

HOW CHRIST-ANS SHALL DESTROY THE ANTICHRIST -- Dr. Francis Nigel Lee

From Corinth, Paul wrote his Second Epistle to the Christians in Thessalonica. Since he had left them, many had backslidden from his own solid and Biblical Postmillennialism.

They had lapsed into screwball Quasi-Zoroastrian Premillennialism. Indeed, they had falsely assumed that Christianity would shrink -- and Jesus soon return to rapture His 'imperilled' Church, before the Final Judgment.

So Paul now reminded the Thessalonians that Jesus would not return physically until long after the 'wicked one' -- Antichrist, alias 'the man of sin' -- had later been revealed. Indeed, only thereafter would Jesus return unto Final Judgment.

The latter could and would occur only after Antichrist had been destroyed by the Church's Spirit-filled powerful preaching and obeying of God's Spirit-inspired Word the Holy Bible -- when the Gospel had run its "free course" throughout the World. Cf. Second Thessalonians 2:8 to 3:1 with Revelation 13:4 & 15:4 & 16:14 & 19:20f.

True, "that wicked one [would indeed] be revealed" or manifested. However, he would be but the entity which "the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His Mouth" alias the Church's [Spirit-filled] powerful preaching and obeying of the written Word of God. And because God from the beginning has chosen Christians "unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit" -- "therefore, brothers, keep on standing fast...so that the [Spirit-filled] Word of the Lord may have free course!"

Here, Calvin says: "If prophecy [alias the Spirit-filled forthtelling of God's Word] is to have its due authority, we must have regard to the Spirit of God!... The Spirit declares that that day [of the Lord] is at hand...in regard to God, with Whom 'one day is as a thousand years' (Second Peter 3:8)....

"The false-prophets on the other hand, who are refuted by Paul, were bidding men feel assured of His soon and speedy advent.... [However:] The Day of Christ, he [Paul] says, will not come -- until [after] the World has fallen into apostasy, and the rule of Antichrist has held sway in the Church....

"This," explains Calvin, "we see accomplished in Popery.... Anyone who has learned from Scripture what are the things that belong particularly to God, and who on the other hand considers well what the Pope usurps for himself -- even though he were a ten-year-old boy, will not have much difficulty in recognizing Antichrist....

"The reign of Antichrist will be temporary.... He [the Spirit-filled Paul] had predicted the destruction of the reign of Antichrist, and now describes the manner of his destruction. He will be annihilated by the Word of the Lord....

"Paul does not think that [the Spirit-filled] Christ will accomplish this in a single moment.... [The Spirit-filled] Christ will scatter the darkness in which Antichrist will reign -- by the rays which He will emit before His coming....

"This [**Spirit-filled**] victory of the **Word** will therefore be seen in the World. For [the **Spirit**] or 'the **Breath of His Mouth**' means simply **His Word**, as in Isaiah 11:4.... True and **sound doctrine**...is represented as being **sufficient** to put an end to all ungodliness, and...destined...to be **victorious** over all the devices of Satan.... The [**Spirit-filled**] preaching of this doctrine, is referred to as [**the Spirit-anointed**] Christ's 'coming' to us....

"The Kingdom of Christ consists of the doctrine of truth and **the power of the Spirit**.... [**The Spirit-anointed**] Christ, by the **doctrine** of His Gospel, **enlightens our minds** to eternal life.... Christ puts forth **the power of His Spirit** for our salvation....

"The adversary, by the efficacy of Satan, alienates us from the Holy Spirit and conforms...creatures in their error by his delusions.... **God enlightens us inwardly by His Spirit**, so that His doctrine may **take effect in us**....

"[Paul's] purpose was to consider the interests not simply of these [Thessalonians], but **also of future generations**.... He has **sanctified us by His Spirit** and enlightened us to faith in His Gospel.... **The Spirit also seals it**; and those who are **led by the Spirit** are the 'sons of God' (Romans 8:14)...

"We are...to be satisfied with...**the grace of the Spirit** by which we have been regenerated.... **The Spirit is given to us as a seal and pledge** of eternal life. We are not to grow despondent!....

"'Brethren, pray for us...[so] that **the Word of the Lord** may **run**!'... Why does he [Paul] want to be commended to the prayers of the Thessalonians? So that the [**Spirit-filled**] doctrine of the Gospel may **run** its course.... The 'course' to which he refers, means dissemination..., [so] that his **preaching** may have **power** and **efficacy** to refashion men in the image of God."

In his *Institutes*, Calvin argues "it behooves us to remember that Satan has his 'miracles' which, although they are tricks rather than true wonders, are still such as to delude the ignorant and unwary.... Paul too gave warning that the reign of Antichrist would be 'with all power and signs and lying-wonders' (Second Thessalonians 2:9)....

"It has been...just punishment of God to send on those who do not receive the truth in the love of it -- 'strong delusion, so that they should believe a lie' (Second Thessalonians 2:11)." Yet in spite of that, Paul also "says to the Thessalonians, 'God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth' (Second Thessalonians 2:13) -- by this...reminding us that faith itself is produced only by the Spirit...

"Daniel and Paul foretold that Antichrist would sit in the Temple of God (Daniel 9:27 and Second Thessalonians 2:4). We regard the Roman Pontiff as the leader and standard-bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom. By placing his throne in the Temple of God, it is intimated his kingdom would not be such as to destroy the name either of Christ or of His Church." Thus Calvin, **the** Reformer and Rebuilder of the papally-dilapidated Church.

"Hence then it is obvious that we do not at all deny that churches remain under his tyranny -- churches, however, which by sacrilegious impiety he has profaned.... Churches where [the Spirit-anointed] Christ lies half-buried, [and] the Gospel is suppressed....

"How often did [**the Spirit-filled**] Christ and His Apostles foretell that the greatest dangers with which the Church was threatened, would come from Pastors! Matthew 24:11,24. Nay, Paul openly declares that Antichrist would have his throne in the Temple of God (Second Thessalonians 2:4).... **The Spirit**, by the mouth of Paul, foretells in distinct terms that a defection would take place -- a defection which **could not** come, until Pastors first forsake God (Second Thessalonians 2:3)."

Yet that is a defection which a **Spirit-revived** Church would at length destroy! Second Thessalonians 2:8. For, concludes Calvin: "God by the agency of **His Spirit** corrects all the depraved lusts of the flesh.... By the secret inspiration of **His Spirit**, He displays the efficacy of **His Word**, and raises it to the place of honour which it deserves....

"God therefore sets up His Kingdom by humbling the whole World.... We should desire this to be done every day."

Why? "In order that God may gather churches to Himself from all quarters of the World; may **extend** and **increase** their **numbers**; enrich them with His gifts...; **beat down** all the **enemies of pure doctrine and religion**; dissipate their counsels; **defeat** their attempts....

"There is good ground for the precept which enjoins **daily progress**! For human affairs are never so **prosperous** -- as when the impurities of vice are purged away, and integrity flourishes in full vigour....

"He protects His people, guides them aright by the agency of His Spirit, and confirms them in perseverance.... He frustrates the impious conspiracies of His enemies; dissipates their wiles and frauds; prevents their malice; and curbs their petulance -- until at length He consumes Antichrist 'with the Spirit of His Mouth' [alias His **preached and obeyed Word**... Second Thessalonians 2:8."

Indeed, according to the *Westminster Confession*, this is to be accomplished precisely by proclaiming and obeying the Spirit-inspired Bible. Thus: "The whole counsel of God...may be deduced from Scripture unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit or traditions of men.... Second Thessalonians 2:2." Again: "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life...He is pleased...effectually to call by His Word and **Spirit**. Second Thessalonians 2:13-14." Furthermore: "They who are effectually called and regenerated...are farther sanctified...through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them.... Second Thessalonians 2:13."

Hence it is the indwelling Spirit and **Word** of God that demolishes Antichrist, and cleanses the Church. As the *Confession* (at 25:2-6 cf. 23:4) assures us: "The Visible Church...consists of all those throughout the World that profess the true religion together with their children.... Christ has given the Ministry...for the...perfecting of the **saints** in **this** life, to the end of the World -- and doth by His Own presence and Spirit...make them **effectual**....

"There shall be always a Church on Earth to worship God according to His will. There is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus.... Nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof -- but is that antichrist, that...son of perdition that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ.... Matthew 23:8-10; Second Thessalonians 2:3-9; Revelation 13:6. [& 13:15-17]."

So too the *Westminster Larger Catechism*. This rightly teaches that "sanctification is a work of God's grace... **through the powerful operation of His Spirit** (Second Thessalonians 2:13)." As a result, God's elect get "renewed in their whole man after the image of God, having...**all...saving graces** put into their hearts and...so **stirred up, increased and strengthened** as that **they more and more...rise unto newness of life.**"

Matthew Henry comments: "Some among the Thessalonians had mistaken the Apostle's meaning in what he had written in his former Epistle about the coming of Christ, by thinking that it was near at hand.... Or it may be some among them pretended that they had the knowledge of this by particular 'revelation' from the Spirit....

"The Apostle confutes the error.... There would be a general apostasy; there would come a falling away first.... No sooner was Christianity planted and rooted in the [Roman] World, than there began to be a defection in the Christian Church.... To whom can this better apply, than to the bishops of Rome to whom the most blasphemous titles have been given?...

"This mystery of iniquity was gradually to arrive at its height.... By pretended devotion, superstition and idolatry were advanced.... The fall or ruin of the antichrist-state is declared....

"The Apostle assures the Thessalonians that the Lord would consume and destroy him. The consuming of him **precedes** his final destruction, and that is by the '**Spirit of His Mouth**' [alias] by His Word....

"**The pure Word of God**, accompanied with the Spirit of God, will discover [or disclose] this mystery of iniquity and make the power of Antichrist to consume and waste away. And in due time, it shall be totally and finally destroyed....

"Observe...the consolation the Thessalonians might take against the terrors of this apostasy, verses 13-14!... God had chosen them from the beginning.... The means in order to obtaining this end -- [were and are] **sanctification of the Spirit** and **belief of the truth**.... Sanctification is by the operation of the Holy Spirit as the Author, and by faith on our part....

"Blessed Paul was most solicitous.... He desired that the Word of the Lord might **run**... All the forces of hell were then, and still are, more or less raised and mustered to oppose the Word of the Lord -- to hinder its publication and success.

"We should **pray**, therefore, that **oppositions** may be **removed**! So that the Gospel may have **free course** to the ears, the hearts, and the consciences of men."

Let **God's Word** then but be **preached and believed** today -- in a sustained way -- in the **power of the Holy Spirit**! Then would both Romanism and all other Non-Protestant religions soon succumb to a **Spirit-filled revival** and **expansion of the Protestant Reformation** -- **Worldwide**!

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