



2 Thessalonians

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And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.

2 Thessalonians 2:6

Paul continues with his thoughts on the revealing of the Antichrist. He said that the Antichrist would not be revealed until after the rapture of the church. This is implied in the previous verses, and it will be implied again in the coming verses. Only then will Antichrist be revealed, and the world enter the day of Christ (the day of the Lord). But something is restraining that from occurring, something they have already been told about. This is reminded to them now with the words, "And now you know what is restraining."

The words, "And now" are not speaking of anything he has said in this letter. Instead of being in a temporal sense, the word "now" is being used in an introductory sense. They are being asked to call to memory what had already been told them. The reason for explaining it this way is because the church had been fooled; they had been misdirected by false information claiming that "the day of Christ" had come. The reminder now is that the revealing of the Antichrist is actually purposefully hindered, and it would continue to be so until the right time arrived.

The words, "what is restraining" are insufficient here. There is a definite article in front of "restraining" in the Greek. Therefore, this is not a mere doctrine that they are aware of, but rather of a specific and familiar object. Therefore, it should say, "that which is restraining." A known entity is restraining the coming of the Antichrist, and the time for that entity to cease restraining will come as planned by God. And so there was absolutely no reason for those in Thessalonica (and thus us!) to speculate about having already entered into the tribulation period.

The truth holds for us even until this day. And yet, how many have claimed that the day of Christ (the day of the Lord) has arrived? How many speculations about the tribulation period

have been laid out in chart upon chart! But there is one restraining, and that will continue to be the case so “that he may be revealed in his own time.” The “he” is speaking of Antichrist.

What is restraining the revealing of the Antichrist is not specifically mentioned, but it can be readily inferred based on several things. These will be looked at in the verses to come. But suffice it to say that:

- 1) the Antichrist is one who stands in opposition to Jesus. If this must be restrained for even 2000 years now, it shows that even though Antichrist is a person, there is more involved. He is a person who will be specifically filled by Satan.
- 2) if this could be at any given time, then there is a set time – known even 2000 years ago – when this would come about. What could could restrain Satan from so filling whatever person he chose for that long? Stay tuned.

The words, “that he might be revealed in his own time,” have the meaning of “with a view to.” What this means is that God’s purposes will come about because the power of Antichrist will stop being restrained when He sees fit. Just as God ordained Israel to be exiled to Babylon for 70 years, and then that exile ended as prophesied, and then just as the same is true with the ending of their second exile at a pre-prophesied moment to effect His purposes, the ending of the restraint of the power which will be given to the Antichrist is intended to meet God’s purposes for judgment on the unrepentant world.

The word translated as “time” indicates a set and purposeful time. It is a particular season. Just as Christ Jesus was said to have come in the fullness of the time set by God (Galatians 4:4), so Antichrist will come at a particular season to fulfill God’s purposes.

Life application: Way too many people focus on who the Antichrist is. That is a pointless venture. The Bible says he will be revealed at a particular time, and that time will not be until after the rapture of the church. If you are looking for Antichrist, you need to redirect and look for Christ. Stop wasting your time on useless videos about an already-defeated enemy. Instead, pick up your Bible and find Jesus.

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. 2 Thessalonians 2:7

The word “For” is given based on the words of the previous verse. Paul said something was restraining the Antichrist. This was “that he may be revealed in his own time.” From this, Paul continues with “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work.” A mystery is something not revealed. There is a lawlessness which is working (and it has been working for 2000 years or

more) which is not yet fully revealed. It has been slowly working out a plan. In the Greek, there is an article in front of both “mystery” and “lawlessness.” It reads, “For the mystery of the lawlessness.”

The state of lawlessness which is still not fully revealed is “already at work.” The idea of the work is that of an inward action, as if yeast causing bread to swell. As Charles Ellicott notes, “This is not a personal thing.” It is a state of lawlessness which is working, and which will eventually be revealed. This mystery is then sharply contrasted to the word “revealed” which is found in verses 6 & 8. There is a time when the lawlessness will come forth to effect its purposes on earth. It will be when the Antichrist is revealed, because he will then embody this lawlessness. This working of lawlessness, however, is kept in check until the appropriate time.

At some point, the restraining force of verse 6 will no longer restrain. As it says, “only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.” The words “will do so” are supplied by the translators for clarity. The use of the masculine word “He” is based upon the masculine, singular article in the Greek. In verse 6, the restraining force was described with a neuter article, “that which restrains.” That is converted now to a masculine noun. The question is, “Who is He?”

The NKJV capitalizes the word. This is a presupposition that it is speaking of the Holy Spirit. Others continue to translate this as “the one,” “he” (not capitalized), “that which,” “the person,” etc. Each translation is based on a best guess of the nature of this “restrainer.” But Paul uses the masculine here for a reason, and so it is not appropriate to continue to translate it in the neuter. Further, this cannot be a “person” in the regular sense. The restraining has gone on for millennia. It is also not something belonging to the lawlessness. To be restrained is an external force, not an internal one.

Therefore, it appears that the NKJV is correct in their translation. This is God who is restraining. However, and more specifically, it is the restraining power of the third member of the Godhead – the Holy Spirit. One analysis is that the restrainer is the church itself, but as the word is masculine, it is more appropriately the One who is intimately identified with the true church. The Holy Spirit is given to all who believe in Christ (Ephesians 1:13, 14). As this is so, the church is involved in the restraining process, but it is the Holy Spirit who is the one who actively restrains the lawlessness. And He will do so “until He is taken out of the way.”

What this means is that there is a time when the Holy Spirit’s restraining influence will no longer be effected. A releasing of the restraint will come about, and then only will the lawless one be revealed. What is certain then is that if the Holy Spirit is taken out of the way, the church too must be taken out of the way. If the effect of the Holy Spirit is to end, and the church were to remain, then the “guarantee” of the sealing of the Spirit which Paul notes in

Ephesians 1:14 would not be a sound “guarantee” at all. We would be left abandoned. This is completely contrary to the nature of God and His word. Thus, this taking “out of the way” of the Holy Spirit is simultaneous with the taking away of the church at the rapture. Both occur, and only then will the mystery of lawlessness (and thus the Antichrist) be revealed. This will be explicitly stated in the next verse.

Life application: Are you a believer in Christ? If so, you are sealed with the Spirit. There is a time when the Spirit will be taken out of the way. But God will never leave nor forsake His people. Thus, the rapture is implied in today’s verse. And it is a moment prior to the revealing of the Antichrist and the seven years of tribulation on earth. Why would you look to determine who the Antichrist is? He is a part of a mystery not yet revealed. Rather, look for Christ – our hope of glory.