

## 2 Thessalonians 2:9-17

### “Salvation Through Sanctification”

The Thessalonians were starting to sway. Being shaken in mind & troubled... They had received (it would seem) false prophecy, some false teaching, even a forged letter alerting them to the false fact that they were in the throes of what Jesus referred to as the “great tribulation” that would come upon the whole world prior to His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. (This outpouring of God’s wrath upon a rebellious & Christ rejecting world.)

What was so alarming about this news was the fact that Paul had taught them that they (as the church) had not been appointed unto wrath (1 Thess 5:9) but to obtain salvation (or deliverance from God’s wrath) through our Lord J.C. -- That prior to this outpouring of wrath, Jesus would “gather us to Himself”. We would be caught up to the clouds to meet the Lord in the air & thus we shall always be w/the Lord... But because of the intense nature of persecution that was taking place among them, they were being persuaded that perhaps something had changed, or that possibly Paul had missed it & they were indeed in the throes of the great tribulation.

So Paul wrote to them, so as to bring both comfort & clarity. He reminded them of the things he taught them when he was w/them. He assured them that God hasn’t changed His mind, that God is not a man that He should lie & that they weren’t being subjected to God’s wrath... He called to our attention 3 “tells” of the great tribulation.

#1 The falling away comes first. A great departure from the faith, not “a” falling away, “the” falling away. The final world rebellion, turning from the truth of God’s word, the salvation found in J.C. & trusting in the lie of the A.C. (Which leads us to the 2<sup>nd</sup> “tell”)

#2 The man of sin, the lawless one/the son of perdition (the A.C.) is revealed. He will be revealed in the fact that he will go into the holy of holies in the temple (which is to be rebuilt in Jerusalem). He will exalt himself above all that is worshiped or called God, demand to be worshiped *as* God, showing himself that he *is* God. – But before those things can happen #3 He who now restrains (the power & Person of the Holy Spirit through the church) will be taken out of the way (you will be raptured, there will be nothing left restraining & the A.C. will make his move). (You can download last week’s study for details)

Now; admittedly, that all sounds incredibly dramatic/*cinematic*. If it weren’t in the written word of God, we confess, it would be hard to swallow. But the bible is clear that God will bring the consummation (the finalization) of this world’s sinful rebellion into judgment in this fashion.

But family, there are details that make this happening even *more* dramatic, even *more* fantastic or what we might envision as *cinematic*. Up to this point, we realize that this “man of sin” will be worshiped by the world, that he will bring peace (initially) to the Middle East through seemingly brilliant political maneuvering. He will have a plan that will have the global economy firing on all cylinders. – *But the question that we’re left wondering about is... “How will he put himself in the spotlight? How will he make his move onto the global stage? How will he turn the world’s attention upon himself in such a definitive way, that essentially all the world (not categorically, but generally) will fall under his sway?”* Look at Vs 9...

### Vs 9-10

Perhaps you recall that I told you that during this time that the bible refers to as “the Day of the Lord”, “the time of Jacob’s trouble” that God would be involved in the affairs of this world in a much more direct, dramatic & drastic fashion than ever before... Even so, the bible teaches that Satan will step up in a way previously unparalleled as well.

*& It’s not that Satan wouldn’t do these things right now if he were allowed. Let’s remember “He who is restraining” hasn’t been taken out of the way. There’s a reason a full-fledged deceitful satanic assault hasn’t been unleashed upon mankind up to this point. It’s because the power of the Holy Spirit through the presence of the church is restraining it. But once the church is removed, the restraining power is taken out of the way; the coming of the lawless one will be in full effect.*

Notice, “W/all power, signs & lying wonders & w/all unrighteous deception...” Now; this draws something to our attention, doesn’t it? It’s true that Satan is a charlatan, he is a counterfeiter. But let’s not fool ourselves for a second so as to think he has no real power. (Of course, compared to the omnipotence of God he’s nothing, the Lord won’t even be needed to bind him at His return, He’ll dispatch Michael the Archangel to take care of that). But as far as we’re concerned, he’s incredibly powerful.

*He has the power to perform miracles... signs & wonders... Not cheap parlor tricks, not smoke & mirrors, not the art of misdirection or sleight of hand. “All power, signs & lying wonders...” The word “wonders” indicates the attitude of awe that people will have when they see what this guy can do... We’re learning here that the miracles he performs will be so powerful, so irrefutable, that it will be evident to all that his power is supernatural & people will stand in awe of him.*

Let's remember, he's the "anti", the "instead of" Christ. He will do the kinds of things Christ did. Perhaps he will heal people, walk on water... the bible tells us that he will receive a mortal wound & have some sort of death/resurrection experience. He will be able to call fire down from heaven... **Again, all energized by Satan himself. (Rev 13 speaks in detail about what we're reading of here. John takes an entire chapter & sort of unpacks what Paul is speaking of here). No one will be able to make war w/him & all will stand in awe of him.**

Now; there's a sub-point that we should be picking up on here & that is this. The A.C. will be persuading & proving to people that he's God by the miracles, the signs/wonders he performs. What that should alert us to is that miracles, signs/wonders aren't definitive proof that God is at work.

**If you recall; when Moses confronted Pharaoh, Pharaoh's magicians performed many of the same signs Moses did. Moses didn't say, "That's smoke & mirrors, this is a true miracle!" Their staves became snakes just the same! They turned water to blood, they manifested frogs as well...**

It's not just the miracle that validates a man is sent from God. Jesus spoke in regard to His return & said, **"... false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand."**<sup>1</sup> So we can't validate a man being sent from God, simply (if I can use that word) because miracles (genuine signs & wonders) are being manifested among us. **We also need to pay attention to his (listen): his message. It's not only the miracles that confirm God is on the move, it's also the message.**

Does his message lead you to obey God's *word*, honor God's *ways*, to worship & serve God? Or does he distract you *from* God, lead you to not think so highly *of* God, maybe look to another *besides* God? God spoke to the nation of Israel saying, **"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."**<sup>2</sup>

You see? God is telling us that not every miracle, or "wonder" comes from Him.

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 24:24–25). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Dt 13:1–3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

That doesn't mean I should ignore signs/wonders or say, "They don't happen today" it simply means that I should *discern* them. Again, not some sort of cheap scam (those are all too common). The question is, "Where does the *message* of the one who performed the *miracle* lead me?" These are called, "lying wonders" not because the wonder isn't legitimate but because they lead people to believe Satan's lies.

However, it's not only signs/wonders that will be employed by this man. Everything he does will be to mislead people, "all unrighteous deception", notice "among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved." -- The idea here is that his deception will only "take root" among those who did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved... If you're not willing to *receive* (that is believe, accept & adhere to) the *truth* of the gospel, then you're left wide open to "all unrighteous deception."

We might understand it like this. The consequence of believing, receiving the truth is *salvation*. (Notice it's the "love" of the truth. It's not a matter of what's happening in my head, it's a matter of what's happening in my heart). However, the consequence of rejecting the truth, not loving the truth... will be deception & *condemnation*.

Here's something you might ask yourself, "Does my heart hunger for truth?" Yes, the truth of the gospel, but I think we can broaden the spectrum a little bit... If we've learned anything over these last few yrs, it's that you can't believe everything you see on the news, or hear on the radio, or read on the internet. The words "fake news" are common play now... Activist agendas. (& I'm not speaking of *any* specific occurrence, just a general observation that I think we could all agree on. That much of what we see is narrative, or agenda driven.)

The question is, do we really want the truth, or do we want to settle for simply what makes us feel good, or fits into the way we think? Many people aren't really interested in the truth, they just want what they want... But here's the thing, if we don't want the truth, if we don't love the truth or aren't interested *in* the truth, we're ripe & ready to receive a lie. If we don't love the truth, we're basically saying, we want a lie. -- That's the context Paul is speaking into. This man of sin will be readily received because the love of the truth will have been rejected societally, globally (generally). Notice.

### Vs 11-12

You see, this is *God's* judgment. The A.C. essentially becomes the means by which God gives man over to the desire of their own heart.

God will send them (notice) *strong delusion* that they should believe the lie. Not just “a” lie. “the” lie. What lie is that? That the A.C. is their messiah, their Savior, God in the flesh... Does that mean God’s forces them to believe a lie? No, it means they chose to refuse to receive the love of the truth.

We know (1 Tim 2:4-6) that God desires all men everywhere to be saved & to come the knowledge of the truth! But the bible is clear (Rom 1:28-32) that when people refuse to receive the truth, God will allow them to pursue (& receive the ramifications of) their own way... What *they* want (which is a lie)... So let’s be clear. This is God’s judgment, but it’s their choice.

2 Things. #1 It always amazes me, the people who say something to the effect of. “Well, I’m not ready to receive it now, but if the day comes that I see these things happen, I’ll be the 1<sup>st</sup> to confess Him, & I sure won’t receive any ‘mark’ (in reference to the mark of the beast, [Rev 13:18]), I’ll die first!” – **Let me ask you... if you won’t receive Christ in the day of God’s grace, what makes you think you’ll stand ready to receive Him in the day of God’s wrath? & If you can’t live for Him now, what makes you think you’ll be able to die for Him then?**

Beyond that (& I hope I’m wrong on this) #2 If I read this correctly, once you’ve heard the truth & chose to reject the truth, it seems to me that you’ve sealed your own fate... You see this is the age of grace. You can hear the gospel, reject it, hear the gospel, reject it (& should you live long enough) maybe you’ll hear it one day & choose to receive it. **But if you’re of the # that hears it, rejects it, & the church is raptured & you miss it... According to the way I see this; that it. Having rejected the truth, God will send strong delusion & you’ll receive the lie... Again, I hope I’m wrong about that, but why take the chance? Just believe on the Lord Jesus today & be done with it.**

“Who then will be saved after the rapture?” All kinds of people, who’ve yet to hear the truth of the gospel. Do you realize that there are approximately 2 billion people on the planet today who have never heard the message of J.C. & Him crucified for the sins of the world? There’s about 2.3 billion on the planet who identify as Christians. **So, as many Christians who are in the world today (assuming that # represents every genuine believer, which is doubtful), there are approximately that many more people to be reached by the gospel So, millions & millions will still be saved... I’m just not sure if it’ll be any of those who had their chance & chose to turn away (& take pleasure in unrighteousness) rather than receive the truth.**

## Vs 13-14

“How can I not give God thanks” Paul says, “for the great work He’s done & is doing through you?” Let’s remind ourselves, it’s not only prayer that encourages people to keep going, praise will as well. Encourage others; it can make all the difference.

He says, “I thank God for you, because from the beginning, God chose you for salvation.” Jesus said that like this; **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit...”**<sup>3</sup> & I’m not going to turn this into an election Vs freewill study. We just need to remember, God doesn’t choose anyone for condemnation, (we’ve established that man chooses to reject the love of the truth, God desires all men everywhere to be saved). The invitation unto salvation went out to all the world at the cross of J.C. But God knows who will respond affirmatively to that invitation & He chooses them. But if you don’t want to be forgiven of your sin, you don’t want to be saved by Jesus, don’t blame God for that, that’s your choice.

What I want to draw your attention to here is the fact that God chose you for salvation (notice) *through sanctification*. Guys, the idea here is that *salvation* & *sanctification* go together (the principle of being set apart *from* the world *unto* God)... It blows my mind the boldness that some “Christians” have, to brag on their sin (via the dumping grounds of social media) & then boldly state, “& I’m a Christian” in a “I dare you to judge me” kind of way!

You’ll see it from time to time, “I do this, I do that, I’ll partake of these things... & I’m a Christian.” As if they’re exceptions to the word of God! Listen, there’s a night/day difference between a person who says, “I want to be transparent. I struggle w/this, I’ve stumbled over that... but I love God, I want to be changed *by* God, I’m learning what it means to follow God & lead my life in such a way as to bring Him glory.” Vs, “Yeah, I sin, so what? I’m still a Christian.” One is a contrite & broken spirit, humbled in the sight of God, repentant before God... The other is braggadocios, prideful, if not defiant.

But family; don’t live on the shaky grounds of claiming salvation w/no evidence of sanctification. They go together. I may not see your *salvation*; but I can certainly see your *sanctification*. Don’t try & tell me that God will save us from the *consequence* of sin while allowing us to continue to revel in the pollution of sin itself... A life that’s been *saved* by Him, has been & *is being changed* by Him... How so?

<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Jn 15:16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“By the Spirit & belief in the truth.” The Spirit of God & the Word of God working together to make us more like Jesus. Teaching us to crucify the flesh & to walk in the Spirit.

Now; in their case God used Paul to preach the gospel to them, & that’s how God called them. Some people, He calls through my preaching of the gospel, or your presenting of the gospel. The call of God unto salvation comes through the preaching or presenting of the gospel. “For the obtaining of the glory of our Lord J.C.”

### Vs 15

When you hear the word, “traditions” don’t think of “religious traditions” that so easily creep into the church & turn us in to old un-flexible wineskins. He’s in reference to the teachings of the apostles. This was literally the 2<sup>nd</sup>, maybe 3<sup>rd</sup> epistle ever written. Most of the teaching of the apostles was still oral at this point, passed from one to the other. Paul is saying, “Don’t abandon what you’ve been taught, be it by our words or our letters.” “Don’t be moved from the truth of the gospel.”

But rather, stand fast... Keep on keeping on. Hold tight to the truth of what Jesus has for you, that He’s returning to receive you, don’t allow the currents of our worldly culture pull you down the stream of sinful compromise. Keep hold of what the apostles have taught you. He saying, “Anchor yourself to the word of God, & refuse to be moved from it at all costs.”

### Vs 16-17

He points to God’s past faithfulness to give them present hope & encouragement. “Remember all that God has done for you, He won’t abandon you now.” “May He comfort your hearts & establish (or strengthen) you in every good word & work.

This kind of hearkens back to “salvation through sanctification”. It’s not simply in learning the language, having words that sound godly. It needs to be matched by a life that’s lived godly. Word & work, not just learning truth, living truth. We’re to be doers of the word of God. Listen, being a *defender* of the faith is great, being a *demonstrator* of the faith is greater still. I don’t think Lazarus gave too many lectures on being called out of death into life. People only needed to look at him & all the evidence was there (Jn 12:9-11).

Family, when a person believes on the Lord J.C. & the fact that He will come again & receive us to Himself. It will impact their attitude toward the *Word*, toward their *walk* & toward their *works*. – Salvation through sanctification by the Spirit & belief in the truth. Amen? Amen.

**Prayer Points:**

God we thank You for the life changing power & the rejuvenating waters of Your word. May we hunger all the more for truth & may our lives reflect the wonderful work of Your salvation, through the working out of sanctification through the power of Your Spirit & the truth of Your word. Strengthen us to stand fast, to not be moved from what we've been taught, that You might be glorified in our lives.

If God is calling you through the gospel today, let me implore you, receive the love of the truth. That Jesus has loved you, He has shed His blood & died upon the cross for you, He was buried & 3 days later He rose from the dead that you might have life in His name. Turn from your sin; trust in Him, right here, right now.