

A Comprehensive Benediction

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately expounds on the unwavering love of God and the everlasting consolation and hope given to believers through grace, urging Christians to embrace and rejoice in these divine blessings.

Scripture: Romans 8:38-39, John 14:2-3, Hebrews 7:23-25, Ephesians 2:8, 1 John 3:1, Romans 5:5, 1 Corinthians 15:52

Topics: "Divine Love", "Christian Hope"

Description

In 'A Comprehensive Benediction,' C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound truths of God's eternal love and the divine blessings of everlasting consolation and hope granted to believers through grace. Drawing from 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, Spurgeon passionately exhorts Christians to embrace these assurances, find joy amid trials, and rest fully in the promises of God. This sermon offers rich encouragement for believers to deepen their faith and live confidently in the love and hope provided by Christ.

Transcript

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work." 2 Thessalonians 2:16,17.

[Other Sermons by Mr. Spurgeon, upon the same text, are Sermons, #1542, Volume 26—FREE GRACE A MOTIVE FOR FREE GIVING;

#2363, Volume 40—COMFORT AND CONSTANCY and #2991, Volume 52—WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE.]

ALL through his Epistles, Paul is continually expressing his best wishes for the friends to whom he writes. The Christian should be a well-wisher to all men. No cursing should ever come out of his mouth, but his lips should always distil blessings even upon his enemies—and much more upon his friends. Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, it should be a part of our religion to be desiring the best of blessings for our fellow men. As the high priest of old blessed the people, so should those whom God has made to be priests and kings unto Himself—a privilege that pertains to all saints— exercise the function of blessing the people by desiring good things for them!

The blessing invoked in the text is very comprehensive, but although there is much to crave, there is much more to acknowledge with gratitude. Blessings already secured in the Covenant are the foundation of a

rich expectancy for the supply of all our present needs. We may reasonably hope that God will do in the future what He has done in the past. Hence the Apostle speaks very plainly of what God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ have already bestowed—and then he couples therewith the kindest wishes as to the future of his friends at Thessalonica.

With as much brevity as possible, I shall first speak on that part of the text which contains two positive facts. And then upon that part of it which expresses two holy desires.

I. The 16th verse contains A VERY CLEAR STATEMENT OF THE TWO POSITIVE FACTS.

Paul, writing concerning believers in Christ at Thessalonica and everywhere else, says, "Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace." From this we gather that every true Believer—everyone who rests upon Christ and is saved through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit—is, at the present moment, first of all, the object of the love of God—"who has loved us." So, my Friends, Paul does not speak of God as though we were strangers to Him and He is a stranger to us, but he says, "who has loved us." Concerning this matter, he does not speak as one who was in doubt—with mingled hope and fear—but he says positively, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, who has loved us." He is quite sure of it! He is certain that these people to whom he is writing, and all believers in Jesus, are the objects of Divine Love!

Will you turn that Truth of God over in your minds, dear Friends, making a personal application of it at this moment? If you are now trusting in Jesus Christ, God loves you! That He should think of you is something! That He should pity you is more. That He should bear with you and have patience with you is no small thing—but think of God loving you! That Infinite Being whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, whose years are eternal, whose existence knows no limit nor shadow of a change—He loves you and yet you are, compared with Him, nothing—yes, less than nothing and vanity! Could you conceive of an angel loving an ant? Could you imagine one of the seraphs being in love with the gnat which dances in the sunbeam? It would be wonderful condescension for the august spirits to love such insignificant creatures, yet it would be only one creature loving another creature! And between one creature and another, the distance cannot be as great as between the Creator and the created one! That God, the Eternal, Infinite, Almighty I AM, should actually condescend to love us, who are but as worms compared with Him and who are but as things of yesterday, soon

gone, oh, 'tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing! Yet though it exceeds marvel, it does not, thank God, exceed belief! But were it not that God has, Himself, revealed it, we might have cause enough to suppose it to be impossible that the Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, should have loved us!

Being spoken of in the past tense, I infer that the love which God has for Believers is no novelty. He did not commence to love them yesterday. Brothers and Sisters, we believe that as many as have been called by Grace have been the objects of a love that never knew a beginning! Long before the stars were lit, or the sun's refulgent ray had pierced through primeval shade, the heart of Deity had fixed itself upon the chosen! The prescient eyes of God had seen them when as yet they were not—and in His book all their names were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them! They were not merely foreknown, but they were foreloved! They were the favorites of His heart, the dear ones of His choice. He "has loved us." Fly back as far as you will—till time has not begun, the work of Creation is not accomplished and God dwells alone—it was still true of all Believers, even then, that "God, even our

Father, has loved us."

Is it not marvelous that we should have been the objects of a love that has been so constant? For, as there never was any beginning to it, so there never has been a period in which that love has grown dim towards those who were the objects of it! The river of God's Love has gone flowing on in one undiminished stream even until now! He "has loved us." He loved us when our father Adam plunged us into the ruins of the Fall. He loved us when He spoke the first promise in the Garden of Eden, that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head. He loved us all through the prophetic days when He was writing the Book of Love upon which our delighted eyes were afterwards to gaze. He loved us when He sent His Son, His only Son, to live our life and to die our death! He loved us when He exalted that Son of His to His own right hand—and in His Person exalted us there, too, and made us to sit in heavenly places together with Him. He loved us when we were little children, in the weakness of infancy hanging upon our mother's breasts. He loved us when, in the follies of our youth, we seemed determined to destroy ourselves while He was determined that we should be saved. He loved us when we loved not Him. He drew us with the cords of a man and with the bands of love—and now, even at this day—we can, each one of us, look up to Him and say, "Abba! Father! You are mine and I am Yours by the Spirit of adoption." Yes, we can say this! We can look back all along our past lives and right beyond our birth into eternity past, and we can thank Him that we can truly say, "God, even our Father, has loved us."

Now, my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you must not be satisfied unless you can speak about God's love to you in the same positive terms as those which were used by the Apostle Paul. Never rest contented if you do not know that God loves you! Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids until, by a living faith, you have been able to read your title clear to this love of God! It may be that you have lost the sensible presence of that love—then ask for Divine Grace to search until you find it again. You may be saved and yet you may not be happy, but you ought never be content unless you are certain that you are saved—and then such certainty will infallibly bring you peace and joy. If now your full assurance has departed and your faith is under a cloud, come and knock again at Mercy's door and cling to the posts thereof, looking up at the Crucified One. Turn your tearful eyes to Calvary, trusting afresh to Him whose wounds will give you healing and in the crimson lines of whose agonies you must read your acceptance. Go there, I say, and be not content till you can say with Paul, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us." This is the first positive fact which is here mentioned.

There is another fact which is equally positive—"and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Graced It is absolutely certain that God has given His people this double blessing. What a delightful blessing this is, "everlasting consolation"! There is music in the word, "consolation." Barnabas was called "the son of consolation." No, more than that, it is the name of One who is far greater than Barnabas, for the Lord Jesus is called "the Consolation of Israel." But God is here said to have given this blessing to His people in a very special form—"everlasting consolation." A man goes to work to make money and, after toiling hard for it, he gets it and it is a consolation to him. But it is not an everlasting consolation, for he may spend or he may lose all his money. He may invest it in some company (limited or unlimited), and very soon find it vanish! Or he may be compelled by death to leave it. It cannot be, at the best, more than a temporary consolation. A man toils hard for knowledge. He acquires it. He becomes eminent, his name is famous. This is a consolation to him for all his toil, but it cannot last long, for when he comes to feel the headache or the heartache, his degrees and his fame cannot cheer him. Or when his soul becomes a prey to despondency, he may turn over many a

learned to me before he will find a cure for melancholy. His consolation is but frail and fickle—it will only serve to cheer him at intermittent seasons—it is not "everlasting consolation." But I venture to say that through the consolation which God gives to His people, they are unsurpassed for their endurance! They can stand all tests—the shock of trial, the bursting out of passion, the lapse of years—no, more—they can even endure the passage to eternity, for God has given to His people "everlasting consolation."

What is this "everlasting consolation"? It includes a sense of pardoned sin. A Christian, when his heart is right, knows that God has pardoned his sins, that He has cast them behind His back, and that they will never be mentioned against him again. He has received in his heart the witness of the Spirit that God has blotted out, as a thick cloud, his transgressions and, as a cloud, his sins. Well, if sin is pardoned, is not that a consolation? Yes, and an everlasting consolation, too—one that will do to live with and that will do to die with—and that will do to rise again with! Oh, joy! My sins are pardoned! Now do what You will with me, my God! As my sins are put away, You have given me "everlasting consolation."

This "everlasting consolation" also gives an abiding sense of acceptance in Christ. The Christian knows that God looks upon him as he is in Christ and, inasmuch as God put Christ into his place, and punished Christ for his sin, He now puts the Believer into Christ's place and rewards that Believer with His love just as if he had been obedient unto death, as Christ was! It is a blessed thing to know that God accepts us and to be able to sing, with Hart—

" With my Savior's garments on,

Holy as the Holy One"—

and this is a consolation which is abiding. It is, in fact, everlasting! Now let sickness come—the consolation still abides. Have we not seen hundreds of Believers as happy in the weakness of disease as they would have been in the strength of hale and vigorous health? Let death come—the consolation still remains. Have not these ears often heard the songs of dying saints as they have rejoiced because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit? Yes, a sense of acceptance in the Beloved is an "everlasting consolation."

Moreover, the Christian has a conviction of his security in Christ. God has promised to save all those who trust in Jesus. The Christian does trust in Him and he believes that God will be as good as His word and will save him. He feels, therefore, that whatever may occur in Providence, whatever onslaughts there may be of inward corruption, or of outward temptation, he is safe by virtue of his union to Christ—is not this a source of consolation? Why, some of you might freely give your eyes to know that you are saved! It would be a good bargain for men even to be lame or maimed if they did but enter into life. The Christian knows that he is secure—beneath the shield of the Divine Omnipotence he laughs at the rage of Hell, feeling that no fiery dart can ever pierce that sacred protection! Are you rejoicing in this everlasting consolation? If not, you should seriously question whether you know what true religion means. Do you find that your losses make you wretched? Do bereavements in your family make you murmur and complain? Are you never happy? Does not joy ever come into your spirit? Do you always hang your head like a bulrush? Have you no peace of mind, no sacred mirth? Do the bells of your heart never ring? Do the heart-strings of your soul never sound out the music of grateful praise? Then gravely question whether you can be a child of God, for concerning the children of God it is written, "God, even our Father, has given us everlasting consolation."

I am sure there are many here who, if they were to speak from experience, would say, "Well, we are very poor, but we are rich in faith, and faith makes us rich toward God. We have not anything to spare, yet surely goodness and mercy have followed us all the days of our life. We are sick in body, yet our afflictions are so sanctified that we rejoice in deep distress. We are ridiculed and slandered by the ungodly, but we rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer anything for Christ's sake. Yes, God has given us everlasting consolation!" John Bunyan said that the man who wears the flower, "heart's ease," in his bosom need not envy a king! And that is a flower which the Christian always wears in his buttonhole—or if he does not always wear it there, it is his own fault, for God has given it to him—He has given unto us everlasting, unchanging, unfading, inexhaustible fountains of consolation!

Another thing which God has given us is "good hope through Grace"—a hope, a good hope—a "good hope through Grace." What is the Christian's hope? It is a hope that he shall be preserved in this life by God's love and kindness. A hope that when he comes to die—for die he must unless the Lord shall come first—he shall have all-sufficient Grace to be able to play the man in the last solemn article. He has the hope that, after death, his soul, out-soaring sun, Volume 56 www.spurgeongems.org 3

moon and stars, shall enter into the realm of spirits and be with Christ! He believes that the day shall come when his very body, though it has become food for worms, shall be quickened and called by the voice of the archangel from its bed of dust and its silent sleeping place. He believes that those bones of his shall live again and that his soul and body shall be reunited and that, when the Lord Jesus shall stand at the Last Day upon the earth, in his flesh he shall see God! So he sings with Toplady—

"These eyes shall see Him in that Day, The God that died for me! And all my rising bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto Thee?"

This is the Christian's hope, that he shall then live, world without end, in the perfection of enjoyment! That he shall have all spiritual joys in communion with Christ—and all joys that shall be suitable to his new and spiritual body as he shall walk the golden streets and forever praise the love which brought him into an existence of perfect bliss! This is the Christian's hope and, consequently, the thought of death does not alarm him—rather, he looks forward to it with joy! As the toil-worn laborer does not dread the eventide when he shall put off his dusty robes, but longs for the night that he may rest in his bed, so the Christian, when he is in his right mind—

"Longs for evening, to undress,

That he may rest with God."

He is willing to put off the cumbrous clay of his body and commit it to the purifying earth, that he may, as a disembodied spirit, depart to be "with Christ, which is far better," expecting that, afterwards, body and soul together shall be forever gratified with Christ!

This is the Christian's hope and it is a good hope. It is good for what it brings us, but it is especially good for that upon which it is grounded. The reason why the Christian expects this eternal happiness is because God has promised it to him and has given him an earnest of it. He has Heaven in his heart even now. That is to say, he has within him the beginning of that life which shall, in due time, become the heavenly life. In olden times, when men bought an estate, it was customary for the seller to give to the purchaser a tuft of grass and a leaf from one of the trees on the land, signifying that the purchaser then had what was called seizin of the property, and they were proofs that it belonged to him. And when God gives true faith in

Christ and enables a soul to have peace with God through the precious blood, this is the earnest of Heaven, a foretaste of its bliss and sure evidence that Heaven is, indeed, ours. I trust that there are many of us who have this earnest and feel comforted by it. We have a good hope because it is founded upon God's promise in His Word and upon the witness of the Spirit within our heart that we are born of God!

And it is said to be a good hope through Grace." Ah, Friends, there is no good hope except "through Grace." You cannot have a good hope through merit. If anybody expects to have a good hope through baptism, he is very much mistaken! Baptism is simply the testimony of a good conscience toward God—it cannot give any hope of Heaven. If we were to build upon such a foundation as baptism, confirmation, the Lord's Supper, or anything of the kind, we should be sad losers, for there is nothing in all these things put together to make a Christian's hope! Nor must we build our hopes on our prayers or our tears, or on anything that we can do, for if so, it will be a sandy foundation and when the time of trial comes, it will give way under us. But to have a good hope through Divine Grace—such a hope as this—that I, a poor unworthy sinner, have been invited by God to put my trust in His dear Son, and that He has promised that if I do, I shall be saved! I do trust in Jesus and, therefore, if God has promised truly, I shall be saved—this is indeed a foundation on which I may build without fear! Is not this, my Brothers and Sisters, the top and bottom of the Christian's hope, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life? You do believe in Him and, therefore, you can say that you do possess eternal life! I do solemnly declare that if I have ever at any time begun to say in my own mind, "I shall be saved, for I have preached the Gospel, I have experienced such-and-such enjoyments, I have drawn near to God in secret prayer"—if ever I have talked to myself like that, I have soon been led to see that if I had not something infinitely better than all that to trust to, I would be resting on a broken reed. But, oh, to come to Jesus just as one came, at the first, saying—

"Nothing in my hands I bring— Simply to Your Cross I cling. Naked, come to You for dress.

Helpless, look to You for Grace. Foul, I to the Fountain fly— Wash me, Savior, or I die!"

This is, indeed, to have a "good hope through Grace."

Now let us take these two statements, look at them again, and then lay them up among our choicest treasures. The one statement is that God has loved us. O Christian Friends, do try to drink in that great Truth of God! Do not be satisfied simply to hear the words repeated, but get them right into your very spirits—"Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, has loved us." O you angels, you have not even in Heaven a greater joy than this—to know that God has loved us! The other statement is that God "has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace." So we cannot be without consolation. Whatever your trouble may be, my dear Christian Friend, though you may have lost your dearest one, though your property may have melted as the snowflake melts into the sea, yet God has given you eternal consolation—and whatever you may have to fear concerning the future, you have a hope that is broader than your fears!—

"This is the hope, the blissful hope, The hope by Jesus given! The hope when days and years are past, We all shall meet in Heaven!"

As I turned this text over, I could not help pitying those who have no hope, no good hope through Divine Grace. When I opened my letters this afternoon, on coming back from Liverpool, the first one I opened was to tell me of the death of one with whom I spent a very happy day about a fortnight ago. He seemed to me to be in perfect health when I spoke to him, then, but now he is gone to his eternal rest. The next letter

I opened came from the deacon of a Church in Devonshire, to say that one of our students, who was settled there as a minister, had been suddenly taken ill and had just died. I did not care to open any more letters, just then, for fear that I would read of somebody else being gone. But I thought, "Well, both of these dear Brothers have served their generation by the will of God, and they have fallen asleep, and it is well." I could only look forward with hope to the day when somebody would read just such a letter about me— and could only trust that they would be there to say of me what I could say of these Brothers—"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."

But what a sad thing it is to live in this world and to have no hope! It would have been better not to have lived at all than to live without a "good hope through Grace." I do not really know how some of you manage to live. I know you have your troubles—troubles at home and troubles in business—and I cannot make out how you manage to put up with this poor existence without the hope of a better one! Knowing what we do about a future state, if we had not a good hope concerning it, we really might wish that we had never been born. And we sometimes wonder how some of you can be so easy and so careless about the unknown state when you, perhaps, know that you will soon be in that state and also know that if it is not a better state than this one, it will be a very sad thing for you to have had an existence at all! Oh, "seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call upon Him while He is near." A good hope can be had through Divine Grace and that Grace is free even to the chief of sinners! If we come to God on the footing of Divine Grace, He will never cast us out. Oh, that we might all have this infinite treasure of a "good hope through Grace"!

II. Now I can spend only a few minutes upon the second part of the subject in which we have TWO GOOD WISHES, TWO HOLY DESIRES. The first part of the text has told us what God has given us. The second part tells us what we ought to desire God to give us—"Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work."

I pray God for those who are about to be baptized and also for you who have long made a profession of your faith, that you may get the first blessing, namely, Divine comfort. May God comfort you! It is a bad case when a Christian is not happy, when he is not full of comfort. I know it is treated by some people as though it were a very insignificant matter whether a Christian is happy or not, but I am sure it is an exceedingly important matter that he should have comfort. A wretched, miserable Christian is, to a great extent, an injury to the Church, and a dishonor to the Cross of Christ, for worldly people will pick out such an one and say, "That is what your religion does for a man!" Now, genuine godliness gives peace and joy. In its first beginning, when a man is under a sense of sin, it does make him wretched to feel his sin,

but when the soul is obedient to the command of Christ and trusts in Him, it gives him joy and peace. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace"—and for a Christian not to have this fruit of the Spirit is to libel Christianity!

When one's heart is sad, it is not always best to show it. "When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that you appear not unto men to fast." Even if you have some sorrow of heart, tell it not at once to your neighbor, who may have quite enough trouble of his own to bear without having yours added to it! Do, Christian, seek to get the comfort of which the Apostle here speaks. Is there ever a position into which you and I can be cast where there is no comfort for us in the Divine promises? There is, in God's Word, a key to open all the locks of trouble in Doubting Castle! If we will but turn over the sacred pages, we shall find there a promise exactly suited to our case. Do you lack comfort, Christian? How can you while there is a Mercy Seat to go to and One there whose ears are always open to hear your petition and to relieve your

trouble? Do you lack comfort while you can pray? Surely it must be neglect of prayer that makes your burdens so heavy. How can you be without comfort while your Savior lives? If Jesus Christ still bears your name upon His heart, that should be enough for you! Is it not really a comfort to think that the Father, Himself, loves you? My Father, who is in Heaven, knows my needs—ought not that to cheer me? Midst darkest shades, if I feel that He is with me—yes, even in the Valley of the Shadow of Death—if His rod and His staff comfort me, what have I to fear? Yes, Christian Friends, you have abundant ground for comfort, so be not content unless you enjoy that comfort! May God, even your Father, put you and keep you in a comfortable frame of mind!

I would say especially to young Christians—Do not imagine that as soon as you become believers in Christ, you are to cast away those cheerful looks and those bright eyes of yours. God forbid! If you were happy, before, be far happier now! You need not have levity—that is to be avoided—and the pleasure which consists in sin should be no pleasure to you, but now your joy should be deeper as it is purer, more lively as it is more sound!

"And establish you in every good word and work" These are the two forms of establishment in good Doctrine and in good practice. When a Christian receives good words, the devil would like to drive them from him and to drive him from them. It is one of the masterpieces of Satan to try to spoil our faith. If he can lead us to believe falsely, he will the more easily lead us to act falsely. So may God "establish you in every good word." You cannot help noticing, if you look upon the spiritual firmament just now, how like it is to what the natural firmament was the other night. It is said that there were thousands of shooting stars visible within an hour! And I might almost say that if you look out into the Christian world, you can see thousands of shooting stars within a minute! I do not know what new error we shall have within the next 24 hours. There are some people who are so fond of novelties that they have advanced pretty nearly every form of error that our poor imagination can conceive of, yet they seem to be studious to make fresh ones! We have new "isms" and "ities" of all sorts, but old-fashioned Truths of God, which we thought would never have been doubted, are, nowadays, contested! An age of great religious activity is pretty sure to be also an age in which error is active and, therefore, it is the more necessary that we should pray for Believers that they may be established in every good word!

I should like you who are members of this Church not only to believe the Truth, but to know why you believe it and to be so sure and certain of it that you cannot be shaken from it! I would have you be not like the dry leaves in autumn, which are carried away by the first wind because they have lost their vitality, but like the green leaves in spring which will bear the March winds and cannot be torn off because their sap is flowing in them and they are fresh and vigorous. I would that you were always able to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. The faith which we have has been handed down to us by martyrs' hands all along the ages—not through the corrupt Church of Rome—but down along the line of martyrs and confessors who have sealed their testimony with their blood! And that testimony is still with us this day! Search God's Word and if we teach you anything that is inconsistent with it, then reject us as we would have you reject all false teachers! If we set before you anything which is of our making, and not of God's making, cast it to the dogs and have none of it! But if it is God's Truth, be established in it. Garner it in your soul. Hold it fast as for dear life and never let it go! Believe that the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, is worth the blood which martyrs have shed in its defense—and will be worth all that it can possibly cost you in holding it! May you be established in every good word—not merely in some good words—but in every good word! Believe all the Truths of God. Many Christians, alas, believe only one Truth or so. One man gets a hold of the Doctrine of Predestination and he is like a child with a doll—it is all the world to him!

Another man gets a hold of the Doctrine of Human Responsibility and he looks at it, as Luther

says, "like a cow at a new gate." He stands staring at that and can see nothing beyond it! But I would have you see all the Truth and be always ready to receive anything that God has revealed! Be you steadfast "in every good word."

But the blessing invoked by the Apostle is that you may be established in every good work as well as in every good word. Alas, there are some Christians who like the Word of God very well, though they do not like the work—but unless our godliness extends to our daily work, it is not godliness at all! May you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, be established in every good work! May there be the good work of holiness in all the relationships of life! May you be the best of sons, the best of daughters, the best of parents, the best of husbands, the best of wives, the best of employers, the best of employees! Wherever your lot may be cast, may you be established in every good work in all the relationships of life!

Then, in this Christian Church, may you work in prayer, may you work in teaching, may you work according to the ability which God has given you—and may you be established in it! If there is any good work which you have not yet attempted, but to which you are called of God, may you have Grace to enter upon it and, once engaged in it, may you never take your hands from the plow till you have finished the task that God has sent you! O Beloved, I can pray this prayer from my heart for everyone of you! May you who have served the Master for years, still be kept serving Him! Oh, may none of you turn your backs in the day of battle! May you be faithful unto death and so obtain the great reward! May the Grace which has helped you forward up to now, impel you forward till your hairs are gray and until you throw yourselves back upon the couch of death to sleep with God! So may you be established in every good word and work! Every Christian ought to be a member of the established Church—I do not mean the church which is established by the English law—but the Church which is established by God! Oh, to be established by Divine Grace—to be established by knowing what we believe, by practicing it—and by being established in that practice! These Apostolic good wishes I leave with you—may you inherit them!

But remember that we must first come to Christ, or these good wishes will be only wishes. We must first trust the Savior, or else these blessings can never be ours! May Divine Grace bring us to Jesus and keep us at His feet—and Divine Grace shall have the praise forever and ever!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 THESSALONIANS 2.

Verses 1, 2. Now we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. In the Church of Christ, the teaching has always been that Christ is coming quickly and that teaching must never be withdrawn, for He is coming quickly, as He said to John in the Revelation. At the same time, this teaching has given an opportunity to certain presumptuous people to prophesy that at such-and-such a time, Christ will come. They know nothing about it and their prophecies are not worth the breath they spend in uttering them! And we have, today, what the Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians—

3. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that Day shall not come, except there comes a falling away, first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. I believe that to a large extent this has already happened and that the "man of sin" has been revealed. This "son of perdition" has had a long, dark and terrible reign over myriads of men, and he still sits on the seven hills of Rome, and rules over multitudes of his fellow sinners. Paul held that it was consistent to expect the Lord to come quickly and yet to know that

certain events must occur before He did come. That is just the condition, I think, to which a man's mind will come if he diligently and impartially reads the Scriptures—especially the prophetic parts of them. The Lord will come in such an hour as we think not, yet there are clear indications of certain things which are to happen before He does come.

4. Who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. It has been said that the Pope of Rome is infallible, that his interpretation of Scripture, whatever it may be, is as valid as the Scripture, itself, and that whatever he chooses to decree must be obeyed by the faithful. Such are some of the pretensions, even at this day, of the "man of sin."

5-7. Do you not remember that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity is already at work. There were certain rea-Volume 56 www.spurgeongems.org 7

sons why that gigantic iniquity should begin to be developed, even while the Roman Empire was in power to keep it in check. And when that passed away, there was the opportunity for "the mystery of iniquity" to become the despot of the world!

7-10. Only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. This is the last sin of all—that ungodly men do not receive "the love of the truth." If they were, themselves, true, they would love the Truth of God. If the Grace of God was in them, His own precious Truth would be prized by them above everything else! But when men finally reject the Truth by which they might be saved, God visits them with terrible judgments!

11-17. 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 pleased in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanc-

tification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work So may it be, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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