

Man of Lawlessness

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[0:00] 2 Thessalonians, and we come to chapter 2, verses 1 through 12. 1 Thessalonians 1, verses 1 through 12.

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1 Thessalonians 1, verses 1 through 12. 1 Thessalonians 1 through 12. 1 Thessalonians 1 through 12. 1 Thessalonians 1 through 12. 1 Thessalonians 1 through 12. and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth, but have delighted in wickedness.

[2:04] Six, six, six. The Antichrist. That's who we're going to be talking about tonight. The man of sin, the man of lawlessness, the son of perdition.

Now, you are somewhere on the scale between being really curious about what the Bible says about this man, about this character on the one hand, or you couldn't care less on the other hand. You think there's so many more important things to be talking about than those kind of issues. And maybe if you grew up hearing sermons about the Great Tribulation, and about Russia invading Israel, and how hornets in the Revelation are John's ancient understanding of jets, and how the Antichrist will lead a newly constituted Roman Empire or the ten nations of the European Union, if that was your early church experience, and sort of you've gone past those things, and maybe you're thinking about this Antichrist, I don't care about him really anymore.

I'm a panmillennialist. That means, you know, it's all going to pan out in the end, so whatever. There are more important things to talk about. Maybe you don't carry that baggage, but you've seen how people go off the deep end when they get excited about these things, when they start talking about the Antichrist and those end days, and you say, well, I don't want to do that.

I don't want to go where those people are going. I'm not reading left behind. I'm reading right behind. And, you know, there's just more important things to talk about than that.

[4:11] Well, we are creatures of extremes, aren't we? We have a hard time hitting the middle. And tonight I want to just show you biblically how to think about the Antichrist, about this man of lawlessness.

And we want to avoid the extremes of sort of poo-pooing all of the thoughts about those last days. And also, we want to avoid the extreme of elaborating and going into depth that the Bible just will simply not allow us to go into.

The Bible does talk about this character, the Antichrist, and so we are going to, and we have to. Well, we have six points tonight.

I thought that was fitting. Six points and some practical application at the end. And first we want to just talk about Paul's purpose. These are all going to be fairly brief points, and we're going to get through the first 12 verses.

So we're going to talk about Paul's purpose. Why is Paul talking about this character? And you see it there in the first two verses of chapter 2.

[5:23] He says, He says, And apparently, we're not sure how, but by a prophecy, a report, a letter, somehow, some other word has come in, and they've got the idea that the day of the Lord has already come.

And we need to give them a break. They're not saying that Jesus has already come, but this complex of events that the Bible calls the day of the Lord, it's already started. And so, that caused problems of 1 Thessalonians, and it's still apparently unsettling them.

And so there's this confusion, and questions are swirling. And in the midst of this confusion, they begin to waver. They're losing their stability. And so Paul writes to pour concrete into the pillars of their faith so they would quit wavering.

And have you noticed that unstable Christians are dangerous? They're dangerous. They're dangerous to themselves, and they're dangerous to other people.

They don't grow well, and they actually stunt the growth of other people. And so Paul's writing, and he's saying, don't let anyone deceive you in this matter.

[7:08] Don't let anyone deceive you. And do you see that? It's our responsibility not to be deceived. We cannot just say, well, I was duped.

And say, I'm blameless. Paul says, you don't be deceived. Satan deceived Eve, but Eve was deceived. Eve was responsible.

And it was the same for the Thessalonians, and it's the same for me, and it's the same for you. We have a responsibility not to be deceived doctrinally. We need to pay attention to what people are saying, and not be deceived.

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. You must know the truth. Now, what keeps you from drifting? What keeps you from wavering?

Well, it's the Word of God. We heard that this morning. And so that is what Paul is pouring into these Thessalonians. This is the concrete, and this is the concrete that we need to pour into our lives.

[8:15] The written Word. And we need to drive that steel down into our bones, and so that when we hear false doctrine, when we hear strange doctrine, we are not deceived.

That's how we stay on course. And that's why Paul's writing. He wants to straighten them out. He wants to strengthen their resolve, their understanding. Now, secondly, Paul says, before that day of the Lord comes, before Jesus returns, there's some things that need to happen.

And that's our second point. Paul says, you're wavering because you have forgotten. You have forgotten. You are forgetting what must happen before that day comes.

He said, when I was with you, remember I said that there had to be two things that happen before the Lord returns. The rebellion and the revelation of the man of lawlessness.

And you see that in verse 3. The rebellion and the revelation of the man of lawlessness. The rebellion must occur. That word is apostasy.

[9:23] And it generally meant any kind of rebellion, whether it's political or not, it's a rebellion against the known authority.

And the way the Jews used the word was it referred to religious, spiritual apostasy. So Israel rebelled against God in the desert.

They apostatized. And that's the word. And so, just looking at the text, there's only two words that we know about the rebellion and it's the and it's rebellion. And so, it's hard to read into what is actually going to happen here.

But I think we can gather from this that it is centered, this rebellion, this apostasy is centered on the professing, in the professing church.

Because the word generally means a defection. And so, people that once belonged to a group have now defected. And since the world has never belonged to God's people, they have always been in rebellion, it means that obviously, we're talking about the professing church.

[10:35] And Paul seems to be saying that at the end, to a great extent, there will be a rebellion against Jesus Christ himself. not this law or that law, not this belief or that belief, not this group or that group, just sort of in parts as goes on and has gone on.

But it will be a wholesale apostasy of Christianity from Jesus Christ. So, Christianity will cut itself off from Christ.

Christ. And I'm talking, of course, about the professing church. And that fits in with what the Bible says about this wider decline that will happen, that is going on, as the world gets closer to the end. Remember, Jesus tells the parable of the field and the world is this field and the wheat grows and the weeds grow. the church grows and the rebellion gets worse and worse.

And Jesus says in Matthew that it will get much worse right before the end. In Matthew 24, 12, He says, because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

[11:59] And so, there's going to be this great increase of wickedness right before the end. And that great increase of wickedness will sweep the church into rebellion against Christ.

And Jesus said, it will be so bad that if God did not cut those days short, that the elect themselves would fall, would fail.

But for the sake of God's elect, He will cut those days short. Because God knows how you are made. He knows what we can withstand. He knows our frame, and so He promises us that even in those worst of days, He will be there, and they will be cut off, and His people will be saved.

And so, before the end comes, the rebellion must occur. And then Paul says, and the Antichrist must come. The man of lawlessness must have his day.

See, he must have his day for glorying in himself. himself. But notice, look down at verses 6 and 7, that right now His coming is restrained.

[13:14] He only comes in God's time. Verse 6 says, Now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work, but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way, and then the lawless one will be revealed.

So right now, there's a spirit, a principle of lawlessness already at work. This principle of rebellion. But there is something, and someone, or someone, he refers to this restrainer as a what and a who, and that makes it very difficult because there's not a lot of things that are what's and who's.

So we're not sure who this restrainer is. No one has a definite idea about who or what is restraining the Antichrist coming, but Paul doesn't tell us. He just says, you know who, and the problem is we don't know who.

The Thessalonians knew, and we can only guess. And we don't have time to go into all the opinions about who the restrainer is, what is restraining, but ultimately it's God.

However, he is doing it, he is restraining until the proper time. And just at the right time, when things are right, he will make, the Antichrist will make his appearance.

[14:41] He comes, he will come, but for now he is restrained. And so the rebellion must happen, and the revelation of the man of lawlessness must come before the day of the Lord will happen.

But these things will only happen in God's good time, when time, the time is perfect. Until then, he is restraining, he is holding back this principle of lawlessness, until the right time.

Now, let's talk about this man of sin in particular. And that's where our next four points are, we're going to be talking about. And so third, the Antichrist's character, this man of lawlessness, his character, what will he be like when he shows up, when he is revealed?

Well, he's called a man of lawlessness, and that is a Jewish way of saying that he is a man that epitomizes lawlessness or sin.

He is the very incarnation, if you will, of sin. It is his essence. Every aspect of his personality is totally bent on sin.

[15:59] And you could be saying, well, we believe in total depravity. Aren't we all sort of that way? And the answer is, of course, yes.

But God in his mercy restrains the sinfulness of man, doesn't he? No matter how bad anyone has been, he has not been as bad as he could be.

God has, in his common grace, he's kept sinful men from developing their sinfulness to its fullness. But when this man of sin, this man of lawlessness, when he arrives, he will be the exact opposite of Jesus Christ.

And he will be totally unholy. Totally given over to sin. God will put no curb, no more restraint on his ability to sin.

So God gives him completely over to unrighteousness. He will be sin incarnate. He's the very epitome of the rebellion that we have been referring to from Psalm 2.

[17:08] The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and his anointed one. Let us break their chains and throw off their fetters. That's mankind in general in rebellion against God and this man of sin will be the very incarnation of that attitude.

That principle that is now at work, that secret, it is at work. But the spirit of Antichrist according to 1 John 1:4, that spirit that is present now, it will coalesce as it were.

It will congeal. It will come together and produce this real man of sin. And with him, man's rebellion, the kings of the earth and the men of this world, their rebellion will reach its height.

And that rebellion will chiefly show itself in his pride. That is what this rebellion has been all about. We saw that this morning. Man is always crowding the center.

We want the center. It's all about pride. And that's what the climax of this rebellion will look like.

Look at verse 4. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped so that he sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God.

[18:39] Now the rebellion of mankind is a proud rebellion. Pride is the first shirt that we put on when we are born. And it is the last shirt that we take off when we die.

Pride governs everything sinful man does. I will decide what is right and wrong. I will be the captain of my destiny. I will be free.

I will choose. I will do what I want to do. I will make my own rules. I have that power within myself. I, I, I, I, I.

That is sinful man. And that spirit of pride that opposes God's sovereignty, his rule, is the very spirit that motivates this man of sin. And it's all so satanic.

Satan did not want God to be God. He wanted to take the throne. He wanted to be worshipped. He wanted to be at the center. And so Ezekiel talking about Satan, talking about the king of Tyre, but talking about the king, talking about Satan, says this, in the pride of your heart, you say, I am a God.

[19:53] I sit on the throne of a God in the heart of the seas. That is the heartbeat of this man. I am a God and I sit on the throne of a God in the heart of the seas.

So his pride goes so far, this man of lawlessness, his bride goes so far as to sit himself as a king on a throne in the very temple of God and to claim divinity himself.

And there's been so much ink spilled on what this verse means about what exactly this temple is.

And to do justice to every opinion would keep us here far too long. Some people think by temple, Paul is referring to a literal temple in Jerusalem.

Some think it is the church. Some think, some read it more generically, generally, so it would read something like he sets himself up in the temple of the God, proclaiming himself to be a God.

[21:07] God. And that is grammatically possible. And to be honest, I think it's sort of a combination of those last two. Paul commonly calls the people of God the temple.

The new covenant people of God is constituted as a new temple. And I think if we connect this verse with the rebellion in verse 3, it would seem to say that this man himself will hijack the professing church and take the place that Christ has.

He will take Christ's place at the center of the church's worship. And again, I'm referring to the professing church. But I do think that this idea that what is going on here is a little more general even than just what's going on in the church.

It not only seems that he will take over the church, but he will claim all worship from everyone, over everything. He will oppose and exalt himself over everything that is called God.

He will exalt himself over everything and everyone, whether truly or falsely called God, whatever has the name of God. And so he just won't demand the worship of the church.

[22:32] He will demand the worship from everyone. And so I think just to sort of understand this idea better, it helps to know what was going on in Thessalonica at the time.

Paul obviously is writing to these people and they would have an understanding of what he is saying. Now remember what I've sort of repeated a few times, that Thessalonica was a city that had its heart set on Rome.

It needed Rome, it loved Rome, it was pretty much Rome's lap dog. And so in an effort to keep on good terms with Rome, the Thessalonians on their own accord set up a temple to Caesar.

And there was a whole Caesar cult, meaning there were priests, and there were sacrifices, and there were procedures for worshipping the emperor.

And so the emperors themselves, they claimed the title Augustus. Remember in Luke, it says Augustus Caesar. Augustus is not his first name, Augustus is a title, and it means something like your worship.

[23:46] It was a claim on divinity, and they expected everyone to worship them as divine. divine. And so here Paul is saying that this man, he will set himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God, and the Thessalonians would not have thought so much of the temple in Jerusalem so far away that most of them have never been to, and they were Gentile, and they weren't Jewish.

They would have thought of their own hometown, where in their own hometown, there was a man claiming to be God, having a temple, and being worshipped, and demanding that everyone worship

him.

And Paul says that's what this man is like, this man of lawlessness. He's like those Roman emperors, except his pride will have no bounds.

It will reach over everyone and everything. He'll want the allegiance, the loyalty, the praise of everyone, just like the Roman emperors, but he will exalt himself against God to an unheard of degree.

He will say unheard of things. See, even the Roman emperors didn't want all the praise. They were satisfied to be praised right along with all the other gods. As long as they had their spot at the table, they were satisfied.

[25 : 06] But this man, he puts himself on the very throne where he demands worship above every god, above everything. His pride is completely boundless.

And so there is his character. He is the epitome of sin because he is the epitome of pride. Rebellion and rebellion.

So that's the third point. Here's the fourth point. Let's look at his methods. His methods. Into Christ's methods. How will he go about exalting himself to the throne how will he go about exalting himself to the highest place in men's hearts?

So that the whole world will go after him. Well, it's going to be a combination of two things. It's going to be a combination of political power and it's going to be a political power and false religion.

It's going to be that combination. Now, the false religion aspect is pretty obvious in this text. but the political power is not so obvious.

[26 : 21] But I think as you look at it and you dig into it, you see that that is actually part of what is going on here. Verse 4, as you have it, he will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God and is worshipped.

It is a very clear allusion to Daniel chapter 11 verse 36. And listen to what Daniel says. This is Daniel 11 36.

The king will do as he pleases. He will exalt himself above every god and will say unheard of things against the god of gods. So Daniel calls this man that he is referring to a king.

And so this antichrist figure will have some political, he will be a political figure, he will have political power, and he will use that power to exalt himself over every god, including the one and true living God.

Now, most scholars believe that Daniel 11 36 is in part fulfilled, and this is going to be a history lesson, but if you're going to understand this passage, you need to have this little bit of history lesson.

[27 : 38] It was fulfilled in part by King Antiochus Epiphanes. you're like, I don't know who that is, well, I'm going to tell you. Antiochus Epiphanes was the king of the Seleucid Empire, which is sort of north of Israel, who in the second century took the name Epiphanes, which means God manifest.

He claimed to be divine, and he demanded that everyone worship him as divine, and when the Jews refused to worship him, he desecrated the temple, and they went to war.

The people of God went to war against this Antichrist. So Antiochus Epiphanes, he used his political power to enforce his worship, the worship of himself.

And that's exactly what the Roman emperors did, and that's what lots and lots of people have done over time. They used their power to make sure that everyone worships them, and if you don't worship him, then you are punished.

And that's why so many of the early Christians were martyred. They refused to say that Caesar is Lord. All you had to do to avoid martyrdom was to say Caesar is Lord, burn the incense, sign your name, and you went scot-free.

[29 : 00] And they refused to say that Caesar is Lord, because there's only one Lord, and it's Jesus. And so on that basis, they refused, and they were executed.

Now, it seems to be that at the very end, it will be no different. This story has occurred over and over again in world history, and it's going to reach its climax at the end, and the Antichrist will use his political power to threaten with force everyone who will not worship him.

And he's not only going to use political power, he will use deceitful, deceit, lying, miracles. Look at verse 9. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan, displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, miracles, signs, and wonders, and every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing.

Do you see the emphasis in that verse? These are lies. They're deceitful. It's deceit. And yeah, there's going to be signs, and there's going to be wonders, lies, but they're all going to be lies, and they will deceive many.

Now, why is Paul telling the Thessalonians this? Why does God make sure that this gets into our Bible, so he's telling us? Why are we hearing this?

[30:28] But it's basically so we ourselves won't be deceived. just because something looks wonderful, just because something looks miraculous, doesn't mean it's from God.

And I want you to nail this down into your heart, and to fasten it there, because there are going to be signs and wonders that are unexplainable.

And if your criteria for something being from God is just that it's unexplainable, you will be deceived. Because it will be in accordance with Satan.

It will be his power, Satan's power. And Satan can do marvelous things. His ability to deceive is unrivaled.

And so don't be duped yourself. You're going to see things that will blow your minds. And Paul says don't be deceived. So those are the Antichrist methods.

[31:35] Political power and deceit. And he's going to use them hand in hand. One will enforce the other. And he will use the lies to fool the perishing.

And he will use the power to enforce and threaten all who oppose him. And the point is be ready for him.

Be ready. be ready to suffer. Be ready to see amazing things. Know the truth.

Hold the truth. And if you do, you will overcome. And if you don't, you will be overcome. So that's points three and four.

We've seen his character, his methods. Now point five, the Antichrist purpose. Why does God allow this man on the scene?

[32:36] I mean, what purpose in God's plan does this man have? And notice I'm saying that God has a purpose for him. Nothing is out of God's control.

Even in the worst of times at the very end, and those hardest of times when the increase of wickedness will make many fall. Even then, God is in control and so his purpose will stand. Remember, the kings rebel and the Lord laughs. Never threaten. His throne is never harmed. His sovereignty is never in doubt.

And so what is God's purpose for this man of lawlessness? Well, God does it to punish the unbelieving. That might sound strange.

He allows this figure to come into the world and the purpose is to punish the unbelievers. You can see that in the middle of verse 10.

[33:43] They perish because they refuse to love the truth and so be saved. And for this reason, God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

God does it to punish the wicked. They refuse to love the truth. God has given them the gospel. He sent them the gospel and they refuse to believe it. Not because it looked false but because it was obviously true.

And in the face of obvious truth, they refuse to believe. believe. And that is so important to understand right from the very beginning because we can't say, well, these people, God is treating them so badly.

No, they love lies. And so God says, you want a lie? Here's a lie. He sends them a powerful delusion, which I think is a reference to the man of lawlessness himself.

And so he is a delusion. And he comes on the scene and he's the lie of all lies. remember back in the garden, what did the serpent say?

[34:56] Well, you'll be like God. That was the greatest lie of all, that you in rebellion could be like God. And so that's what this man is claiming for himself, that I, a sinful man, am not only like God, but I am God.

It's a delusion. And men love it. See, he won't have to fight for followers. People will fall right in line. They'll be tripping over themselves to follow him because they love lies.

They hate the truth. And so what happens to them? What happens to these truth haters? Well, they're brought to condemnation. God brings them to their own destruction because on the last day, Jesus destroys this character completely.

And they themselves are destroyed right along with him. And the sad thing is they go so willingly. God doesn't have to coerce them.

He doesn't have to make them follow. They go of their own accord. Their punishment is deserved and they walk right into it.

[36:16] And they love lies and their love destroys them. And I think that is a warning to all of you who are outside of Christ.

There comes a time when the day of grace ends. You're never going to read anywhere in the Bible that grace is infinite. God is obligated to be gracious.

We say come. We say come to Jesus. Come and be saved. But there is a line that every perishing sinner crosses. It is invisible. And no one sees it.

Only God. When you cross that line, the Spirit stops striving with your Spirit. And you are given over. And there's nothing left but condemnation.

And you become a dead man walking. And that's what they call people on death row. Did you know that? People who have no hope, who are going to be executed, they're dead men walking.

[37:25] They're not living. It's just a matter of time before they die. And that is what happens to those who refuse the gospel. And refuse the gospel.

It isn't a matter of if the execution is going to come. It's just a matter of when. And so if you live for the lie, God will give you over to your own lie.

And you'll believe it to your own destruction. And who can you blame? Except yourself. So hear me, if you haven't believed the gospel, and you know who you are, hear me, don't delay.

delay. Don't delay any longer. God will not be mocked. He will send a powerful delusion, and you will believe it to your own destruction.

And you know what? It might not be the antichrist for you. It just might be the riches of this world, and the praise of your friends, and it might just be the promise that you know what? Tomorrow, I'll do this tomorrow.

[38:30] I'll repent tomorrow. And you know what? It's a lie, and you believe the lie. And you'll hang yourself with your own rope. And so come to Christ today, because now there is time.

If the spirit is striving, if he is wrestling in you, then don't be afraid that the day of grace is gone. Come to him. Give in to that wrestling.

Believe the truth and be saved. God allows the antichrist to come to punish the wicked. And he also does it to glorify Jesus.

Does it to glorify Jesus. And you say, well, how does he, the exact opposite of Christ, how does he glorify Christ? And the short answer is, by being instantly destroyed by him on the last day.

By being instantly destroyed at Christ's coming. you see, every victor, every great, true champion needs a worthy opponent.

[39:37] Doesn't he? Every champion who is truly glorious needs to have some sort of rival to establish his greatness. So think about it.

This is kind of, these are just examples. Batman, he needs Joker, or he's not much of a superhero. The Celtics, they need the Lakers, or they're not much of a basketball team.

And Bremen, they need Jimtown, or, well, something like that. Or they're not, you need a rival to establish greatness.

So tomorrow is the college national football championship game. And who is going to be playing? It's going to be number one versus number two. It's going to be number one Auburn versus number two Oregon.

And so why is it number one versus number two? Well, the idea is that the winner of this match, the winner of this game, will be the undisputed champion.

[40:38] Because the greatest teams need to play in order to truly crown the champion. There has to be no doubt who is the greatest. And so that is God's purpose with this man of lawlessness.

When Jesus destroys him with the splendor of his coming, there will be no doubt in anyone's mind who is the king of kings. There will be no doubt who has the right to exalt himself over everyone and everything.

And there will be no doubt who deserves the praise of men. Who deserves to sit on God's throne in the temple. God's And so when the antichrist, the man of sin, he is the greatest, he is the most cunning, the most powerful, the most wicked man in human history.

He is the greatest hope that sinful men have of throwing off the fetters and breaking the chains and taking over the universe. He has the greatest hope of throwing off Christ and his kingdom. And so when he is destroyed, who gets the glory? Well, it's Jesus. It's all about Jesus. And so God allows this character to come into the world and he allows him to sit on the throne and he allows horrible wickedness for the sole purpose that when he is destroyed, Jesus gets all the glory. [42 : 12] And so the antichrist exists for the glory of the lamb. It's point five. Point six. The antichrist destruction.

Verse eight. The Lord Jesus will overthrow him with the breath of his mouth. Overthrow him with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming.

So will number one verse number two be much of a match? Not at all. Will it be a fight to the finish? A fight to the death?

A real grudge match? No. Not at all. Jesus has died once. He is God of God. He is light of light. He is the true and faithful one.

And when he rides to victory, he rides to instantaneous victory. glory. And so he will breathe and he will crush his enemy and he will destroy the height of human pride.

[43 : 19] He will destroy it with the splendor of his coming. Christ's coming will be so glorious. We talked about it in chapter one that his arrival on the scene will destroy the wicked and push them out.

his very glory will sweep them away. So his very arrival on the field of battle will be the victory.

His coming through the tunnel, his going through the gate onto the playing field is the victory. And so surely the Antichrist will think that his empire is secure.

He will undoubtedly think that he is secure. But at the height of his powers, Christ will crush him.

And then all pretense will be ended. And all the pride of men, it will be finished.

And sinful men and their desire to exalt themselves to the highest place, their desire to crowd themselves into the middle, it will be over. Because all bad things must come to an end.

[44 : 25] And Christ's coming will crush men's rebellion against God and his kingdom. Remember we heard from Daniel 2 this morning? There is the statue. And it's men's kingdom. It's men's pride.

And then there is the rock. And it rolls down. And it obliterates the kingdom of men. Christ will rule until he puts every enemy under his foot, under his feet.

And his kingdom will grow. And it will fill the earth. Christ will have dominion. right now he gains it by the faithful witness of his people.

He's exercising his kingdom as you witness and as you establish his kingdom in your hearts, as you obey him, as you speak of him to other people.

But at the end he will take it by force. will destroy the height of human hubris and pride in the glory of his coming.

[45 : 33] So that's the antichrist and that's his destruction. And all that is the symphony to the glory of Christ. Christ. Now let's talk very briefly about how this all applies to us.

This has sort of been kind of a lecture-y feel. I hope it's been okay. How does all this apply to us?

First, do you see there's no reason to fear?

There's no reason to be afraid or be alarmed. That's the reason Paul was writing to begin with so that these believers would be calm and stable. And now for us, I know that sometimes when I think about these things, I can become concerned.

I can start to fear. I mean, this man of lawlessness, he's a terrible person. And I don't want to be around when he's around.

to be honest. And I don't want the people that I love to be around when he's around. But what if I am?

[46 : 51] What about he should come in our day? Well, there's nothing to fear. There's nothing to fear. The worst he can do, and I think we need to secure this in our minds, unless our fears sweep us away.

The worst he can do is torture us and kill us and send us to heaven. The worst he can do is martyr us and give us the joy of wearing a martyr crown to the glory of Jesus forever and ever.

That's the worst that he can do. There's no reason to fear because the Antichrist cannot take away Jesus' love for me.

He can't do it. He can kill my body. He can torture me, but he cannot take Jesus' love away from me. He cannot take heaven away from me. He can only speed me on my way.

That's the love of God for his people. There's another reason not to be afraid. If he comes, then Jesus will soon be coming.

[48:01] for the Antichrist coming, it's only for a brief time. It's so anticlimactic, isn't it? Verse 8, it just seems like there's so little to say.

Then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth. He'll only show up to be destroyed. His reign is not long.

His reign is not forever. forever. He shows up, and Jesus is hard on his heels. So there's nothing to fear from him, because his coming means Jesus' coming is very near.

And if we live to see his day, then I think we might live, or at least Jesus is coming soon. And there's no reason to fear, because I want that day.

Don't you want Jesus to come back, and for the heavens and the earth to become one, and God's kingdom to fill the earth? And you know what, if I have to live and die through that, well, so be it, it doesn't matter.

[49:10] And still, I say, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Even if I have to go through that, let Jesus come quickly. There's no reason to be afraid. That's the first thing I want to say practically.

Then the second thing is simply this, we must begin to fight him now. we must begin to fight him now. And you might be saying, well, he's not here, we don't think he's here, well, how can we do that?

Well, 1 John 4 says the spirit of the Antichrist is at work. And Paul here says that the secret power of lawlessness, that's the same thing, is already at work.

And so it's here, he's here in principle. He's here when you see political oppression. He's here when you see false religion.

He's here when you see human pride crowding God in his throne. And all that is present, the spirit of rebellion, the spirit of political oppression, the spirit of false religion, that is here.

[50:19] And so we are called to oppose that principle even now. And we do it not by buying guns and fighting.

We do it by humbly living for the kingdom of God. We do it every time we say no to this world that says, you know what, things and stuff, that's what you should live for.

And that's just idolatry. That's just the world. That's just human pride. And we do it by faithfully witnessing in the face of political pressure.

That is becoming more of a reality, isn't it? Our little bubble is beginning to pop. And so we oppose the Antichrist, we oppose that principle by faithfully witnessing in that situation, in the situation that we find ourselves in presently.

And we do it by opposing the worship of man and false religion. We do it by not compromising. We do it by overcoming his spirit now. And perhaps we'll see him.

[51:37] Perhaps we won't. But he's our enemy. He steals glory from Christ. In principle, he's doing it now. And when he comes, he'll do it then.

And that cannot stand. We saw today in Sunday school, you have to pick sides. Don't you? You just cannot be neutral in this battle. You are either for Christ, the anointed one in his kingdom, or you are joining the kings.

And so we begin to fight him now. He steals glory from Christ and that just cannot stand. Jesus loved us. Jesus loved us and died for us. He has been so faithful to us and we have to stay faithful to him.

And we will stay faithful. We have to stay faithful even if it costs us our very lives. And we need, I don't mean to sound alarmist or melodramatic, but we need to learn to accept that reality.

It might get so bad that I might have to die. And we have to accept it. And we have to say, you know what, even if it does, it doesn't matter. my sins are taken care of.

[52:43] By the grace of the Lord, I am ready to see God. And so I will be faithful. I will be faithful to him because he has been so faithful to me.

Well, let's pray. Let's pray. our heavenly father, we thank you for your word.

Pray that you would come and lay a foundation in our hearts, something that we can live on, that we would have truth that we could depend on, that it would be present in our lives, that we could build our lives around it and on it.

Father, thank you for warning us beforehand. Thank you for your great love to us. Thank you that you have given us the end so that we can know with confidence how this whole world, the story that

we find ourselves, how this is going to end.

Thank you for loving us. And thank you that our victory is secure. It is beyond a shadow of a doubt. [54:07] Jesus has already won the decisive victory. Help us to rest in that. We help us to believe the gospel so that we can be faithful in the face of whatever oppression, whatever lies that come our way.

Father, I pray for the lost. Have mercy on them. If you were to give us our just desserts, who would be saved, no one would be saved.

If you are going to have glory for your grace, then you must be gracious. So please be gracious, Lord. Help us to live for your glory. You are glorious.

We do adore you. You are worth living for. You are worth dying for. Will you help us to see the greatness, the weight of your glory.

Thank you for loving us. Thank you for being so powerful for us, for being so faithful for us. Thank you that you've called us into covenant with you, and so that all that you are, which is so magnificent, and that we will have to spend forever and ever finding out, all of you is for us in Jesus.

[55:26] We thank you for that. We give you praise because you are worthy. We give you praise because you have loved us. I pray that you would give us grace to live for you in a way that's worthy of you.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. We'll forego our closing hymn. We're dismissed.