

Session 15

An Exposition of I & II Thessalonians

II Thessalonians 2:10–3:5

Scriptures

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II Thessalonians 2:10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

When men do not love the truth and count it as their greatest joy, they place themselves in a position fertile for deception.

Ultimately, it is the engrafted Word that saves a man's soul and the kept Word that keeps him from sinning against God. Both will only be accomplished when men love the truth, without which they can easily be deceived.

Hence, at the core of all apostasy is the reality that those who apostatized held no real affection for the truth, which itself reveals no real affection for God and the holiness contained in His divine nature.

It is this absence of love for God and His Word that sets the table for human deception by evil forces.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Thess. 2:10

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness - There are two ideas here. The first is, that there would be deceit; and the other is, that it would be for the purpose of promoting unrighteousness or iniquity. The iniquitous system would be maintained by fraudulent methods.

The Antichrist is said to lead people towards unrighteousness through deceit. Iniquity is such an odious thing, so much so that even those born in sin will not fully embrace it without a level of deception.

Hence, for sin to fully grow, deceit is needed to make good be perceived as evil and evil be embraced as good.

The people most susceptible to the Antichrist's deceptive and controlling methods will be those who, because of an affection for sin, took pleasure in unrighteousness.

When a deep and affectionate love for truth is absent, all that is left for men to have affection for, is sin. What people love directly affects what they believe. This is why a man's appetites will eventually determine his destiny.

The heart and what it cherishes most, whether God or the world, greatly determines what is believed. So, if sin is embraced and not God, it is impossible to escape deception.

Observe as well that love for the truth is directly linked to love for God. Therefore, when men cease to love the truth, it sends a very clear message that love for self, sin, and the world is preferred above God.

II Thessalonians 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

Though Satan and the man of sin begin the process of deception in those who love not the truth, it is God Who finishes it.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, II Thess. 2:11

A terrible combination when God and Satan are agreed to deceive a man! Yet what an encouragement to see God using Satan for His own purposes.

No one can resist God, abandon His will, and not pay harsh consequence for their actions. To those who love not the truth, God will send them *strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*.

Benson Commentary, II Thess. 2:11

For this cause God shall send them — That is, shall judicially permit to come upon them; *strong delusion* — The strong working of error in their hearts. From this we learn that, as a punishment of their sins, God suffers wicked men to fall into greater sins; and as the sin of the persons described in this passage consisted in their not loving the truth, what could be more just or proper than to punish them, by suffering them to fall into the belief of the greatest errors and lies? Thus the heathen, mentioned Romans 1:24, were punished by God's giving them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts; that they should believe a lie — Or, as the words εἰς τὸ πιστεῦσαι αὐτοὺς τῷ ψευδεῖ may be translated, *so that they will believe a lie*.

Matthew Poole's Commentary, II Thess. 2:11

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion: we had account in the former verse of such as are deceived by the man of sin, of their sin, and here of their punishment. They were first deluded, which was their sin; and God sends them strong delusion, and that is their punishment. They did not receive the truth in the love of it, which was their sin; and therefore are given up to believe a lie, which is their punishment. Had they received the truth aright, they might have been saved; but not receiving it, they are damned.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Thess. 2:11

God often places people in circumstances to develop their own nature, and it cannot be shown to be wrong that He should do so. If people have no love of the truth, and no desire to be saved, it is not improper that they should be allowed to manifest this.

It is an observable law that what men sow, they shall reap.

This justice is constantly executed by a sovereign God, and none can escape bringing into their lives what was sown in their hearts. The English idiom “the chickens have come home to roost” informs us that even in an ungodly world, men are somewhat aware that their previous actions will result in future consequences. However, Geoffrey Chaucer's idea in “The Parson's Tale” cannot remotely compare to what God's Word reveals on the subject.

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

If men refuse to love the truth, God will ensure they believe a lie.

This teaches us that even in unbelief and rebellion, God maintains control over all things by yielding to men exactly as they have sown.

II Thessalonians 2:12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Here we see God's universal judgment, that *all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*. The emphasis here is that *all* who love sin and follow the *man of sin* in embracing it shall be *damned*.

Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines *damned*, the Greek *krinó* #2919, as: "to separate, put asunder; to pick out, select, choose."

This teaches us that those who will be damned and judged by God shall be selected and separated out for their sin.

The scripture states that *all might be damned who believed not the truth*, revealing that *all*, without exception, who engaged in sin shall be damned by God. Apostasy is worthy of judgment, and God shall make sure it is executed upon all who love sin over righteousness.

II Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

In comforting contrast to those who will be damned because of their affection for sin, the apostle now turns to what God has purposed for the Thessalonians, who had exhibited a belief and a love for the gospel.

Whereas damnation awaits the deceived, salvation and sanctification awaits those who choose Christ.

It should be emphasized that since God is God, He can just as easily sanctify a soul for heaven and cleanse it of sin as He can send one to hell because of love for sin. The Lord's power to cleanse should not be thought less than His power to damn. Both will be in operation at Christ's coming and carried out to fulfill God's purposed end.

Men can know that God has chosen them for salvation by their being sanctified by His Holy Spirit. This spiritual baptism, performed by the Son of God, renders men fit for heaven and proves spiritual election by God.

Ultimately, possessing the Holy Spirit certifies heavenly sonship and confirms inheritance in heaven.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Thess. 2:13

No one can have evidence that he is chosen to salvation except as he has evidence that he is sanctified by the Spirit; . . .

No one who is not a believer in the truth can have evidence that God has chosen him.

II Thessalonians 2:14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ now possesses a *glory*, and those who have believed upon Him will share in it. Hence, as dark and dreary as the apostasy and the man of sin's rise to power will be, equally as brilliant will be the glory of the Son of God and the spiritual glory He will give to those saved by Him.

In truth, there is no gray area between light and darkness, no middle ground that any man will be allowed to stand on. Thus, God's final judgment for man must fall into one of two camps. Either men will be glorified because of their connection to the Son of God or be condemned because they chose the pleasure of sin.

Obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Whenever we think of heaven and life beyond this earthly abode, we should think of it as God describes it and not as we might be misled to believe it will be. Thus, it is not simply that a man will enter a land of heavenly bliss, but rather that those called by Christ shall obtain and share in the *glory* of Jesus Christ.

Saints, therefore, shall possess a portion of the Son of God's celestial glory. This is the true hope of the gospel, and it provides great spiritual encouragement when believed.

Colossians 1:27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

Children share the characteristics of their father, and the children of God are no different. Because of their faith, God's new sons are purposed to share in the glory of the first begotten Son of God.

And though this coming glorification will not be equal to Christ's heavenly position as the Head of all things, it will be of the same constitution and worth as His glorified body. One record in God's Word that hints at the glory of Jesus is found in Matthew's gospel, detailing the events of His transfiguration.

***Matthew 17:1-2 And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.***

It was not accidental that Jesus led His disciples to the top of a mount to reveal to them His future glory. This symbolized that it would be necessary for Him to ascend into heaven to receive His full glorified reward from God.

The word for *transfigured* is the Greek #3339 *metamorphoó*. *HELPS Word-studies* defines it as "(from 3326 /*metá*, 'change after being with' and 3445 /*morphóō*, 'changing form in keeping with inner reality') – properly, transformed after being with; transfigured."

This word is also where, in English, we get the terms "'metamorphosis' and 'metamorphize.'" By this, we can see that the glory that is now Christ's cannot be likened to any earthly body, including the tabernacle Jesus walked in while on this earth.

Christ's transfiguration was purposed for Peter, James, and John to observe so they could see His glorified state. No doubt, this sight of the Lord Jesus in heavenly glory did much to encourage the disciples that their faith in Christ was warranted, and it provided them the spiritual confidence to remain faithful despite the troubles that lay ahead.

Meyer's NT Commentary, Matt. 17:2

was *transfigured*, in the way about to be described. That is to say, His external aspect was changed (“non substantialis, *sed accidentalis fuit transformatio*,” Calovius); His face gleaming like the sun, and His raiment being so white that it shone like light. He appeared in outward heavenly δόξα, which μεγαλειότης (2 Peter 1:16) was the foreshadowing of His future glorified state (John 12:16; John 12:23; John 17:5; John 21:24; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Matthew 13:43). The analogy presented by Exodus 34:29 comes short in this respect, that, whereas the brightness on the face of Moses was the result of God’s having *appeared before him*, in the case of Christ it proceeded from His own divine *nature and life*, the δόξα of which radiated *from within*.

Once Christ’s power has miraculously transformed believers’ bodies, they shall not only see Jesus as He actually is, but be provided with the necessary spiritual ability to behold the entire spiritual world.

I John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, I John 3:2

see *him*—not in His innermost Godhead, but as manifested in Christ. None but the pure can see the infinitely Pure One. In all these passages the Greek is the same verb *opsomai*; not denoting the action of seeing, but the state of him to whose eye or mind the object is presented; hence the Greek verb is always in the middle or reflexive voice, to perceive and inwardly appreciate [Tittmann]. Our spiritual bodies will appreciate and recognize spiritual beings hereafter, as our natural bodies now do natural objects.

II Thessalonians 2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

It is one thing to be taught the truth, and quite another to fully obey it. It is important to understand this, as many mistakenly believe that hearing the Word is equal to obeying it.

James 1:22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Jas. 1:22

Deceiving your own selves - It is implied here, that by merely hearing the word but not doing it, they would deceive their own souls. The nature of this deception was this, that they would imagine that that was all which was required, whereas the main thing was that they should be obedient. If a man supposes that by a mere punctual attendance on preaching, or a respectful attention to it, he has done all that is required of him, he is laboring under a most gross self-deception. And yet there are multitudes who seem to imagine that they have done all that is demanded of them when they have heard attentively the word preached. Of its influence on their lives, and its claims to obedience, they are utterly regardless.

Practically, it makes no difference how we are exposed to the Word of truth, either by *word* or *epistle*. Whether He speaks to us through the Spirit or writing, the Lord’s Word comes from Him and should be believed and obeyed.

II Thessalonians 2:16 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,

Because of the Father's and Son's love, saints are given *everlasting consolation and good hope through grace*. The comfort given to the Christian at his new birth is both everlasting and eternal.

This informs us that once born of God, the comfort of God will never leave us. It has been given to us by divine means, and it shall not be taken away, even in death.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Thess. 2:16

And hath given us everlasting consolation. - Not temporary comfort, but that which will endure forever. The joys of religion are not like other joys. They soon fade away - they always terminate at death - they cease when trouble comes, when sickness invades the frame, when wealth or friends depart, when disappointment lowers, when the senses by age refuse to minister as they once did to our pleasures. The comforts of religion depend upon no such contingencies. They live through all these changes - attend us in sickness, poverty, bereavement, losses, and age; they are with us in death, and they are perpetual and unchanging beyond the grave.

II Thessalonians 2:17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

It is not simply that God loves His children and gives them hope, which every sinner lacks, but that He comforts their hearts and establishes them in every good word and work.

In this supernatural process, the peace and strength that dwell in God and are a characteristic of His Being are transmitted into the hearts and lives of His people.

II Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

⁴ Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

It is the will and work of God that the saved are filled with His supernatural comfort and peace.

The Lord has always been the great and sustaining strength of His people. Therefore, when believers are *established in the faith* and comforted when facing trials, it is because of God's care for His own.

Acts 16:5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Whenever saints are grounded in the truth, it is because of God's power and influence in their lives. Whether this establishment occurs through the Holy Spirit or Christ's ministers, the One to be praised is always God.

Through the Father's presence in His people's lives, they shall be established in the Christian gospel and grow confident of its truth and revelations.

II Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Thess. 3:1

Finally, brethren, pray for us - That is, for Paul, Silas, and Timothy, then engaged in arduous labors at Corinth. This request for the prayers of Christians is one which Paul often makes; see the notes, 1 Thessalonians 5:25.

That the word of the Lord may have free course - That is, the gospel. The margin is “run.” So also the Greek. The idea is, that it might meet with no obstruction, but that it might be carried abroad with the rapidity of a racer out of whose way every hindrance was removed. The gospel would spread rapidly in the earth if all the obstructions which men have put in its way were removed; and that they may be removed should be one of the constant subjects of prayer.

Concerning prayer, there lies a very important truth; it is that whatever a man believes is his greatest strength is what he will lean on when setting about to do a work. Hence, if men believe that it is through their own power and ability that the gospel is advanced and believed in, it is to themselves that they will turn to for strength.

A man’s prayer life, therefore, or perhaps a lack of it, reveals the true source of his confidence. For Paul, it was God; for most, it is self.

Every true Christian’s desire is that when others hear the truth, God will be glorified from it. For the true Christian it is God Who is sought to be glorified, and not self. When truth is sincerely believed, this is what will actually happen—God will be glorified as men come to realize the glorious nature of His person.

II Thessalonians 3:2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

When men cease to call upon the name of the Lord, wickedness grows. And the more sin develops in sinners, the more wickedness you will see manifested from them. Where there is sin, evil deeds and actions will follow.

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary, II Thess 3:2
have not faith—or as Greek, “the faith” of the Christian: the only antidote to what is “unreasonable and wicked.” The Thessalonians, from their ready acceptance of the Gospel (1Th 1:5, 6), might think “all” would similarly receive it; but the Jews were far from having such a readiness to believe the truth.

II Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

As much as God is love and light, He is also faithful. This is seen in His faithfulness to uphold His promises, provide forgiveness for sin, and receive those called to heaven through His Son.

The Lord is faithful and this shall be proven when He establishes His saints and keeps them from evil.

How a man views God also directly affects his confidence in Him. Hence, if he does not believe that God is faithful, it will be difficult for him to gain and maintain consistent trust in the Lord. Consequently, at the foundation of any true walk with God, is held a firm belief in God’s faithfulness.

There is another great truth that should be considered concerning God’s faithfulness; it is this: if men deny God, His faithfulness demands that He will deny them.

So that just as God is faithful to preserve saints from evil, equally faithful will He be to send sinners to hell.

II Timothy 2:12–13 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

13 If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, II Tim. 2:13

Yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.—Those who have understood these words as containing soothing, comforting voices for the sinner, for the faithless Christian who has left his first love, are gravely mistaken. The passage is one of distinct severity—may even be termed one of the sternest in the Book of Life; for it tells how it is impossible even for the pitiful Redeemer to forgive in the future life. “He cannot deny Himself”—cannot treat the faithless as though he were faithful—cannot act as though faithfulness and faithlessness were one and the same thing. The Christian teacher, such as Timothy, and the members of his flock likewise, must remember that, sure and certain as are the promises of glory and happiness to those who love the Lord and try to live His life, so surely will fall the chastisement on all who are faithless and untrue.

Just as God remains faithful to those who obey His will, His faithfulness demands that He cannot save those who do not.

Ultimately, God cannot treat the faithless as faithful.

II Thessalonians 3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

At the base of all Christian ministry should be confidence in the Lord. Hence, Paul's confidence that the Thessalonians would obey the gospel brought to them, lay in the fact of his confidence in the Lord, working in them to do so.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Thess. 3:4

And we have confidence in the Lord - Not primarily in you, for you have hearts like others, but in the Lord. It is remarkable that when Paul expresses the utmost confidence in Christians that they will live and act as becomes their profession, his reliance is not on anything in themselves, but wholly on the faithfulness of God. He must be a stranger to the human heart who puts much confidence in it even in its best state; see Philippians 1:6; Philippians 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:12; compare Jde 1:24; Revelation 3:10; Proverbs 28:26.

Paul's confidence that the Thessalonians would do all that the Lord had commanded stemmed from the fact that he knew God was now their strength.

Whereas sin had been dominant in the Thessalonians before conversion, now holiness would manifest itself in their hearts as the greater power. And though sin could still tempt these new children of God, it could no longer control them.

The ability to obey the gospel had been provided by God, through giving the Thessalonians new hearts that would keep God's commandments.

Ezekiel 36:26–27 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Benson Commentary, Ezek. 36:26

A new heart also will I give you — A new disposition of mind, excellent in itself, and vastly different from what it was before; a frame of soul changed from sinful to holy, from carnal to spiritual; a heart in which the law of God is written, Jeremiah 31:33; a sanctified spirit, in which the almighty grace of God is victorious, and turns it from the world to God, and from all sin to all holiness; a state of mind which is the supernatural gift of God, and not wrought

in any man by his own power. *And I will take away the stony heart* — The hard, senseless, unfeeling, inflexible heart; the heart unapt and averse to receive any divine impressions, and to return any devout affections. *Out of your flesh* — That is, out of you. *And I will give you a heart of flesh* — A soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, and is conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures; a heart of quite another temper, hearkening to God's law, trembling at his threats, moulded into a compliance with his whole will; disposed to do, to be, or to suffer what God wills; receiving the divine impress as soft wax receives the impress of the seal. *I will put my Spirit within you* — My enlightening, regenerating, and sanctifying Spirit; that Holy Spirit which is given to and dwells in all true believers; *and cause you* — Sweetly and powerfully, yet without compulsion; *to walk in my statutes* — In all my ordinances and commandments, and that from judgment, choice, and affection. For our spirits, when renewed by God's Spirit to a disposition conformed to his holiness, readily comply with his will in all things, concur with his designs, and become *workers together with him*. *And ye shall keep my judgments, and do them* — Ye shall be willing and able to perform all acceptable obedience, and to live a life of universal holiness and righteousness.

II Thessalonians 3:5 And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

God's Spirit inspired the Thessalonians to obey the gospel, and that same Holy Spirit directed them to grow in the *love of God* and *patient waiting for Christ*.

Matthew Poole's Commentary, II Thess. 3:5

Till man's love is set upon God, the motions of the heart are crooked and irregular; as the ways of sin are called *crooked ways*, Psalm 125:5; and John [the] Baptist's ministry was to make crooked things straight, Isaiah 40:4. The turning [of] man's heart and ways towards God makes them straight. David prays, Psalm 119:36: *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies*; *ybm-jh* ... Or as he prays God to unite his heart to his fear, Psalm 86:11; so here Paul, to direct theirs to his love, by which some understand all religion. We learn hence, that to direct man's heart to the love of God is the work of God, and beyond our power. And the hearts of the best saints stand in need of a more perfect and constant direction unto the love of God.

Love is the divine quality that, when manifested in Christians, reveals their true knowledge of God and the higher spiritual realm. Ultimately, all who are truly born of God through the Spirit will manifest a deep love for not only their Savior but those born of Him. This is something a merely religious man can never possess.

I John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Ultimately, divine love is that spiritual fruit that confirms true relationship with God. For those who dwell in love, dwell in God, and He in them.

Hence, whenever divine love is present, we can know that that person indeed has fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and the Lord Jesus with him.

The patient waiting for Christ.

Barnes' Notes on the Bible, II Thess. 3:5

And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God - So direct your hearts that you may love God. "And into the patient waiting for Christ." Margin, "patience of Christ." The marginal reading is in accordance with the Greek, and seems best to express the apostle's meaning. The prayer of the apostle was, that they might have the love of God in their hearts, and "the patience of Christ;" that is, the same patience which Christ evinced in his trials.

