



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V25 N27

July 2, 2023

## LIVING HOPE

“The Adult in the Room”

2 Thessalonians 2:5-12

### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

#### Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts, and changes me as a child of God.

*“You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.”*

**Romans 8:9**



When will the lawless one be revealed?

Paul identifies two key figures in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12, “the man of lawlessness” (v. 3) and the restrainer, who is both a restraining *force* and a restraining *person*. The reference in verse 6 is to a restraining *force*, to *katechon* (neuter article followed by the participle); the reference in verse 7 is to a restraining *person* — *ho katechōn* (masculine article followed by the participle).

Regarding the identity of the first, the “man of lawlessness,” one commentator writes: “Most prophecy scholars and teachers believe that the ‘man of lawlessness’ is a reference to the future world dictator, the same man described as the Antichrist in 1 John 2:18 and the beast out of the sea of Revelation 13:1. The final great apostasy is embodied and ultimately headed up in a man who has not yet appeared. The day of the Lord, therefore, could not have come in the Thessalonians’ time because this evil person had not yet been revealed” (John F. Walvoord and Mark Hitchcock, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 124-25)—and has not yet been revealed to this day.

Regarding the identity of the second, the restrainer, no such consensus exists. In fact commentators are quick to quote Augustine: “I frankly confess I do not know what he means.” Of course, that hasn’t stopped interpreters from proposing answers to the question of his identity. Some of the answers include the following: the restrainer is 1) the Roman Empire personified in the emperor; 2) the principle of law and order (personified in v. 7); 3) the Jewish state; 4) Satan or one of his evil angelic agents; 5) the angel Gabriel; 6) God or the Holy Spirit, who indwells believers; 7) the proclamation of the gospel (neuter participle) by Christian missionaries, especially Paul himself (the masculine participle. For a discussion of each interpretation see Walvoord and Hitchcock, 126-32; G. K. Beale, *1-2 Thessalonians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series, 213-17; Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *1-2 Thessalonians*, BECNT, 567-577.

While all of these may be *possible* answers,

answers to the question of the Restrainer’s identity, number 6 is likely the most *probable*—especially in the view of those who understand that Jesus is coming to *rescue* before the day of the Lord. Walvoord writes: “While we can sympathize with Augustine, there is one key question that points unmistakably to the identity of the restrainer. Who, after all, really restrains sin and Satan? The answer found in the Bible is that God is the one who restrains sin. Genesis 6:3 declares that the Spirit of God was restraining sin in the day of Noah. It was predicted that instead of striving with sin, God would judge it in the flood . . . As revealed in Genesis 6:3, the Spirit strives with humans and opposes Satan, his program, and his hatred of the children of God. Also, this is the only view that adequately explains the change in gender in verses 6-7. The restrainer is both a power—‘what is restraining him now,’ and a person—‘he who now restrains.’ In Greek the word *pneuma* (‘spirit’) is neuter. But the Holy Spirit is also consistently referred to by the masculine pronoun ‘He,’ especially in John 14-16. This fits the language of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7 very well . . . Of course, this raises the question. In what sense can the Holy Spirit be removed from the world? . . . The most natural explanation of the removal of the restrainer is to identify this particular action with the time when Christ will come to take out His church. If the Holy Spirit indwells the church and the church is taken out of the world, then the Spirit will also be taken out of the world. This does not mean that He will not continue working in the world in some way” (Walvoord and Hitchcock, 128, 129). Put simply, “Only a supernatural person can truly frustrate the supernatural workings of Satan” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 339). When the Spirit “leaves the scene” (cf. Beale, 215), via the removal of those in whom he dwells, his work of restraining through the church will end, but his other ministries in the world—e.g., convicting of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (Jn 16:8-11)—will not.

# 1 EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

## Read 2 Thessalonians 2:5-12

5 Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? 6 And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. 7 For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, 10 and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness

## Read in another translation

5 Surely you recall that I used to tell you these things while I was still with you. 6 And so you know what holds him back, so that he will be revealed in his own time. 7 For the hidden power of lawlessness is already at work. However, the one who holds him back will do so until he is taken out of the way, 8 and then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will destroy by the breath of his mouth and wipe out by the manifestation of his arrival. 9 The arrival of the lawless one will be by Satan's working with all kinds of miracles and signs and false wonders, 10 and with every kind of evil deception directed against those who are perishing, because they found no place in their hearts for the truth so as to be saved. 11 Consequently God sends on them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false. 12 And so all of them who have not believed the truth but have delighted in evil will be condemned. (NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Circle "remember" in v. 5.
- Circle "holding him back" in v. 6.
- Box "so that" indicating *purpose/result* in vv. 6, 11, 12.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 7, 12.
- Underline "what" in v. 6 and "the one" in v. 7.
- Double underline "he" in v. 6 and "the lawless one" in v. 8.
- Circle "secret power" in v. 7.
- Bracket "taken out of the way" in v. 7.
- Circle "overthrow" and "destroy" in v. 8.
- Bracket "splendor of his coming" in v. 8.
- Bracket "signs and wonders that serve the lie" in v. 9.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 10.
- Circle "powerful delusion" in v. 11.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

---

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Why the *reminder* (v. 5)? What *purpose* does it serve?
2. *What* (v. 6) or *who* (v. 7) is holding *whom* back and *why*?
3. Explain *what* is “already at work” (v. 7), and *how* so.
4. Explain how the *restrainer* will be “taken out of the way” (v. 7).
5. Describe the end of the “man doomed to destruction” (v. 8; cf. v. 3).
6. What will the “lawless one” use to *deceive* those who are perishing?
7. Do you think Satan has the power to do genuine miracles? Explain.
8. How can God justly condemn those whom he sends “a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie” (v. 11)?
9. Identify “the lie” (v. 9).
10. **Discussion:** Talk about why some people perish and conversely some people don’t. Who’s responsible?

### Commentary On The Text

In 2 Thessalonians 2:5-12, Paul continues his description of the “man of lawlessness” — aka “the beast” (Rev 13:1-10; 14:9-11; 17:11-18; 19:19-21), aka “the Antichrist” (1Jn 2:18) — begun in verse 1. In his opening paragraph (vv. 1-4), the apostle tells his readers that the day of the Lord has *not* already come, contrary to what they are being told, and explains why not. First, the rebellion must come, and second, the man of lawlessness, who will set himself up to be God, must be revealed before that day comes (v. 3). And because these things have not happened since, contemporary readers can be assured that the day of the Lord has still not come.

In the second paragraph (vv. 5-12), Paul goes on to tell his readers that a *restrainer* is presently at work to keep the “man of lawlessness” from being revealed (vv. 6-7). But after this restraining *personal force* is “taken out of the way . . . the lawless one will be revealed” (v. 8). The paragraph concludes (vv. 9-12) with a description of what the lawless one will do when he appears and of the effects of what he will do on those who are perishing.

In the first sentence of the second paragraph (v. 5), Paul tells his readers that what he has written in the first paragraph should come as no surprise to them. After all, it contains nothing new, only a *reminder* of things he used to tell them *personally*, apparently during his short stay in Thessalonica (Ac 17:1-10). This fact may have been comforting for his original readers, but it is challenging for contemporary readers. One commentator writes: “Having discussed briefly in 2:3b-4 the ‘man of lawlessness’ who must be ‘revealed’ before the coming of the Day of the Lord, Paul alludes in 2:6-8 to what is ‘holding . . . back’ or ‘restraining’ (NRSV) his appearing until ‘the proper time’ (lit., ‘his time’). But he only alludes to this, since the Thessalonians already know what he is talking about. As a result 2:6-8a are among the most difficult in the Pauline corpus” (Michael W. Holmes, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Thessalonians*, 232).

In verses 6-8, Paul focuses on the restrainer, who is “holding *him* back,” that is, “holding *the lawless one* back.” The restrainer is both a *force*, “the *thing* that restrains” (v. 6) and a *person*, “the *one* who restrains” (v. 7) (see the *NET Bible*, 14tn and 16tn on 2 Th 2:6, 7) until the time is ripe for the lawless one to appear — both the *force* and the *person* are allusions to the Holy Spirit. One commentator writes: “Only a supernatural person can truly frustrate the supernatural working of Satan. This would at once rule out human agencies as well as all evil supernatural agents. This

leaves the attractive suggestion that ‘the restrainer is God . . . But the book of Revelation makes clear that God’s providential interventions in the affairs of men will not cease during the days of the Antichrist. The fact that the Restrainer will be ‘out of the midst’ (*ek mesou*) seems rather to speak of one who is now ‘in the midst.’ This seems to point clearly to the Holy Spirit who is now here in person as the indweller of the saints. The indwelling Spirit will be ‘out of the midst’ of this present scene when the returning Christ calls His church to Himself” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 339).

After the restraining influence of the Spirit is “taken out of the way” (v. 7) when Jesus comes to *rescue* the church from coming wrath in the day of the Lord, the principle of lawless that presently permeates society will be unleashed to wreak havoc on humanity. However, in the end, when Jesus comes to *reign*, he will kill the lawless one and put an end to his evil machinations (Rev 19:19-21).

In verses 9-12, Paul focuses on “the lawless one,” whose rise to power will be “in accordance with how Satan works” (v. 9). The “man of lawlessness” will use deception. His displays of miraculous power (i.e., miracles) are through signs and wonders, which are counterfeit in that they “serve the lie” — the lie being that the lawless one is God (v. 4). Put differently, these signs and wonders are false because they are deliberately misleading. One commentator observes: “The advent of the Lawless One is quite deliberately described in v. 9 in a way that parallels the (first) coming of Christ. Not only does this person have a ‘parousia,’ ‘he too works in obedience to a superior power; he too has his miracles and signs’ . . . What is being claimed here is that just as God empowers Christ, so Satan empowers the Lawless One to perform pseudo-miracles and signs. It is not suggested that these signs and wonders are not real, in fact their real quality is what is misleading about them. These miracles are ‘false’ in the sense of misleading and coming from a wicked source” (Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 223-24).

Nevertheless, although false, they have their desired result on those who are perishing only because “they refused to love the truth and so be saved” (v. 10), a reference to their rejection of the gospel. And “since they deliberately chose falsehood in defiance of the truth of God, God subjects them to the power of the error they chose. God uses their choice of evil as the instrument to punish their sin” (Hiebert, 344), which *results* in their condemnation (v. 12).

---

## Word Studies/Notes

v. 5 **remember** “Reminder language (see comments on 1 Thess 1:5) helps the disciples recall that they already have the answer; it helps to forestall panic in the face of what might have looked like new and puzzling information . . . This teaching device has the effect of giving comfort: *your apostles have already foreseen and provided for you need*” (Gary S. Shogren, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, ZECNT, 285).

vv. 6, 7 **what, one** “Paul first refers to this restraining influence in 2:6 as *to katechon* (a neuter participle meaning ‘that which restrains’) and then in 2:7 as *ho katechōn* (a masculine participle meaning ‘the one who restrains’). The restrainer is the person currently keeping the man of lawlessness from appearing.

v. 6 **holding back** “Grk ‘the one who restrains.’ This gives a puzzling contrast to the impersonal phrase in v. 6 (‘the thing that restrains’). The restraint can be spoken of as a force or as a person. Some have taken this to mean the Roman Empire in particular or human government in general, since these are forces that can also be seen embodied in a person, the emperor or governing head. But apocalyptic texts like Revelation and Daniel portray human government of the end times as under Satanic control, not holding back his influence. Also the power to hold back Satanic forces can only come from God. So others understand this restraint to be some force from God: the preaching of the gospel or the working of the Holy Spirit through God’s people” (the *NET Bible*, 16tn on 2Th 2:7).

v. 7 **secret power** Cf. “mystery of lawlessness” (ESV). “The term ‘secret’ or ‘mystery’ in the New Testament does not mean something mysterious or unintelligible but rather something that was previously hidden and unknown to man and undiscoverable by mere human search but has now been divinely revealed” (D. Edmond Hiebert, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, 337). “In this case the mystery is the revelation of a future climax of lawlessness in the world. Then and now a movement against divine law directed by Satan was and is operative. But it is being restrained somewhat, and this restraining will continue until the time appointed for revealing the man of sin and the climax of lawlessness” (Thomas L. Constable, “2 Thessalonians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 719).

v. 7 **taken out of the way** “When the church leaves the earth” —once Jesus comes to *rescue* (1Th 4:13-17) — “the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way in the sense that His unique lawlessness-restraining ministry through God’s people will be removed” (Constable, 719). “Once the body of Christ has been caught away to heaven . . . His function of restraining evil through the body of Christ (John 16:7-11; 1 John 4:4) will cease similarly to the way he terminated his striving in the days of Noah (Gen 6:3). At that point the reins will be removed from lawlessness and the Satanically inspired rebellion will begin” (Robert L. Thomas, “2 Thessalonians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 11:325).

v. 8 **overthrow, destroy** “This imagery recalls Isaiah 11:4 (cf. 30:27-28; 66:15-16a; Mal. 4:1), while the two verbs emphasize both the destruction of the evil one and especially the shattering of his power” (Michael W. Holmes, *The NIV Application Commentary: 2 Thessalonians*, 235). “He will be killed, and his work will be destroyed, brought to nothing” (Constable, 720). “The true Christ will swiftly terminate the career of the deceiving Antichrist” (Hiebert, 340).

v. 8 **splendor of his coming** Lit., “by the epiphany of his presence.” “The unique combination of the two terms stresses that the whole Antichristian system will be put out of operation by the conspicuous shining forth of our Lord’s presence. The visible encounter with the glorious Lord Jesus will paralyze the daring presumption and arrogant activity of the lawless one” (Hiebert, 341).

v. 9 **that serve the lie** Lit., “of falsehood;” cf. “false wonders” (NET); “false signs and wonders” (ESV). “The question is how far back in the list ‘power and signs and wonders’ [*dunamei kai sēmeiois kai terasin*] does this attribution function? Some English versions take it to refer to the last term (*teras*in; ‘power, sign, lying wonders,’ NRSV), some to the last two terms (*sēmeiois kai terasin*; ‘signs and wonders that serve the lie, NIV), and some to all three words (‘counterfeit power and signs and miracles,’ NLT; GNB is similar). “Claiming himself to be God” (v. 4) is “the lie.”

v. 11 **powerful delusion** “It is a matter of God giving people up to a debased mind, God saying ‘okay, if you insist, have it your way, including the consequence of such a choice.’ Here is an example of God not only allowing sinners to violate his will but allowing them the consequence of those violations, which ultimately means judgment, condemnation” (Ben Witherington III, *1 and 2 Thessalonians*, 223-24).



## APPLY THE TEXT

---

### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

When the Holy Spirit, who restrains lawlessness through the church, is taken out of the way,  
the lawless one will be revealed to deceive those who are perishing until  
he is destroyed by the splendor of Jesus coming to *reign*.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



## 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

Have you ever played the game Rock, Paper, Scissors? It's such a fun game. Rock beats scissors. Scissors beats paper. Paper beats rock. In our house we often use this game to settle disputes because it's such a fair game. Your chances of winning and losing are about the same and there is always a winner and a loser. Winning and losing are both a part of life. If you've ever played a board game or any kind of sport, you know that sometimes you win and sometimes you lose. We can practice really hard and prepare well to increase our chances of winning, but no one wins all the time. Well, wait a minute... Actually, there is someone who always wins. God. God always wins. This week we read about how Paul was encouraging the Thessalonians. They were continuing to experience persecution and even starting to believe that maybe their enemy was going to win. Paul reminded them that God is powerful and sovereign. That means He is in control of everything, including those who participate in evil acts. Throughout the Bible we see a theme of evil characters challenging a good God. Thankfully, this doesn't thwart God's plans. Sometimes God even uses those evil acts to bring about more good! He's that amazing! Ultimately, we can rest assured that in the final battle between good and evil, God is victorious. He wins! Like the Thessalonians, we will experience wins and losses, ups and downs, but we can choose to remember who God is and that in the end He is the ultimate winner.

\*\* This week's edition of the Family Scrolls written by Melissa Freeman, Mix Coordinator

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read 2 Thessalonians 2:5-12.

1. What question did Paul ask the Thessalonians in verse 5?
2. In verse 8, what happens to the lawless one?
3. In verse 10, why are some people perishing?

### What Do You Think?

Think about what it's like to win and to lose. What does it look like to honor God in both circumstances?

### What Do You Do?

Have a family game night or play a quick game of Rock, Paper, Scissors. Talk about winning and losing and how we experience both throughout life. Finish by discussing how everyone who repents and believes is an ultimate winner with God.

## CORE COMPETENCY: The Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit helps me become more like God.

## MEMORY VERSE: Hebrews 12:28-29

*"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our 'God is a consuming fire.'"*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

**Tom Bulick** (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) from 1986 to 1998 and Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church (Arlington, TX) from 1998 to 2022. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

**Stephanie Thomas** (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

© 2023 Central Bible Church.

Material researched, written and supervised by Dr. Tom Bulick. All Scripture referenced from the New International Version unless otherwise noted. This resource is freely distributed and may be copied without permission.



**CENTRAL  
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard  
Fort Worth, Texas 76120  
817-274-1315  
wearecentral.org