

Sermon November 9, 2025 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8; 13-17

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you've lived through decades of change—wars, economic shifts, family milestones, and now, in retirement, the news bombards you with chaos: moral breakdowns, political unrest, and churches straying from truth. It's like those Thessalonians, rattled by false alarms that Christ's return had come and gone without them. Their hearts raced with fear about missing the ultimate hope. That's the tension Paul tackles head-on in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8 and 13-17. He warns of dark days ahead but delivers unshakable comfort in God's sovereign plan. Today, we'll unpack this passage, revealing its sharp warnings and glorious promises for your well-earned season of life.

Paul starts by tackling the misinformation directly. In verses 1-2, he says: "Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come." The Thessalonians had been misled—perhaps by a phony message pretending to come from Paul—claiming Christ's return had passed them by. This stirred deep fear, making them question their place in God's story. Paul pleads: Stay calm. Hold steady.

He explains further in verse 3: "Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction." The Greek word for "rebellion" is *apostasia*, signaling a massive turning away from faith, a widespread rejection of God's truth. This isn't mere unrest; it's a profound spiritual defiance. At its center stands the "man of lawlessness," a symbol of ultimate evil, who defies everything sacred. Verse 4 details: "who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself

to be God." This figure claims divine status, invading God's sanctuary to demand allegiance.

In verse 5, Paul recalls: "Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?" He's reminding them of prior lessons on the order of events. Verses 6-7 introduce a holding force: "And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way." Here, the Greek for "restraining" is *katechon*, referring to a power—maybe God's providence through authorities, the church, or the Holy Spirit—that keeps evil in check. The insight? Wickedness simmers beneath the surface today, but God controls its full release.

Verse 8 brings the climax: "And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming." The tension mounts as evil emerges, yet Jesus vanquishes it with effortless might, His mere presence like a breath toppling a house of cards. This mirrors Isaiah 11:4, affirming Christ's supreme authority.

Then, Paul turns to encouragement in verses 13-17. "But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth." From eternity, God selected you—not for your achievements, but by pure grace. He summons us via the Gospel to partake in Christ's splendor. Verse 15 instructs: "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter." These are the unadulterated doctrines of the Bible, anchors in stormy seas. Verses 16-17 bless: "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word."

This text offers key lessons for us. Deception will intensify—false doctrines, counterfeit leaders, and faith's erosion. The *apostasia* urges vigilance against truth's abandonment. Evil is curbed now by God's will; the *katechon* displays His rule. Christ's advent obliterates opposition. Most crucially, salvation stems from God's election, the Spirit's renewal, and trust in truth. We endure not by our grit, but by grasping the Gospel.

But as years accumulate and the world's turmoil echoes in our quiet homes—headlines of moral decay, leaders prizing power over piety, or faiths diluted like weak tea—the strain weighs heavy. Memories of stronger days mix with fears for grandchildren's futures, health's fragility, or loneliness's sting. We sense evil's mystery at work, tempting despair. Yet, beloved saints, let's shatter that gloom with radiant joy! Recall the Thessalonians, elders among them surely pondering life's twilight, hearts racing from those deceptive claims. Feel their peace as Paul's assurance dawns: You are chosen! Stand resolute! Christ consoles you!

This promise surges into our retirement years like a warm dawn after a long night. In a society unraveling—conflicts abroad, values crumbling, lies masquerading as wisdom—Jesus stirs us to fervent love for Him. Sense that inner glow? It's the Holy Spirit, refining your soul, pulling you nearer to the Redeemer who bore your burdens on the cross and triumphed over the grave for your sake. No more weary sighs in the armchair; rise in spirit to the hope of a flawless realm ahead, where aches vanish, reunions eternal await, and peace reigns supreme.

To make this vivid, consider a true tale from military history that ignites the point. During World War II, General Dwight D. Eisenhower led the Allied forces in Europe. As D-Day approached in 1944, tension gripped the command—storms delayed the invasion, spies spread doubt, and the fate of nations hung in balance. Eisenhower, in his later years reflecting on it all, stood firm amid the chaos, issuing the order to proceed despite risks. He held to strategic truths taught by mentors, trusting the plan's restraint until the right moment. Victory came, evil's tide turned, and peace followed.

Eisenhower's resolve wasn't solo; it drew from higher purpose, much like our comfort from Christ turns anxiety to ardent service.

So it is with us, dear ones. In your golden years—gardening with arthritic hands, visiting kin amid worries, or watching news that shakes the soul—stand unyielding! Let zeal for Jesus erupt: pray with depth born of decades, mentor the young with wisdom's fire, proclaim the Gospel to neighbors with unquenchable passion. Dream of that brighter eternity—no frailty, no farewells, just boundless delight in our Lord. Commit wholly as His followers, not from obligation, but from hearts brimming with gratitude for the One who picked you eons ago.

Beloved, this scripture unveils rebellion and lawlessness ascending, yet God binds it. He elected us for rescue through His Spirit and truth. We cling to biblical teachings. And Jesus personally soothes our souls, rooting us in noble deeds and speech. What mighty grace He bestows! He shatters wickedness with His whisper, draws us to splendor, and infuses unending hope. By His love, He transforms our reflections into rejoicing, our concerns into commitment. Glory to Christ, our eternal Anchor! Amen.

The peace of God guard your hearts and minds as you believe and trust in Him.

Pastor Ron Breight

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