

Comfort For Christians

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

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I would like for you to open your Bibles with me to the book of 2 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians chapter two. In a few moments I am going to speak to you from verses 13 through 18. Now, here is my title, here is my subject. I think you will be interested in this. I'm sure many of you will who love Christ and love the gospel, who know something about his saving mercy, the sure mercies of David. My subject today is comfort, comfort. That's it, just comfort for Christians.

Now, as I travel about the country and preach and I as I hear from many of you, you write letters and I hear from you, there are two things which especially disturb the people of God in our day, two things disturb the people of God, cause them great concern. And the first one is this. There is so little true preaching of the Word of God in this day. That's right. There is much religion. You know that. I do, too. There is a great deal of entertainment and socializing in the name of God, in the name of religion. There is a lot of zeal. There are a lot of church activities. There are a lot of programs. But you know and I know that in this day there is very little teaching, true preaching and teaching of the Word of God. People just don't know anything about the Bible.

Oh, they can quote two or three favorite passages or well known passages, but as far as knowing something of the mystery of God and the mystery of godliness, justification, sanctification, redemption, righteousness, how God can be just and justify. How can he be clean that is born of a woman? Imputed righteousness, imparted righteousness, these things. People know so little about the Word of God, but that's a fulfillment of Amos' prophecy.

Amos prophesied in chapter eight of his book. He said, "God said, 'Behold, the day is come.' Thus saith the Lord, 'Behold the day is come when I will send a famine, a famine in the land. Now, not a famine of bread, not a famine or thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. And people shall wander from sea to sea and from north to the east and they shall run to and fro and seek to hear the Word of God and shall not find it.'"

There is very little preaching, serious preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Men and women today have very little knowledge of God's Word. Now you know that and I know that and that deeply, greatly concerns you and me.

You take a program. People often comment about this program. It is really 28 minutes and 30 seconds long. And that entire time is not spent making announcements and begging for money and singing songs and entertaining people and announcing projects. It is spent teaching the Word of God. That is what I am trying to do.

I have got a subject this morning: Comfort, comfort for Christians. And I want you to be comforted. And that is what I am going to deal with. But there is very little teaching of the Word of God.

And the second thing that concerns people is this. And that is that sin and wickedness literally are bound today all over this nation and all over the world. People ask me, "Preacher, have you ever heard of a day like our day when evil prevails from the top to the bottom of society and fear grips the hearts of people young and old? The streets are unsafe, communities are unsafe. Children can't go out in the yard and play alone. You can't walk down the street. There is greed from top to bottom. There is drugs and drunkenness, murder, child abuse, divorce. Oh, the streets are dangerous."

This is a concern of the people of God; so little true preaching and so much wickedness. And I understand your concern and I understand your fears. But I tell you this. This is no new thing, really. It is no new thing. If you will turn to my text, 2 Thessalonians chapter two, the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica 2000 years ago over 1900 years ago. And he talks about this very thing, this very thing, the poverty and famine concerning the preaching of the truth and the wickedness that abounds.

Now, here in chapter two of 2 Thessalonians, back here in verses two and three, Paul talks to them about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, our Lord, before he ascended to the Father, he said, "Now, I go to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again. I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there you may be also."

And then when he ascended to heaven the angels appeared to the disciples as they were gazing up into heaven as Christ was taken up from them into heaven. And they were gazing up there and the angel said, "You men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you will so come in like manner as you see him go. He is coming back."

And these people said, "Well, maybe because of the wickedness and evil of our day, maybe Christ is coming now."

This was 1900 years ago. You see, we have been in what they call "the last days" since Paul preached. The creation of the world, the existence of our world seems to be divided into three almost equal parts. From the creation of Adam to Moses was about 2000 years. And from Moses to Christ is about 2000 years. And from Christ to this present day is about 2000 years. And it is called the last days, the last days. It is called the last days all the way through the New Testament.

But Paul says here in verse six and seven of 2 Thessalonians two, he said of the return of Christ, "Christ will not come except there come a falling away first and the antichrist is revealed."

Now, that day is here. That day is here. It is not just one man. This antichrist is not just one man. This antichrist is the spirit of antichrist. The Scripture said there would be many antichrists. Christ said, "He that is not with me is against me. He is antichrist."

But the coming of the Lord will not take place until there come a falling away, a desperate falling away, a falling away in spiritual matters and a falling away in carnal things, a falling away. And the spirit of antichrist prevails. And Paul said in verse seven, "And this spirit of iniquity is already at work," even in his day, already at work. "Evil men and evil spirits are at work," he said, "in my day." And in the next verse he said, "They are restrained by the Spirit of God. Only he that letteth, only he that hindereth will hinder until he be taken out of the way."

You see, God restrains this wrath. God restrains this enmity. God restrains this wickedness. He holds it in check like he holds the oceans and says, "Hitherto shall you come and no further." God restrains it.

That is the reason the people of God, children of God need not fear. Fear not. Christ said, "I am with you. I am with you." He has said, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. So you can boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper.'" He will restrain the evil. "A thousand will fall at your side, ten thousand at your left side. It won't come nigh you because the Lord is your helper and he that keepeth Israel, spiritual Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. Thy Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. He'll keep you. He gives his angels charge over you to keep you in all your ways.

And so he restrains. In Psalm 76, verse 10, listen. Listen to Psalm 76:10. "Surely, the wrath of man shall praise the Lord and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." And that is what Paul is saying to this church at Thessalonica. He says, "Now, people this is no new thing. Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse. People are lovers of themselves more than lovers of God and evil is on every hand. And only he that letteth will let until he be taken out of the way." God restrains evil. He hinders and restrains and keeps it in check.

But listen. When God shall be pleased to remove his hand and remove his spirit, oh my, wickedness will prevail as never before and all of it after the power and pattern of Satan. You see, he is the supreme antichrist. He is the great antichrist. He is the one who works in all the other antichrists. He is the one who is the opposer of the Son of God. And all these others are spirits of antichrist. There are many of them.

And he says in verse 10, "And many people are going to be deceived. Deceived. They will receive not the love of the truth."

These antichrist and false prophets and preachers go about deceiving many, deceiving many and they receive not the love of the truth.

You know, I thought about this. People are not deceived by the Word of God. The Word of God doesn't deceive anybody. People are deceived by men who use the Word of God to their advantage. That is who deceives men. It is not the Word of God. The Word of God doesn't deceive anybody. The Word of God is the truth. The Word of God reveals Christ. The Word of God comforts and brings faith and blesses the heart. But men are deceived by other men who use the word of God to their profit and to their advantage, not to the glory of God.

You see, religious people are the product of what they heard. That's right. If they have heard nothing they will be nothing. If they hear error they will follow error. If they hear the Scriptures twisted then they will be twisted in their thinking concerning the Scriptures. That's right. The Scriptures do not deceive. It is men using the Word of God to their own advantage. And those who hear the truth will love the truth. They will walk in the truth.

What is truth? Christ is the truth. He said, "I am the truth." These two things, now you listen to me very carefully. These two things always go together: a disrespect for the Word of God and evil. Where you find no reverence for God's Word, you will find evil practices. Where you find people who do not reverence the Word and love the Word and study the Word and listen to the Word of God and bow to the Word of God, you will find unrestrained blasphemy, darkness, evil, corruption. Error and evil go together.

And also where you find truth you will find obedience. Where you find faith you will find godliness. Where you find a love for the Word of God you will find people who obey the Word of God. That's right.

But my message today is primarily to you who do love the Word of God, who do rejoice in the grace of God, who do delight in the law of God. Here, in the next verses Paul writes, after he writes of the evil of that day and the wickedness of that day and a departure from the love of the truth. He says in verse 13, "But." And that is what I am coming to, "But.

"But I am bound to give thanks for you. I am bound to give thanks for you, beloved of the Lord, because God hath not left you in your sins. He hath not passed you by, but he has chosen you to salvation. He has not left you to your own thoughts. He has not left you to the leadership of evil men. But I am bound to give thanks for you, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."

Now, lest you be discouraged and depressed and often we are, aren't we? Lest you should be fearful and afraid of these forces and powers of evil, lest you should doubt the sure mercies of the covenant God, lest you should be taken up with signs and seasons rather than with him and his blessed Word, I want you to know, Paul said, "I thank God for you. And I want to comfort you and give you assurance for the following reasons."

Now here they are. First of all, God has chosen you to salvation. He didn't pass us by. He didn't leave us in the darkness of false religion. He chose us in Christ to be saved. What a comfort. What a comfort. What a comfort to know that he set his love upon us from all eternity and chose us in Christ.

David one day, it says in the book of Chronicles, David one day went in and sat before the Lord. He just sat there in meditation, contemplation of God's mercies upon him and mercies upon his house and mercies upon his people. And finally he spoke. And he said these simple words. "Who am I? Who am I and what is my house that you should show such mercy to me?"

Oh, my friends, grace first inscribed my name in God's eternal book. It was grace that gave me to the Lamb who all my sorrows took. It was grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed. Oh, God has been so merciful, hasn't he?

I was down in Louisiana preaching some time ago and right on the front row in the meeting every night was a lawyer and his wife. His name was Mr. Horn and his wife Linda. They were in their 50s. They love the gospel. They had been brought to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he invited me to have lunch with him one day while I was there preaching. And we went out to lunch and we were sitting across the table from one another and he is a Jew, a full blooded Jew. So is his wife.

And I asked him. I said, "Sid, how did you get the name Horn? Horn is not a Jewish name. How did you get the name Horn?"

He said, "Well," he said, "my family...my family name is Bernstein. My grandfather was a German Jew. My grandfather lived in Germany back in the early part of the 1900s, 1912, 13 14, the war. World War I was going on. My grandfather Bernstein was a teenager, late teens. And the Germans were losing the war and they were being slaughtered on the battlefields. They were being killed by the thousands. And the Germans...the war was just about finished. The German cause was lost. And they kept sending young men up to take the place of these who were being killed." And he said, "My grandfather who was then a teenage boy got a notice to report to the army and he wouldn't go. He ran away. He fled. And the authorities were on his trail. And he fled to the German border. Tired out, worn out, frightened, fleeing for his life he came to a farmhouse. And he knocked on the door, right on the border before he crossed the border. He had no papers. He had no way of identifying himself. But this couple, it was a man and his wife there, their name was Horn, Mr. and Mrs. Horn. And this German Jew, Bernstein, 17, 18 years of age, told them his story. He said, 'I am...I don't want to be killed. I don't want to go to the front. I don't want to be slaughtered. I am running away.' And this couple loved him and sympathized with him and they said, 'Come in.' And they fed him and gave him rest. And then they said, 'Our son just died a few days ago in a farming accident and he is buried out here in the family cemetery. His name is on the grave. Horn. Now, then, we are going to let you take his place.' They went out there

and put the name of the tomb, the marker over the grave, a wooden grave. They put the name Bernstein. This boy's first name and Bernstein. They said, 'Now you are dead and buried. Here is our son's papers. Here is our son's name.' They gave him some money and he left and he came to America. His name was Horn. Bernstein was dead and in the grave and Horn was a free man. And he came to America and became a very prosperous man."

And this lawyer sitting across the table from me said, "My father, my grandfather was a Horn because Bernstein was buried. My father was a horn and I am a Horn. That is our family name."

And, my friend, that is what Christ did for us. I thank God for you. Paul said, "He didn't leave you in darkness. He didn't leave you in bondage. He didn't leave you subject to the broken law. He took your place. He chose you to salvation and took your place. He came down here to this earth and took your place and died and your name is on the grave. You died with Christ. You are buried with Christ. The name is on the grave. And he gave you his name, a new name and papers. You have papers to prove it. You are sons of God. Now are we sons of God. We are no longer sinners, rebels, traitors. We are dead in Christ and buried. We have a new name, a new name."

Ah, I thank God for you. God, I thank God...look at the second, in verse 14. That's verse 13. "But I thank God for you. God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

Now, here is another word of comfort. "And he called you by our gospel to obtain the glory of Jesus Christ."

I ask you. When our Lord sat on the well was that an accident that that woman came there? God purposed that. He crossed her path.

When Paul went down by the river was it an accident that Lydia was there? He was never...he never passed that way again. God sent Paul there and he sent Lydia there.

Zacchaeus up the tree, when Christ walked, that's the only time Christ walked under that tree and there was Zacchaeus. Was that an accident?

The eunuch in the chariot where Philip joined him out there in the desert, was that an accident? Oh, no.

My friend, he calls you. This is comfort. But God...But God... Beloved of the Lord, God hath chosen you to salvation. And he called you by our gospel to obtain that glory, to obtain that grace, to obtain that new name. He called you.

Christ said, "Other sheep I have. Them I must bring and they will hear my voice and they will be one fold and one shepherd."

Ah, you may be a child like Timothy. But from a child he knew the Holy Scriptures able to make him wise to salvation.

You may be a religious rebel like Saul of Tarsus. But God will call you. You may be a rebel like Zacchaeus or a harlot like Rahab. You may be a business woman like Lydia. You may be a government official like the eunuch. You may be a jailer or a runaway slave. But if you are one of his sheep he will call you. He will call you. He will call you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of Jesus Christ at salvation and deliverance and eternal life. He will call you. He will call you.

And we are not called to a position. We are not called to a profession. We are not called to a place. We are called to a person. He calls you to obtaining the glory of Jesus Christ.

I wonder, do you think it was an accident that Bernstein came to that house that day? He could have crossed the border at 1000 different places, but he came to that one house. And there were people that had compassion on him and loved him. And they said, "We'll just bury you." And when the authorities came that way they were hunting this man Bernstein. They said, "Here is his grave. He is dead. He is dead. He died in a farming accident. He is dead."

And the authorities tore up the paper and turned and walked out. And I will tell you. God chose us to salvation, sent his son down here to redeem us and the law has no more claim on us. The law has no...Christ has delivered us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us. He died and he is buried and we are buried with him and we are free. He called us by his gospel.

And, listen in verse 15. "And not only that, but the Lord has taught you by his word, taught you." Oh, he tells the Church, "Don't faint. Don't quit. Be strong. Be strong. Stand fast and hold to the traditions and the truth which you have been taught by his Word."

My friends, you will be oppressed. I know that. You will be opposed. You will be persecuted. You will even be hated for what you believe. But I am telling you this. The Lord chose you to salvation. The Lord gave his Son to redeem you. And the Lord has called you by his gospel and the Lord has taught you his Word. Now, you hold fast to his Word. You stand. And having done all, stand. May your faith be strengthened by his Word? May you grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ by his Word? May you be sanctified by his Word? May you be comforted by his Word?

Now, here is the last word. Verse 16. He not only chose you and redeemed you and called you and taught you, but he has given us a good hope, a good hope through grace, a hope of forgiveness, a hope of life, a hope of heavenly glory. That is what he said.

"Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, himself, and God even our Father who hath loved us and given us everlasting consolation and a good hope, a good hope through his grace."

What is that hope? I'll tell you what it is. He shall appear and we are going to be like him. And he that hath this hope purifieth himself.

So the very last verse as you see it, verse 17, he said, "So comfort your hearts. God comfort your hearts and establish you. Comfort your hearts."

Don't be moved by all these things that are going on; the famine and the thirst and the hunger and the wickedness and the evil and the sins and the confusion and the religion. Just comfort your heart and be established in the Word in every good word and in the work of God.

Comfort. Comfort for Christians. It is found right here in the Word.

Now, if you want this message on tape it's called "Comfort for Christians." I have got two messages on this tape. One I preached last week on "God's Preacher, God's Preacher." And this one I am preaching this morning on "Comfort for Christians." If you want this message send two dollars and we will mail it to you. Here is the address, now, now, on the screen.

Until next week at this same time may God bless you everyone.