

Our Only True Protection

Hosea 6; 2 Thessalonians 2:7–12

Because sin entered into God’s beautiful creation, the world has become a dangerous place. The Garden of Eden was a perfect environment where man lived harmoniously with nature. There was no death, no killing, no aggression—only exquisite peace. The creation was so perfect that Adam and Eve could gain all their nutritional needs from a purely vegetarian diet.

All this changed with the fall. Paul explains: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, *and death by sin*; and so *death* passed upon all men.” Man died spiritually and also physically. In the first genealogy in the Bible (Gen. 5) we have the solemn recurring refrain “and he died” over and over, eight times in all: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Mahalalel, Jared, Methuselah, Lamech: “and he died . . . and he died . . . and he died”—and on and on it goes. The same solemn refrain will be attached to the story of *our* lives as well until Christ returns, when “death is swallowed up in victory.” The last enemy to be destroyed is death, and this will happen because our mighty Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, rose from the dead the third day, never to die again! This is the Christian’s hope.

But when death entered into the world, violence entered too. The first child ever born to a human couple murdered his own brother—an unspeakable, unprovoked act of violence. Since that time all of us need to take appropriate steps to guard ourselves. In the words of the Shorter Catechism, the sixth commandment requires “all lawful endeavors to *preserve our own life, and the life of others.*” Those in authority are required to be keepers of the peace. Parents must take reasonable steps to protect their children when they are young, as well as teach them how to protect themselves when they are older. There are evil people in the world, and self-defense is necessary.

Ultimately, God is our protector. “The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and *delivereth* them.” This is not an iron-clad guarantee but a general principle. Here is a promise of God’s deliverance “as far as it shall serve for God’s glory and their own good.”¹ God is absolutely sovereign and allows human tragedy and suffering to come into our lives according to his eternal purpose. While it may not make perfect sense to us now, someday it will, and we will bless God that he has “done all things well” (Mark 7:37). In the meantime we can have full assurance that he “will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends upon me in this vale of tears”²—no exceptions! Nothing happens in the Christian’s life by accident or by mistake. The God of heaven is always working out all things according to the counsel of his will, and his way is perfect.

¹ Cf. Shorter Catechism 66, <https://opc.org/sc.html>

² Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 9, <https://all-of-grace.org/resources/heidelberg-catechism>

I have three points this morning: (1) powerful enemies, (2) careless saints, (3) conquering Savior. First,

1. Powerful enemies

Here is the “son of perdition,” the “lawless one,” energized by Satan, “His Infernal Majesty,” who gives him power to perform “signs,” “lying wonders” and works of “deception.” He is called “the lawless one,” that is, one who cares nothing for God’s moral law, who persists in sin without fear of consequences. His conscience has been seared as with a hot iron; he will break any of God’s commandments in order to achieve his ungodly ends. Though God’s law has been written in the hearts of men, this man sees himself as *above* the law. He is a law unto himself; he can lie with a straight face; he believes his own lies.

God is a God of truth. He is the God who cannot lie. His word is truth. Whatever he says is truth. He wants us to tell the truth. Satan, on the other hand, is a liar and the father of lies; he lies to achieve his own ends, to gain control over the unwary. This is why all of us need to develop discernment. We live in a world of lies; the devil wants us to believe a lie. He tells us that we can sin with no consequences, that there will be no final judgment, that we can get away with our sin—but that is not true; at the final day every one of us will be called to account. If we have told a lie in an attempt to gain mastery over another person, God remembers; we will not get away with it. God is a God of truth, and he wants his people to be men and women of truth, sons and daughters of the God of truth.

Though the text speaks of the “lawless *one*,” there are actually *two* enemies, one human, the other demonic: the “son of perdition” and his patron, Satan, who is behind him. The word *Satan* comes from an Aramaic word meaning *one lying in ambush for*, and came to mean *adversary* or *accuser*. Satan is also called the devil; he is the mortal enemy of the souls of men. He is a fallen angel who rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. There is no salvation for fallen angels, but only for “the seed of Abraham”—Abraham’s *spiritual* seed, those who follow in the *faith* of Abraham. Satan is unmasked in the book of Revelation, where it says that “the *accuser of our brethren* is cast down, which *accused* them before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10). Satan knows that his time is short, that his destiny is “everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). His goal is to take as many of the sons of men there as he can. But there will be no fellowship or camaraderie in the lake of fire, only “outer darkness” and the everlasting cries of the damned.

The “son of perdition” is almost certainly the “antichrist” (1 John 2:18), the “man of sin” (Byzantine text) or “man of lawlessness” (critical text). Whether this is a single man or an institution has been the subject of much discussion. The original British edition of the Westminster Confession identified him as “that Antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself, in the

Church, against Christ and all that is called God,” but the American revisers removed that wording, leaving only “There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor can the pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof.”³ The Pope is not the head of the church; *Christ* is the head of his church!

The current pope works for Satan. He speaks blasphemies, denying Holy Scripture. He has encouraged priests to “bless” same-sex unions, in contradiction to Holy Scripture, which teaches that marriage is a union of a man and a woman. Moreover, he has said—and I quote—that “*Mary* is the road you must travel to reach Jesus.”⁴ Recently he said, “*Every* religion is a way to arrive at God. . . . Each of us has a language to arrive at God. Sikh, Muslim, Hindu, Christian, they are different paths.”⁵

Both these widely-reported statements are wrong. They are false teaching, heresy, blasphemy, error. Holy Scripture is the standard of truth. God says, “To the *law* and to the *testimony*: if they speak not according to this *word*, it is because there is *no light* in them.” “The law,” “the testimony” and “the word” are synonyms for Holy Scripture. If any teaching by any person contradicts Holy Scripture, it is error and to be rejected: the Bible is right; the human teaching is wrong. “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). That is the Word of God; that is truth. There is *one* mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Mary is *not* a mediator; the office of mediator belongs to Christ alone. To say, without scriptural warrant, that another person—even a good role model such as Mary—shares that office with Christ, is error. It steals from the honor that is due to Christ and gives it to another. Moreover, for the pope to say that “*every* religion is a way to arrive at God” is to assert that there are multiple ways to God. That assertion directly contradicts the plain word of Christ, “*I* am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” It directly contradicts the apostle Peter: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” So which is true? Is *every* religion a way to arrive at God, or is Jesus the only way to God? Who is correct? The pope of Rome, or the Lord Jesus Christ? Clearly, Jesus is correct, and no mere man has the right to contradict him. If the pope of Rome truly believes the words that come out of his own mouth, he is *not* a Christian—he is an antichristian. And if he knows that what he says is error and he promulgates it anyway, he is an avowed enemy of Christ. The pope of Rome is an *antichrist*—an imposter—and the entire Roman communion ought to rise up and drive him out. The fact that they do *not* indicates that they fear the wrath of man more than the honor of God. It is evil that even one

³ https://opc.org/documents/WCF_orig.html

⁴ <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2021-01/pope-mary-is-the-road-we-must-travel-to-reach-jesus.html>

⁵ [https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/breaking-pope-francis-every-religion-is-a-way-to-arrive-at-god/?](https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/breaking-pope-francis-every-religion-is-a-way-to-arrive-at-god/)

penny of their tithe money goes to support such blasphemy. “All idols underfoot be trod, the LORD is God, the LORD is God.” As Elijah fearlessly challenged the Israelites, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”

We are in a spiritual battle, and it is a battle to the death. While “nothing can separate us from the love of Christ,” that does not mean that Satan won’t try. He is the author of confusion, and his object is to destroy the church’s witness. But he will not succeed. At the final day every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Amen!

The pope of Rome is not the only antichrist. There are *lots* of antichrists, and God’s people must be wary. Anyone who teaches anything contrary to the Word of God is to be rejected. God’s people must search the Scriptures daily, both individually and as families, to know God’s truth and to identify error. Heads of families: teach those under your charge the Word of God! The church faces *powerful enemies*, and we can overcome only by the greater power of Christ. Our second point is

2. Careless saints

Our text warns us that “the coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” Who perishes—that is, goes in the end to the Lake of Fire? Those who did not receive the love of truth, that they might be saved. Here is the duty of every person—to receive the love of truth. Oh, my hearer, do you have a love of truth? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ, who is truth in human flesh? Search your heart.

Our text speaks of “lying wonders” and “deception” that are opposed to “truth.” Satan’s kingdom consists “partly in false doctrine and errors, and partly in pretended miracles.”⁶ “Lying wonders” are miracles that Satan appears to perform in order to deceive people. Satan’s whole kingdom is based on deception. From the beginning his line was “You shall *not* surely die”; Satan wanted to convince Eve that she could disobey God without consequences. And he succeeded!

How do we discern truth and error? It’s actually quite simple: *truth* is whatever is in accord with Holy Scripture; *error* is whatever contradicts Holy Scripture. Jesus said, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Christian, you can *trust* your Bible.

In Psalm 119 the Psalmist says, “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore *I hate every false way*” (v. 104). Again he says, “Therefore I esteem *all* thy precepts concerning *all* things to be right; and *I hate every false way*” (v. 128). God’s people are to be lovers of truth. To love the truth is to hate error, to hate

⁶ Calvin, commentary on 2 Thess. 2:9 (Logos Bible Software)

every false way, to hate whatever is opposed to God's truth, no matter who utters it, to stand up for God's truth, even in the face of persecution. Brothers and sisters, we are to be men and women of *truth*. We are to tell the truth, and admit it when we are wrong. We are to pray with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:22–23). If we utter a falsehood—or even assent to a lie by a nod or a smile—we must own up to it and admit it, and ask forgiveness of God and of those whom we have hurt. The ninth commandment ("Thou shalt not bear false witness") requires "the maintaining and promoting of *truth* between man and man, and of our own and our neighbor's good name."⁷ We are not to boast in order to make ourselves look better and our neighbor look worse. To do so is to lie in two ways: to misrepresent ourself as something better than what we truly are, and to misrepresent another person as being less than what he or she truly is. It is to falsely misrepresent *Christ*, whom we claim as our Lord and master. Jesus said, "I am the truth"—truth incarnate, truth in human flesh, truth personified. He did not have to resort to lying in order to make his case. He did not have to remember what story he told to this person and what story he told to that person, so that he could keep his stories straight. He simply told the truth—*all* the time. If we do that, brothers and sisters, our life would be so much simpler, and we could sleep at night with a good conscience.

God wants us to receive the *love* of the truth, that we might be saved. Many people do not like the Bible because they are offended at its teaching. The Bible points out the errors in their own life, so they close their ears to it. They want to *live* a lie—to pretend that they are better than they really are. They don't want to admit that they are liars who need God's forgiveness.

How do we receive the love of truth? Only by the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit. Christ's Spirit has the power to change even the most hardened heart—to humble even the chief of sinners and make him cry out, "Who art thou, Lord? Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

If you have been living a lie, you need to admit that and cry out, "Lord, give me a love of truth; help me to admit my secret faults and come to you for cleansing and pardon." God answers all prayers that are sincerely uttered in accordance with his Holy Word. The sinless Son of God gave his life to save hopeless sinners. Will you ask him to save you? He will do it! Oh, do not be a careless saint.

Thirdly, consider

3. Conquering Savior

Church of Jesus Christ, the opposition is strong. The Antichrist is Satan's operative, opposing the kingdom of Christ, seeking to establish his own rival

⁷ Shorter Catechism 77, <https://opc.org/sc.html>

kingdom, trying to take as many people with him to the Lake of Fire as he can. As we look at the way evil is advancing in the world, as we see how many people are repeating the devil's lies: "Women's rights are human rights." "No person is illegal." "Science is real." "Love is love." "There are no absolutes." "Gender is just a construct." "You can be whatever you want to be." "A woman should have the right to abort her unborn baby." "Men and women are the same." "Children ought to have the right to determine their own sex." As we see these things, as we see how the tide is turning, and so many people are being swept up and believing lies, we are tempted to give up. We are tempted to think, *there is no hope! Satan has won!* But that's not true! Look at our text. What is to be the fate of the lawless one—the Antichrist?

"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.*"

This is what was prophesied in our Old Testament text, Hosea 6: "O Ephraim, what shall I do to you? O Judah, what shall I do to you? For your faithfulness is like a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goes away. Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets, *I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and your judgments are like light that goes forth.*"

Our powerful God knows his people's weakness. He knows that we are inconsistent, that our faithfulness is like the morning dew that melts away. He knows that we are unreliable. But he loves us and is committed to us. So, even though *we* are undeserving, the Lord Jehovah slays our enemies by the words of his mouth, and our "judgments"—the matters that we have correctly discerned by careful study of his Word—he judges to be "like light that goes forth," which even those who walk in darkness will be forced to admit are true.

This should be encouragement to us in a world where big lies have the ascendancy, where impressionable young children are being told that gender is a matter of personal choice, not biology, that it is OK to try to change their sex; where women are told that it is OK to have sex outside of marriage, that if a baby is conceived, it is OK to "terminate the pregnancy" (that is a euphemism for *kill the unborn baby, a separate and distinct human being with its own DNA, made in the image of God*); where people are being told that same-sex "marriage" is just as valid as biblical marriage, where people ought to have the right to love whomever they wish, that sham marriage and real marriage are both the same. Probably a majority of our fellow countrymen now believe these lies, and there is seemingly no turning back.

But read our text again: "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.*"

Yes, there are powerful enemies—yes, there are careless saints; but remember: *there is a conquering Savior!* All is not lost; *he* will gain the victory!

At this point in time God has sent strong delusion, that the wicked should believe Satan's lies. But God's purpose is "that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Oh, brothers and sisters, let us not be numbered among those who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Let us rather *love* the truth, let us *take pleasure* in righteousness! Let us await the Lord, the righteous Judge, whose kingdom is secure, whose will will certainly be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

"And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us. The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure; one little word shall fell him."⁸

Amen.

⁸ <https://www.trinitypsalterhymnal.org/hymns/a-mighty-fortress-is-our-god/>