

# Man of Lawlessness

by Alan Martin

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*The mystery of lawlessness is a gradual departure from the truth, ultimately leading to the revelation of the man of lawlessness, who is opposed to God and leads people away from the truth.*

**Scripture:** 2 Timothy 3:14

**Topics:** "Lawlessness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of truly knowing and understanding the word of God. He challenges the casual attitude towards reading and studying the scriptures, stating that it takes a lifetime of pouring oneself into it to truly grasp its meaning. The speaker highlights the danger of seeking to put out the light of truth and warns that the enemy is after the church, trying to lead it away from the truth. He references Peter and Paul's writings to emphasize the increasing perilous times and the love for pleasure that characterizes society. The speaker also points out the increasing lawlessness and apostasy in various aspects of society, including movies, sports, and even government.

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## Transcript

You have your Bible open in two passages. You read 1 Corinthians 13 and Matthew 24. There are times you just know, you weren't intending for it to happen, that the Lord just came alongside you and He opened to you the Scriptures.

And your heart just burns within you. And you know you're being taught of the Lord. And it's one of those times, it comes out of a deep concern.

Let's just ask the Lord to help us. To grant us a hearing. Father, be merciful to us.

May according to Your will, may Your Word perform that for which You sent it. May it quicken. May it cleanse.

May it bring light to the innermost part. And may it affect us the way You want it to. And may Your Word and Your truth save us.

Save us from lies. Save us from deception. Save us from our own unclear, incomplete ideas.

May we receive the fullness of it this morning. According to Your will and by Your Spirit's help, we ask this in Jesus' name. Don't be surprised at this.

This will be regular today. Any attempt to distract you from hearing, you'll have it today. Just prepare for it.

Be ready. 1 Corinthians 13, 6. Someone tells me what love does in relation to the truth. Love rejoices with the truth.

So in Matthew 24 then, love rejoices with the truth here in Matthew 24. What's going to happen when according to Matthew 24, verses 11 and 12, then many false prophets will arise and deceive many. And because lawlessness will increase, the love of the many will grow cold.

Well, if love rejoices with the truth, and the love of many is going to wax cold probably due to the many false prophets that are going to arise and deceive many, then what's going to happen to the love of the truth? If love rejoices with truth, what's going to happen about men's attitudes toward the truth? Won't it grow cold as well? Won't there be less and less affection for it? You know, this whole process is described as a mystery. The mystery of lawlessness. Turn to 2 Thessalonians 2. In 2 Thessalonians 2, verse 7. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.

Well, when would that time have been? The mystery of lawlessness was already at work when Paul was writing to the church of Thessalonica. My question is, can we understand this mystery? Do we need to understand this mystery? Didn't Jesus say that there is nothing hidden which will not be made known? Nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light. So let's look at this mystery of lawlessness.

Does it work? Let's go back to the first verse of the same chapter. 2 Thessalonians 2. Verse 1, And we request of you, brothers, concerning the coming of the Lord and our gathering to Him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled either by spirit or by word or by letter as if from us, although the day of Christ had come. Because let no one deceive you by any way for that day will not come until something else happens first.

What must happen before the day of Christ comes? The, the great falling away. Falling away is the way some of your versions choose to translate it. Some versions say the apostasy.

The literal word that they're trying to translate using falling away or apostasy comes from the Greek combination *apa*, away from, and *esteni*, to make the stand. So until the great standing away from comes, Christ is not coming. Ask yourself this question.

Standing away from what? Let's just see if that, keep it in mind. Standing away from what? And not only must this standing away from occur, this also, this man of sin, according to the *textus receptus*, man of lawlessness according to other Greek manuscripts, doesn't really matter. Doesn't 1 John 3, verse 4 says anyone practicing sin practices lawlessness and sin is lawlessness.

So whether he's a man of sin or a man of lawlessness, he's the same thing. But it's interesting, this great standing away from must happen. This man of lawlessness must be revealed.

And he's also called the son of perdition. Now what does that mean? What is the son of perdition? Well, where is perdition used in the Scripture? Well, Jesus used it in Matthew 7, verse 13 when He said, Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way and wide is the way that leads to perdition. Same word in the original language.

And narrow is the gate, narrow is the way, small is the gate leading to life, and few there are that find it. So this great standing away from by this man of lawlessness leads people to this great destruction. The word

itself, destruction, comes from the Greek word apa, away from, and luo, to loose.

To loose away from. And in Jesus' words Himself, it's actually wide is the gate and broad is the way leading away unto perdition. Leading away unto that place that has been loosed away.

From what? Loosed away from what? Standing away from what? So the son of perdition, this man of lawlessness, must be that one who is characterized as the one responsible for this leading away unto that place where men no longer stand in the place they're supposed to be. Leads them away from that place. Now, this mystery.

Four more clues are given, or some more clues are given in verse 4. 2 Thessalonians 2 verse 4. And these are basically other things that describe this man of lawlessness. This one responsible for leading away unto perdition. He opposes and exalts himself above, against, or above everything being called God.

So that even in the temple of God, he sits down as God, displaying himself that he is God. Even here again, in the word displaying, the word displaying comes from the Greek word dikai, not to shine. And guess what else? Away from.

Apar. He's actually going to shine away from that he's God. Shine away from what? Lead away from what? Stand away from what? Paul in verse 5 reminds them, I talked about this already.

You'll remember that I was telling you these things when I was with you. Then in verse 6, he says, and now you know what is restraining so that this man of lawlessness may be revealed in his own time. Restraining? Something's holding back this mystery of lawlessness, this man of lawlessness? Something is holding it back? What is this? Verse 7, for the mystery of lawlessness we mentioned is already at work.

And now it says, and he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. Now it's not a what, it's a he. Someone is restraining this mystery at work, this person who will eventually lead others away from where they need to be standing.

Then in verse 8 it says, and then, once this one is taken away, then the lawless one himself will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. Paul mentions that he's not going to be around forever. And then he comes right back to wanting to describe the coming.

Verse 9, the coming of the lawlessness is going to be in accordance with what? The working of Satan. What's Satan's work? That's right. Look in Revelation 20.

Exactly right. Satan's work is the work of deception. Revelation 20, verses 2 and 3 says, And he laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil, and Satan had bound him for a thousand years.

Now, you notice this version of the New King James Version left out something that the Texas Receptus, and probably your King James has, what? The one who's deceiving the entire world. Verse 3, And he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should do what? Deceive the nations no more. That's his work.

That's what he does. And that's what the coming of the lawlessness is going to be according to this. According to this deception that will deceive the entire world.

Jesus also speaks about the work of the devil. In John chapter 8, you want to turn there, John chapter 8, verse 44. He tells those Jews that were opposing him, the Messiah sent to save them, you are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.

He was a murderer from the beginning. Wait a minute. A murderer from the beginning? Did Satan ever kill anybody? Did Satan kill anybody? How about he killed Adam and Eve? Who provided the knife? How did he kill them? He spoke a lie.

Sure he murdered from the beginning. How did he do it? He spoke on it. And is it any surprising then that the next statement, he was a murderer from the beginning and does not do what? Does not stand in the truth.

What does apostasy mean? Stand away from. Well, if you're not standing in the truth, where are you standing? You're standing away from it. So is he the one that's ultimately responsible for the great standing away from? Are you sure now is what people are really going to be standing away from? Are they going to be standing away from the truth? Sure.

As a matter of fact, this deceiving, this deception from Satan is so pervasive, Jesus has to pray for his own select disciples. In John 17, look at his prayer there with me. John chapter 17, verses 15 through 17, he's praying, verse 15, he's saying, I do not pray that you should take them out of the world.

Now what's the world? John tells us that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one. So he's praying, knowing that they're going to be in this world, that the entire world is lying under the power of the evil one. He says, I'm not asking you take them out of it, but that you protect them from the evil one.

Now how is he going to protect them from the evil one? Jesus says in verse 16, they're not of the world, they're not under his sway right now, just as I am not of the world. Here's how you protect them from the evil one. Set them apart.

From what? From those under the sway. Set them apart from the whole world. How do you set them apart from the whole world? You set them apart by the truth.

That's what sets men apart. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Free from what? Free from the deception that the whole world is under.

Let's go back to 2 Thessalonians. Look a little more about this mystery of lawlessness. 2 Thessalonians 2. Let's go to verse 9 again.

The coming of the lawless one is in accordance to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonder. Hmm. Now think about this.

If the working of Satan is the work of deceiving, how is he going to use signs and wonders and miracles to deceive? Can Satan really do signs and wonders and miracles? Would he even do them in Jesus' name? Would he? Well, let's see if Jesus has something to say about that. Matthew 7 again. Matthew 7 verse 22.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name and cast out demons in Your name and in Your name done many wonders? Actually, it's the same word powers as used in 2 Thessalonians. Do you think it's a big deal for Satan to see someone cast out a demon in someone's name if it serves the purpose of causing those mesmerized by it to listen and follow this person? Or to

have someone get up out of a wheelchair or be healed of any kind in the name of Jesus so long as it accomplishes the purpose of getting this person to follow that person leading them away from the truth. Sounds like a pretty good strategy.

Mystery. You already know this. What are the false prophets in the Old Testament? Whose name did they prophesy in? And what was the common theme of their prophecy? It'll go well with you.

God loves you just the way... I mean, it's not a quote from the Old Testament, but obviously if He's telling them peace and safety to you, He's telling them you're okay. He's not upset. Now, I have a question for you.

How can someone, a prophet especially, prophesy falsely and often in the name of Jesus? We'll turn to 2 Corinthians. A friend of mine named Gerald Green, a person who had a very wonderful effect on my own life. Struggled early on.

He got caught up in a certain movement. And things weren't making sense to him because he had been given a hunger for the Word of God. And he was around a lot of spiritual hype and a lot of stuff going on.

And it just caused him to wrestle. And he was asking God, people seem like they have joy and it seems like they have power. And they're saying, they're asking you these things in Jesus' name.

And they're saying you're answering them, that Jesus is doing these things. And he was stunned when he said, he told me he heard the voice of God. He says, they aren't doing it in Jesus.

It's just another Jesus. There's more than one Jesus. Look right here.

2 Corinthians 11. Start with verses 2 and 4. Paul says, I'm jealous for you with a godly jealousy, for I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

And he goes on down and explains part of how this is going to work. Because there's going to be false apostles, verse 13. For such are false apostles, deceitful workers.

Well, if they're deceitful workers, which camp are they working for? Their work is according to the work of Satan, the one who deceives the whole earth. Now how does this happen? They transform themselves into what? Messengers of light. Do you know what the term Lucifer means? Light bearer.

Therefore it should be, it is no great thing if his deacons, that's a literal word, or his ministers or his servants, also transform themselves into deacons, servants, ministers of righteousness. You know, Jude warns of these men. You want to see it during the first part of the book of Jude, right before the book of Revelation.

Jude says that these men creep in unnoticed. They slip in. I believe they're slipping in under the cloak of the mystery of lawlessness.

Now what do they do? In verse 4 of Jude, they're men who turn the grace of our God into the license for sin. And they deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. Now a question for you.

More pertinent to where we are. That's what they do. Well, let me ask you.

Who, first of all, are these men, these false apostles, these deceitful workers, these men slipping in unnoticed to the church, who are they deceiving? First of all, Matthew 24, it says in verse 10, first of all it says they deceive many. Many. That's the first thing it says.

But now, back in 2 Thessalonians, not only do they deceive many, look in 2 Thessalonians 2 again. How else are the ones they're deceiving characterized in verse 10? Well, think about it. Who else are being deceived? According to 2 Thessalonians 2.10. They deceive the ones that are already perishing.

What is the word perishing? Same word as in verse 3, perdition. What does it mean? To be loosed away from. Who's being deceived? Those who have already been loosed away from.

Loosed away from what? The ones being deceived are the ones who already, by the mystery of lawlessness, by these false apostles, by these deceitful workers, by these men who have slept, crept in, unawares, and have already loosed people away from the truth. They're the ones set up for this great deception when the man of lawlessness is going to be revealed. This mystery of lawlessness has been at work a long time.

And it's at work now. Look what's happened to Europe. You know what happened in Europe not that long ago? The Protestant Reformation.

Where was the first printing press for the Bible? Germany. What's Christianity like in Germany? You know what language John Calvin wrote almost all of his first theological works in? French. The French schools were the center for the Reformation writers.

Where's France now? Where's England now? John Knox. John Calvin. Where's Scotland now? Where's Ireland now? What about our own country? What about our own country? How much of the Great Awakening is left? What ever happened to men like Jonathan Edwards? What's happened to the very schools in this country that were built by conservative Christians for the propagation of the Gospel that are now the number one opponent that now do not even believe in the Gospel that the founders of that very institution founded it to promote? The apostasy is growing.

The great standing away from the truth is permeating our entire society. Our children are forbidden, it is against the law to teach that God created the earth in the public school. You know who first opened public schools in America? The Puritan.

And now in the very institution they were instrumental in founding, it's against the law to teach that God created the heaven and the earth. Lawlessness is so increasing, it's begun to saturate our movies, our sport. You know, Michael Vick is being arrested for some kind of charm.

He spent time in jail for fighting dogs. I just saw the other day, I saw two grown dogs fighting with nothing more than leather gloves on their hands. There was a referee in the ring, and it's legal.

And they could beat each other to a bloody pulp. And they call it extreme. It's okay for a man to knock the teeth out of another man, but it's somehow inhumane for dogs to fight.

We are sick. We are sick. The apostasy is growing.

And it's getting worse and worse. It's not going away, and it won't go away. It's at work.

I stopped at one short. Not only is it saturating our movies, our sport, our music, you know what else it's saturating? Our own government. Our government is saturated.

Now, why is it not completely taken over everything? Because there's one restraining. Yes. How does the Holy Spirit restrain the work of lawlessness? Because when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth.

And He will convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. And the only reason lawlessness has not completely taken over the entire earth is the Holy Spirit is still at work. And only He, only He can keep us from being led astray by the creeping apostasy that will eventually grow so big that He will be taken out.

And when there is no more voice of truth, society will be perfectly ripe for the man of lawlessness. You know, Lucifer, Satan, already led a third of the whole angels to rebel against God. And what did it cost him? He was kicked out of heaven.

And where did he fall when he was kicked out of heaven? He fell to the earth. So he's not going to be allowed back in heaven. So he's not set his sights on heaven, and he already has the whole world under his lies.

And the whole world lies in darkness except for the light. Ye are the light of the world. And if you want to keep the world in darkness, how do you do that? You seek to put out the light.

Guess who He's coming after. He's after you. And He's after me.

He's after the only place where there's light left. And what are you going to try to lead the church away from? The truth. And Paul saw this so clear.

The very last letter he wrote was to who? Timothy. And he saw it so clearly, he began to pour out his heart to Timothy. Look with me.

2 Timothy. Chapter 3, verse 1. What does he say? In the last day, perilous time will come. Take a look at the list and see if you don't recognize this is the society we live in.

The saddest part about this to me, verse 4 and 5, is that all these people in this description love pleasure. And according to the Greek, not instead of, it should be translated more than God. Their love for pleasure exceeds their love for God because they have a form of godliness.

They just deny its power. Where are those people going to end up? They're going to end up standing away from the truth. Can you see why Paul says, from such people? Turn away.

If you stand with them, where will you be? You'll be in the apostasy. And later on in verse 12 of chapter 3, Paul begins to say, prepare Timothy, that everyone who really desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus can expect persecution, while evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving others, probably because they themselves are being deceived. They're just telling others what they're convinced of.

And why? Why are people being deceived? Because they have already been loosed away from the truth. So Paul tells him, but you must do what? Remain in. You, Timothy, remain in the things which you have learned and have been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.

And that from childhood, you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. More than at any other time, this is where the enemy seeks to attack.

Paul says to Timothy, God has said Satan, his false apostles, his false workmen, his false prophets, and his false teachers say, did God really say? These Scriptures, which are God-breathed, they're the ones able to make you wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. And they make the man of God, they make him perfect. They equip him for every good work.

And so Paul then says to Timothy, I charge you, Timothy. I charge you before God who's going to come to judge the living. Preach the Word.

And then some of your Scriptures say, be instant. You know what the actual Greek word is? It's epistethe. Stand by.

Stand. Stand by. What is the whole mystery of lawlessness so suddenly, continually permeating, saturating, getting first the world easily, and now even the church is getting them away from the truth.

He's telling Timothy, stand in it. Stand in it. I don't care what it produces, how much of an idiot you look like to fools.

Stand in the truth. Stand in the Word. Stand in the Scriptures.

Preach it. Reprove, warn, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. Verse 3, For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but will heap for themselves teachers.

Remember that? Those of you old enough to remember it. What's a heap? Have a heaping helping of their hospital. You remember that? The word heap means you pile it up right now in the church.

Men are piling up to themselves teachers strictly because it appeals to their own desires. It says they will not put up with sound doctrine, but according to their own desires they will heap to themselves teachers. Some of your versions say tickling.

Tickling your ears or having itching ears. You know what he's talking about? Stimulating. Wasn't that a stimulating message? Didn't John join church this morning? And what do they do to the truth? Verse 4, They will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables.

Now how I wrap this up will burden my heart. What is the only hope for you and I? What's the only hope to keep us from being swept away in this great flood of iniquity that is permeating our entire culture? It says the only hope for us is if we receive the love of the truth. Now, I don't want to be around the bush here.

I am appalled at biblical ignorance. It is sickening the level of biblical knowledge many people have. How do you plan to stand when you've not given yourselves to know the scriptures? What makes you think you are so smart that you can casually peruse and think you know? I pour myself into knowing the scriptures.

And it overwhelms me how much is there. And the more I search, the more I pour myself into it, the more I see it takes your entire life pouring into it to really understand it. And how do you and I think we are going to stand taking some casual attitude because some of you do not ever even read the scriptures because you think you already know it good enough.

Someone who pours himself into the scriptures and speaks it out, how does that understanding sound to someone who is only casually and minimally even really read? It sounds strange. Listen to this word from Peter. You don't even need to turn there.

We are going to be reading from 2 Peter 2. But there were false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers... among you. And they will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them and bringing on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways and because of whom the way of truth will be evilly spoken against.

Blasphemy means to speak against. You know why men that are under the influence of these teachers speak against the truth? Because it doesn't sound like what they've heard all their life. Well, that's not what we believe.

Well, what if what you believe came from a false teacher? What if what you believe came from a deceitful workman? How will you know if you don't know the Scripture? It's a just punishment. If they've rejected what He inspired to give us, to make us wise unto salvation through belief in the truth, to those who receive not the love of the truth, all He has to do to them is do what? Give them over to their own thinking. It says in Proverbs 1 that the waywardness of the wicked shall slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them.

And you know where I'm concerned about complacency? I'm concerned about complacency in white-water church about the Scripture. I don't see young men or old men to my satisfaction craving the Scripture. You're too busy.

Your priorities are ruffled, and you're empty. I may not be around to warn you much longer, but by God's grace, you better know that your only hope from being swept away in this flood of apostasy is you love the truth above. Your mama is not going to save you.

Your daddy is not going to save you. He can't walk with you every moment. Only the Spirit of truth can guide you into all truth.

And you better learn to walk with Him. Get out of your games and wake up and take life as serious as our Lord Jesus Christ meant it to be.

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