

THE MAN OF SIN
PRESENTED BY
JESS HALL, JR.
GREEN LAWN CHURCH OF CHRIST
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OUR LESSON TONIGHT DEALS WITH THE SUBJECT, "THE MAN OF SIN" AND IN JUST A MOMENT WE ARE GOING TO READ THE FIRST TWELVE VERSES OF THE SECOND CHAPTER OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THESSALONICA. BUT BEFORE WE READ THOSE VERSES I THINK WE MIGHT DO WELL TO STOP AND MAKE JUST ONE COMMENT OR TWO CONCERNING WHAT WE ARE HOPING TO DO IN OUR LESSON TONIGHT, AND THE BEST WAY I KNOW TO DO THAT IS TELL YOU WHAT I DON'T INTEND TO DO. IT WOULD BE VERY EASY FOR US TO SPEND A GREAT DEAL OF TIME TRYING TO IDENTIFY PARTICULARLY THE MAN OF SIN. IF YOU HAVE STUDIED VERY MUCH CONCERNING THE SUBJECT, YOU REALIZE THAT THERE HAVE BEEN MANY BOOKS WRITTEN AND ALMOST AS MANY DIFFERENT OPINIONS AS BOOKS WRITTEN CONCERNING SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAN OF SIN. I AM CERTAIN THAT I HAVE MY OPINION AND I THINK IT IS RIGHT, AND YOU MAY HAVE ANOTHER ONE AND YOU MAY BELIEVE IT IS RIGHT, SO I DON'T WANT TO DELVE INTO THE AREA OF PARTICULAR IDENTIFICATION. I DON'T THINK THERE IS A GREAT DEAL TO BE GAINED FROM IT AS FAR AS OUR BENEFITS ARE CONCERNED. BUT WHAT I DO HOPE TO BE ABLE TO DO IS TO LOOK AT THIS CONTEXT AND TO SHOW HOW IT RELATES TO THE OVERALL PICTURE OF SIN IN THE WORD OF GOD, AND TO SHOW THIS PARTICULARLY AS THE INCREASE OF SIN IN THE WORLD RELATES TO THE SECOND ADVENT OF JESUS CHRIST. WHILE WE MIGHT BE MISTAKEN AS TO ANY PARTICULAR IDENTIFICATION OF THE MAN OF SIN, I THINK WE SHALL NOT BE MISTAKEN CONCERNING THESE POINTS FOR I THINK THESE ARE THE THINGS WHICH ARE THE PLAINEST AND THE MOST VIVID IN THIS WRITING OF THE APOSTLE PAUL. SO IF YOU HAVE YOUR BIBLES, LET US TURN TO THIS PASSAGE, II THESSALONIANS 2, AND READ THE FIRST TWELVE VERSES. "NOW WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, BY THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND BY OUR GATHERING TOGETHER UNTO HIM, THAT YE BE NOT SOON SHAKEN IN MIND, OR BE TROUBLED, NEITHER BY SPIRIT, NOR BY WORD, NOR BY LETTER AS FROM US, AS THAT THE DAY OF CHRIST IS AT HAND. LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU BY ANY MEANS; FOR THAT DAY SHALL NOT COME, EXCEPT THERE COME A FALLING AWAY FIRST, AND THAT MAN OF SIN BE REVEALED, THE SON OF PERDITION; WHO OPPOSETH AND EXALTETH HIMSELF ABOVE ALL THAT IS CALLED GOD, OR THAT IS WORSHIPPED; SO THAT HE AS GOD SITTETH IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD, SHEWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD. REMEMBER YE NOT, THAT, WHEN I WAS YET WITH YOU, I TOLD YOU THESE THINGS? AND NOW YE KNOW WHAT WITHHOLDETH THAT HE MIGHT BE REVEALED IN HIS TIME, FOR THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY DOETH ALREADY WORK; ONLY HE WHO NOW LETTETH, WILL LET, UNTIL HE BE TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY. AND THEN SHALL THAT WICKED BE REVEALED, WHOM THE LORD SHALL CONSUME WITH THE SPIRIT OF HIS MOUTH, AND SHALL DESTROY WITH THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING; EVEN HIM WHOSE COMING IS AFTER THE WORKING OF SATAN, WITH ALL POWER AND SIGNS AND LYING WONDERS, AND WITH ALL DECEIVABLENESS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN THEM THAT PERISH; BECAUSE THEY RECEIVE NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED. AND FOR THIS CAUSE GOD SHALL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE; THAT THEY ALL MIGHT BE DAMNED WHO BELIEVED NOT THE TRUTH, BUT HAD PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS."

AS WE LOOK AT THE FIRST VERSES OF THIS CHAPTER, ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS THAT OUGHT TO STRIKE US IS THE FACT THAT THIS ENTIRE PROBLEM AROSE BECAUSE OF A MISCONCEPTION WHICH THE THESSALONICANS HAD RELATING TO THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST. APPARENTLY, FROM WHAT PAUL SAID IN THESE VERSES, THIS SITUATION HAD BEEN AGGRAVATED BY CERTAIN FALSE TEACHERS WHO HAD COME AMONG THE THESSALONICAN BRETHREN APPARENTLY CLAIMING TO HAVE SOME LETTER FROM HIM--PERHAPS A FORGED DOCUMENT--AND SAYING THAT THIS CAME FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL.

OR IF NOT POSSESSING SUCH A DOCUMENT, LOOKING AT SOME OF THE WRITINGS OF PAUL AND SAYING, "WE ARE THE TRUE INTERPRETERS OF WHAT PAUL HAS SAID AND HERE IS THE REAL MEANING. HERE IS THE HEART AND CORE OF THE MESSAGE OF PAUL." THEY WERE EMPHASIZING TO THESE BRETHREN THAT THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST WAS VERY CLOSE AT HAND. NOW THIS MISUNDERSTANDING, THIS MISCONCEPTION HAD APPARENTLY CAUSED A GREAT DEAL OF SORROW, IT HAD APPARENTLY CAUSED A GREAT DEAL OF CONCERN AMONG THESE BRETHREN, FOR PAUL SAID FOR THEM TO "BE NOT SOON SHAKEN IN MIND, OR BE TROUBLED," AND THIS WOULD INDICATE THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME SHAKING OF THE MIND AND SOME TROUBLING OF THE BRETHREN. NOW ALL OF THIS (THESE FEARS, THESE MISCONCEPTIONS) WAS WHAT PAUL WAS SEEKING TO ALLAY, WHEN HE WROTE TO THESE BRETHREN IN THIS EPISTLE.

NOW, BEFORE WE LOOK AT SOME OF THE THINGS RELATIVE TO THE MAN OF SIN PAUL HAS DESCRIBED HIM, I THINK WE OUGHT ALSO TO POINT OUT THAT THERE IS DEFINITELY A MAN OF SIN. AND EMPHASIS HERE IS NOT UPON THE WORD "A", THAT WE MIGHT PARTICULARIZE, BUT I WANT TO PLACE THE EMPHASIS UPON THE FACT THAT IT IS A "MAN" OF SIN, THAT IT APPARENTLY REFERS TO A PARTICULAR INDIVIDUAL OR, IF YOU PLEASE, A PARTICULAR OFFICE WHICH WILL BE FILLED BY A SUCCESSION OF PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS. I POINT THIS OUT TO INDICATE THAT THE BIBLE DOES NOT IGNORE THE GREAT WICKEDNESS INTO WHICH MAN HAS FALLEN. THE BIBLE IS NOT A BOOK WHICH SEEKS TO SUGAR-COAT THE SITUATION OF MAN. IF WE MIGHT USE MODERN PARLANCE, THE BIBLE IS A BOOK THAT SEEKS TO "TELL IT LIKE IT IS," AND WHEN THE BIBLE BEGINS TO DESCRIBE THE SITUATION OF MAN, IT DOESN'T WANT TO LEAVE ANY ROOM FOR DOUBT IN THE MIND OF MAN THAT SOMEHOW MAN MIGHT BE ABLE BY HIS OWN INITIATIVE OR BY HIS OWN POWER TO OVERCOME THE FORCES OF EVIL. THUS, THE BIBLE HERE DOES NOT IGNORE THE DEPTHS OF HUMAN WICKEDNESS, AND IT SUGGESTS THAT HERE IS A MAN WHO HAS SUNK TO SUCH A DEPTH OF DEPRAVITY THAT HE OR HIS LINEAGE OF RULERS, IF THAT BE THE CASE, MAY EVEN BE IDENTIFIED WITH THE POWER AND THE FORCES OF SIN. THIS IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT PERHAPS TEARS DOWN SOME OF THE LITTLE FORTRESSES THAT WE HAVE BUILT UP. SOMEHOW WE HAVE CONVINCED OURSELVES, AND PERHAPS WE HAVE DONE IT BECAUSE WE WANT TO BELIEVE THAT WE ARE PRETTY GOOD FELLOWS AFTER ALL, WE HAVE CONVINCED OURSELVES THAT ALL OF THE EVIL IN THE WORLD CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO WHAT WE MIGHT CALL THE DEVIL, OR THE DEVIL'S INFLUENCES WHICH HE BRINGS ABOUT, BUT HERE PAUL SAYS THAT SOME OF THE EVIL THAT IS IN THE WORLD IS IN MAN AND IS BEING WORKED BY MAN, AND MAN IS HAVING A MAJOR ROLE IN THE MULTIPLICATION OF EVIL INFLUENCES AND EVIL FORCES THAT EXIST UPON THE EARTH. PAUL IS SAYING THAT HERE IS A HUMAN BEING WHO HAS BEEN MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD THAT MAY BE DEPRAVED SO MUCH THAT HE COMES TO BE IN THE IMAGE OF SATAN. PAUL IS SAYING THAT HERE IS AN INDIVIDUAL WHOSE BODY HAS BEEN MADE AS A TEMPLE FOR GOD WHICH MAY BE DEPRAVED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT IT BECOMES A HAUNT FOR INIQUITY. SO PAUL IS TALKING HERE ABOUT THE MAN OF SIN.

NOW THE FIRST QUESTION IS, WHEN IS THIS MAN GOING TO APPEAR? THE APOSTLE PAUL INDICATES THAT THE APPEARANCE OF THE MAN OF SIN MUST BE PRECEDED BY A PARTICULAR EVENT. "LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU BY ANY MEANS: FOR THAT DAY SHALL NOT COME (HE IS TALKING HERE ABOUT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST), EXCEPT THERE COME A FALLING AWAY FIRST, AND THAT MAN OF SIN BE REVEALED," NOW NOTICE WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN BEFORE THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. THERE SHALL BE A FALLING AWAY, THERE SHALL BE A DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH, AND WHEN THE DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH HAS BEEN COMPLETED, THEN THERE SHALL APPEAR THE MAN OF SIN. THE SECOND COMING IS DEPENDENT UPON THE COMING OF THE MAN OF SIN AND THE COMING OF THE MAN OF SIN IS DEPENDENT UPON THE FALLING AWAY OF THE CHURCH OF GOD. NOW THIS SHOULD INDICATE SOMETHING TO US. IT SHOULD INDICATE THAT SPIRITUAL APOSTACY IS ALWAYS GOING TO BE FOLLOWED BY MORAL CORRUPTION. WE LOOK AROUND US IN THE WORLD TODAY AND WE WONDER WHAT IN THE WORLD HAS GONE WRONG, WHY THERE IS SO MUCH MORAL CORRUPTION ON HAND, AND THE ANSWER IS VERY SIMPLE WHEN YOU READ THIS PASSAGE. THE ANSWER IS THAT THERE HAS BEEN A DEPARTURE FROM THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE WORD

OF GOD. WHENEVER THERE IS A DEPARTURE FROM THE WORD, WHENEVER THERE IS A SPIRITUAL APOSTASY THE MORAL CORRUPTION IS GOING TO FOLLOW, AND WHENEVER THE CHURCH BEGINS TO APOSTATIZE, WHEN THE CHURCH BEGINS TO DEPART FROM THE SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS OF GOD, IT ALWAYS, WITHOUT EXCEPTION, OPENS ITSELF TO THE ATTACK OF ITS ENEMIES. NOTICE THAT THE MAN OF SIN COULD NOT COME, OR IF HE CAME, HE COULD NOT PREVAIL AGAINST THE CHURCH AS LONG AS THE CHURCH WAS FAITHFUL TO THE WORD OF GOD. BUT WHEN THE CHURCH WAS NO LONGER FAITHFUL TO THE TEACHING OF THE WORD, THEN THE MAN OF SIN COULD NOT ONLY COME, THE MAN OF SIN COULD PREVAIL OVER THE KINGDOM OF GOD. I WOULD SUGGEST TO YOU TONIGHT THAT IF THE CHURCH OF MY LORD IS PREVAILED OVER BY THE FORCES OF EVIL IN THE WORLD TODAY, IT WILL NOT BE, IT CAN NEVER BE, BECAUSE THE POWER OF SATAN IS STRONGER THAN THE POWER OF GOD. IT WILL ALWAYS BE BECAUSE THE CHURCH HAS PROSTITUTED THE POWER OF GOD AND HAS GONE AFTER THE WORLD LIVING IN SPIRITUAL ADULTERY. THE SAME THING, I THINK, IS TRUE OF AN INDIVIDUAL IN HIS PERSONAL CHRISTIAN LIFE. WHEN ONE BEGINS TO RATIONALIZE AND WHEN ONE BEGINS TO EXPLAIN AWAY THE CLEAR TEACHING OF GOD'S WORD, HE OPENS HIMSELF TO THE ATTACKS OF SATAN AND HE WILL BE OVERCOME. SPIRITUAL APOSTASY IS GOING TO BE FOLLOWED BY MORAL CORRUPTIONS.

WHAT IS THE CHARACTER OF THIS MAN? HE IS GOING TO COME WHEN THE CHURCH HAS FALLEN AWAY, BUT WHAT KIND OF INDIVIDUAL IS HE? LET US LOOK AT HIS CHARACTER AS IT IS DESCRIBED IN THE FOURTH VERSE. VERSE THREE IDENTIFIES THE MAN OF SIN, "THE SON OF PERDITION: WHO OPPOSETH AND EXALTETH HIMSELF ABOVE ALL THAT IS CALLED GOD, OR THAT IS WORSHIPPED; SO THAT HE SITTETH (THE KING JAMES SAYS HE "AS GOD" BUT "AS GOD" DOESN'T BELONG IN THE TEXT) IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD, SHEWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD." THERE ARE THREE THINGS INDICATED HERE CONCERNING HIS CHARACTER, 1. HE OPPOSETH AND EXALTETH HIMSELF ABOVE ALL THAT IS CALLED GOD, OR THAT IS WORSHIPPED, " HE CLAIMS SUPERIORITY NOT ONLY TO THE GODS OF HEATHENDOM, YOU SEE, BUT HE CLAIMS SUPERIORITY TO THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD. HE OPPOSETH EVERYTHING THAT RELATES TO GOD. HE EXALTS HIMSELF ABOVE ALL THAT IS CALLED GOD AND HE CLAIMS TO BE THE OBJECT OF MAN'S WORSHIP. 2. "SO THAT HE SITTETH IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD," THIS SAYS THAT THE MAN OF SIN IS GOING TO ARISE WITHIN AND FIND A HOME WITHIN, THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD, FOR THE CHURCH TODAY IS THE TEMPLE OF GOD. 3. "SHEWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD," HE ASSUMES TO HIMSELF THE PREROGATIVES OF GOD AND MAKES FOR HIMSELF THE CLAIMS OF GOD.

THE QUESTION THAT IS UPPERMOST HERE IS "DOES THIS APPLY TO THE ROMAN POPE?" I SUPPOSE MOST OF THE EFFORTS TO PARTICULARIZE THE MAN OF SIN HAVE FOUND THEIR IDENTIFICATION JUST HERE. I BELIEVE MY REPLY TO THE QUESTION WOULD BE YES AND NO. FOR I BELIEVE WHILE HE MAY BE INCLUDED IN THIS DESCRIPTION OF THE MAN OF SIN THAT HE DOES NOT NECESSARILY EXHAUST THE MEANING OF THE MAN OF SIN. IF WE SAY THAT IT IS FULFILLED HERE, THEN WE ELIMINATE THE POSSIBILITY OF ANY OTHER FULFILLMENT OR ANY FUTURE FULFILLMENT. THUS, WHILE I BELIEVE THAT PAUL'S STATEMENT HERE IS NECESSARILY ONE WHICH IS PROPHETIC, I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IT EXHAUSTS ITSELF IN APPLICATION TO THE PAPACY. IT IS VERY DIFFICULT FOR SOME TODAY TO MAKE SUCH IDENTIFICATION ANYWAY, SEEING THE POPE AS HE IS IN MODERN TIME. THE IDENTIFICATION WOULD NOT BE SO DIFFICULT WERE WE TO GO BACK TO THE DAYS OF THE INQUISITION. WE COULD COME NEARER SEEING THAT THIS MAY BE A DESCRIPTION OF HIM. BUT AGAIN, WE DO NOT WANT TO PARTICULARIZE. WE JUST MENTION THIS AS A POSSIBILITY. MAINLY WE WANT TO SEE SOMETHING OF HIS NATURE, THAT HE IS ONE WHO BLASPHEMES, HE IS THE ONE WHO ASSUMES FOR HIMSELF THE POSITION OF GOD AND CLAIMS TO BE THE OBJECT OF THE WORSHIP OF MAN.

WHAT ARE THE METHODS THAT THE MAN OF SIN USES IN ORDER TO ATTRACT FOLLOWERS UNTO HIMSELF? TURN TO VERSES 9 AND 10. "EVEN HIM WHOSE COMING IS AFTER THE WORKING OF SATAN, WITH ALL POWER AND SIGNS AND LYING WONDERS, AND WITH ALL DECEIVABLENESS OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IN THEM THAT PERISH; BECAUSE THEY RECEIVE NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED." NOTICE IF YOU

WILL THE SIMILARITY OF THE LANGUAGE BETWEEN THE DESCRIPTION THAT WE HAVE OF CHRIST AND THE DESCRIPTION THAT WE HAVE OF THE MAN OF SIN. WHEN JESUS CHRIST CAME PREACHING, HE CAME PREACHING WITH POWER, WITH SIGNS AND WITH WONDERS, AND HERE THE MAN OF SIN COMES WITH POWER, HE COMES WITH SIGNS, AND HE COMES WITH WONDERS OF A LYING NATURE. IT IS TO BE REGRETTED THAT THERE ARE THOSE WHO HAVE SURRENDERED THEIR ACCESS TO THE POWER OF GOD FOR THAT WHICH IS IN REALITY NO POWER, THOSE WHO HAVE SURRENDERED A FAITH IN THE SIGNS THAT GOD HAS GIVEN THROUGH CHRIST FOR THOSE SIGNS THAT ARE CHARACTERIZED BY DECEIT, AND THOSE WHO HAVE SURRENDERED THE WONDERS THAT WERE DONE BY OUR LORD FOR THOSE WONDERS THAT ARE NOT REAL BUT ARE SIMPLY LIES. BUT SUCH IS THE MAN OF SIN, AND SUCH COMES THE MAN OF SIN, A MAN WHO IS THE OFF-SPRING OF PERDITION, MAN WHO IS CHARACTERIZED BY MORAL CORRUPTION, A MAN WHO IS ENDUED WITH THE POWER OF SATAN, A MAN WHO IS WORSHIPPED AS GOD, AND HE LEADS INTO THE ETERNAL ABYSS ALL OF THOSE WHO WILL FOLLOW HIM BECAUSE THEY RECEIVE NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED.

I WANT TO EMPHASIZE SOMETHING HERE AND PERHAPS GIVE EACH OF US SOME REASON FOR CONCERN. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WE COULD BE CATEGORIZED AT ALL AS BEING A FOLLOWER OF THE MAN OF SIN, TO GO AFTER THE WRONG POWER AND THE WRONG SIGNS AND THE WRONG WONDERS. BUT PAUL SAID THERE ARE SOME WHO HAVE AND THEY ARE IDENTIFIED AS THOSE WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED "THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH" IT WAS NOT UNINTENTIONAL THAT PAUL DID NOT SAY WHO HAVE "RECEIVED NOT THE TRUTH" BECAUSE IT IS ALTOGETHER POSSIBLE FOR A MAN TO RECEIVE THE TRUTH, BUT NOT TO RECEIVE THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH. THOSE WHO ARE FOLLOWING AFTER THE MAN OF SIN ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE LOVE OF THAT TRUTH. THIS IS HIS METHOD, HE ATTRACTS HIS FOLLOWERS BY POWER, BY SIGNS, AND BY LYING WONDERS.

WHAT HINDERED THE MAN OF SIN? TURN TO VERSES 5-7. "REMEMBER YE NOT, THAT, WHEN I WAS YET WITH YOU, I TOLD YOU THESE THINGS? AND NOW YE KNOW WHAT WITHHOLDETH THAT HE MIGHT BE REVEALED IN HIS TIME. FOR THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY DOETH ALREADY WORK (THE BEGINNING, THE INCEPTION OF THIS FALLING AWAY AND THE APPEARANCE OF THE MAN OF SIN WAS ALREADY HERE WHEN PAUL WAS WRITING. THIS IS ONE OF THE EARLIEST BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT); ONLY HE WHO NOW LETTETH, WILL LET, UNTIL HE BE TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY." HERE WE ARE TOLD THERE IS SOMETHING THAT HINDERS THE APPEARANCE OF THE MAN OF SIN HIS FULL FRUITION OR, IF YOU PLEASE, HIS TAKE-OVER. WHAT IS IT? THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS THAT WE HAVE SO MUCH DIFFICULTY WITH THE PASSAGE. THIS IS ONE OF THE REASONS THAT THE PASSAGE IS SO OBSCURE TO US. THE THESSALONIANS KNEW SOMETHING THAT WE DO NOT KNOW. LOOK AT THE FIFTH VERSE AGAIN, "REMEMBER YE NOT, THAT, WHEN I WAS YET WITH YOU, I TOLD YOU THESE THINGS? AND NOW YE KNOW WHAT WITHHOLDETH THAT HE MIGHT BE REVEALED IN HIS TIME." PAUL SAID, "YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS BRETHREN. I TOLD YOU." BUT HE DIDN'T TELL US, AND WE JUST DON'T KNOW AND IT IS PRETTY USELESS TO SIT AROUND AND TRY AND FIGURE IT ALL OUT. ALL WE KNOW IS THERE WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS WITHHOLDING, THERE WAS SOME POWER IN THE WORLD THAT WAS HINDERING HIS COMING, AND HE COULD NOT COME UNTIL THAT POWER HAD BEEN REMOVED. IT MAY EVEN HAVE BEEN THE FAITH OF THE BRETHREN, BECAUSE JUST AS SOON AS THAT FAITH WAS LOST, WHEN THE CHURCH HAD APOSTITIZED, THE MAN OF SIN CAME, AND THE MAN OF SIN WAS NOT GOING TO COME ALONE. THIS MAN OF SIN WAS GOING TO HAVE SOME ALLIES. NOTICE VERSES 11 AND 12. "AND FOR THIS CAUSE GOD SHALL SEND THEM (WHO ARE "THEM"? THEY ARE THE ONES BACK IN THE TENTH VERSE WHO "RECEIVED NOT THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH THAT THEY MIGHT BE SAVED.") STRONG DELUSION, THAT THEY SHOULD BELIEVE A LIE: THAT THEY ALL MIGHT BE JUDGED (NOT DAMNED AS THE KING JAMES VERSIONS READ. THOUGH THE IMPLICATION IS THERE, THE WORD IS PROPERLY "JUDGED.") WHO BELIEVED NOT THE TRUTH, BUT HAD PLEASURE IN UNRIGHTEOUSNESS." HERE ARE THE ALLIES OF THE MAN OF SIN, AND GOD SAID THEY SHALL BE SENT A STRONG DELUSION, THEY ARE GOING TO BE GIVEN OVER TO THE DECEIT WHICH CHARACTERIZES UNRIGHTEOUSNESS AND THEIR ALLIANCE WITH THE MAN OF SIN IS GOING TO MAKE THEIR CONDEMNATION DOUBLY SURE. GOD IS NOT MOCKED AND GOD CAN MAKE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THOSE WHO HAVE THE TRUTH AND THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH. GOD IS NOT MOCKED AND GOD CAN

MAKE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN THEMSELVES OVER TO THE MAN OF SIN AND THOSE WHO HAVE NOT. GOD SAYS THAT WHEN MAN CONDUCTS HIMSELF IN SUCH A WAY THAT HIS PRIMARY ALLEGIANCE IS TO THE MAN OF SIN AND HE WANTS NOT THE THINGS OF GOD, GOD WILL JUST GIVE HIM OVER AND LET HIM GO. THIS HAS BEEN TRUE IN ALL OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH MAN. TURN TO THE 81ST PSALM, VERSES 11, AND 12. GOD SAID, "BUT MY PEOPLE WOULD NOT HEARKEN TO MY VOICE; AND ISRAEL WOULD NONE OF ME. SO I GAVE THEM UP UNTO THEIR OWN HEARTS' LUST; AND THEY WALKED IN THEIR OWN COUNSELS." HERE GOD WAS TALKING OF HIS OWN PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. HE SAID MY PEOPLE WOULD NONE OF ME, THEY DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME AND SO GOD JUST CUT THEM ADrift AND LET THEM GO AFTER THEIR OWN COUNSEL. THEY HAD NOT ACCESS TO THE COUNSELS OF GOD. HE DEALT WITH THE GENTILES THE VERY SAME WAY. TURN TO THE BOOK OF ROMANS 1:21-25 AND THERE YOU WILL READ, "BECAUSE THAT, WHEN THEY KNEW GOD, THEY GLORIFIED HIM NOT AS GOD, NEITHER WERE THANKFUL; BUT BECAME VAIN IN THEIR IMAGINATIONS, AND THEIR FOOLISH HEART WAS DARKENED; PROFESSING THEMSELVES TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS, AND CHANGED THE GLORY OF THE UNCORRUPTIBLE GOD INTO AN IMAGE MADE LIKE TO CORRUPTIBLE MAN, AND TO BIRDS, AND FOURFOOTED BEASTS, AND CREEPING THINGS. WHEREFORE GOD ALSO GAVE THEM UP TO UNCLEANNESSTHROUGH THE LUSTS OF THEIR OWN HEARTS, TO DISHONOUR THEIR OWN BODIES BETWEEN THEMSELVES; WHO CHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD INTO A LIE, AND WORSHIPPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE MORE THAN THE CREATOR, WHO IS BLESSED FOR EVER, AMEN." I DON'T THINK YOU WILL FIND A DARKER DESCRIPTION THAN THIS THAT WE HAVE READ, RELATING TO THE GENTILES WHO WERE ALIENS FROM THE COVENANT AND STRANGERS FROM THE PROMISE, WHO, WHILE THEY HAD NOT THE COVENANT, AND THEY HAD NOT THE PROMISE OF THE LAW, DID KNOW GOD, BUT DELIBERATELY CHOSE NOT TO RETAIN GOD IN THEIR KNOWLEDGE. GOD SAID, "I JUST GAVE THEM UP, I GAVE THEM OVER TO LIVE AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS."

I THINK WE OUGHT TO ASK OURSELVES THE QUESTION, "HOW LONG WILL IT BE BEFORE GOD GIVE ME OVER?" WHEN I HAVE STEADFASTLY, WHEN I HAVE WILLFULLY, REFUSED TO BEND MY WILL TO THE WILL OF GOD, AND WHEN I HAVE DELIBERATELY CHOSEN NOT TO WALK IN THE PATHWAY OF THE TEACHING OF GOD'S ETERNAL WAY. DO YOU PRESUME THAT GOD WILL BEAR LONGER WITH YOU? DO YOU PRESUME THAT GOD HAS SOME OTHER RULE FOR YOU BECAUSE YOU WORSHIP IN A BUILDING WITH "CHURCH OF CHRIST" OVER THE DOOR? IT MAY JUST BE, BRETHREN, THERE IS A GREAT POSSIBILITY, THAT BECAUSE YOU DO GOD MAY HAVE A DIFFERENT RULE FOR YOU, BUT REST ASSURED IT IS ONE WHICH IS MORE STRINGENT THAN HE WILL APPLY TO THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO KNOW THE WAY AND TO WALK THEREIN. WHEN GOD IS FOR US, WHO CAN BE AGAINST US? WE CAN BE TRIUMPHANT, BUT WHEN GOD IS AGAINST, WHEN GOD HAS GIVEN US OVER, WHEREIN IS OUR HOPE?

THE MAN OF SIN SHALL COME, BUT PAUL SAID, "BRETHREN, DON'T LET IT WORRY YOU." IT IS GOING TO BE TRAGIC, IT IS GOING TO HAVE SOME TRAGIC CONSEQUENCES, BUT THE MAN OF SIN, YOU SEE, IS NOT GOING TO TRIUMPH, THE MAN OF SIN IS GOING TO BE DESTROYED. "AND THEN SHALL THAT WICKED BE REVEALED, WHOM THE LORD SHALL CONSUME WITH THE SPIRIT OF HIS MOUTH, AND SHALL DESTROY WITH THE BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING." THIS MAY WELL BE THE SAME MESSAGE THAT WE HAVE AS THE THEME OF THAT GREAT APOCALYPSE, THE BOOK OF REVELATION, WHICH SAYS TO THE CHURCH, "DO NOT DESPAIR THOUGH THE TIMES MAY GET DARK. DO NOT DESPAIR THOUGH THE GOING MAY BECOME TEDIOUS AND ROUGH. REST ASSURED THAT NO MATTER HOW DARK THE DAY MAY BECOME THE DAWN IS JUST BEYOND, AND REST ASSURED OF THIS ONE THING---THAT THE FORCES OF EVIL SHALL NOT TRIUMPH BECAUSE THEY ARE OPPOSED TO THE ETERNAL POWER OF AN ALMIGHTY GOD."

WHEN PAUL WROTE THESE WORDS TO THESE BRETHREN, I DON'T THINK HE DID SO IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT TELL THEM ABOUT THE MAN OF SIN. I DON'T THINK HE DID SO IN ORDER THAT HE MIGHT TELL THEM ABOUT THE APOSTACY THAT WAS GOING TO COME. I THINK HE TOLD THEM ABOUT THE APOSTACY THAT WAS TO COME AND THE MAN OF SIN WHO WAS GOING TO BE IN ORDER TO ASSURE THEM THAT BEYOND THESE THINGS

AND AFTER THESE THINGS, JESUS CHRIST WOULD COME AGAIN AS HE HAD BEEN SEEN TO DEPART FROM THE EARTH. HERE IS THE ENCOURAGEMENT I BELIEVE FOR THE CHURCH, HERE IS THE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE CHILD OF GOD—TO BE FAITHFUL EVEN IN TIMES OF TRIAL. HERE IS THE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE CHURCH TO BE FAITHFUL IN DAYS THAT ARE DARK BECAUSE PAUL SAID THAT THESE DAYS ARE TO USHER IN THE DAY OF THE LORD. THESE DAYS ARE A SIGN THAT JESUS IS GOING TO COME. THESE DAYS ARE A SIGN THAT THAT GREATEST OF LIGHTS IS GOING TO BREAK FORTH UPON THE HORIZON AND WE MAY SEE THE SON OF GOD. DREADFUL AS THESE DAYS MAY BE AND DREADFUL AS THEIR CONSEQUENCES MAY BECOME PAUL SAYS THESE THINGS WILL BE SWEEPED AWAY. HE IS SAYING TO US THAT CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN JUST WHEN HE IS MOST NEEDED. CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN JUST WHEN HE IS MOST NEEDED.

BUT NOW BRETHREN LET US THINK NOT OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, BUT LET US MAKE OF THIS LESSON A PERSONAL APPLICATION IN OUR OWN LIVES WHEN, NOT THE MAN OF SIN AS SUCH, BUT THE INFLUENCE OF SIN WHICH IS PRESENT IN THE WORLD COMES TO US AND WE ARE SORE TRIED IN TEMPTATION, OR LET US THINK OF THESE OCCASIONS WHEN TEMPTATION TO DOUBT AND TO QUESTION COMES TO US BECAUSE OF DARK DAYS OF DISAPPOINTMENT AND SAD PARTING WHICH IS CAUSED BY DEATH, AND LET US REALIZE THAT THESE ARE SIGNS TO US. NOT SIGNS THAT WE SHOULD DESPAIR, NOT SIGNS THAT WE SHOULD DISTRUST, BUT RATHER SIGNS THAT WE SHOULD LOOK MORE CLOSELY TO JESUS CHRIST FOR HE SHALL BE NEAR. IN OUR PERSONAL LIVES CHRIST WILL COME WHEN HE IS MOST NEEDED. CHRIST LOVES THOSE WHO ARE HIS BRETHREN. GOD LOVES THOSE WHO ARE HIS CHILDREN. GOD DOES NOT LEAVE US, AND THANKS BE TO GOD THAT HE DOES NOT LEAVE US TO FACE THESE MOMENTS ALONE. IF WE FACE THEM ALONE, AND IF THROUGH THE TIMES OF TEMPTATION AND DARKNESS WE FEEL ALONE, IT IS NOT BECAUSE JESUS IS NOT NEAR. IT IS BECAUSE WE WILL NOT OPEN OUR EYES AND OPEN OUR HEARTS. CHRIST WILL COME WHEN HE IS MOST NEEDED.

IF YOU ARE TONIGHT WITHOUT THE SAVIOR, HOW YOU NEED HIM. CHRIST WILL COME TO YOU TONIGHT IF YOU WILL COME TO CHRIST. CHRIST WENT TO CALVARY. FROM CALVARY HE WENT TO HEAVEN, AND FROM HEAVEN HE ISSUES AN INVITATION, "COME UNTO ME." THE ONLY WAY THAT YOU CAN GO INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE FATHER IN HEAVEN IS TO COME BY HIM WHO IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE, AND IT IS TO THAT WAY, AND INTO THAT WAY, THAT JESUS BIDS YOU COME IN FAITH, FAITH EXPRESSED, FAITH SEEN IN A CHANGE OF LIFE—REPENTANCE; FAITH SEEN IN THE CONFESSION OF THAT FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST THAT THE WORLD MAY HEAR; FAITH SEEN IN YOUR BEING OBEDIENT TO THE LORD IN BAPTISM THAT THE OLD MAN MIGHT BE BURIED AND THE NEW MAN MIGHT COME FORTH, AND THROUGH THESE THINGS YOU STAND ON THE OTHER SIDE WITH SINS FORGIVEN, WASHED IN THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB. IF YOU HAVE DONE THESE THINGS AND YOU HAVE WANDERED AWAY, CHRIST STANDS WAITING EVEN NOW TO RECEIVE YOU IF YOU WILL COME. WE SING THIS SONG TO ENCOURAGE YOU. WE PRAY QUIETLY FOR YOU. WON'T YOU COME WHILE WE STAND AND SING?