

II THESSALONIANS 2:5-12
THE LAWLESS ONE!
PART 1

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to II Thessalonians chapter 2 as we continue our study through Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica. Keep in mind that this was a young church. And yet, their lives manifested what God had done in them. They lived what they said they believed.

And in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians he shared about the coming of the Lord in every chapter! That tells me that when Paul spent three Sabbaths with them teaching them the things of God, this was an important part of what he was teaching, the coming of the Lord!

We also need to keep in mind that they were suffering intense persecution for their faith. Think about that. They came out of the darkness into the light of God and their lives changed. Thus, their family, their friends, those that they worked with saw this change and for many of them, this light of God shining down upon them was too much. Thus, they lashed out at these Christians, to try to put out this light!

Because of the persecution, because of some false prophecies and false teaching by false teachers, as well as a letter that was supposedly written by Paul, it wasn't, there was some confusion in this church.

You see, they thought they were in the Day of the Lord, that they had missed the Rapture. That is what these false prophecies, these false teachings by these false teachers and this false letter were all about.

And now, with all the persecution they were facing, they had lost hope and felt that they missed the Rapture and now they had to endure the Day of the Lord! Paul, in this second letter to the church in Thessalonica, is trying to correct that.

In fact, Paul said in II Thessalonians 2:1-2, **“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.”**

In other words, don't be shaken, don't let your faith be rocked by these things because they are not true! How important it is for us to let the Word of God be our standard for truth! Man has a great way of twisting the Scriptures to make them say what they want them to say and not what God is saying. That is very dangerous!

But, make no mistake about it, if you read the Scriptures, you should not be deceived. And Paul is sharing the truths of God with them, why? So they are not shaken, they are not troubled by these things that they were hearing and seeing!

And to drive home that point, Paul tells them in verse 3 of II Thessalonians chapter 2 that the Day of the Lord will not come before the Rapture of the church. He put it like this, **“Let no one deceive you by any means for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.”**

I realize for some that when you see that phrase, **“falling away”** or apostasia in the Greek, you see it as a falling away from the faith. The reason being is that when the King James Version of the Bible was put together they changed it from “departure” to “revolt” or “departure” to come against the Protestant Reformation.

But, as we said last time, there has always been a departure from the faith since the church began, so that is not really a sign. Is it getting worse today, this departure from the faith? I believe it is and it will get worse. And the Bible does speak of this departure from the faith, but not here in II Thessalonians.

Here Paul is speaking of a departure and not from the faith but from this world. And it makes sense when you read this. Paul wants to encourage them that they are not in the Day of the Lord. How does Paul know that? Because the Rapture of the church must come first and then the Day of the Lord begins!

And as the Day of the Lord begins, the first scroll is opened up by Jesus, the first judgment is poured out as Revelation 6:1-2 tell us, and the Antichrist is revealed. And we are told of this man that he is one, **“who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”**

And Paul is going to expound more on this man of sin, this son of destruction here in chapter 2 of II Thessalonians. This man, who is just doing what Satan desires, worship, to be God, and in the end, as we will see, he will lose everything just as Satan will. But make no mistake about it, that doesn't stop him from trying to destroy lives and bring as many people as he can to hell with him!

Let's begin reading in verse 5 of II Thessalonians chapter 2 to get an overview of what Paul is saying. (Read II Thessalonians 2:5-12)

That is what we will be looking at over the next few weeks, these verses because there is so much in them and it is important for us to understand what Paul is saying here.

In part 1 of our study on “*The Lawless One*” we are going to be focusing on three points and we will cover three verses, II Thessalonians 2:5-7. The three points we will be looking at are: **REMEMBER** – II Thessalonians 2:5; **RESTRAIN** – II Thessalonians 2:6; and **RELEASED** – II Thessalonians 2:7.

So, with that as our introduction, let’s begin reading in II Thessalonians chapter 2 starting in verse 5 and let’s see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word.

II THESSALONIANS 2

VERSE 5

This first point is so important for us to not only understand but apply to our lives. We need to **REMEMBER!**

This is something that I think we do struggle with as we get older, remember where we put things, what we were going to do, where we were going, and the list goes on, I think, I don’t remember!

And Paul is reminding them that he has taught them these things before when he was with them, but they now let false doctrines, false teachers, false letters to come into the church and confuse them.

This is something that I have been dealing with for a while, something that has been brought into the church and it is wrong. And it has brought confusion into the church, which should be a red flag for many, but it is not.

It sounds good, but when you compare it with the Scriptures it is not true. And it is amazing how many are swayed by this and they forgot what they have learned!

And that is Paul's point here, **REMEMBER!** In other words, "Look guys, I was with you for a short time and, yet I taught you these things. Have you forgotten what I taught you or are they that good in deceiving you with this false doctrine?"

God is not the author of confusion and yet, look at what was going on here in Thessalonica, **CONFUSION** over the Day of the Lord! And yet, they were taught these things by Paul and they chose to forget what they were taught and hold onto what these false teachers with their false doctrine were saying!

And what Paul told the Thessalonians, we are not listening. One writer put it like this. He wrote,

I want to speak on "The Astounding Confusion in Today's Churches." I'm saying that after visiting literally thousands of churches in all of these years of my ministry and visiting over a hundred every year, one after another, week after week. . . .

But there is an astounding confusion in today's churches. For example, there's confusion on salvation. The Bible teaches salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible is clear on that, but there is confusion. Some believe in salvation by works; some, in salvation by baptism; some, in salvation by church membership. On and on they go.

Then there's confusion on standards of living. How should we live? That confusion is everywhere, in every city, on how Christians ought to live, how they should behave, what they should do. Some are weak, and they turn away to the world and the sins of the world. Their members do, and their pastors do. The pastors lead in it. Others are strict and believe the Scriptures and try to live a separated life.

Again, there's confusion in leadership. Some believe in a called-out ministry. I do. I believe God calls men to preach and missionaries to go out to the mission field. But some do not believe that. Some take the ministry as a business, paying a good salary, and as a public opportunity. There's confusion in all of that.

Then there's confusion of purpose. Why do we have a local church? What is the purpose of the local church? Well, some believe we're going to change society, make America a better nation. No, that's not it. The purpose of our church is to win souls to Christ. That's the purpose of a local church, to win people to the loving Son of God. That's the business we must hold to all the time. The Great Commission has been given to us, and we must not turn away.

All of this confusion! Christians are confused, and churches are confused. But what about lost sinners? What about the unsaved? They're confused also by hearing a multiplicity of ideas and thoughts. And I don't blame them sometimes. They get all worked up when they hear Baptist and Methodist and Presbyterian and Church of God and Church of Christ teaching, all of them mixed together. They say, "What are we to believe?"

My friend, we must come back to the Word of God. This Book is our standard, and this is what we must have in your church and in my church and in every church. If we are to get things right, eternally right, we have to follow the holy Word of God. When we hold to the Book we're then sure of where we stand.

- https://www.soulwinning.info/sermons/dr_roberson/confusion.htm

Absolutely! The Word of God is our standard all the time! Remember what Paul said back in II Corinthians 14:33, "**For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.**"

And yet, we see confusion in the church today because we have allowed false teachers and false doctrine to come into the church. And, like a cancer, it will destroy it. I am amazed, and I shouldn't be, at the things that people hold onto.

They will argue their point and when you show them Scripture that shows them they are wrong, they ignore it, they move on to something else or they say that it is not an inspired portion of Scripture. So many red flags and yet people buy into this and in the end, confusion because they refuse to remember the elementary principles of the Bible, the ABC's!

Thus, what an important warning for us. As one person said, "If it is new, it is not true and if it is true, it is not new." May we **REMEMBER** that!

John gives to us this warning in I John 4:1, "**Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**"

John is giving to us a warning not to believe everything we hear. Then what are we to do? We are to "**test the spirits, whether they are of God.**" And our truth tester is the Word of God, all of it.

Again, I am just amazed how easily people are swayed and they get angry when you show them that the Scriptures go against what they believe or are teaching. But the warning is clear, test what is being taught "**because many false prophets have gone out into the world.**" Pretty straight forward and yet, it is amazing how many are taken in by these things and bringing confusion into their lives and the lives of those around them!

In fact, Paul warned us of what it will be like in the last days, the days we are living in back in II Timothy chapter 3 where he wrote, **“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! . . . But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”** II Timothy 3:1-5, 13.

So, **REMEMBER** the Word of God, test the spirits to see if they are from God or not. And if not, dismiss the teaching because it will not build you up but only bring confusion into your life and move you away from God.

Now, let’s take this a step further. What happens when we are going through difficult times, when things seem a mess, when things are not going the way we think they should, what should we do? **REMEMBER!** And again, **REMEMBER** the words of God because they will bring peace, they will bring comfort in your life.

What happens many times is that we are the midst of some trial, there is some persecution going on in our lives and we are so consumed with it that we **FORGET** instead of **REMEMBERING** what God has said to us in His Word!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Sometimes we as Christians need to stop along life's road and look back. Although it might have been winding and steep, we can see how God directed us by His faithfulness. Here's how F. E. Marsh described what the Christian can see when he looks back:

The deliverances the Lord has wrought (Deut. 5:15).

The way He has led (Deut. 8:2)

The blessings He has bestowed (Deut. 32:7-12).

The victories He has won (Deut. 11:2-7).

The encouragements He has given (Josh. 23:14).

When we face difficulties, we sometimes forget God's past faithfulness. We see only the detours and the dangerous path. But look back and you will also see the joy of victory, the challenge of the climb, and the presence of your traveling Companion who has promised never to leave you nor forsake you.

- Source Unknown

I like that, and it is important to **REMEMBER!** Let me show you how easy it is to forget when things get difficult. We see the writer of Psalm 42:9-11 bring this out and this was probably written through the eyes of David through the Sons of Korah. I will expound on that in a minute, but listen to what we are told, **"I will say to God my Rock, 'Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?' As with a breaking of my bones, My enemies reproach me, While they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?' Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God."**

Some feel that this Psalm, written by the sons of Korah, was written through the eyes of David, as I have said, during the time his son, Absalom, was rebelling against him.

And if anyone has ever been depressed before or if you are, and I think we all have, this Psalm is one of those that can lift your spirits and get you focused back on the Lord.

You see, this person, as we go through this Psalm, was depressed and he is seeking after the Lord to lift up his spirits because the world has him downcast!

We see in this Psalm that David's enemies, and again, I believe this Psalm is written through the eyes of David, had come against him and they are putting him down saying, "**Where is your God?**" Talk about draining. Day in and day out this is going on and there is no relief in sight.

Not only that, but we also see that David feels that the Lord has forgotten him. How can David say that? Because of all that he was going through. He felt beat up, discourage, depressed and without hope! He felt cast down and he could not get up! He lost perspective and the situations he was facing overwhelmed him. I understand what he was saying, how he was feeling!

Make no mistake about it, there are times when God seems distant from us, like He is not listening to our hearts cry, that He has forgotten us or even worse forsaken us. Is that true?

Absolutely not and thus, our feelings are wrong because God's Word tells us He will not forsake us, He will not leave us! If you lose that perspective, you will be depressed!

What happened to David? He ***FORGOT?*** What did David ***FORGET?*** He ***FORGOT GOD!***

Thus, we read "**Hope in God.**" In other words, ***REMEMBER!*** You see, he ***FORGOT*** about God and once he ***REMEMBERED*** that his hope was not in himself or the situations that were before him, but in God and He is unchanging, his countenance changed for the better!

And what I want you to see is that the situation does not change, David does. You see, we don't see David walking down the street on a bed of roses with the sun shining down upon him. We don't see Mr. Bluebird sitting on his shoulder singing, but he did leave him a little gift on his shoulder you might say!

We have been there and the same is true for David. The trial is still going on. David is still down, and he is trying to get re-focused. Friends are still mocking God during this time and mocking David. The thing we must remember is that God never promises to deliver us from all our problems, but He has promised to be with us through them all. Thus – ***HOPE IN GOD!***

Not only that but ***REMEMBER*** what Jesus said in John 15:18-21, **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.”**

The topic here is persecution and Jesus is telling them that if they persecuted Him they will also persecute those who love Jesus! It is not that persecution might come, it will, and they needed to be ready for it so that they will not lose hope. Thus, the key to all of this is Jesus told them to ***“REMEMBER!”***

What were they to ***REMEMBER?*** They were to ***REMEMBER*** the word that Jesus has spoken to them about these things.

And how true that is for our own lives. We need to **REMEMBER** what God's Word has said to us to encourage us, to help us so we are not cast down, discouraged, depressed. God wants to lift us up, but we must let Him, and He will do that as we surrender to Him and trust what His Word has said to us!

May our hope be in God and His Word to us and that as we go through tough times, we would **REMEMBER** what God has said to us!

So, this first point speaks of **REMEMBERING** what God's Word tells us so that we will not succumb to false teaching, false doctrine and we will be encouraged no matter what we are going through because our **HOPE IS IN GOD – REMEMBER!**

VERSE 6

The second point that Paul brings out here is **RESTRAIN!** It is the Greek word KATECHO, (kat-ekh'o) and it speaks of, "to hold back, to hold down, to suppress."

The words "restraining" (v.6) and "restrains" (v.7) both come from the same Greek word meaning "to hold in check".

What is being restrained? What is being held in check? I believe it is not only the coming of the Antichrist, but it is lawlessness in general. Look at this world and you can see that lawlessness around the world is growing, especially in this country! Right is wrong and wrong is right and people are willing to fight for what is wrong! But there is also a **RESTRAINER** that is holding things back, at least for now. Without this **RESTRAINER** it would be much worse, if you can believe that!

And now the big question, "**Who is this RESTRAINING person or persons that is doing this? Who is the RESTRAINING one that is keeping things in check?**"

There is much speculation regarding this person. Several years ago, and I think it is still being promoted, Marv Rosenthal, who help promote the false doctrine of the Pre-wrath Rapture or that the Rapture will take place after the midway point of the Tribulation Period, said that this **RESTRAINING** force was none other than Michael the Archangel.

Let me share with you a few things regarding why he believes Michael the Archangel is the **RESTRAINER**. He wrote in his book, The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church the following,

The one who had the job of hindering the Antichrist will step aside; that is, he will no longer be a restraint between the Antichrist and those the Antichrist is persecuting.

. . . The Bible is explicit that the archangel Michael is the personage who will step aside.
(p. 257)

He also said,

Michael will no longer hinder or hold down the wicked one; he will step aside; that is, from between Israel and Satan. (p. 260)

And,

Michael, Israel's great prince, shall stand up . . . from helping Israel during the time of the Great Tribulation (v.1a). (p.267)

He does sound very sure of himself that Michael the Archangel is the one who steps away or steps aside to allow the Antichrist to come to power.

First of all, Paul is not speaking of this **RESTRAINING** force as restraining the Antichrist. It is speaking of the power of lawlessness that will increase and usher in the Antichrist!

Secondly, as you read Revelation it is the Lord who is protecting Israel, not Michael, even though Michael is the warrior for Israel. That is not what is being spoken of here.

Remember; context, context, context!

And Michael is a created being. He is not God and thus, he is not able to restrain evil in this world, lawlessness in this world because he can only be in one place at a time. Also, he is not all powerful.

When Michael the Archangel is mentioned in the Scriptures, we are given his name. Why doesn't the Holy Spirit do that here if this is Michael the Archangel?

And for Marv Rosenthal, he believes the church will go through just a little over half of the Tribulation Period and he calls it the Pre-Wrath Rapture.

But the Scriptures are clear on this. The church does not endure the wrath of God and as I have said before, the wrath of God begins with the first seal judgment and the emerging of the Antichrist.

Also, and this is important, Dr. Showers tells us, "The restrainer in 2 Thessalonians 2 is described by a neuter gender participle in verse 6 ("what is restraining"); and a masculine gender participle in verse 7 ("He who now restrains"). By contrast, the Greek word translated 'archangel' is only masculine in gender . . . In line with this . . . The New Testament Greek word for Spirit (pneuma) is neuter, and the New Testament also uses Greek masculine words (translated 'he' and 'him') to refer to the Spirit. For example, the combination is found in Christ's statements about the Spirit in John 14:26; 15:26 and 16:13-14."

Furthermore, Michael is never seen in Scripture as a restrainer of sin or evil generally speaking - *he is always portrayed as a protector of the nation of Israel.*

So, Michael the Archangel is not the **RESTRAINER!**

And others think that human government, the preaching of the Gospel, Israel, even the binding of Satan will **RESTRAIN** the lawlessness and keep the Antichrist from coming on the scene.

Do you see a problem with this? It is all human effort and that is not going to work!

I believe it is the Holy Spirit working through believers as we are the salt of the world or the preserving force. We are the light of the world to dispel the darkness.

Jesus told us this in Matthew 5:13-14, **“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”**

Now look at how this fits in with what Paul is saying here in II Thessalonians. Remember, context, context, context!

Paul tells them, and us, not to be shaken, not to be troubled by anything that you hear that opposes the Word of God. The Day of the Lord has not come yet and before that Day can begin, the church will be Raptured or taken home to be with the Lord!

It is after that the lawless one will be revealed, the Antichrist, after the church is removed. And now, we see lawlessness growing and it will continue on, but it will be **RESTRAINED** until that **RESTRAINER** is removed and I believe, as I have said, that the **RESTRAINER** is the Holy Spirit working in the church!

And this makes sense. When the church is Raptured, the work of the Holy Spirit *in* believers comes to an end and we see the Holy Spirit come upon believers in the Tribulation Period to empower them for service.

You see, if we went through the Tribulation Period and the Holy Spirit was removed from our lives, it would go contrary to the Scriptures.

In John 14:16-18 Jesus said, “**And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.**”

The Holy Spirit will never leave us and thus, if the Holy Spirit is taken away, we must be gone as well. And I think that is Paul’s point here.

William MacDonald gives us some further insights on this as he wrote,

“But here an objection is raised. How can the Holy Spirit be removed from the world? As one of the Persons of the Godhead, isn’t He omnipresent, that is, everywhere at all times? How then can He leave the world?”

Of course, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent. He is always in all places at one and the same time. And yet there was a distinct sense in which He came to the earth on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus had repeatedly promised that He and the Father would send the Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7). How then did the Spirit come? He came as the permanent Indweller of the church and of every believer. Until Pentecost the Spirit had been with believers, but since Pentecost He has dwelt in them (John 14:17). Until Pentecost the Spirit was known to depart from believers - hence David’s prayer, “Do not take your Holy Spirit from me” (Ps. 51:11b). After Pentecost the Spirit remains forever in believers of the Church Age (John 14:16).

The Holy Spirit will, we believe, leave the world in the same sense in which He came at Pentecost - that is, as the abiding Indweller of the church and of each believer. He will still be in the world, convicting people of sin and leading them to saving faith in Christ. His removal at the Rapture does not mean that no one will be saved during the Tribulation. Of course they will. But these people will not be members of the church, but rather the subjects of Christ's glorious kingdom".

Another writer summed it up like this. He wrote,

I take the view that the restraining power is the Holy Spirit working primarily through the church in the world. Today, the Holy Spirit restrains the world's lawlessness chiefly through the church. His presence in believers shines as the light of the world and permeates secular culture as the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13-16). When the church is taken to be with Christ in the air (1 Thes. 4:16-17), the children of light will be removed from the world of darkness, leaving a pitch-black night (cf. 1 Thes. 5:4-8). In the resulting darkness, every vestige of goodness will evaporate; every remnant of truth will unravel. And, what's worse, the man of lawlessness, the Antichrist, will take center stage. Yes, the "mystery of lawlessness" is already at work in the world (2 Thes. 2:7), just as the "spirit of antichrist" is already present (1 John 4:3), inspiring many little "antichrists" (1 John 2:18). However, Satan's spiritual wickedness is presently restrained, unable to take complete control, as it will when the restrainer is removed.

- Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights, 1 & 2 Thessalonians*, p. 135

A good example of this is seen in disasters. Because of a disaster, like a hurricane, many law-enforcement officers can't be on the scene, it is too dangerous. And if they are around, there is not enough to cover the area.

When that hurricane hit New Orleans several years ago, we saw what happened. Lawlessness abounded, and the reason is simple. The heart of man is wicked and when the restrainers, the police were not around to restrain the evil, it just rose to the surface.

Can you imagine what is going to happen when the Holy Spirit is removed and thus, the church! Evil will explode!

And as I have said, the Rapture must be before the Day of the Lord for the Holy Spirit cannot be removed from us until the Rapture occurs and then, once the restrainer is removed, the evil that is in the hearts of man will be manifest beyond what we could ever imagine, and the Antichrist will be revealed! We may think things are bad today, but when the church is gone, look out!

Let me share this with you because it will give you a perspective of what we are to do, at least as Christians should be doing. This is from 2014 when President Obama was in office and this is what the writer said,

We do live in perilous times and these are evil days. God's word tells us that perilous times are coming and there will be a time called the evil day which will approach. This ISIS / ISIL is a rag tag bunch of ungodly thugs and bullies who have stolen money, arms, and equipment; they threaten, demand, lie and kill people indiscriminately. The British, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Lebanon are all saying we must engage and destroy these ungodly people. Alas, our President says "we don't have a strategy"! Can you imagine what would have been the outcome if the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill, had said we don't have a policy? On the afternoon of May 13, 1940, Churchill summoned all his ministers to Admiralty House and told them, "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat." A few hours later in the House of Commons he declared:

“You ask, what is our policy? I will say: it is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy.

You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival. Let that be realized; no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forward towards its goal.

But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope. I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, ‘Come then, let us go forward with our united strength.’”

On June 4, 1940 Churchill again declared:

“Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail.

We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.

And even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the Old."

- <http://www.worldviewweekend.com/news/article/preparation-evil-day>

We are in this world, but we are not of this world. Our citizenship is in heaven but do not let that cause you to ignore what is going on. In other words, do nothing! Jude admonishes us by saying, **"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."** Jude 3.

We need to contend for the faith that has been entrusted to us! And what I mean is we are to stand up for the truth, we are to shine brightly, we are to stand against immorality. We are to be a preserving influence in this world and we are not going to save this world, we were never called to do that. But we are called to save people out of this world and thus, may we shine brightly in this dark world!

Now in saying that this **RESTRAINER** is the Holy Spirit working through the church and when the church is taken home to be with the Lord, the Rapture, the **RESTRAINER** or the Holy Spirit will be taken as well does not mean He does not have anything to do with what is going on here on planet earth!

He will have an active role in the Tribulation Period, but indwelling those who come to the Lord during that time we do not see. The Holy Spirit will empower them for the work, but the bride is home with the Lord, the church!

VERSE 7

The last point is that of being **RELEASED!** Make no mistake about it, this great principle of evil is already present in the world. Paul said, “**For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.**”

One writer put it like this,

The Greek word Paul uses for *iniquity* in this passage literally means lawlessness. Therefore, the mystery is one of lawlessness - acting without law or restraint.

Yet, this lawlessness is not simply a rebellion against the rule of man. It's not about rebelling against civil authority or committing a violent crime. These things do provoke God's wrath, but the mystery of lawlessness goes much deeper. It is an outright rejection of the truth that is in Christ - a casting aside of God's Holy Word and His commands.

This spirit of lawlessness is rampant in our nation today. It is the very force behind the legislation that seeks to banish God from our society; the same spirit that Satan used to deceive Eve when he told her, in so many words, “God won't punish you for disobeying. You can eat the fruit and you won't have to pay for it!”

Satan is using the same lie on Christians today; day after day, he convinces masses of believers that they can sin without paying any penalty. It is a demonic scheme to pervert Christ's gospel of grace.

- <https://worldchallenge.org/devotion/spirit-lawlessness>

And as bad as it is now, make no mistake about it, it will be ultimately unveiled in the man of sin, but he does not introduce a *new* wickedness into the world, only an intensity of prior wickedness.

You see, the **RESTRAINER** is gone and now the man of lawlessness is **RELEASED!**

Summarizing Paul's teaching on this issue, William Hendriksen wrote,

Accordingly, the sense of the entire passage (verses 6 and 7) seems to be this: Satan, while perfectly aware of the fact that he cannot himself become incarnate, nevertheless would like to imitate the second person of the Trinity also in this respect as far as possible.

He yearns for a man over whom he will have complete control, and who will perform his will as thoroughly as Jesus performed the will of the Father. It will have to be a man of outstanding talents.

But as yet the devil is being frustrated in his attempt to put this plan into operation. Someone and something is always "holding back" the deceiver's man of lawlessness. This, of course, happens under God's direction.

Hence, for the time being, the worst Satan can do is to promote the spirit of lawlessness. But this does not satisfy him. It is as if he and his man of sin bide their time. At the divinely decreed moment ("the appropriate season") when, as a punishment for man's willingness to cooperate with this spirit, the "someone" and "something" that now holds back is removed, Satan will begin to carry out his plans.

- William Hendriksen, New Testament
Commentary: Exposition of Thessalonians,
Timothy and Titus, pp. 182-183

Also, when Paul speaks of this being a "**mystery**" he is not speaking of something that we cannot know or has not been revealed. The idea with this word is this.

This mystery is something that cannot be known by human effort or human intellect. It can only be known if God chooses to reveal it.

And the mystery that Paul is speaking of here is this. The man of lawlessness will not be revealed until God allows it by removing the Holy spirit working through the church at the time of the Rapture.

Do you see how this all flows together? I Hope so.

What I also want you to see is that things are already at work in the world for this ultimate deception of the Antichrist, what he will bring into this world, and, as we will see in another study, it is "**the lie.**"

Make no mistake about it, this man of lawlessness will be revealed but before He is the church will be removed.

The point that Paul brings out here is that he will be ***RELEASED!***

It is amazing to see how this world is fighting more and more against God and in the end, at the Battle of Armageddon, the armies of the world will gather together to fight against God, as hard as that is to believe.

But man is fighting today against God and judgment is coming. Listen carefully,

In a book entitled "Down to Earth", John Lawrence tells the story of a city that dared God to show Himself and paid a terrible price.

It seems that the city of Messina, Sicily, was home to many wicked, irreligious people.

On December 25, 1908, a newspaper published in Messina printed a parody against God, daring Him to make Himself known by sending an earthquake.

Three days later, on December 28, the city and its surrounding district was devastated by a terrible quake that killed 84,000 people.

- Today in the Word, October 1997, p. 25

We see deception growing in this world and in the church. The key to exposing the deception is the Word of God. That is what Paul is doing here. He is exposing the false so that these believers in Thessalonica can see the truth!

Look at what Paul has taught them and us this morning.

REMEMBER – remember the things of God, the Word of God so that you don't fall prey to the lies, the false doctrine, the false teachers. Don't let these false teachings bring confusion into your life. And, remember the things of God to encourage you, to help bring peace in your life as difficult times come your way.

RESTRAIN – Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit working with the church is the preserving force. The church empowered by the Spirit of God is a light that exposes the darkness. It is a preserving force. And once the Holy Spirit is removed from believers, at the time of the Rapture, that which was holding back lawlessness and the lawless one will not any longer!

RELEASED – Make no mistake about it. The lawless one, the man of sin, the Antichrist is going to be revealed, he will be released upon this earth in God's timing. We look for Jesus Christ, not the Antichrist! And when he is released, he will deceive many with **THE LIE!**

And I will close with this, **“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.”** II Thessalonians 2:1-4.