

II Thessalonians 2:6-8

The Correct Understanding Concerning the Day of the Lord Part 1

Alright, this morning we are going to start a new section, II Thessalonians chapter 2 verses 6 through 12, the main theme of II Thessalonians. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians with the central theme to share with them, the basic essentials, and the basics of what we call The Day of the Lord, or the Tribulation Period, which is a seven-year period of time which God has designated and set apart for the judgment upon the nonbelieving world.

According to his first letter, in I Thessalonians chapter 4 the believers are taken up in what is called theologically *the rapture*. And then I Thessalonians chapter 5 he describes this day of judgment, this tribulation period. He says the basics of The Day of the Lord (or the tribulation period), this is not a time of trial or testing upon the earth, but the time of judgment. God's judgment upon the earth. They were told - as he related in chapter 1 of II Thessalonians - that they were told by false teachers that they are suffering hardship because of their difficulties and that it is actually the judgment of God. And Paul is saying, "No, it is not the judgment of God, it is the natural thing that Christians go through. In fact, your suffering for the sake of Christ is what makes you worthy of the kingdom of God," he related in chapter 1. So because of the trials and hardships they were going through, these false teachers came in telling them that they were in the judgment or tribulation period.

Well, Paul wrote in chapter 1 the comfort concerning trials, the trials are a normal thing for believers for them to grow. But the tribulation period or The Day of the Lord is the time of judgment, not a time of growth. And so he mentioned to them that God's grace is sufficient to take them through the normal trials. That the trials were God's way of proving them, that is, developing their relationship with Him. And that the trust in the Lord through these trials was the whole purpose, to be a pattern, or an example of encouragement in ministry to others. And Paul related in that first letter that he used the Christians in Thessalonica and their trust in the Lord during hard times as an example and a pattern of what those trials are for, and what they are supposed to be teaching.

Then he shared with them the promises of God. Both for believers - they were going to be glorified with Him to rule and to reign with Him. But also that those who do not believe, and those who are perishing, those who are going to suffer the judgment of God.

And then Paul's prayer for them at the end of chapter 1 - that they would understand all of these things and receive the comfort concerning trials.

As we opened up chapter 2 two weeks ago, we have the correction concerning the tribulation. Verses 1 to 5 were the introduction to verses 6 through 12 that we are starting today, which is the central theme of the book. Verses 6 through 12, we are going to begin at verse 1 by way of summary and lead us into verses 6 through 12. Verses 1 to 12 is actually one section in the Greek text. We have divided it up into half because verses 1 to 5 is our introductory comments that lead us into the central theme. Verse 2 is the purpose for asking.

He asks them in verse 1, **Now we ask you, brothers regarding the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him.** (Verse 2) **For you to not quickly be shaken from the mind.** So the purpose for his writing is that they should not be shaken from the perception of spiritual things that Paul had taught. The word *mind* is the Greek word **νοῦς** (nous), and it has to do with the perception abilities of the mind. And so what he is saying to you is I am asking you regarding these two things, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him. And he says, "My concern for you is that you are being removed or shaken from the perception we gave you. When we taught you gained a perception as to what the coming of the Lord is really all about. What trials are really all about." And he says to them, "My concern for you is that you are quickly shaken from the mind, that is the perception that we gave you. You now have a different perception of what the coming of the Lord is really all about. Somebody has told you some things that have caused you think something differently than that which we taught." Satan likes to pull people away from the true perception. He likes to pull them away from the understanding of what God's word brings and teaches.

And secondly, he says, **Not only shaken from the mind but also troubling you.** The word *trouble* means *to faint*. They are troubling you and causing you to faint.

In the second part of verse 2, the three ways in which he is concerned that they would be shaken and troubled.

- 1) Number one, **whether through spirit.** That is somebody coming up to you and saying, "The Spirit of God has told me that you are going through the tribulation period. That is why you are suffering hardship." He says special messages from God through some kind of spiritual messenger that are not founded upon the Word of God.
- 2) The second thing that takes you away, **Or through word,** it says in verse 2. That is some kind of teaching, whether it is teaching, or whether some system of teaching, someone through their speech and systematic teaching can pull you away from the perception of the Scriptures and trouble you.
- 3) Thirdly, the third thing that he mentioned, **Or through letter,** he says.

Even if they present it as being from us, or somebody brings you a message from the Spirit, or somebody comes to you with some kind of teaching, or some kind of message, and draws your mind away from the perception of the truth that Paul taught, and to bring a person to be troubled. He says, "That is what we are asking you regarding these two things about the coming of the Lord and our gathering together to Him." He says, "You are off-track and now I have to write this second letter to get you back on track."

Look at verse 3, **Anyone should not deceive you according to any way: because *that day will not come, unless the apostasy should come first.*** Some English texts say, *unless a falling away comes first.* It is the word **ἀποστασία** (apostasia) in the Greek text. It is a falling away, but it is a spiritual falling away, it is a falling away from the faith. ***That day will not come, unless the apostasy should come first, and the man of sin should be revealed, the son of perdition.*** The word *perdition* means *destruction*.

So he shared with them two things in verse 3. The falling away is not the taking up of the church. It is the word **ἀποστασία** (apostasia) as I said earlier. It is apostasy, the falling away from the faith must come first. And second, **the man of sin**, or as some texts have it, **the man of lawlessness is revealed, who is called the son of perdition** (or *the son of destruction*). So there must be a falling away from the faith first. Not revival but a falling away from the faith. And secondly, the son of destruction or the son of perdition must be revealed before that day of judgment can come.

We left off at verse 3 last week. Look at verse 4, **this son of destruction; the one opposing and exalting himself above all things being called God, or worshiped; so as for him to sit in the temple of God as God, displaying himself that he is God.** In the middle of the tribulation period the antichrist, the son of perdition, is going to help the Jews rebuild their Temple. And he is going to help them start their sacrifices over again. And then he is going to set up his image in the holy of holies, and he is going to tell the people that unless they bow down and worship his image, they cannot receive the mark which helps them to participate in the marketing system, economic system of the world. You must receive his number in order to buy and sell, the book of Revelation tells us. And that mark can only be given if you bow down and worship his image in the holy of holies. So the two things are supposed to happen: there is supposed to be an apostasy and a falling away from the faith; and the son of man, the son of lawlessness should be revealed.

Now this position in verse 4. So the antichrist is somebody who is going to oppose Christ by taking His place. That is what *anti* means. *Anti* does not mean *to go against*, but rather *to take the place of*. So he is somebody who is going to oppose Christ by taking His place.

So we saw three things last week. Paul's previous teaching in verse 1, he is reminding them that they had been removed from that perception. And so Paul repeats his prior teaching. He tells them the purpose of his request: **that they be not shaken or troubled from the perception of the truth.** And third, to understand the position which the antichrist (or the son of perdition) is going to take. He is the guy that is going to oppose everything that is God. The antichrist is going to control the entire religious, political, and economic systems of the world. He is going to hold the whole world, the whole habitable Earth in his hand as being God himself. Not the representative of God, but God himself in human form. He is going to control those three systems political, economic, and religious. And we see those formations taking place by the politics and the events of the world, not only in the Middle East, but also in America, in our political system; getting ready for one man who will be the son of perdition, the antichrist, who will come, and he will be the head of the political, religious and economic systems of the world.

Now verses 6 through 8, look at verse 6. **And now you know the one restraining, for him to be revealed in his own time.** So, first of all, he is telling two things must happen. First, we have to understand this concept that there is a restraining going on. The word *restraining* in Greek literally means *holding down* or *holding back*. There is something that is holding all this back that is restraining them from taking place and he is explaining that right now. This is why he says we cannot be in the tribulation period, these things must happen; there must be a falling away from the faith, and the son of lawlessness must be revealed. Well, he is not revealed yet.

The whole world economic, political, and religious systems are not under his control. Therefore we cannot be in the tribulation because there is something that is restraining, or something that is holding all of this back. He says that he may be revealed in his own time, in verse 6. So someday this man, this son of perdition, this lawless one, this antichrist is going to be revealed. Not right now, because he is being restrained. The whole process is being restrained. And now he is going to explain it.

We can identify what the restraining is here when he says, **The one who restrains**. Your English text might have *that which holds back*. Notice the word *which* or the word *what* some translations use, we have translated it literally: *the one restraining*. But it should be pointed out to you that the reason why these different translations are trying to point out something that is neutral, *what is holding back, the one holding back*; it is neuter in the grammar. It is neither masculine, nor is it feminine, it is neuter. It is not talking about a man hindering, nor is it talking about a woman hindering, but *that which* or *the one* who holds back. The Holy Spirit is neuter. In Greek it is neuter. We translate it in English as *the one*, but it is really *it*, because *spirit* is neuter. It is not masculine or feminine gender, it is neuter. A spirit is the object which holds back or is restraining. It is God's Spirit that is doing the restraining, and holding everything back from taking place, which would introduce the tribulation or judgment period.

We read in verse 7, **For the mystery of the lawlessness is already working: only the One restraining at the present, until he should come from out of the midst**. We will see when we get to verse 7 that the whole gender changes to where it is no longer neuter but it is masculine. **Only the One restraining at the present**. *The One* is now masculine, not neuter. It is not the spirit. It is a person. The text is talking about God himself and His Spirit holding all this back until a certain time. It is that God's Spirit is going to let go and let this antichrist be revealed.

So the thing that we learned today is a couple things.

First of all, about the sovereignty of God. The Bible teaches that God's Spirit governs everything and everybody on the earth. God's spirit governs everything and everybody, every person upon the earth, whether they are believers or nonbelievers. The Bible also teaches that God controls Satan. He controls all the circumstances that people go through, but He has a purpose for it.

I remember several years ago there was a famine in Thailand and the Thai people were taking to boats and sailing away to try to find food and try to find shelter, and many of them died. Boats were overturned and people drowned. They were called *boat people*. The boats were just overloaded and they tipped over. Some people were saying about this, "How can a God of love allow starvation? How can a God of love allow these people to die?" God is in charge. I do not have to apologize for Him, but we do not understand but that is the way it is. He is either in charge or He is not God. But anyway on the front page of the Los Angeles Times one Sunday there was one of the boat people, he had landed on shore in some island out in the sea, and they showed him kneeling and thanking Buddha. And so I said to myself, "There is the answer right there." The reason God doesn't step in, in most instances, is a lot of people are serving a false god and their god is not helping them. If God steps in to help, then they are going

to attribute it to be of the false god. So God gives them over to call upon their false god but he is not answering. God allows them to suffer the starvation and the hardship because their god is not answering. And if God were to help them, they would attribute it to be the false god and everybody would start serving the false god.

All through the Bible it is God's Spirit working with men. God has a timetable and He has a purpose for every single thing that He does, and man cannot stop that timetable. So when God's judgment comes it will be because God's time has come.

I read in a magazine here a couple weeks ago where they said, "The reason why the Lord has not come back is God's people are not praying enough for it." People cannot make it happen. God has a timetable. God has a reason. And He is just, and He is right in everything that He does. It is His Spirit that restrains right now, as we speak, just like in Paul's day. It is the Holy Spirit that withholds the antichrist from taking over because we are still here. We are still here. Paul says we are going to be gone, in I Thessalonians chapter 4. And then tribulation and the day of judgment is going to take place, I Thessalonians chapter 5. For the mystery of lawlessness is already working, that is what our verse tells us in verse 7. It is already working, in other words, right now it is a mystery, this whole realm, this whole evil system is going to take over during the tribulation. It is already working right now. It is already here. It just has not been revealed yet.

We see in a quote in verse 7, **It is already working**. That is point number one. Only the one who now restrains, notice it is now masculine. That is, He is holding back until He removes His Spirit from the situation. So from verse 7 and from verse 6 we understand the neuter form to be God's Spirit. And here in verse 7 the masculine form of God is God on the throne. God is holding in and restraining the lawlessness one back, until He removes His Spirit from the situation. And it is not removing the Spirit from the earth because God's Spirit never leaves the earth. But he is making reference here to the removal of God's Spirit from hindering the revealing of the antichrist. If your text says *taken away* at the end of verse 7, it just means that he comes out of the midst, that is the translation at the end of verse 7. *He is taken out of the way*, there is no word *taken*. Literally it is translated, *he becomes from out of the midst*. In other words, God's Spirit is here holding back.

The third thing in verse 8, **And then the lawless one will be revealed**. That is when God's Spirit is removed from hindering the revelation of the antichrist. He says in verse 8, **Whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth, and destroy in the brightness of His coming**. The word *brightness* is the word *appearance*.

So three things about the restraint. The man of sin, or the man of lawlessness, is going to be revealed. But he will be revealed when God - who is restraining - when He removes His Spirit and then the lawless one is going to be revealed. And then third, he is going to be destroyed. According to verse 8, the lawless one is going to be destroyed when the Lord comes at His second coming.

We will take the second part of this section next week as we have run out of time. I encourage you about next week, that he is going to talk about the lawless one in verse 9. He

says, **According to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood,** (verse 10) **and in all deception of unrighteousness to the ones perishing.** He is going to be performing miracles. He is going to be healing. He is going to be setting himself up as God, this lawless one, and is he going to be deceiving the people who are rejecting Christ. Because of this God is going to send a working of deception, interesting study for next week, God sends a deception. Not all people are open to the truth. Some have rejected the truth and because of that God has sent them a deception, according to verse 10, **because they did not receive the love of the truth.** Keep that in mind for next week. It is not that they rejected the truth, they rejected the love of the truth. God wanted to give them a love for His truth, but they rejected it. It is not that they rejected the Bible or rejected the word of God, but rather they rejected the truth. All of this must take place at the time of judgment and before the judgment.

But next week will get in depth to study how all this figures with us in our efforts to as we say, try to reach people for Christ. Well, unless the Lord is doing it, you cannot. You cannot reach people for Christ with human effort. It must be the Lord.

Okay, let's close with prayer.