Solomon's temple actually is north of the Dome of the Rock, some 322 feet, so that they will be very satisfied because they will be able to rebuild their temple right over the site of Solomon's temple.

Now, there's a couple of interesting scriptures that sort of verify this whole theory. When Ezekiel was taken by the Spirit through time and saw the temple that is to be rebuilt, that has not been built yet, Ezekiel gave the measurements. The Lord gave him a ruler and says, now measure this temple and the walls and the courts and so forth.

And so as he was measuring the temple, he said, and I measured the wall that was around the temple 450 meters. And he said, this wall was to separate the holy place from the profane place. And interestingly enough, the Dome of the Rock has profanities written in Arabic around the top, profanities against Jesus Christ.

God is not begotten, neither does He beget. A definite profanity against Jesus Christ. The only begotten Son of God.

There's another scripture in Revelation chapter 11, which is quite interesting because John also was taken by the Spirit unto the day of the Lord, where he too saw the new temple that was to be rebuilt. And like Ezekiel was told to measure it, he was given a rod and said, now measure the temple and the courts. But then he was instructed, don't measure the outer court because it's been given to the heathen.

And the Dome of the Rock would stand in the outer court of the rebuilt temple. So the Antichrist, when he arises, is going to make a covenant with the nation of Israel. In the covenant, no doubt will include their privilege to rebuild their temple by building this wall and satisfying both parties.

And everybody in the man is a mastermind. Who could have thought of that solution? And they're going to worship the man as the Savior. But after three and a half years, he is going to come to that temple that is going to be rebuilt.

And Paul tells us about it in just a moment here. Verse four, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God. That is this man of sin, the son of perdition.

He opposes himself. He exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped. Now, you remember in Isaiah 14 as he speaks of the fall of Satan, O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning.

For thou didst seek really to exalt your position. You said, I will exalt myself above the angels of heaven. I will sit in the congregation in the sides of the north.

I will be like the most high. And yet God said, you'll be brought down to hell. But here is the Antichrist doing the same thing, exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped so that he as God will sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

In other words, after three and a half years, when the temple has been rebuilt, he will return to Jerusalem. He will sit in the Holy of Holies of the rebuilt temple and declare, I am God and will demand to be worshipped as God. This is called in the book of Daniel, the abomination of desolation or the final abomination, which will bring the desolation of the earth as God at this point will pour out his judgment and wrath.

The cup of his indignation at this point will overflow. This is the final straw. This will perpetrate the judgment of God coming upon the earth in this three and a half year period known in the Bible as the great tribulation.

So Paul said, don't think that this is the tribulation, that the tribulation is now present. Don't be troubling your spirit. Yes, it's tough.

Yes, you're really going through a lot of persecution and all, but the great tribulation cannot come. The day of God's judgment cannot come until first of all, there be this spiritual apostasy and their man of sin, the son of perdition is revealed. And then he tells us a little bit about what this son of perdition is going to do.

And so the great tribulation cannot happen until these things take place. Paul said, remember ye not that when I was yet with you, I told you these things, I already instructed you in these things. And now you know what withhold it, that he might be revealed in his time.

In other words, there is a force that is holding him back, holding back the power of darkness from taking over the world completely for the mystery of iniquity is already at work. Only he who is now hindering will hinder until he be taken out of the way. So the powers and the forces of darkness are working in the world, but there is a hindering force that is keeping them from taking over complete control.

The question, what is the hindering force? People say the Holy spirit, that's probably correct, but where is the Holy Spirit dwelling in the church? Now, if you say the Holy spirit is to be withdrawn from the world and the church remain, then God help us all. We're in horrible trouble. I can hardly make it with the power of the Holy spirit and the help of the Holy spirit.

If he were withdrawn, I would be totally destitute. Be wrapped. I believe that the restraining power that is keeping back evil from taking over the world today is the light that is still here.

The church of Jesus Christ. That's the thing that's keeping darkness from just totally engulfing the world. You are the light of the world.

But when Jesus takes his church out of this earth, then there will be no longer any restraining power or force. And the antichrist will at that point take over, but he cannot as long as he, which is hindering continues to hinder until it is taken out of the way. So I really believe that the Lord's taking the church out of the way is the next major event that must take place before the final sequences of events can happen in the book of revelation.

Chapter one, verse 19, the book is divided into three sections, right? The things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which will be after these things. And so John recorded in chapter one, the things that he saw the vision of Jesus Christ walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, holding the seven stars in his right hand. In chapters two and three, the second section of the book of revelation, John wrote the messages to the seven churches as they were dictated to him by Jesus Christ, covering the seven periods of church history.

In chapter four, it begins with the Greek words, *metatauta*, after these things. After what things? Logically after the things of chapters two and three, which are the church things. I saw a door open in heaven and the first voice was as of a trumpet saying unto me, come up hither and I will show you things which must be after these things.

After the church things. And so John is representative of the church as he is caught up by the Spirit into heaven at the trump of God. Now, the trumpets were sounded in those days among the troops to give messages, even as was done in our army and all for so many years, the bugle calls.

And each bugle call had its separate message that it declared. One said, go to sleep. Another said, come and eat.

Another said, charge. Another said, male call. And still another said, get up.

But each one was a distinct bugle sound that conveyed a message. When the trump of God sounds, it's going to convey a message. The message is, come on up, come up hither.

The trump of God come up hither. And so from chapter four, John is now viewing the things that are happening on the earth from the heavenly viewpoint. He looks down as the seals are open in heaven.

He looks down and sees the corresponding judgments upon the earth. But before this scroll is open, he first of all introduces the scroll in chapter five with writing both inside and outside seal with seven seals. And he hears the angel proclaiming with a strong voice who is worthy to take this scroll and loose the seals.

The scroll being the title deed to the earth, which Jesus died to redeem back to God. But no one is found worthy in heaven and earth to open the scroll or loose the seals. And so John begins to sob until the elder says, don't we John behold, the lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed and he's going to take the scroll and loose the seals.

And John turned and he saw Jesus as a lamb that had been slaughtered. And he stepped forth and he took the scroll out of the right hand of him who was sitting upon the throne. And immediately the 24 elders came forth with little golden bowls that were filled with incense odors, which are the prayers of the saints.

How many times have you prayed thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. It's about to happen. The prayers are about to be answered and they offer these prayers before the throne of God.

And then they sang a new song saying, thou art worthy to take the scroll and loose the seals for you were slain and you have redeemed us by your blood out of every nation and tribe and tongue and people. And you have made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we're going to reign with you upon the earth. Who can sing that song? The church of Jesus Christ.

Where is the church standing before the son of man in glory? Tribulation hasn't begun yet. It won't begin until he opens the seals of the scroll, which he proceeds to do in chapter six. And the first seal that is broken brings forth the entrance of the Antichrist upon the earth, coming forth, conquering and to conquer, riding his white horse.

The coming of the Antichrist. And then it is followed by the wars, ensuing wars, the red horse. And then the black horse of famine and the pale horse of death.

So the sequence remains the same. The Antichrist, first of all, being revealed. And then the great day of God's wrath and vengeance coming forth upon the earth.

You have the same sequence in Revelation for the Antichrist comes forth and then there follow the wars, the famines, the death, the plagues, six seal, the cataclysmic events as the heavens are casting forth the meteorite showers like a fig tree cast its untimely figs in a wind and all of this great cataclysmic judgment that begins to fall upon those upon the earth. So Paul said, don't be fretting in your spirit or thinking that, hey, this is the day of God's judgment. This the day of the Lord is come.

It's now present. He said, no, there are things that have to happen before that can happen. Namely, the great apostasy and the unveiling of this man of sin, which cannot take place until that which hinders is taken out of the way is removed.

So that which hinders shall hinder until it is removed. Taken out of the way and then. So that wicked one be unveiled, revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

So this man of sin who will have his day and have his time will be destroyed when Jesus returns with his church to establish God's kingdom upon the earth. And when Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory. Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute his judgment upon the earth.

And the first thing the Lord does as he returns to the earth is gathers together the survivors for judgment to determine which ones of those that survive will be allowed to go into the kingdom age. And then he will

separate them as his shepherds. I mean, yes, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goat, Matthew 25.

And to those on his right side, he'll say, come you blessed of the Lord, enter into the kingdom that was prepared for you from the foundations of the earth. For I was hungry and you fed me thirsty and you gave me to drink naked and you clothed me sick and in prison and you visited me. But to those on his left, he'll say, depart from me accursed into the everlasting fire that was prepared for Satan and his angels.

For I was hungry and you did not feed me thirsty. You did not give me to drink naked. You did not call me, Lord, when did we see you like this? And as much as you've done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you've done it unto me.

If you give a cup of water to a prophet in the name of the Lord, you receive the prophet's reward. And so the Antichrist, when Jesus comes with his church, will be destroyed with the brightness of his coming. Even him who's coming, the Antichrist, who will be coming after the working of Satan with power and signs and lying wonders.

There is a dangerous curiosity in man to be attracted and drawn after signs and wonders. But the fact that something is done that is scientifically or physically unexplainable, it does not necessarily follow that God's power is behind the miracle. When the Antichrist comes, he will be working miracles.

He will come with signs and powers and wonders. People will wonder at the things that are being accomplished, wondering how can he do that? Supernatural manifestations. And so be careful of following after miraculous phenomena just for miraculous phenomena's sake.

You really could be deceived if you develop a credibility in anything unexplainable. Well, it must be of God because look, it's a miracle. I can't explain it.

Paul warns Timothy that Satan is able to transform himself into an angel of light in order to deceive. And such will be the case with the Antichrist for the first three and a half years. He will come with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.

In other words, who is to be deceived? Those who are going to perish because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie that they might all be damned to believe, not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Now, Paul tells us in Romans chapter one that it was when man did not want to retain God in his mind, God gave him over to a mind that was empty of God because they didn't want the truth of God.

Then God allowed them to believe a lie. Here, the same thing is declared. They don't want to believe the truth.

So what does God do? He says, all right, you don't want to believe the truth, then go ahead and believe the lie. And he allows them to be deceived into believing a lie. Now, as a child of God, God won't let you believe a lie.

God's spirit will warn you. I'm, I'm thrilled when some of these new babes in Christ come to me and they say, Chuck, I was watching someone on TV the other day, but it just didn't seem right to me. All right, Lord, you won't let him believe the deception and the lies that these guys are coming off with.

And I think, oh, great. But you know, there are some people that seem to fall for every gimmick that comes down the road. They have a penchant towards false doctrine.

They have a desire almost to just gobble up anything, you know, that comes along, any new weird tangent or doctrine that comes by, oh, there they go tracing after it, you know. They, they just seem to have a total lack of discernment. And that's hurtful.

As a pastor, that's probably one of the most hurtful things to see your little sheep, you know, following after a lie, after a deceiver, after a fraud. But one of the most rewarding things for a pastor is for someone to come and say, you know, I was, you know, just watching this fall and it just something's wrong there, Chuck. I don't know.

I can't tell you what it is. Something's wrong. Paul said, but we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brothers, beloved of the Lord.

Because God from the beginning has chosen you to salvation. Hey, this is interesting. From the beginning, God has chosen you, he said for salvation.

Here again, this interesting doctrine that Paul taught in his book to the Ephesians is taught here again, where he said you were chosen in him from the foundations of the world. Isn't it exciting that of all the people, God chose you to be his child. That's so thrilling to me.

Last night for a little while, Kay and I were watching a documentary on Channel 28. I think it was of some of the Indian tribes down in the Amazon area of Brazil and some of their practices, the various rituals that they have for the various gods that they worship. And we were quite fascinated from a cultural sociological kind of a standpoint of watching these people in the various religious rituals that they went through, naked, all of them superstitious.

And Kay said, for the grace of God, we could have been born in that tribe. And oh my, I guess you're right. Oh, thank you, Lord.

For God chose you from the beginning unto this sanctification of the spirit and the belief of the truth. The word sanctification is to be set apart. God has chosen you to be set apart from the world, to be set apart as an instrument through which the spirit of God might work.

From the beginning, God chose you. That thrills me. And because he chose you, then he called you by our gospel, by our declaring to you the good news, actually, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate. And those he predestinated, he also called. And those he called, he also justified.

And those he justified, he also glorified. As Paul follows the same progression of thought in the eighth chapter of Romans. First of all, chosen in him.

And because you were chosen, God called you. The spirit of God reached out and touched your heart, made it open to the things of God, made it receptive to the things of God. How thrilling that God should choose us and then, having made us receptive, then called us so we could hear the call and respond that we might be the children of God set apart by the Spirit.

Here you are, my children. You know, I don't appreciate it so much until I talk to people who seem to have absolutely zilch as far as spiritual comprehension or understanding or even interest. Oh, what a shame! What a tragedy! Their voice is totally closed to the gospel.

I mean, their ear is totally closed to the gospel. No interest, no concern. How is it that I'm so interested? How is it that I'm so concerned? Because God chose me and God called me.

And so I rejoice in that I've been chosen. Therefore, brethren, stand fast. You're going to go through persecution.

You're having tribulations. But stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by our words or our epistles. Those things that I have taught you, those truths that I have taught you, hold on to them.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God, even our Father, which hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work. So Paul's little benedictory type of prayer for them at this point, that God would comfort them and establish them in the word and in the work. Finally, brethren, pray for us.

Now again, Paul is calling for prayer for him. I think that maybe sometimes we are guilty of not praying for those in spiritual leadership, feeling they've got it made. Far from the truth.

Those who are in the position of spiritual leadership really have probably greater trials, greater temptations than the average person. Satan, I think, works harder against spiritual leadership. How many pastors have fallen into the snare of the devil? Because you see, if Satan can snare a pastor, then the repercussions go through the whole congregation.

Many people are hurt. So the pastor needs prayer. Pray for us, Paul said.

I would say the same to you. Pray for me. I need your prayers.

For what? That the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified even as it is with you. That God's word might just come forth freely from us. That we would remain faithful to the word of God and to the truth of God.

People often ask me, what can I pray for you? And I answer, pray that God will keep me usable. Paul the apostle said, I beat my body to keep it in subjection, lest having preached to I'd be put on the shelf. If we don't keep our body in subjection, we can be put on the shelf very easily.

So many ministers have been destroyed by pride or by greed or by lust. They let the body get the best of them and they become destroyed, no longer usable. It's my prayer that I will remain usable.

I have only one purpose for living, one main purpose for living, and that's to do the work of the Lord, that which God has called me to do. Pray for us. God's word may have free course and he be glorified through his word, even as you have experienced the power of God's word in your life.

And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men for all men have not the faith. And that's one of the problems of ministry is some of the unreasonable people that you have to deal with. And what happens is that they can waste your time, totally unreasonable.

They really don't want to reason. They just want to throw their trip on you. And they become so demanding and so pushy.

Paul says, pray that God will just deliver me from unreasonable men. For not everybody has the faith, but the Lord is faithful who will establish you and keep you from evil. The Lord is faithful and God will establish your walk in your life and God will keep you from evil.

He is faithful. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you. Paul said, what is it that you both do and will do the things which we command you? I have this confidence that you know, you're going to obey the instructions and the exhortations in this epistle.

I just have that confidence. I know. And that the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Other commentators and translators translate this into the patience of Christ. But that the Lord will direct your hearts in the love of God, how we need God's love to be working in our hearts and lives more and more for all of our efforts, all of our works, all of our sacrifices, all of our gifts, all of our anointings are of no value. If the love of God, isn't there working through it.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not loved, it's just a meaningless, empty sound. Though I can prophesy, I understand all mysteries. If I have not loved, it's worthless.

Though I give my body to be burned or I sell everything I have and bestow it on the poor. If I have not loved, it really profits me nothing. Oh, may the Lord cause his love to abound in our heart, direct our hearts into the love and into the patience of Christ.

Now we command you brethren in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now this becomes very serious when you start commanding people in the name of Jesus. It's the way you deal with demons that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly and not after the truths which you have received from us.

Now, Paul is commanding them that you really separate yourselves from the disorderly brothers. When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he said that we're not to have fellowship with those who are drunkards, who are committing fornication, who are living after the flesh, who claim to be brothers in Christ. He said you can't just exclude yourself from, you know, mixing with everyone who does these things.

In other words, you live in the world, you can't get out of that. But with those who say they are brothers, don't eat with them, don't fellowship with them if they are walking disorderly. He is saying now the same thing, only commanding them in the name of Jesus that you withdraw from these disorderly people.

For yourselves know how that you ought to follow us, for we behave not ourselves disorderly among you. And so there were those who were coming in after Paul, who were creating divisions and all, and Paul said withdraw from them. These guys are teaching you junky stuff.

Withdraw from them. They're not following the teachings that we gave to you. Now follow after those things that we taught you, for we taught you the truth through the Holy Spirit.

And neither did we eat any man's bread for nothing. We set an example for you, and the pastor should be setting an example for the flock, but a good example to be sure. I heard of this one pastor who with his deacon decided to go hunting one day.

And so they got in their pickup, and they had the guns on the racks in the back, and they drove for several hours out into the country. And when they got out there, they found the whole area posted closed. And they said, oh man, what a shame.

We've driven all this distance, and all, and the whole place is posted closed. The deacon said, well there's only one possibility of hunting today, and that would be over in Farmer Brown's property. But I hear that he is the meanest guy in the whole county.

He's, everybody stares clear from him. Well the pastor said, well we've come this far. He said, I might, he said, I'll tell you, I'll go up to the door, and I'll ask him.

He said he can't do any more than refuse us. So he went up to the door, and knocked, and the farmer came to the door, and said, hi, I'm Pastor Jones. And my deacon and I came out this morning, drove all the way out here, decided we'd do a little hunting, but we found every place closed.

He said, do you suppose it would be possible that we could hunt on, on your property? And the farmer said, Pastor Jones, he said, what a joy to see you. He said, I've been listening to you on the radio, and been so blessed by your ministry. He said, honey, Pastor Jones is here.

Can you believe that? He said, oh hey, it would be a privilege for me to have you hunt on my property. It would be a blessing. He said, but, he said, would you do me a favor? He said, the horse out there in the corral, the vet just went away and said he's got, you know, I've got to kill him.

He said, would you mind shooting the horse for me before you go? Pastor said, no, I'll be glad to do that. And so, as he went back to the truck, he decided that he'd play a trick on his deacon. Sort of tease him a bit.

And he said to the deacon, boy, you know, the stories we heard about that guy are true. That has to be the meanest, onriest fellow I've ever met in my life. In fact, the things that he said to me have me boiling so inside.

I don't know. He said, I've got to do something. He said, I just can't.

He said, I've got to get rid of this pressure. He said, I'm just going to explode. He said, give me my gun.

And he took his gun and he aimed at the horse and shot it. And the horse fell over, you know, and he turned around to see the shocked expression of his deacon. When he heard, here's the deacon says, I got two of his cows preacher.

Let's get out of here. Now Paul says, be followers of me, but that's to a point. Paul said, I didn't eat any man's bread for not.

In other words, I didn't sponge off of any of you. I didn't come in and eat your bread. I didn't come in and inflict myself upon you and say, all right, now take care of me.

Feed me. I didn't come in and tell you that God was broke and going out of business. If you didn't send your tithes and offerings in this week, we didn't eat any man's bread for not, but we worked, we labored and we travailed night and day that we would not be chargeable to any of you that we wouldn't be dependent upon any of you.

Not because we do not have the power to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us. In other words, as an apostle, as, as bringing you the, the word of God, they, that, uh, uh, the ox that treads out the corn is not to be muzzled. Paul wrote to the Galatians to communicate to those who taught them in the word in every good thing.

But Paul said, I wasn't chargeable to you. I, I, not that I didn't have the power, but I just wanted to set an example for you. I wanted to set this kind of an example of working to provide for my own needs, that it might be an example to you that you might follow us.

For even when we were with you, this, we commanded you that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, not working at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness, you go to work and you eat your own bread.

But ye brethren be not weary in well-doing. Again, in another place, Paul said, be not weary in well-doing for in due season, you will reap if you faint not. It is easy sometimes to become weary in doing good, especially if we don't see any effects or any results, any fruit from it.

And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, mark that man and have no company with him that he may be ashamed. Yet don't count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. Now the Lord of peace himself, give you peace always by all means.

The Lord be with you all. The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is the token of every epistle. So I write, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Amen. So Paul signifies that this, his signature attested to the veracity, the truth of this letter being from him, follow it, obey it and the teaching that he had given. Great epistle.

We'll get next into first Timothy. So you can go ahead and read first Timothy, the first couple chapters. You might as well read the whole book, but we'll take probably the first three chapters in our next lesson.

Now may the Lord be with you and cause you to abound in all things in Christ, that the love of God might increase in your hearts and in your lives as God establishes you in the faith and in your walk with him. God be with you and God bless and keep you during the time that we are absent from one another. May God enrich you through his spirit in all things in Christ Jesus.

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