

The Thessalonian Epistles

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] Even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Any of you who have been recently converted, what is this conversion of which you speak?

You couldn't do better than refer them to the first two verses that were read in your hearing. These Thessalonians were recent converts when the Apostle Paul wrote to them this first letter.

And what he said of them was that everything about them witnessed the fact that they had turned to God from idol to serve the living and to God and to wait for his son from heaven.

[00:01:05] The better translation I believe of the last words is, who is our deliverer from the wrath to come.

He hadn't done it because the Lord hadn't come, but he is the deliverer from the wrath that is to come.

Now my friends, young and old, young Christians particularly, you are living in a world that is incurring the wrath of God. We are living in a day when men are setting aside these things. You know it was God who instituted that murderers should be killed and that man were to do it.

What does it matter to God? It matters everything to God. [00:02:05] Murder isn't merely when that poor girl is slaughtered by some Russian. It isn't merely wrong done to humanity.

You say why? Because God is the giver of life. You can't give life. I can't give life. Life is a very mysterious thing. But God is the giver of life. Who is man to take away what God has given? Murder truly is a wrong against my neighbor.

But primarily that sin, like every other sin, is against God. And the day is coming when God is going to act. I'm afraid in this age there is a fact that has been forgotten, even by true Christians.

[00:03:04] I've said to myself in these later years when I talk to people of God, how often have I made it very clear that the wonderful offer of divine grace is made against the dark background of divine judgment.

Well, the apostle here makes no secret of it. There is more to come. The Lord Jesus Christ is our deliverer, my dear friend, young and old. If we are converted, we have turned to God. If we are converted, we have turned to God. When we were unconverted, we had our backs up on God and our faces towards the world with all its attractions. Some of us, of course, despise the low-down, carnal, filthy attractions [00:04:01] that many people are fascinated with. There are the intellectual folks who oftentimes are far the furthest away from God. But anyhow, we had our backs up on God and we had our faces towards the world. And now we've been converted. And turning to God, we have found one who fills our vision.

And the idols that once enslaved us have lost their attraction and their power. Now, don't let us think because we are living in this favored land where nobody thinks of having visible idols. I do know one place. I said, name it if anybody wants to know. At least, I haven't been there for some years. But in a lot of the houses, there's a little outward niche and generally there's a wonderful effigy of the Virgin Mary or one of the saints. [00:05:02] I suppose they had a very, very high anglo-catholic man in the pulpit there for years and they've got these little things. I don't know whether they cross themselves and kind of bow down and worship or whether they don't. But there are little idols. That's really what they are. Little religious Christianite idols in an English village.

I've seen them with my own two eyes. But this is generally no. No, we haven't got the ugly idols of the heathen world that men are idolizing all kinds of things all the time. We have the word. We use it. Oh, so-and-so simply idolizes. Is that all we have? Exactly when we were unconverted, we were under the power of things that idolize. We idolize. We idolize. And they dominated our thoughts. If we are converted, we turn to God. [00:06:04] And our best are turned to the idols that once enslaved us. But we turn to God to serve Him. Now if we are going to serve God, we must know His mind, mustn't we? We must be instructed in that which is according to His thought. We cannot say, Oh God, I intend to serve Thee as I like. No, no, I must be dominated by Him. His word must govern me. And it must govern you. We turn that our lives may be marked as serving the living and the true God. And we are waiting.

I'm waiting for His Son from heaven. He is the one who will tackle world conditions which Christianity was never intended to tackle.

[00:07:01] The very genius of the gospel is this. It goes forth among the nations to gather out of the nations a people for His name. That is what God is doing today. Calling out the church, the word that is used, you know. They tell us, the folks who know all about the Greek, it is the ecclesia. We say it is the ecclesiastical. We've got in this country the ecclesiastical commissioners. Very well, they're the commissioners that hold money in relation to the church. The ecclesia, which means simply the called out one. We are called out.

God has been all along the line working in this way and particularly so at the present moment.

I've often noticed how striking it is that in Genesis, then we read that following chapter about the power of Babel [00:08:03] when they said, go to, let us do this and go to, let us do that. In the Darby translation, he uses a far more familiar phrase. You read it and you see it says, come on, come on, let's club together.

The individualistic age is over.

We will act in concert on what we could never accomplish as individuals. We can accomplish if we all put our backs into the plan. Come on.

And the next chapter begins and God said unto Abraham, get out. Have you noticed that?

And that's what God has been saying more or less ever since. That's what he said to Israel. Get out and don't dabble with these idolatrous nations. They'll infect you with their evil and that's just what they did. [00:09:02] That's what they did. God called his people out of Egypt. He launched them into the land where they were to destroy these nations who were being rotted by the vile things of hedonism. He had a people out, but alas, it broke down. God has called the church out. We belong to the called out people of God.

We are to serve him and wait for his son from heaven.

How is he going to deliver us from the wrath to come? I can imagine any Thessalonian beginning to read this chapter. He gets to the end and he comes. He's going to say, I'll deliver us from the wrath to come. They might very well have said a Thessalonica. Thessalonica? Well, there's pretty much bad state of things here. Thessalonica, remember, was the place where Paul had to leave because certain lewd fellows of the baser thought set the whole city on an uproar. [00:10:06] It was the place where they said the men that had turned the world upside down had come here also, for they never had. The world has been upside down ever since sin came in. The gospel is not turning even the world right side up. Conversion is turning individuals right side up in a world that is permanently at present upside down. Now that's nearer the mark. Yes. But the very lawless state. God is going to deal with it in judgment.

And he's going to deal with it by his power.

He's our deliverer from the wrath to come. Now that brings me to chapter four. The Thessalonians were in a bit of trouble because they knew the Lord was coming. [00:11:02] They did not know exactly how they were going to reach him and what would be the portion of some of their number who had died.

They had fallen asleep. And therefore we get that wonderful revelation of how the Lord himself is going to appear and those who have passed into death, saints who have died, are not going to lose anything. Where I say he, we are not going to prevent. That's the old fashioned word that we use. The modern word is precede. We are not going to precede, no. Those who have died will have the precedence. Only no man is to be released, but still they will have the precedence. The dead in Christ arise first. Then we, which are alive and remain. Not painted in this chapter in Thessalonians, but painted in the 15th or 1st Corinthians, an additional fact. [00:12:05] Changed, we living ones, changed into the likeness of the Savior. The dead are raised in that likeness as the 15th or 1st Corinthians shows. They are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. And you say, well now, but, hold hard.

You are assuming that that will take place before the wrath that is poured out on the earth. Yes. Now I wonder if you've noticed the contrast there is in these chapters between the verse which is 13 in chapter 4. But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren concerning these matters. And he reveals to them what we call the coming of the Lord for his sake. [00:13:01] What I think I may call tonight the catching away.

Commonly spoken of as the rapture. Which is only another word for that text. The catching away of the raising when Jesus comes for his people.

That is something they did not know. Because it had not been previously revealed, it had been hinted at by our Lord himself in the farewell discourse in the 14th of John. When he said, I'm going to prepare a place for you. Going to prepare. As we said before, we thought you were coming to prepare. We thought you were going to establish a visible kingdom. And we were going to be, so to speak, your ministers and kings. No. He's going.

They've lost their place on earth, these good disciples. [00:14:04] The Lord says, never mind, I'm going to prepare. Going away.

Going heavenward. To prepare a place for you. And if I do, I'll come again. I'll receive you to my place. What that meant in its fullness is revealed to us by the Apostle Paul in this fourth chapter of Thessalonians.

The catching away of the faith. Now that they did not know. Now please look at the beginning of chapter 5, the contrast. And the beginning of chapter 5 is, but. Of the times and seasons. It has, of course, to do with earth. Times and seasons as you get in the first of Genesis. The sun and moon and these things would establish that there might be the times and the seasons on earth. Well, of these times and seasons on earth. [00:15:04] There's no need that I write. Because you yourself know perfectly.

Well, how could they know perfectly. All about the times and seasons. If the coming of the Lord for his faith were a part of the times and seasons. Hmm. I don't think you can dispute that. If. They knew perfectly the details concerning the times and the seasons. And yet they were ignorant of the actual coming of the Lord Jesus. The rapture, the catching away of the faith. Then obviously that is not part of the times and seasons. Because if it had been they wouldn't have known about the times and seasons perfectly. That was something as to which they were ignorant. A clear distinction is drawn between God's dealings on earth.

[00:16:04] Times and seasons and nations and dispensations.

And what is going to happen. When the faith. Are carried into their heavenly inheritance.

At the rapture or the catching away.

Of the faith of this dispensation who have believed.

Of the times and seasons then they knew perfectly that the day of the Lord was coming as it did in the night. Now let's read the day of the Lord and what is found in the Old Testament. You would read in the opening chapters of Isaiah. You would find how the day of the Lord is going to be as he puts it upon. The come down crashing with power upon.

Things in which men draw. Taking them aside.

[00:17:03] Establishing what is of God.

The day of the Lord in majesty and power. The hour when God intervenes to tackle human sins.

And to put the world.

Right according to his thought. Introducing. What is called the age of the thousand years the millennial age. Which will be. Not exactly the day of the Lord but the day of Christ. The day when Christ will have his right. And be honored.

And be free.

That day the day of the Lord is coming.

And we are told very plainly it will come when men in their pride will be saying. Oh now at last peace and safety.

But we're not saying that yet are we. Now taking in their shoes. The fact is the men who know most. Of our human invention.

[00:18:03] And all that is going on behind the scenes. Are most apprehensive.

Of what the upshot is going to be. But a day is coming when men will feel they've achieved their aim. And they'll be able to say now there's no more fear. Peace and safety.

They'll look north, south, east and west. Particularly east and west. There'll be no fear from that great Soviet power. No fear from the USA.

Or Britain or the western powers. Or the southern powers or the eastern powers. Or any power.

But they don't forget to look in one direction. They look north and they look south and they look east and they look west. And they don't look up. And so comes down the mighty hand of God.

In the public appealing of Christ. In the overthrowing of satanic powers. [00:19:03] Meeting men's evil.

According to God.

Now I've said enough on that. Now I'm coming to the second chapter of the second epistle.

Which perhaps is more particularly my thing. And he begins by an allusion to the catching away.

I'm going to use that term. Remembering we've got many many young people here. And I would like to put it in a way that you may be able to remember. The first thing is then the catching away. The fact was that people now had come trying to deceive these simple Christians of Thessalonica. And make them believe that the persecutions and trials through which they were passing. Were really a proof that not the day of Christ. The better translation let me say at the end. [00:20:01] The last line of verse two.

Chapter two of the second epistle. It is second epistle two two.

The last line is.

Don't you be deceived that the day of the Lord is present.

Not merely at hand.

The word means present. Somebody says oh don't you see you simple folks. You're living in this day of the Lord. All these troubles that are crashing in upon you. Are the day of the Lord. He says but look.

Are we deceived you brethren by what we have made known to you. The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And our gathering together unto him.

I've heard people use that phrase in regard to. Coming together to remember him according to his word. In his supper in the breaking of bread. No where we gather to his name.

His name while he is absent.

[00:21:03] Not there's going to be hands of this great gathering together. Not to his name but unto him.

In the air.

You possibly say my dear brethren. Let me beg of you by the fact that we have established. The coming of the Lord for his sake. The catching away.

Don't you be deluded into imagining. That your tribulations and your persecutions mean that the day of the Lord. Is present with you.

For he says that day is not going to come. Until something else happens. Now what is this something else. Well it's a very solemn thing. That day is not going to come he says.

This is the third verse.

That day shall not come. Except there come a hauling away earth.

[00:22:03] Now those who know the Greek.

Tell us that the Greek there is this word. That we brought almost into our English language. Apostasy.

When we talk of people apostatizing. It means not merely slipping away from whatever it is they've apostatized from. Let's take the gospel.

Not merely slipping away in detail in this point or that point. But a kind of wholesale forsaking. Of the whole thing.

What is that coming?

Yes that is coming.

And clearly coming as the fruit of the catching away.

What will happen as a result of the catching away. The coming of the Lord for his praise.

Is going to be a hauling away.

Which in turn it seems to me irresistibly in turn.

[00:23:06] There will be a great outward crowd.

Which appears to be of the church.

That are not the vital things.

And there will in the fear of Christian perception.

When all that is real and vital.

Is removed by the catching away of the faith. What will result will be a hauling away.

A hauling away.

An abandonment of the whole basis and truth that has been revealed.

I'm going to ask a question. As you young people may know in your schools or in your colleges or elsewhere. You are the ones who teach. Are there any signs of anything like that happening today?

[00:24:07] The answer must be what? Signs?

Why? Multiplied signs.

Men who forsake everything that has been established.

Men who under cover of what is motherlistic and up to date and intellectual.

Who deny every foundation of truth.

On which the holy gospel rests.

I warn you against it.

There are signs of the hauling away.

See to it dear young Christians that you are not moved in any way. Or stopped by this evil.

It happens just come to a head.

It will come to a head.

When the catching away comes to pass.

[00:25:03] Now why do I say that? I say that because.

I told that the hauling away.

Will be accomplished.

When. The mystery of iniquity he says in verse seven. Does already work very well if it was working in the apostolic age. Mystery remember means something secret. Something beneath the surface.

Paul says in effect remember the iniquity is there.

In a hidden form beneath the surface even today.

But it will not come to fruition.

Yet because there is a hindering power.

Now in our version we get the word withhold.

Verse six he says now you know what withhold.

[00:26:02] That he might be revealed. The evil man in whom the falling away will reach its climax and expression.

You know what withhold. May I put here a simpler ordinary word.

What withhold.

There is something that restrains. Why didn't Paul plainly tell us?

Well because they knew. That's why of course. If you and I don't know it's your business. But anyhow these dear Thessalonians they knew. Now you know that. You know what is restraining.

And it's evidently vested in a person. Because it says that he who now let it.

Now that's the same kind of word restrain it. Let's use that one word. Only he who now restrains.

Will restrain until he is taken out of the world.

[00:27:09] But do you know any power that can put its hand. Upon the workings of the devil himself. To bring to pass his counterbeat.

To all who have been revealed. Who can restrain the devil.

Who can do it?

I don't think you can.

Certainly I can't.

I don't know what can. Church do it. Archbishop do it.

No big man.

No my friend. The devil is too effusive. And too powerful. For any man to restrain him.

Is there a power that can restrain the devil. And his work.

To raise it and build upon her. Yes. Says the apostles of the Christian. Greater is he that is in you.

[00:28:01] Than he that is in the world. Who is in the world? The devil.

The world lies in the wicked one.

He's behind all these things. He moves behind the scenes.

And brings to pass these things.

And brings to pass these things. That are agitating men of the present moment. Where is the power of the spirit of God. Indwelling in the church. Where the church goes. The indwelling spirit goes with the church.

You may say to me. Yes but won't he work after it. He will.

Just as he worked before. The spirit of God doesn't work.

Before Christ came. The spirit of God was working. In old Simeon Washington. You read the early chapters of Luke. If you read the early chapters of Matthew. You have what follows on these terrible fatal things. In Malachi.

In the masses of the people. But if you read the opening chapters of Luke. You are the persons you are permitted to find. [00:29:03] Godly souls. Like those who spoke one to another. Who in Malachi say. Then they that fear the Lord. Take often one to another. Here they are in Luke's day. Luke shows us the Godly.

In whom God was working.

Yes the spirit of God was working. There was all Simeon. Marked by our spirit of God.

But the spirit of God wasn't indwelling. The spirit of God wasn't indwelling. As Christ promised he would be.

In his farewell discourse. In John 14, 15, 16.

No. And when the church goes. And the Lord comes. And there's the catching away. Then the spirit of God indwelling.

Will go with the.

The present epoch.

Marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit. On earth.

In the faith. [00:30:01] It will be over.

The faith will go.

And he will go. And the retaining power.

Will be removed.

And what will be the result of that? The revelation.

Of the one who's called the man of faith.

Now here.

A human being is going to find a climax.

In a man.

Now let me tell you.

If you look at the end of verse three. There's going to come a falling away.

The catching away has taken place. The faith and the indwelling spirit are gone. The restraining power is removed.

There's a falling away. A falling landslide.

In the wrong direction.

And. That man of sin.

Man in whom sin is going to reach its climax. [00:31:02] Is going to be revealed. Now that word revealed is apocalypse. They sometimes use that for revelation. It's the same word as revelation. What does it mean apocalypse?

It simply means unveiled.

Uncovered.

The removal. The casting away.

Of what has.

Outwardly hidden.

So that everything may be perfectly clear. And. May I use another term. The catching away.

Will mean a falling away.

And a casting away.

Of the veil.

That has hidden the devil's real objective.

In all that is being wrought.

And what's that? The old original lie.

Man's tail.

[00:32:01] When the temptation was presented. What did God say back to Isaac? That is if you.

Will just do what God has forbidden. You'll be as dogs yourself. You'll elevate yourself.

Man will be elevated.

The creator doesn't want you to get up. He put you there. And he doesn't want you to elevate yourself. In this tale of creation. So tempting delusion.

And man's hell.

It will reach its climax. When a man.

Will virtually claim divine honor. In the nitty gritty matter. The beginning of the times of the Gentiles. Almost did that.

I presume in making his great golden image.

No doubt it represented himself. And everybody was to bow down to it. And to think he was still a Buddhist.

The age will end.

In a similar and perhaps even more awful.

[00:33:04] Disdain.

Of human sin.

Lawlessness.

Rising up against man.

My friends.

Let us face the situation.

We are drawing nearer young Christians. I believe to the cashing away.

You're left and I'm left. To serve the living and to God. The most wonderful privilege we have. We must certainly study his word.

We must gain an understanding of what is his design. For service at the present moment. Whether it be in the gospel.

Outward to the world.

Or whether it be in the circle of his faith. In the church.

But we are here to serve his image. To serve the living and to God.

While we wait for his son to come. [00:34:01] And we know the first thing that's going to happen when he loses it. The cashing away of the faith.

But when the true and vital thing is done.

With the spirit in dwelling. Then the falling away.

And then the cashing away.

Of the veil that has covered.

The real purpose of the adversary.

In all that has been going on in the earth. You know I think I can quite understand. I'm not a scientist.

I'm a poor fool. From those points of view. That I candidly confess. But I think if I were and knew all these marvelous things. That people have discovered now. Hear their talking of all these things. Traveling to the moon and all kinds of things. Unheard of. Unimagined.

Well I was a young man. I hope they won't get to the moon. [00:35:02] Because if they do they'll carry sin to the moon. Well the poor moon, at least we have left the poor moon alone. It hasn't got sinners on the moon messing things up. But if you can shoot a man to the moon. He'll be a sinner before he

goes. And he'll be a sinner when he gets there. Well may the Lord be kind to the moon please. And not allow man to get there and mess it up. Still, that's what he thinks he's going to do. He'd like to carry himself and sin to the moon. Well men are very brave. I think I can understand if I were full of these things. I might discover that I'm still just a young man. Look at the moon, look at the sun. Look at the moon, look at the sun. What greater power is there than man? Man is the great power. That's all you think about. I am God and all that.

You haven't any proof that it's man. Yes. Yes.

The veil will be torn.

[00:36:01] There'll be the casting away of the veil. As a result of the falling of the veil. And then God will act in justice.

Now he never does.

Until things are perfectly right.

You know folks would say, I heard them say it even in the first world war. Oh you Christians, why doesn't God do something? Well, I think I said it, but I think not.

Well, what do you suppose God should do? Well, oughtn't he to be very kind to the British Isles? And knock them off the old Kaiser and all that? Well I don't quite know that he can claim to be such a privileged, such good people that God should intervene in that way. But what do you think God ought to do? My dear friend, there's only one thing left for God to do and that's to act in judgment. And he's very slow to do it.

[00:37:01] He's acting in grace.

But the moment will come when men's power and iniquities will reach their climax. And God will act in judgment. That's ever been his way.

To Abraham, if I may just instance this before I close.

You remember he said now your seed is going to be in Egypt 400 years and I'll bring them back. The iniquity of the Amorites, that is a completed word of all these various tribes in Canaan, is not yet proved. When 400 years later he sends Israel like a thunderclap to Zion to destroy these nations. The whole thing becomes a rotten and filthy grave. God is going to judgment their iniquity with fruit. He didn't strike in the old world. It was the days of Noah when men had filled up the cup of their iniquity.

[00:38:03] I've come here burdened in my heart as I think of the state of things. I'm privileged to know in connection with my little service in London and publications put one in touch with all kinds of things one hears from all kinds of sources. And I get firsthand knowledge of what's going on at the present moment. In some of these lands what some of our brethren in other lands are suffering is the persecution of the most diabolical thought worth the inquisition in Spain. I never thought I was going to live to a moment when anything like pagan inquisition I've heard about is going to take place. It's taking place probably at this moment while I speak to you here and you're all in peace and quietness. Our saints of God, members of this body to which we belong, are suffering dire things of a very devilish and diabolical, cunning, sinful being to wreck them in every way, sin, and soul, and body.

[00:39:04] The Lord is waiting. An hour is coming when he will remove his faith.

And as I say, there'll be the passing away, the calling away, the casting away, and there'll be the speaking away, the indignant. God will not act until things are right. But when they are, we pray to that. Let us remember we have the gospel of the grace of God to proclaim. And we should have on our hearts the welfare of all faith, every member of the body of Christ. I sometimes feel as if I would weep when I hear what is happening. I hear what is happening by the presence of a man.

I hear sometimes, I know a godly woman who's instructed all these things and knows what's going on behind the scenes. Let us be in her.

[00:40:02] Don't let us live our lives enervated by plenty of money and luxurious things such as we may have. Let us keep our eyes.

Serving the living and true God.

The waiting phase is coming.

Now I think we might sing a hymn of devotion as we close, which is number 52.