

Restraining Lawlessness

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Today we will study the Word concerning the time in the leadup towards rapture of the church, and what some of our responsibilities are in this hour.

Rapture – Latin ‘raptus’ (rapiemur) - used in Latin translation of 1 Thess. 4:17.

1 Thessalonians 4:17 (NLT) *Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be **caught up** in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever.*

caught up – Greek ‘harpazo’ - a sudden catching up, a catching away

Obvious statement: We are closer to the rapture than we have ever been before!

2 Thessalonians 2:1–10 (NKJV) *Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, **2** not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. **3** Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, 4** who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. **5** Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? **6** And **now you know what is restraining**, that he may be revealed in his own time. **7** For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; **only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. 8** And **then the lawless one will be revealed**, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. **9** The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, **10** and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*

- Apostle Paul is writing to the Thessalonian church about the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ
- He makes reference to 2 different & separate events:
 - Our gathering together to Him - that's the rapture of the church
 - The coming of Jesus Christ – that's the 2nd Coming of Christ when He returns to earth to set up His 1,000 year reign (Rev. 20:1-7)
 - Between these two events will be a 7 year period called “the Great Tribulation”

- Evidently someone had confused the Thessalonian believers with a false message saying that the Day of the Lord had already come, and that they had somehow missed it or missed out
- Paul reassured them, saying that the Day of Christ (2nd Coming) hadn't come, and they hadn't missed it
- Then he mentions 2 things that must happen first before the 2nd Coming of Christ can take place:
 - The apostasy (the great falling away) vs. 3
 - The man of sin being revealed (Antichrist) vs. 3
- Then he said that, although the man of sin hasn't yet been revealed, the mystery of lawlessness is already at work
 - The man of sin, also called the lawless one, the Antichrist, is a man who will ruler over the revised Roman Empire
 - The mystery of lawlessness is a quiet, relentless advancing & promotion of ungodly values, laws, and ungodly living
- Then Paul speaks about a restraining force which hinders the antichrist from being revealed, and resists the mystery of lawlessness

2 Thessalonians 2:6-8 *And now you know what is restraining, that he (antichrist) may be revealed in his own time. 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; **only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.** 8 And then the lawless one will be revealed ...*

- It has been suggested that the “what” or the “He” who now restrains is reference to the Holy Spirit
- However, the Holy Spirit will never be taken out of the way
- **We, the born again believers, are the restraining force**
- While we, the body of Christ are on the earth, antichrist cannot be revealed
- But once we are “taken out of the way” through the rapture:
 - Antichrist will be revealed (he will sign a 7 year peace treaty with Israel)
 - And at that time, lawlessness will be completely unrestrained
 - (Lawlessness is a complete contempt & disregard for God's laws)

WHAT DO WE RESTRAIN?

- We restrain & hinder lawlessness in the world today
- We restrain & hinder the Antichrist from coming to power
- Satan wants to advance lawlessness much more quickly, and bring his man, the antichrist to power, but we, the church, are restraining his efforts
- (The spirit of antichrist is already at in the world today (1 John 4:3), but the antichrist himself cannot come onto the world stage until we are gone)

HOW DO WE RESTRAIN?

1. We restrain lawlessness & the antichrist's revealing by our PRESENCE

- Simply for being in the earth today, we, the church, have a restraining influence on satan's plans and endeavours
- There are certain things he cannot do because we are still here
- Jesus said: You are the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13)
- Salt was used as a preservative to preserve foods
- God is using us as a preserving agent in the earth to stop it from rotting completely

Matthew 5:13 (AMP) *You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste (its strength, its quality), how can its saltiness be restored? It is not good for anything any longer but to be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men.*

2. We restrain lawlessness & the antichrist's revealing by our PRAYERS

- God hears our prayers and His power is released in the world today

Isaiah 59:19 (NKJV) *So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; **when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.***

- Our prayers penetrate into dark & murky places, and God answers our prayers by overturning evil plans, limiting the power of wicked governments etc.

3. We restrain lawlessness & the antichrist's revealing by our PREACHING

- The uncompromised preaching of the church today keeps the spiritual lights turned on in the world
- Satan finds it difficult to work in the light

Matthew 4:15–17 (NKJV) *The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: **16 The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned.** 17 From that time **Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."***

2 Corinthians 4:4–6 (NIV) *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see **the light of the gospel** that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," **made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory** displayed in the face of Christ.*

Besides resisting evil agenda's today, we are called to share Christ with spiritually lost people, and lead them to Christ.

4. We restrain lawlessness & the antichrist's revealing by our PROCLAMATIONS

Job 22:27–28 (AMP) *You will **make your prayer to Him, and He will hear you, and you will pay your vows. 28 You shall also decide and decree a thing, and it shall be established for you; and the light [of God's favor] shall shine upon your ways.***

- This speaks of two distinct practices:
 - Prayer
 - Decrees
- Sometimes we don't pray about certain things – we simply decree things
- We say "no" to certain things, and "yes" to other things

Matthew 18:18 (NIV) *"Truly I tell you, **whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.***

- We speak out against certain things, and voice our disapproval of ungodly agendas and practices
- Silence on our part is to become complicit to the evil we see around us