

The Coming Man of Sin, Part 5

Scripture: 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12

Code: 53-11

Open your Bible to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. We're looking at this great chapter that tells us about the coming man of sin or the coming man of lawlessness, the Antichrist. We've subtitled it, "How to avoid fear regarding the Lord's return." This is part 5 in our study.

This week I received a brochure, quite an interesting brochure. And in that brochure it explained in detail the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to occur October 22, 1992. In other words, in just a few months this brochure said the Lord would appear in heaven, this would be His great and glorious coming.

As I looked at it I tried to put myself in the position of the Thessalonians because this is somewhat like what they must have been experiencing, for if indeed Jesus is coming in His glorious return and appearing October 22, 1992, and that's only a few months away, then we could well be in the day of the Lord now. We would certainly be in the Great Tribulation which lasts three and a half years and we would definitely be under the reign of terror of the Antichrist. There will be a number of people who will believe that.

I remember thousands of people believed back in 1988 that Jesus was coming when a very popular book was circulated around the nation and even the world. There have always been those people who wanted to fix a date and tell people that Jesus was coming at a certain moment and this would be His glorious appearing. But if, as I said, Jesus is coming in His appearing, if He will appear in the sky as this brochure said, the writer is not talking about a secret Rapture of the church but talking about the glorious return of Christ, then we must be in the end of the Great Tribulation, we must be under the reign of terror of the Antichrist, and we could well be in the day of the Lord and starting to feel the full heat of it. And the fact of the matter is, we know those things aren't true. We are not in the Great Tribulation, we have not seen the unfolding of the seven seals, and the seven trumpet judgments. We have not seen the development of the career and the enterprise and the empire and the power of the Antichrist who will rule for three and a half years or 42 months.

And so, I can simply say to anyone who may get that brochure, it isn't so. There are some things that have to happen before the Lord Jesus can finally come to destroy the ungodly and set up His glorious Kingdom. But it was a very similar kind of situation that had plagued the Thessalonians. Somebody had come to them with the word that the day of the Lord had already come, they were in it, they were in the Tribulation. They must have missed the Rapture which they expected to deliver them from it or

there was no Rapture. And they are now in the day of the Lord. This was proven to them by whoever told them saying that Paul was the one who was teaching this, he received it by a spirit, gave it in a message, wrote it in a letter. And verse 2 indicates that. It was important if you're going to sort of push that theory off on the church to have some authority for it since it was contradictory to what Paul taught and so they simply said that Paul had gotten a new revelation, a new revelation from some spirit was preaching a new message and had written a new letter. Since Paul dictated his letters they could show a letter not written in his own handwriting and say, "Well it was dictated by Paul," that may be why at the end of chapter 3 Paul says in verse 17, "I write this greeting with my own hand and this is a distinguishing mark in every letter, this is the way I write," to say if somebody gives you a letter and says it's from me but it doesn't have my handwriting at the end, it is a forgery and a fake.

But somebody had come along with this brochure, supposedly, from Paul announcing that here they were in the day of the Lord, they were very near the imminent coming of Jesus Christ to judge the world and somehow this was confusing to them as verse 2 says, it shook them from their composure, it disturbed them deeply because the assumption is they must have thought they weren't going to be in the day of the Lord. Which indicated they thought they would be raptured before the day of the Lord began. So here they were then sufficiently confused and agitated and fearful that they were going to fall, as it were, into the hands of an angry God and get caught up, swept up in the day of the Lord which is a day of fierce and final wrath. That kind of foolishness espousing that kind of fearful message to the church is still going on even today.

Now how does Paul deal with this? How does he remove our anxiety about the fact that we might be in the Tribulation or in the day of the Lord and maybe there is no Rapture, or we missed it somehow, it was a partial Rapture and somebody else got raptured and we didn't? How does he deal with this?

Well he does it by laying out some very important teaching that flows all the way from verse 3 down through verse 15 and then closes with a benediction at the end of the chapter. And in these verses 3 and following he points out some very important matters that they need to take very careful care of. First of all, you remember he said, "don't be deceived," verse 3, "Let no one in any way deceive you." Back in verse 1 he had said, "I would like to talk to you about the coming of the Lord Jesus and the gathering together, our gathering together," that's the Rapture, I want to talk about the Second Coming, I want to talk about the Rapture which precedes it, but you're so confused I've got to clear up a lot of things. The first thing I want you to do is not be deceived, verse 3, "Let no one in any way deceive you." If you fall into the deception of people who say that you're in the Great Tribulation or the deception of people who say you're in the day of the Lord, or give you some error regarding the return of Jesus Christ, it can create fear, it can create anxiety. So don't be deceived. Don't listen to new revelation, don't buy into some guy who says, "I know it's October 22, 1992 because God came to me and told me that." You know what you've been taught. You know a true prophet and a true Apostle. You know the true Word of God, don't be deceived.

Secondly in verse 3 down through verse 5, he says, "Don't be forgetful. You have been taught, verse 5 he says, "Do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these things?" You already know about these. Back in verse 3, "That before the day of the Lord comes the apostasy comes first," and what is that? "That is the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, that's the Antichrist, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God displaying himself as being God." In other words, you can't be in the day of the Lord because you know I have taught you...don't forget, before the day of the Lord comes, the Antichrist comes, he goes into the temple, does the ultimate Satanic act of desecration by setting himself up as God. Here is Antichrist's attempt to be accepted as the true God, the true incarnation, the true Christ. That has to happen first. Daniel 9 calls it the abomination of desolation which Jesus speaks of also in Matthew 24. So he says you couldn't be in the day of the Lord, the Antichrist hasn't come. Where is his career? Where is the apostasy in which he sets himself up as God, as Christ, as the Messiah in the temple? That has not happened. It still hasn't happened. So we cannot be in the latter half of the Great Tribulation waiting for the return of Christ in October. We cannot be in the day of the Lord which follows the time of the Antichrist.

So he says don't be deceived by false revelation, don't be deceived by people who are not true prophets and apostles, and don't forget the things I told you when we were together. And then there is a third thing that he says to them that will waylay their fears, "Don't be ignorant." Don't be ignorant. Starting in verse 6 he unfolds more detail about the Antichrist. He says to them, "You know what restrains him now, there is a force that holds back the Antichrist." Satan would love to come, pick a man, dwell within that man as a devilpossessed man and pull off the great desecration but there is a force restraining him. There is a force holding Satan back from doing that. Verse 7 says, "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work."

In other words, the wicked intent, the Antichrist activity of Satan is already working, the principle is already at work but the ultimate embodiment of it hasn't yet come. There are, as John put it, many antichrists in the world now, many people with an antichrist attitude but the ultimate Antichrist has not yet come. And he can't come until the one who restrains is removed. And all that means is the Holy Spirit who is the force restraining Satan from bringing his ultimate false Christ and attempting to take over the world is stopping Satan. Some day He'll step aside and let that happen in God's good time.

So the Apostle is simply giving them more detail and outlining what's going to happen. Having talked about the revelation of Antichrist in verses 7 and 8, at the end of verse 8 he talks about his destruction. The Lord is going to slay him with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end his...his whole enterprise by the appearance of His coming. In other words, he'll run right up till the Second Coming and at that point the Lord will destroy him and his operation.

He moves from his revelation and destruction to his power. In verses 9 and 10, he's so powerful, he has all power to do signs and false wonders. He is so powerful that he can muster all the deception that wickedness can produce. And then he talks about his influence. His influence is over those who perish, that's the ungodly of the world.

So he says I don't want you to be ignorant about this. You can't be in the day of the Lord because there are some precursors, some things that happen before the day of the Lord. Let me pick out one, the apostasy or the abomination of desolation, the time when Satan's Antichrist, false Christ, false God goes into the temple, literally sets himself up as God. Demands that the whole world worship him, which they do. Makes his point of power by signs and false wonders. When he comes that's prior to the day of the Lord. You can't be in the day of the Lord, he hasn't come. He will be powerful. You won't miss it. He will deceive the whole world of perishing people. So it won't be some obscure isolated smalltime event. You'll know if you're alive at that time. Anybody would. So he is saying you don't want to be deceived by people who come and give you false revelations. You don't want to be forgetful of what you know to be taught. And you don't want to be ignorant about the details of the future or you might find yourself fearing the Second Coming.

There's a fourth component. This one very important. Don't be unbelieving. Don't be unbelieving. Here is a warning to anyone who might be in that church who is not a true Christian, who is not a true believer. He is saying, in effect, if you're not deceived and if you're not forgetful, and if you're not ignorant, you won't be afraid...unless you're not a believer. Because he says at the end of verse 10 that the people who perish are the ones who didn't receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. Those who perish means the damned or the lost, those who are set for eternal hell. And he says don't be among them, they perish because...this is one of the most important statements in all of salvation texts...why do people go to hell? Why do people perish? Why are they punished eternally? Here it is, "Because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." It is a human choice, it is an unwillingness to accept the truth.

Listen, there is no double predestination. People perish not because God ordained them to hell. People perish because of their own choice to reject the truth. Scripture is absolutely crystal clear on this issue. Going back, for example, to the words of our Lord Himself in John chapter 5 and verse 39, Jesus speaking, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is these that bear witness of Me." Then verse 40, "And you are unwilling to come to Me that you may have life." Your problem is not a lack of information. You search the Scriptures and they tell about Me, but you won't come to Me that you might have life. Their antipathy, listen, their antipathy to truth is not intellectual. Their antipathy to truth is moral. Did you get that? Their resistance to the gospel is not intellectual, their resistance to the gospel is moral. In John 8 verse 24, Jesus said this, "I said therefore to you that you shall die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins."

Why do people go to hell? Because they die in their sins. That is their sins have never been forgiven, atoned for or covered, and so hell is where they will pay for them forever. Why do they die in their sins? Because they believe not on Me. Why do they not believe? Because they are unwilling to believe. It is a question of human volition. And again I say, their antipathy is not intellectual, it is moral. It is moral. If you go to someone and say, "There is a God who loves you. There is a God who loves you so much that He came into the world in the form of a man to die on a cross to pay the penalty for your sins. And He wants to forgive you all your sins. And He wants you to be free from any guilt or any condemnation or any judgment and He wants you to spend eternity in glory and bliss and joy and happiness and peace." I daresay to you that anybody is going to say, "I like that...I like that. I like a God who is willing to forgive any of my sins. I am very excited about a God who paid the penalty for my sins so that I will never be punished for any of them. I like a God who wants to remove all my guilt, I like that. I like a God who wants to give me peace and joy and love and satisfaction. I like that."

But the kicker in the whole story is this...are you willing to abandon your sin, repent of it and turn toward the path of righteousness and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord? You see, the decision is a moral one, not an intellectual one. You give someone the intellectual data of the gospel. But now you confront them and you say...will you love the truth or will you love your sin? And you have faced them with a moral dilemma. And, in fact, according to John 3:19 it is simply resolved in these words, "Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil."

Coming to Christ is not an intellectual decision, it is a moral one. It is a decision that says I will no longer love my sin, I will love Christ. Would you please notice verse 10? They perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. If they had received the love of the truth, they would be saved. Note this, please, it doesn't say they did not receive the truth, but they did not receive...what?...the love of it. This marvelous enlightening phrase used only here tells us what is really involved in accepting Christ and the gospel. They had no desire to be saved. They loved their sin, not the truth.

Now what is the truth? Well certainly it's the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the truth that saves, the love of the truth so as to be saved. So it would have to be saving truth and saving truth is the gospel. But I think it could even be a capital "T" and refer to Christ Himself. First Corinthians 16:22 says, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he is accursed." So it is the truth of the gospel as embodied in the Truth who is the gospel, the Lord Jesus Christ. He's saying to them, "You refuse to love Christ and His saving truth. That's your problem. You love your sin."

You see, Paul is saying...Look, you people, you don't worry about the Antichrist, you don't need to worry about all that's going to be happening in the end when the Antichrist comes with his horrible deception and all of that. That is going to effect perishing people, not saved one. Perishing people will

buy that lie. Perishing people will get in to that deception. Perishing people who because they do not love the Truth so as to be saved, love a lie. That's who that effects. So if you're not unbelieving, you have nothing to fear. I have to say to an unbelieving person...you have to fear the coming of Christ, right? You have to fear the return of Christ in glory on His day because He's coming in judgment against all ungodly and you have to fear the coming of Antichrist who will delude and deceive you with all the deception that wickedness can prosper. But here is the true condition of an unbeliever.

Back in verse 8 of chapter 1, they don't know God, they don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus and here they do not love the truth. How would you describe an unbeliever? Doesn't know God, doesn't obey the gospel, doesn't love the Truth, being Christ and His wonderful atoning work. They love their sin, they love what they believe and what they believe is in themselves. They love the lie of Satan and they hate the gospel and Christ. That is a human choice. That is a willful choice and they bear completely the guilt for that refusal. As I said, one can actually receive the truth but not love it. One can make an intellectual apprehension of the truth and not love it.

You have illustrations of this. For example, John 12, just listen to this. In John 12 verse 42, "Many even of the rulers believed in Him...intellectually...but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him lest they should be put out of the synagogue...and listen to this...for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." You see, becoming a Christian is loving God and loving Christ and loving the gospel and loving the approval of God more than you love anything else. Jesus put it another way. "If any man loves father or mother more than Me, he's not worthy to be My disciple." It is a loving issue here. It is an issue of loving God, loving Christ, loving righteousness and hating sin.

But the perishing are perishing because they didn't love, not because they didn't hear, not even because they didn't understand, not even because they didn't see that it could be true or even affirm that it is true, but because they didn't love Christ and hate sin. They prefer to love sin, to love lies. Those are the people who are deceived by Satan. You look at the world around you and you...you who are Christians you say, "I have a Bible and it's so clear and so wonderful and so understandable and so life changing. Why in the world can't other people see it the way I see it? What's wrong with them?" Listen, it is not a question of their mind, it is not a question of their thinking, it is a question of their morality. They love their sin. That's what holds them. And loving sin they must love lies because in order to love sin you'd have to buy a lie, wouldn't you?, that sin is beneficial.

Now the results of this willful unbelief are devastating, verse 11, "And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false." This is powerful. Because of their willful unbelief, because of their willful refusal to love and obey the truth and be saved, there is a severe divine recompense. He says at the end time when the Antichrist comes, those people who have willfully not believed are going to suffer consequences of that unbelief...severe consequences. What are the consequences? Verse 11, "God will send upon them..." Folks, that's divine judgment.

That is divine judgment. God will send upon them. What a thought. The sovereign power of God is going to act on unbelievers to seal their fate...to seal their fate.

What's He going to send on them? A deluding influence so that they might believe what is false. Wow! God's going to send on them literally a force of delusion, or a force of deception so that they might believe what is false. If you read the book of Revelation and you remember when Antichrist comes it says the whole world worships him...do you know why? Because God takes those who have been willfully unbelieving and sends on them a deluding force that causes them to believe that lie.

You might ask yourself...how in the world could people believe the Antichrist was the true Christ? How could they be sucked in to Satan's lie? Because he does mighty signs and wonders, partially. Because he is such a savior of a troubled world, partially. But truthfully, the bottom of it all is that God has sent upon them a deluding influence. God judicially is saying to them...you chose to believe a lie and now I harden you so you couldn't believe the truth if you heard it. All you can believe is a lie.

It's reminiscent, isn't it, of Pharaoh? You remember in the Old Testament when God was endeavoring to speak to Pharaoh to get him to release the children of Israel from the oppression and the bondage in which they were held captive. You remember that God expressed what He wanted done...Let My people go. And if you read through the book of Exodus you read, "Pharaoh hardened his heart...Pharaoh hardened his heart...Pharaoh hardened his heart," and then all of a sudden you read, "God hardened Pharaoh's heart," Exodus 9:12. God hardened Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh chose a path, God fixed him in that path from which he could never return. It was like Proverbs 5:22 which says, "His own iniquities will capture the wicked and he will be held with the chains of his own sin." It is a frightening thing but God will seal people in unbelief.

I go back to that familiar sixth chapter of Isaiah. God says to Isaiah, "I want you to go and tell this people, I want you to go and preach repentance, preach righteousness, preach judgment." And in Isaiah 6:9 God says, "Go and tell this people," then He says this, "Keep on listening but do not perceive, keep on looking but do not understand, render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, their eyes dim, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart and return and be healed." That is astounding. God says you go and preach but I'm going to fix it so they can't hear, they can't see, they can't feel and they don't respond.

That same passage is repeated several times in the New Testament. In the case of Matthew chapter 13 Jesus speaks in parables. Why? Why does He speak in parables? Why doesn't He just speak clearly? And He says, "I speak in parables...Matthew 13:13...because while seeing they do not see, while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand and I am fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, you will keep on hearing but will not understand, you will keep on seeing but will not perceive, for the heart of this people has become dull and their ears they scarcely hear and they have closed their eyes lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and return

and I should heal them." In other words, they've done it on their own and now I'm doing it to them. That is repeated in Mark 4:12, Luke 8:10, John 12:40, Acts 28:26 and 27, that same Isaiah passage. If you will not hear and will not hear and will not see and will not see, the day will come when you cannot hear and cannot see. If you reject the truth the day will come when all you can believe is a lie as God hardens you in the path which you have chosen.

So, judgment comes in a most interesting form. He says judgment comes in that God sends upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false. They are judicially sentenced by God to accept evil as if it were good and a lie as if it were the truth. They have chosen falsehood and they will get it and nothing more.

It should be interesting to point out here that God is really using Satan and Antichrist as the means of His judgment. He is using Satan and Antichrist to punish the perishing who refuse to love His Son. You shouldn't be surprised at that. It is not uncommon for God to do just that. If you were to go back, for example, in to the Old Testament, you would find that God, for example, in 1 Kings, just an illustration here, chapter 22 and verse 23, uses Satan's force for His own purpose. "Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these, your prophets." God says you've been disobedient and you've been disloyal and you've been unfaithful and I'm going to send to you a spirit that is going to deceive you through the mouth of these prophets. And that is precisely what He's saying, the Antichrist, the false Christ, the false one is coming, he will speak lies but I will send a deluding influence and you'll believe those lies are really true.

In Romans chapter 1 we have something of this same attitude on God's part as He judicially responds to the path that man has chosen. Listen to Romans chapter 1, you might want to look at it. It tells us in verse 19 that what is known about God is evident within us, for God made it evident. God has revealed Himself in verse 20 through the creation as well as the conscience. But in verse 21, here is the indictment of man. "Even though they knew God they didn't honor Him as God." So man has the intellectual knowledge but not the moral will. That's the problem. He can understand God, he can read the Bible, he can say it's true, he can say the facts are believable, but he has not the moral will. "Though they knew God they didn't honor Him as God, so they became futile in their speculations, their foolish heart was darkened and they thought they were so smart but they were fools," then it goes on to describe their idolatry.

Then verse 24, here's what happens, "Therefore God gave them over." Verse 26, "For this reason God gave them over." Verse 28, "They didn't see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over."

What does that mean? That means they passed the point of grace. That means God let go. God turned them over to the consequence of their own choice. First in verse 26 He gives them over to degrading passions. Homosexuality is discussed there, indecent acts. Verse 28 gave them over to a

depraved mind. Verse 24 He gave them over to lusts. God just gave them over to the consequence of their own sins and they were then fixed and hardened. It's like Genesis 6 where God said, "My Spirit will not always strive with man." There comes a point when I stop striving and I start judging. Evangelists through the centuries have said, "Don't you continue to sin past the period of grace." You will wake up in the period of judgment and you will have no capacity to believe. Anything but the lie.

In verse 4 we remember the lie is that Antichrist is God. That's the lie. And he's saying you people that may be alive at that time, you're going to believe that, you're going to believe that Antichrist is God incarnate, the true Messiah, Savior. I think Israel is going to believe that. They're still looking for their Messiah. They have chosen willfully to disbelieve. And the nations of the world are going to buy into it, that Antichrist is God and Christ. What an unimaginable situation. But they won't have any choice. They'll be confirmed in that belief because they have chosen to reject the love of the truth.

So you see the position of perishing man. Perishing man has separated himself from God. He is at enmity with God. He is under judgment. He is condemned to a lost eternity. And only grace, grace from the loving heart of God could alter that. Only grace and love expressed in the sacrificial death of God's beloved Son could build a bridge to Him, to reconcile, to justify him. But the perishing ones refuse it. They don't love the Truth, they don't love the Christ of the truth, they don't obey the gospel. They're doing more than presuming on God's grace. They are refusing God's grace because they prefer sin, they love sin, it's a moral decision. It isn't that they don't understand, it isn't that they can't understand, it isn't that it isn't believable, they love sin.

It's a set condition that man brings upon himself by willful unbelief that ultimately becomes a judicial consequence of his own chosen course of action, sealing him in the chains of his own iniquity. He refuses light and chooses darkness, then he'll have darkness and he'll never recognize light. He hardens his heart, then hardened it shall be. He refuses the love of the Truth, then let him receive a lying spirit and embrace the ultimate lie of idolatry and worship the man of lawlessness. He spurned eternal life, then let him have eternal death. So they reap the reward of their unbelief and God even uses Satan and Antichrist to punish him. In all ages, not just the time of the Antichrist, in all ages those who persist in sin may find that eventually they won't be able to change the pattern.

So perishing people hate and reject the saving gospel. Perishing people refuse to love the Lord Jesus Christ. Perishing people love sin. Perishing people will not believe the truth but do believe lies. They will not follow God, they will follow Satan. And eventually unless they repent while they can, they won't be able to. So Paul is saying...Look, if you want to look joyfully at the return of Christ, if you want to be eager about His coming, if you want to love His appearing, then don't be deceived and don't be forgetful and don't be ignorant, and please, most of all, don't be unbelieving. Any of those should produce anxiety.

There's a fifth point. And this one is highly significant. Verses 13 and 14 and I'm only going to introduce it. Don't be insecure...don't be insecure. Verse 13, he says, "We should always give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth and it was for this He called you through our gospel that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

That little two verses is a minisoteriology, that's the technical word for the study of salvation. You have in those two verses enough data about salvation to occupy an eightyyear study. Relax, we're not going to do that. But there's plenty there.

In those two verses we are swept across the vastness of God's redemptive plan. But the main point is this, you don't need to fear that you might miss the Rapture. You don't need to fear that you might get caught up in the day of the Lord. You don't need to fear that somehow God might leave you out and you're going to feel the heat of His fury. You don't need to feel that somehow you could do something to forfeit your future blessedness because God chose you...verse 13...that you may have the glory of the Lord Jesus...verse 14. You have been chosen to glory and you're going to get there.

I was doing a radio interview Saturday, Live in Charlotte, North Carolina and on some branch station in South Carolina. And I was talking to some callers, most of whom who were wonderfully encouraging about the book Charismatic Chaos. One caller called and asked me if I thought that salvation was forever. And I answered the question and it was immediately followed by another caller who said...Look, I must obey the Lord and I must work very hard because if I don't I'll lose my salvation." So he said, "If you...if you believe...this is in effect what he was saying, not his exact words...if you believe that salvation is forever, you're going to cause people to be lazy and indifferent and disobedient because they've got nothing to hold on to. It's all covered, it's all done for them, it requires nothing and you're going to produce people who are indifferent to spiritual responsibility but...he said...I know I can lose my salvation and so I work and I obey to keep it.

And my response to him was simply that I work and I seek to obey not to keep my salvation but to thank the God who keeps my salvation, for keeping it. He's saying to the Thessalonians...Look, you have been given an eternal salvation that started with the love of God in eternity past, and will end up in your glorification. And you're not going to get lost in between, you are the beloved of the Lord, you are the chosen, he says, you have been set apart by the Holy Spirit, you have exercised faith in the truth, you have been called through the gospel and the end of all of that is so that you may gain the glory that belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. You've got nothing to fear, don't be insecure.

So he says in verse 13 we should always give thanks to God for you. I want to thank my God that the salvation He's given to you is forever. Maybe he thought back to John 6 where Jesus said, "All that the Father gives to Me shall come to Me and I have lost none of them." Nobody falls through the cracks of salvation. There aren't any cracks. So he said I want to thank God for you, in contrast to

those who refuse to believe, who refuse to love Christ, who refuse to obey the truth are those who willingly do and that's you, in contrast to those God judges in damnation are those He glorifies in salvation, in contrast to those who are given the Satanic delusion are those who are given the truth...in contrast to those who receive the horrors of Antichrist are those who receive the blessings of Christ. So he says I'm so thankful for you. I'm so thankful that you're God's children and you will never experience the wrath.

Don't be deceived. Don't be forgetful. Don't be ignorant. And don't be unbelieving. And don't be insecure. If I could add just one statement as a footnote that would help you to understand something of the majesty and something of the wonder of this matter of salvation, it would be this statement: in damnation...in damnation God acts in response to human choice. In damnation God acts in response to human choice. In salvation man acts in response to divine choice. That's always the way the Scripture lays it out. And so, he says I will damn those and I will send a deluding influence on them who refuse the love of the truth but for you who are the elect you have nothing to fear for you will receive the glory to which you were chosen.

Father, we thank You for this great passage, so much more yet to learn from it. But we don't want to be caught in any foolish deception that the great appearing of Jesus Christ is coming in October. We don't want to be forgetful of what we know the Bible teaches about the events of that time that would make that an impossibility. We don't want to be ignorant about things that we need to understand in greater fullness. And, Lord, as Paul would have hoped there would be no one unbelieving in the church at Thessalonica, so I would hope and pray that there will be no one here unbelieving for they do have much to fear. And then, Lord, we wouldn't be insecure. How could we be insecure with the God who planned our salvation from before the foundation of the world? So, Lord, help us to look forward to our gathering together to Jesus Christ, look forward to the time when the Savior comes to take us away and keep us out of that hour of trial that comes upon the whole world. Help us to rejoice that we'll not go through the day of the Lord, not feel any of His fury. Help us to realize that the day is coming when Jesus comes not to find us on earth and catch us in judgment, but to meet us in the air and take us to heaven to dwell in the place He's prepared for us. Thank You that He comes to deliver us from the wrath to come. And may we look forward to the return of Christ with great hope and no anxiety, may we love His appearing...in His great and blessed name we pray. Amen.

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