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2 THESSALONIANS

The Anchor to Our Soul

2 Thessalonians 2

- I. A Crisis of Hope
 - a. We learned in Chapter 1 that the Thessalonians were in the midst of a crisis of hope
 - i. A crisis of faith we're familiar with, but what is a crisis of hope? When we believe what God can do but doubt what God will do
 - ii. Hope is what makes faith personal – Jesus is coming back for His church (faith), Jesus is coming back for me (hope)
 - iii. We see in this chapter that the cause of this crisis of hope was bad preaching and teaching
 1. More specifically the belief of bad preaching and teaching – a lie isn't dangerous until it is believed – but when it is believed it can cause a great deal of damage
 2. If someone told you that a comet was going to pass by the earth next week and following close behind that comet was an extraterrestrial spacecraft. And if you were able to board this spacecraft your soul would achieve another level of existence that exceeds being human. And the only way to board this spacecraft is to take your own life as the comet passes by. If you do that your soul will board the spaceship. You would tell your kids to get behind you.
 - a. On March 26, 1997 in San Diego, CA, police discovered the bodies of 39 members of the cult Heaven's Gate – all of whom had committed suicide as the Comet Hale-Bopp passed by in an attempt to board the spacecraft that was flying closely behind it
 - b. A lie isn't dangerous until it is believed. That is satan's greatest tool for destruction. His greatest desire is to steal, kill, and destroy and his greatest tool is deception – take things that are not true and convince us that they are; take things that are true and convince us that they are not –he is called the father of lies
 - i. We see this at the beginning of human history - ***Gen 3:1-5 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" (2) And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; (3) but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' " (4) Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. (5) For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."***
 - ii. The most dangerous lie wasn't "you will not die," it was "eat from this tree and you will be like God."
 1. ***Gen 1:27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. – they weren't going to become like God, they were already created in His image.***
 2. The most dangerous lies we believe are lies about our identity. Who we are in light of who He is. The Thessalonians had lost hope in their identity – they had believed that Christ had already come – that the time of the great tribulation was already upon them – and that God had abandoned them
 3. Paul's remedy for this crisis of hope, the ointment that he applies to heal this wound of doubt, the anchor to our soul – the Word of God

2Th 2:1-5 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, (2) not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. (3) Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, (4) who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (5) Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

II. Grounded in the Word

- a. When we feel there is a disconnect between our spiritual understanding and our experiences we often give ourselves over to doubt, worry, and fear
 - i. The Thessalonians knew that Jesus loved them and was coming back for them – but their present sufferings coupled with the deceptive teaching that had crept into the church started to convince them otherwise
 - ii. That is a crisis of hope – when God’s Word and our own experiences don’t seem to match up – when that happens there always seems to be a false teacher close by to reinforce a lie
- b. Paul says the source of this lie was either by spirit, or by word, or by letter
 - i. Ultimately the source didn’t matter – that is something we have to remember, a lie is a lie regardless of the source – “but a famous preacher said it, the pope said it, this author with a PHD, MD, OD, DMV after his name wrote it, or I heard it during a supernatural experience, I saw a really good movie and it touched my heart” it doesn't matter if it contradicts the Word of God
 1. The enemy will always bring along a convincing source during our crisis of hope
 2. Trouble in a marriage – a co-worker comes along and whispers divorce in our ear
 3. Feeling alone or unaccepted – someone comes along and whispers promises of worldly affection
 4. If that source, no matter how convincing it is, doesn’t match up with the Word of God it is wrong
 5. These are attacks on our identity – they can be so dangerous if we start to believe them – so much of this world has believed a lie about who they are
 - ii. Leads to a mind that is shaken (agitated, toppled, disturbed) and troubled (frightened, afraid) - same word Jesus uses in **Mar 13:7** *But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet.*
 - i. Again Paul points out the source of their anxiety and fear isn’t the trial itself – it is the deception that has come with it - Let no one deceive you - the root of their fear is deceit - they believed a lie, something that is not true about Jesus or not true about their identity in Jesus as taken root
 - ii. Best way for Paul to treat this is to speak truth into their lives, truth that speaks to this specific struggle
 1. In the next 10 verses Paul digs around the root of the deception and attempts to uproot it with what God has already said – the sword of the Spirit
 2. This is something we must engage in ourselves - preaching the gospel to ourselves

III. The Apostasy

- a. The lie – Jesus had already returned, the Second Coming of Christ had already happened
 - i. The truth – no, He had not – (pretty black and white) Paul provides 2 evidences of this fact
 - ii. The great apostasy or the great falling away had not taken place and the man of lawlessness had yet to be revealed – both of which have to happen before the second coming of Christ
- b. The Great Apostasy is something Jesus taught about in **Mat 24:10-12** *And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. (11) And many false prophets will arise*

and lead many astray. (12) And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.

- i. Remember Paul isn't providing his interpretation of the events unfolding in Thessalonica, he isn't offering his opinion – he is simply restating what Jesus has already said
 - ii. Paul has said over and over again “this teaching is not my own, this message is not my own, nor did I receive it from man - I am simply an ambassador for Christ”
 - iii. If only everyone who taught the Word would have this same heart - Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, professors, pastors, chaplains, parents – what a difference that would make
 1. But we get in trouble when we insert our own agenda. When self-seeking and self-promotion, and public opinion gets mixed in with the pure and simple truth of God's Word. When Jesus simply becomes a means to an end.
- c. Why do so many fall away? Why are so many deceived? They do not love the truth. It's one thing to know the truth, it is completely another thing to love the truth. (Lord, Lord - depart from me, I never knew you)
- i. They lacked a pure love for the gospel, for the truth. Again it was a means to an end, a source of pride, a tool for control, a path to riches and comfort and prosperity - but there was never a genuine love for Jesus and the work of the cross. Which means they never fully accepted the love of God.
 - ii. In this we see the nature of true saving faith. It's not simply a belief in the historical Jesus, but a trust in the living Jesus. There will be a great falling away because the son of perdition will promise mankind everything but Jesus and people will be okay with that. Jesus was just a means to an end anyways so if I can get what I want without Him all the better!

IV. The Man of Lawlessness

- a. So who is this Son of Perdition - The Man of Lawlessness – we know him as the anti-Christ – Paul goes on to describe him in more detail

2Th 2:6-12 And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. (7) 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. (8) 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. (9) The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, (10) and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (11) Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, (12) in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

- i. How will we know him when he comes? His identity is rooted in rebellion against God. He will reject Jesus and he will reject the gospel. He will be an adversary of the Word of God.
- ii. Paul calls him the son of perdition – perdition - a state of eternal punishment and damnation into which a sinful and unrepentant person passes after death; complete and utter ruin – he is destined for destruction – a destiny that he cannot escape – again that is his identity
- iii. He will position himself to be the sole object of worship for all mankind
 1. Paul writes that he takes his seat in the temple of God - some believe this means he will be a "church" leader others believe that he will literally seat himself in the temple of Jerusalem – I believe both
 2. The prefix anti is not only against but also in place of - our bodies are the temple of God but we often replace God on the throne - that is the spirit of the anti-christ
 3. Remember the identity of this spirit - ruin, destruction - we are not anti-Christ but we are subject to that kind of thinking which is anti-Christ – I trust myself, I trust others, I trust my circumstances more than I trust Jesus – that is the spirit of the anti-Christ

4. Despite his power he is not in control - God is - His time has been appointed by God and his end is certain.
 - a. How will his reign come to an end? "Our Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming"
5. This man is not satan but comes in the power of satan. He will perform signs and wonders which is a warning that signs and wonders cannot be our foundation for faith and truth. - They are not miracles, they are demonic in nature, because they don't point to the truth of the gospel. They are deceiving just like the lie the Thessalonians had fallen into.
 - b. How does Paul treat their condition with truth - This man must come first before the Day of the Lord comes. The end has not come but when it does the battle belongs to the Lord – and you are His, He is your Father. You are on the right side!

V. The Lie Uprooted

2Th 2:13-17 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. (14) To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (15) 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. (16) Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, (17) comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

- a. Paul has uprooted the lie - he has grounded their experiences in spiritual understanding - now he will plant spiritual truth in their hearts – He reminds them of their identity
 - i. Beloved by the Lord - He loves you, He adores you
 - ii. God choose you - He choose you – you are not an accident, He created you, He designed you
 - iii. God saved you – Even though you rebelled against God, He saved you from your sins by offering His Son as a ransom – why? Because of His great love.
 - iv. He is sanctifying you by the Spirit - He is changing you, teaching you how to walk as a new creation through the power of His Holy Spirit that lives inside of you
 - v. He has called you to go out and share the hope you have found in Jesus through the gospel
- b. (Verse 15) Therefore stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us - this is the opposite of being shaken - whatever we build on Christ, our sure foundation, stands firm - again Paul's heart is to ground this young church, secure them, reassure them, so that they are not easily shaken
 - i. ***Eph 4:11-15 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, (12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, (13) till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (14) that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, (15) but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—***
 - ii. ***Jas 1:5-8 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (6) But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. (7) For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; (8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.***
 - iii. ***Mat 11:7 As they departed, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? "Did you go out to see someone who was flimsy and floppy, blowing in the wind and reading the***

latest public opinion polls before deciding what stance he should take? No! Far from being a reed shaken by the wind, John was a wind shaking the reeds!"

1. When we our identity is shaken we must hold fast to Jesus - that means holding fast to His Word which is inseparable from Him - and that is what Paul plants in their hearts