





(A Burden Shared by David Roper)

To resist the pain, then, is to miss the purpose of it; we must not feel sorry for ourselves. Self-pity is deadly and demonic. It's the Evil One's way of stalling us into introspection and inertia. There is no place for giving up. The warfare is much bigger than our personal humiliations. To feel sorry for oneself is totally inappropriate.

Suffering isn't fatal. Our eternal destiny isn't riding on our circumstances or on what people do or say. Our security is based upon our Lord's acceptance and His word. As He promised, with such fine irony, even though "they will put some of you to death...not one hair of your head will perish" . . . The only fatal act is to give up.

(source unknown)

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Life is not an idle ore

    But iron dug from central gloom,  
And heated hot with burning fears,  
    And dipped in baths of hissing tears,  
And battered by the shocks of doom  
    To shape and to use.

(source unknown)

Now these young believers in Thessalonica are facing all the adversity that we read about. Quite a number of them have died from the persecution.

The church was established in the arena of persecution and the minister, the apostle Paul, was driven out of town within three weeks of the time the church was established.

Now they're having a more difficult time. Somebody has come in since Paul left and told them "Guess what? You're in the Day of the Lord." And all that has upset them terribly.

Our key verse for our last study was 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

### 2 Thessalonians 2:2

that you may not be quickly shaken from your calmness of mind or be disturbed either by a spirit or through a word or through a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Now Paul is talking about the Day of the Lord and he's also trying to minister to them in the midst of their adversity.

We're pursuing a theme through the book:

Delighting the Heart of God.

The common concern is that when life is over, whether by rapture or by physical death, we would be delighting the heart of God and we would enjoy walking into His presence.

There are ways we can know what delights His heart when we

take time to study in the Word. We take eight of those things and spell them out in this wonderful little 3 chapter epistle.

We learned in our first study that we:

Delight the Heart of God: By growing in faith and love.

As we grow and mature in our faith, that delights the heart of God. And when His love continues to flow through us, that does as well.

In our second study we talked about:

Delighting the Heart of God: By understanding God's justice.

In His justice He knows what we need. And sometimes it's pretty painful. And as we go through those experiences, it's consistent with His justice and His full eternal plan to make us more like His Son.

But the scales of justice are going to be balanced because "those who know not the Christ"—the text tells us—"in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not wish to know our God."

So God's justice faces both what is needed in the life of the believer and what is going to be given to those who refuse to receive the Christ.

Then in our last study we talked about:

Delighting the Heart of God: By staying away from error.

Staying away from those things that would bring great difficulty. And Paul said “staying away from a spirit that would speak words.” Staying away from someone who would say a word, which is coming secondhand, and staying away from someone who says they have a letter as if it’s from us and it isn’t.

Jesus said in Matthew 24 to “be careful in the last days because even the very elect would be deceived.”

And since we’re living in those days, it behooves each of us whenever we listen to a message or a Bible study, be like the Bereans—Acts 17:11—search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are so, so that we personally have a forged conviction about scripture and the teaching of the Word of God.

Now, how do we delight the heart of God? We:

Delight the Heart of God: By understanding that God has everything under control.

We really get excited when we see God’s sovereign control in all of these prophetic events but then pull it down and realize He has everything controlled in our personal life. That’s what’s going to bring us real joy if we’re having a hard time. To know He hasn’t abandoned ship.

Pick up at verse 6.

**v. 6 And you are knowing that which is restraining him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.**

“And you are knowing that which is restraining him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.”

We have just read one of the most difficult verses in the whole of the New Testament.

And there are scores and scores of interpretations as to what he meant by the one who is “restraining.”

Now isn't it interesting that he would say “And you are knowing”?

We could have sat in his Bible class when he was there for those three weeks because he obviously shared some things with them.

Now there's another interesting thing. Paul admonished in the last verse in our previous study when he said:

**2 Thessalonians 2:5**

Are you not remembering that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

The thing that is impressive about studying First and Second Thessalonians is the amount of divine truth that this man got across in three weeks of ministry. An incredible amount of material and theological truth and Biblical knowledge, just in that brief period of time.

Now, there are three things that are going to happen before the Day of the Lord takes place. This is his argument.

“You folks are suffering a lot,” he says, “but it’s not the Day of the Lord. It’s God working in your individual lives to make you more like His Son. So don’t get all upset to think you missed the coming of the Lord and you’re in the Day of the Lord. Because that’s what those guys were saying.”

What were the three things?

The first thing was, there’s going to be an APOSTASY—remember? That was in the last study. We have guys running around saying all kinds of weird things.

Secondly, the MAN OF SIN is going to be revealed—the world leader. And he isn’t here yet as far as we know.

Thirdly, the RESTRAINER is going to be taken out, and that’s where we are. We have the first two and the third one is the Restrainer.

Now the problem we have with identifying the one who “is restraining” is that person or force is mentioned in the



NEUTER here. No HE/SHE, it's an IT.

When we get to the next verse, it changes and becomes a HE. So we have some things that we have to deal with in guiding us as we try to interpret this verse.

The word “knowing” gives us a clue.

There are two words for “knowing” that Paul uses all the time.

The first word for “knowing” is this by PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. That's the word, by the way, that's always used when it refers to knowing Christ.

We must come into a knowledge of Christ by personal experience—a personal encounter with Him.

Now that's not the Greek word that Paul uses here. He uses the Greek word *Oida* which means INTUITIVELY. It's part of our nature. We don't have to have experience. We just know this. It's a law of our nature.

“And you are knowing”—by law of our nature—“that which is restraining him”—that is the MAN OF SIN, until now.

Now what is a law of our nature as a Christian when it comes to understanding what keeps us from sinning up a storm?

What does Galatians chapter 5 say?

The flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. (Galatians 5:17)

As a Christian, the minute we became a Christian we started having a battle inside. The forces of evil continue to pursue us and our old way of conduct was there but we had a new divine resident now who came in conflict with that. And we became very sensitive to what pleased God, and that was the presence of the Holy Spirit.

And as a believer, we faced that constant conflict of pleasing and delighting God by responding to the Holy Spirit or we choose to be disobedient and respond to our old nature.

And Paul says it so graphically in Romans 7:

“The good that I would I do not and that which I would not I find I’m always doing.” (Romans 7:15)

It’s a law of life for the believer. We’re going to be in a battle all the way to the house. And the choice is ultimately ours as a believer to choose to respond to the Spirit or to our old flesh.

So that’s the intuitive law of the Christian life and it’s one of the evidences of knowing that we’re a believer by the fact that conflict is there. It’s one of the most refreshing things to know “Hey! I really am a believer because I’m doing battle with my old nature and my old way of life.”

Now, if we’re saying that, then who’s the “restrainer”?

The restrainer then has to become the Holy Spirit. So we might want to run on that track for a minute.

But there's one other thing we have to remember. This person or force, has to be greater than Satan because he is restraining the forces of Satan in bringing the world leader—the man of sin—in the picture. And as long as this person or power is here, that restrainer is keeping the man of sin from being revealed and for Satan to have his kingdom—basically.

So now what do we have? The only one greater than Satan is God! And so it has to be some member of the Godhead.

Now we don't have any problem with the Holy Spirit being used in neuter form.

In John 14 He is referred to in this way.

### John 14:26

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, when He comes, He'll guide you into all truth.

Then when we see the Holy Spirit in other places, He's referred to with personality and a "He."

The "restrainer" is the Holy Spirit and He is restraining all of this from taking place. The "him" refers to the "man of sin," the lawless one.

What's the last phrase of our verse?

“...so that IN HIS TIME HE MAY BE REVEALED.”

We sing that little song “In His time, He makes all things beautiful in His time.”

We take that from:

Ecclesiastes 3:11

He makes all things beautiful in his time...

God is sovereign, isn't He? And He has a perfect time schedule. And no matter who we are or what we try to do, we can't violate that time schedule.

Remember John 13:1? Jesus said:

John 13:1

...knowing that His hour had come to depart from the world..

Before that it was:

“My hour has not yet come....My hour has not yet come.”

BAM! “My hour is here!”

And we see the same thing about the incarnation of Christ in:

Galatians 4:4

In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son...

Right on schedule.

Now, doesn't it feel good just to know that God is sovereign and He's in control of all of this? And no matter what's happening down here, the restrainer says "The buck STOPS here! It's going no further!"

And the fact that the Restrainer is functioning, doesn't that give us a little bit of peace and a little bit of excitement about getting out of here with Him?

Imagine when the dam is cut loose and the Restrainer is gone, what's going to happen to society? What's going to happen to governments? What's going to happen to the world, but a horrible holocaust as the flood of sins sweeps across the world, and the Restrainer is gone.

Now look at verse 7.

**v. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already working; only He who is now restraining [will do so] until He goes out from the midst.**

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already working; only

He”—now see it’s a HE—“He who is now restraining [will do so] until He goes out from the midst.”

“The mystery of lawlessness” is a PERSON.

And the MYSTERY OF GODLINESS is a PERSON.

We find in the book of 1 Timothy 3:16, the mystery of godliness is JESUS CHRIST.

“The mystery of lawlessness” is Satan’s counterpart. He is the “man of sin” that’s referred to here.

“[He] the mystery of lawlessness is already working”—we talked about that in the previous study.

The apostasy is very real around us, to set the stage for it, and the governments of the world are talking worldwide economy—the United Nations is a foreshadowing of what’s going to be used to bring about and form the platform for this “mystery of lawlessness [that’s] already working.”

Now, how do we know that? There are THREE R’S. We know the “mystery of lawlessness is working” by the:

1. RESISTANCE to the Spirit—people today are resisting the power of the Holy Spirit, bringing conviction to hearts. They’re resisting Him.

2. **REBELLION** against God—it's like driving God out of our culture. They just rebel against the thought. They want a totally humanistic society.

3. **RELINQUISHING** of moral standards.

The mess we're in! And we are it! We're the problem.

All of those things are the “mystery of lawlessness” going against what God originally designed for our lives.

Now what do we have when “He who is restraining” is taken out of the midst?

We have the **REVERSAL** of Pentecost at the Rapture.

What happened at Pentecost?

“He who is restraining” came to indwell believers on Pentecost.

At the Rapture, He who came to indwell now **LEAVES**. And guess who's going with Him?

He ain't gonna un-indwelt any believers. And we are outta here.

This is one of the greatest arguments for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the church in all of Paul's epistles.

We're gone! We go with the Restrainer. If indeed the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit, we are permanently indwelt with the Spirit only in this generation, HE who is with us shall be IN us—Jesus said in the Upper Room—permanently indwelt. Then when He goes, we go. In a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, we're gone.

Now we say, “You’ve got a problem in that the Holy Spirit is gonna still be convicting hearts during the Day of the Lord and the Tribulation. How do you figure that one out?”

The Holy Spirit returns to the sovereign relationship that He had with the Old Testament saints. We are the only generation—the church—who are indwelt permanently by the Spirit from the moment we are born again into God’s family. And we’re never UN-indwelt.

We can’t pray the prayer of David: “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me,” because we’re permanently indwelt.

In the Old Testament that’s true. The Holy Spirit was sovereign and He came down on believers for a specific function and then He could depart. David felt, because of his unfaithfulness and his sin, the Holy Spirit would leave him and therefore his ministry as king would be wiped out. So he prays “Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.”

The Holy Spirit will go back to a sovereign relationship during the Tribulation period and people still can be saved during that period by receiving Christ as Savior. The only problem is,



they're all going to have to be martyred because the world leader, in order to exist, they're going to have to go along with his program. To go along with his program, they sign their own death warrant in the process.

So the Restrainer must be greater than the power of Satan and the Holy Spirit can still carry on His sovereign ministry during the Tribulation.

Now the question at this point is, what is our relationship to the Holy Spirit?

We can be in one of about three positions—biblically.

Granted, if we're a believer, the Holy Spirit's indwelt us. We're aware of that conflict so we know we're a Christian.

The question is:

1. Are we GRIEVING the Holy Spirit?—Ephesians 4:30—By sin in our life that we haven't dealt with?

Are there some things that really need to be taken care of? And is the Holy Spirit grieved in your heart because we haven't responded?

And right now He's bringing that to our attention. And we know what it is, and we need to address that thing. We continue to grieve the Spirit.

Secondly:

## 2. Are we QUENCHING the Holy Spirit?

He's spoken to us very clearly about what He wants us to do and we've refused to this point to be obedient. And we're quenching the Spirit of God. We're stifling the function of the Spirit.

And then the third possibility is:

### Galatians 5:16

Walk by means of the spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.

## 3. Are we WALKING under the control of the Spirit in victory?

What a wonderful, wonderful position to be in. That's where we need to be. Not grieving—not quenching—but walking by means of the Spirit.

Dr. Ryrie summarizes this whole thing and this difficult passage by saying:

It should be remembered that Christ said of the divinely indwelt and empowered church that “the gates of hell would not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18), so we can say that this indwelt, empowered church is an adequate restraining

instrument against the forces of darkness. The church will not go through any of the tribulation because the restrainer will be removed before the Man of Sin is revealed, which revelation (with the signing of the covenant with the Jews, in Daniel 9:27) begins the tribulation period. Since the restrainer is ultimately God, and since God indwells all Christians, either He must be withdrawn from the hearts of believers while they are left on earth to go through the tribulation, or else when He is withdrawn all believers are taken with Him. Since it is impossible for a believer to be “disindwelt” [that’s a new word] the only alternative is that believers too will be taken out of the way before the appearance of the Man of Sin, which signals the start of the tribulation.  
(source unknown)

Verse 8—now this is our **KEY VERSE** for this study. We need to focus here for just a little bit.

**v. 8 And then that lawless one shall be revealed whom the Lord (Jesus) shall slay with the breath of His mouth and shall render inoperative by the appearance of His presence;**

“And then”—after the restrainer is taken out of the midst.

“And then that lawless one”—man of sin—“shall be revealed whom the Lord (Jesus) shall slay with the breath of His mouth and shall render inoperative by the appearance of His presence;”

Are we delighting the heart of God by understanding He has everything under control?

We don't read a verse like that but what we are playing the Super Bowl. It's a blowout. It's all over.

His presence ends the satanic kingdom and the opposition and it happens just like that! Because He's the sovereign God.

When the "lawless one...the Lord (Jesus) shall slay with the breath of His mouth..."

Now, what happens here prophetically, is a lot of times in scripture the writer jumps many years without telling us that he jumps many years. What he did right there is jump 7 years.

He jumped from the beginning of the Day of the Lord to the end of the Tribulation period at the Second Coming, because that's when the Battle of Armageddon takes place.

And He slays this world leader. Now watch this. Listen to these verses—Revelation 19:15—because it says the same thing. At the second coming:

### Revelation 19:15-21

And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a

name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”  
And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried out with a loud voice, saying all the birds which fly in mid-heaven, “Come, assemble for the great supper of God...

And it’s the flesh of kings that’s going to be eaten because Christ is going to come and He’s going to destroy them! God has everything under control.

Now see that phrase: “breath of His mouth”?

This is the only place in the New Testament where that phrase occurs, referring to Christ.

The word is like a hurricane. It’s like sweeping everything away in front of it.

Remember the description of Mt. Saint Helen’s when it blew? It literally blew the forest away. That’s the kind of devastation that’s going to take place when Christ comes to set up His kingdom. It’s like the killing of a blast furnace.

Now how does that happen? Well it says He has a sword that’s coming out of His mouth.

### John 12:48

He that rejects me and my word has who that judges him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

## Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is quick and power and its sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is discerning of the things and intents of the heart.

It's the word of God spoken like a sword and it literally is the "breath of His mouth."

He says it's over. It's done.

Now are we delighting the heart of God by understanding He has everything under control?

Personally? Prophetically?

## Psalms 75:6, 7

For promotion comes neither from the east  
nor from the west  
nor from the south.

God is the judge:

He puts down ones, sets up another.

Paul is now struggling with it. Are we delighting that God has everything under control?

And we say: "Lord, what You're telling me is I shouldn't get so

concerned about Slick Willie and Ross the Boss, and Gorgeous George. It's all in Your sovereign purpose and I shouldn't be concerned about that!"

The Lord says: "I think you're catching on."

We just get so upset about it. Listen, He's still has it in control. Maybe He's given us what we deserve.

Number 9—verse 9—that's what a lot of friends say.

Do you believe He's in control?

Alright, then act like it. Be joyful and realize too, that the adversity and the problems we have are under His sovereign control.

We can't say it prophetically for the big picture without saying it personally for our life. It brings a blessing. And we delight His heart when we do that and when we understand that.

**v. 9 that is, the one whose presence is in accord with the working of Satan, with all power and attesting miracles and deceptive wonders,**

"that is, the one whose presence is in accord with the working of Satan,"

Now that's the man of sin. He's going to be Satan's false messiah, his world leader for his kingdom, his last shot during

those seven years. And he's the one that's going to get blown away.

“with all power and attesting miracles and deceptive wonders,”

This is how this “lawless one” is going to come.

There are **THREE THINGS** that characterize him here:

1. “with all power...”

And, he is also going to have deceptive or:

2. “attesting miracles” and

3. “deceptive wonders.”

Now does he have power?

Well Ephesians 6:12 tells us, doesn't it? That we don't “wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers.”

And he is a powerful force!

Just look at some who've fallen at his feet.

2. “miracles...”



Can he perform miracles? We're living in the day of miracles. Miracles here—miracles there.

Now granted, maybe some of those miracles are real but a lot of them were counterfeit. And Satan can do it too.

Remember when Aaron came in with Moses and they threw down the rod and the rod became a snake and that was supposed to impress everybody so the magicians come and throw down their rods. But don't ever forget it. It was Aaron's rod that ate up all the rest of them so God's still sovereign. He's still in control. Satan can do that. And he impresses, he deceives with counterfeit miracles and says "God's at work in this!"

And then he employs various forms of deception. Where do we see that? Drugs—alcohol—perverted forms of sexuality—gambling—adulterous affairs—just name it. These things are the things that are supposed to bring instant pleasure and then Satan has us in his court.

It's amazing what these mainline radio stations do when there's a controversy.

Whenever they're going to talk about an issue, then we're going to get the guy on there and he's going to have enough of this religious garbage to go along with it to make us think that's acceptable behavior.

Satan uses that to the nth degree and we're sitting around watching it happen.

That's all Satan's looking for—some people through whom he can lip-synch everything he wants to accomplish. And he has his men and they're doing their thing.

Vance Havner, before he died said:

(If Jesus Has Come by Steve Brown)

Jesus performed miracles and didn't advertise them. We advertise miracles and we don't perform them.  
(source unknown)

That's really the picture of our day.

Malcolm Muggeridge, before he died, said:

(If Jesus Has Come by Steve Brown)

As Christians we know that here we have no continuing city, crowns are going to roll in the dust and every earthly kingdom must sometimes flounder, whereas we acknowledge a king men did not crown and cannot dethrone, as we are citizens of a city of God they did not build and they cannot destroy.  
(source unknown)

He is going to win. He is King of kings and Lord of lords! He's going to come and He's going to BLOW AWAY this kingdom by the breath of His mouth! And then He's going to come to rule and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

**v. 10 and with every deception of wickedness for those who are perishing, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved.**

“and with every deception of wickedness for those who are perishing, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved.”

Now, there are 3 KEY PHRASES in those verses and they all start with the word “with.” This helps us outline Satan’s program and his kingdom.

The first phrase, this “lawless” one is coming:

1. “with the working of Satan.”

The second phrase is:

2. “with all power and attesting miracles and deceptive wonders”—so we have our second word with “with.”

Then the third one is in this verse:

3. “with every deception of wickedness for those who are perishing.”

Now how does he use the “deception of wickedness” to accomplish his purpose? Well he did that in the Garden of Eden, didn’t he?

In Genesis 3 he tells EVE:

Genesis 3:4

“You shall not surely die...”

That’s the “deception of wickedness.”

To DAVID:

Psalms 32:3

When I kept silent,  
my bones wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.

That’s the “deception of wickedness.”

What about Luke 12:19 and 20?

Luke 12:19, 20

I will say to my soul, “Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry.” But God said unto him, “Thou fool! This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which you provided?”

The “deception of wickedness” and living for the here and now.

## What's the PROCESS OF DECEPTION?

### James 1:13-16

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But every one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed of his own lust. Then when his lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Don't be deceived, my beloved brethren.

That's the “deception of wickedness.”

Gets us to change our course—gets us to follow his pattern and go along with it.

Remember Achan?

### Joshua 7:22-26

So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, silver underneath. They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord...

What had Achan done? He'd stolen the things and put them in the floor of his tent, thinking he was going to get away with it. But there were 36 casualties in the battle of Ai and because of

that sin, it had to be dealt with and he lost his life.

Talk to ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA in Acts 5 about the “deception of wickedness.”

They lied about a real estate deal and both of them became instant fatalities right before the congregation.

Talk to the PRODIGAL SON in the far country while he’s spending up a storm, but when he’s finally in the pig pens, what does the text tell us?

“He came to his senses”—he had healing in his mind.

The “deception of wickedness” is running rampant. And who’s it for?

“for those who are perishing, because...”

Why are they perishing?

“they didn’t receive the love of the truth so that”—RESULT—  
“they might be saved.”

Now when we have the little phrase “love of the truth” we have EMOTIONS and INTELLECT, both.

It’s a HEART and a HEAD deal.

It’s LOVE in the HEART

over TRUTH which is the HEAD.

It's LOVE in the EMOTIONS and

it's TRUTH in the INTELLECT.

“love of the truth...”

Our world has been affected simply because with our head. We understand it and we have a “love for the truth so that [I] might be saved.”

Now are there any people biblically that didn't do that?

Paul's talking to Agrippa:

Acts 26:27-32

“King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.”

And Agrippa replied to Paul, “In a short time you're going to persuade me to become a Christian.”

And Paul said, “I would to God, that whether a short or a long time, not only you, but also who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains. That you'd love the truth and you'd respond.”...

But he didn't, did he?

And then we see Felix calling Paul in and Felix and Drusilla start talking about spiritual things and in Acts 24 it says:

Acts 24:24, 25

Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife and she was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. And as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, when I find time, I’ll summon you.”

He never found time to summon.

The scripture says in:

2 Corinthians 6:2

...behold, now is “the accepted time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation”—

We need to realize we are in those final days and that salvation is an issue for countless, thousands of people who are around us who do not know the Savior.

An author has written a book on the use of time and that we never have enough time. And he was describing that in all of his surveys, he found that many kids from dysfunctional families can really tell us how their parents handle time and relationship to them.



And he made this statement. He said they interviewed several little kids and the 9-year-olds and the 10-year-olds basically said this:

Every time I want daddy and mommy to do something, they always say “Not now” or “Later.” And the other little kid said, “Whenever you hear not now or later, that really means never.”

(source unknown)

That’s a truth. If that’s a truth that a little 9 or 10-year-old kid can pick up, maybe we’re saying that same thing about God. Not now—later.

King Agrippa—Felix. But really NEVER.

We’ll never get around to it—that hurts to think that thought.

**v. 11 And for this reason God is sending upon them a working of error (a deluding influence) so that they might believe the lie,**

“And for this reason God is sending upon them a working of error (a deluding influence) so that they might believe the lie,

We say that isn’t fair. Oh yes it is.

They are believing what they have chosen to believe and God is sovereign. And in His sovereignty, He will allow them to believe what they want to believe. The choice is theirs.

The destiny is left in our hands to choose.

Notice that verse 10 ends with the words “so that they might be saved.”

Verse 11 ends with the phrase “so that they might believe the lie”?

There's the two choices. Either to believe the TRUTH so that we might be SAVED or to believe the LIE and accept the strong DELUSION—powerful “working of error.”

### 1 Timothy 2:4

God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth.

That's what He desires for us. But there comes a time when we make our choices. We can go for the strong delusion. “God gave them over” in Romans chapter 1.

“God gave them over.” They choose to believe the lie and God sends them the delusion that is inherent in their choice.

### John 3:19

This is the judgment, light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light; because their deeds were evil.

This does not affirm that God wished them to believe the lie. They believed the lie. And what is the lie? We can be god in our own will really. Really? Yeah, we can run our own life. We can do whatever we want. That's the lie.

And they continue to spawn that sort of thing. When we buy into it, it's going to be a strong delusion.

The New Age is coming in everywhere.

*(If Jesus Has Come by Steve Brown)*

I think it is in one of A.J. Cronin's stories that a certain doctor worked for one company for most of his career. He started out with high aspirations and a genuine desire to help people. But as the years went by, he sold his soul little by little. He started drinking and became a self-centered, bitter man. His wife died, and after her death he was going through her pocketbook. He found letters from people he had helped and some pictures of himself when he was young, an idealistic doctor. He walks to the mirror, looked at the man he had become and he said, "You thought you would get away with it, but, by God, you didn't."  
(source unknown)

And to many people, it's that delusion that they finally see in the very hours, ending hours of their lives.

Roper puts it this way:

(A Burden Shared by David Roper)

So we soldier on—getting busier, running in our own version of the fast lane, increasing our pace and our blood pressure, rushing to our own destruction like the Gadarene swine. Our densely-packed lives lead us to respond like the Mad Hatter, who, when he was told that the inhabitants of Alice's world had to run very fast to get anywhere, replied, "A very odd world. Here one must run very fast to stay in the same place."

(source unknown)

Such is the case with strong delusions.

Purpose:

**v. 12 in order that they all might be judged who did not believe the truth, but took delight in wickedness.**

"in order that they all might be judged who did not believe the truth, but took delight in wickedness."

They refused to believe the truth and on top of that, that's **NEGATIVE**—they "didn't believe the truth."

**POSITIVELY**—they "took delight in wickedness."

And so God, in justice and judgment, must come forth.

Lewis Smedes said:

(A Pretty Good Person by Lewis B. Smedes)

A man wakes up one morning with a horrible hunch that the whole human race, from the muddy beginning until now, is a cosmic accident doomed to end as a global garbage heap. His own life story now feels like a flutter in time, with no more significance to it than the buzzing of a horsefly around a pile of manure. And then he dies.

We go on breathing when we die our preliminary deaths, but part of us dies inside. And the other part has to decide whether it still wants to live.

(source unknown)

Luke 12:19, 20

And I will say to my soul, "Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." But God said unto him, "Thou fool! This night thy soul shall be required of thee..."

We get ten lessons from our study.

Lesson #1: We can be "delighting the heart of God by understanding God has everything under control."

Lesson #2: There are three signs that will indicate the coming of the day of the Lord: 1) a falling away; 2) the removal of the restrainer; and 3) the revelation of the man of lawlessness

Lesson #3: Since God is sovereign, He is operating on His own timetable.

Lesson #4: It is the Holy Spirit of God who is the Restrainer. “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.”

Lesson #5: When He comes again, the Lord Jesus will destroy the works of the devil.

Lesson #6: This lawless one will come with the working of Satan, with all power and attesting miracles and deceptive wonders, and with every deception of wickedness.

Lesson #7: Those who are judged at the coming of the Lord Jesus are those who did not love the truth, and they did not believe the truth.

Lesson #8: They are judged because they believed the lie, and they took delight in wickedness.

Lesson #9: There comes a time when the Lord Jesus finally says, “Go ahead and believe what you want and do what you want to.”

Lesson #10: All will be judged who did not believe the truth.

Max Lucado in his book *And the Angels Were Silent* tells a story:

(And the Angels Were Silent by Max Lucado)

Hot sun. Salty air. Rhythmic waves.

A little boy is on the beach. On his knees he scoops and packs the sand with plastic shovels into a bright red bucket. Then he upends the bucket on the surface and lifts it. And, to the delight of the little architect, a castle tower is created.

All afternoon he will work. Spooning out the mote. Packing the walls. Bottle tops will be sentries. Popsicle sticks will be bridges. A sandcastle will be built.

Big city. Busy streets. Rumbling traffic.

A man is in his office. At his desk he shuffles papers into stacks and delegates assignments. He cradles the phone on his shoulder and punches the keyboard with his fingers. Numbers are juggled and contracts are signed and much to the delight of the man, a profit is made.

All his life he will work. Formulating the plans. Forecasting the future. Annuities will be sentries. Capital gains will be bridges. An empire will be built.

Two builders of two castles. They have much in common. They shape granules into grandeurs. They see nothing and make something. They are diligent and determined. And for both the tide will rise and the end will come.

Yet, that is where the similarities cease. For the boy sees the end which the man ignores. Watch the boy as the dusk approaches. Each wave slaps an inch closer to his creation. Every crest crashes closer than the one before.

But the boy doesn't panic. He is not surprised. All day the pounding waves have reminded him that the end is inevitable.

He knows the secret of the surging. Soon they will come and take his castle into the deep.

The man, however, doesn't know the secret. He should. He, like the boy, lives surrounded by rhythmic reminders. Days come and go. Seasons ebb and flow. Every sunrise which becomes a sunset whispers the secret, "Time will take your castles."

So, one is prepared and one isn't. One is peaceful while the other panics.

As the waves near, the wise child jumps to his feet and begins to clap. There is no sorrow. No fear. No regret. He knew this would happen. He is not surprised. And when the great breaker crashes into his castle and his masterpiece is sucked into the sea, he smiles. He smiles, picks up his tools, takes his father's hand, and goes home.

The grown-up, however, is not so wise. And the wave of years collapses on his castle and he is terrified. He hovers over the sandy monument to protect it. He blocks the waves from the walls he has made. Salt-water soaked and shivering he snarls at the incoming tide.

"It's my castle," he defies.

The ocean need not respond. Both know to whom the sand belongs.

Finally the cliff of water mounts high above the man and his little empire. For just a moment he is shadowed by the wall of water . . . then it crashes. His tiny towers of triumph crumble and disperse and he is left on his knees . . . clutching muddy handfuls of yesterday. If only he had known. If only he had listened. If only . . .

But he, like most, never listens.



pp. 123-25  
(source unknown)

It was Joe Briscoe who had a great description of Eve eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden:

(If Jesus Has Come by Steve Brown)

... “Prime Rib [that is Eve] took the hand of Omnipotence [God] had fashioned from her little piece of bone and plucked the piece of forbidden fruit. She placed it between the lips of Omnipotence had framed to praise Him and absorbed into her system the poisons of independence, selfishness, and death. *And Jesus prepared to leave for Bethlehem.*”

(source unknown)

Father, we thank You for the reality of this study. We realize that these days are before us and yet they continue to build their castles as though they're permanent. Grant our Father, that You might rearrange our priorities that we might not be like the rich young ruler who has to go away sorrowing because he has great wealth and his priorities are messed up and he loses a life that could have been used for You. Father, we're so, so prone to deception. We're so prone to listen to the evil one as he speaks of the permanence of the here and now and to grab for all the gusto that we can get. Father God, we pray that You'll open our eyes to the plight of a lost and dying world. That we would be men and women who are urgent about sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with those friends and loved ones who have not come into relationship with the

Savior. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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# A Practical Study of 2 THESSALONIANS: Delighting the Heart of God

## “Learning to Bring Pleasure to God”

Key verse 3:16 — *“Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all!”*

### **STUDY NUMBER FOUR – BY UNDERSTANDING GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL – 2 THESSALONIANS 2:6-12**

#### **KEY VERSE 2:8**

v. 6 And you are knowing that which is restraining him now, so that in his time he may be revealed.

v. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already working; only He who is now restraining [will do so] until He goes out from the midst.

v. 8 And then that lawless one shall be revealed whom the Lord (Jesus) shall slay with the breath of His mouth and shall render inoperative by the appearance of His presence;

v. 9 that is, the one whose presence is in accord with the working of Satan, with all power and attesting miracles and deceptive wonders,

v. 10 and with every deception of wickedness for those who are perishing, because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved.

v. 11 And for this reason God is sending upon them a working of error (a deluding influence) so that they might believe the lie,

v. 12 in order that they all might be judged who did not believe the truth, but took delight in wickedness.

#### **NOTES**

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

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2. Who do you think it is that Paul is referring to as the restrainer of evil in these verses?

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3. What does Paul say about the “mystery of lawlessness” in verse 7?

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4. What will the Lord Jesus do to the lawless one when He is “revealed,” according to verse 8?

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5. By whose workings is the lawless one brought upon the scene, according to verse 9?

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6. In what four ways does Paul characterize the coming of the lawless one, according to verses 9 & 10?

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7. Why are they “perishing,” according to verse 10?

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8. What is “God sending upon them,” according to verse 11?

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9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

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10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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**LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: We can be “delighting the heart of God by understanding God has everything under control.”

LESSON #2: There are three signs that will indicate the coming of the day of the Lord:

- 1) a falling away; 2) the removal of the restrainer; and
- 3) the revelation of the man of lawlessness

LESSON #3: Since God is sovereign, He is operating on His own timetable.

LESSON #4: It is the Holy Spirit of God who is the Restrainer. “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.”

LESSON #5: When He comes again, the Lord Jesus will destroy the works of the devil.

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LESSON #6: This lawless one will come with the working of Satan, with all power and attesting miracles and deceptive wonders, and with every deception of wickedness.

LESSON #7: Those who are judged at the coming of the Lord Jesus are those who did not love the truth, and they did not believe the truth.

LESSON #8: They are judged because they believed the lie, and they took delight in wickedness.

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