



2 Thessalonians

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...and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 2 Thessalonians 2:10

The words, "and with all unrighteous deception," are tied into the previous thought. Paul had just said that when the Antichrist comes, it would be with "all power, signs, and lying wonders." Along with that, he will bring "all unrighteous deception." The thought expands the previous three points. Everything about the Antichrist will be filled with unrighteous deception. In this, there is deceit being worked out, and that deceit is specifically for the purpose of committing unrighteousness. This will be evidenced then "among those who perish."

This is speaking not of those who commit the deception, but of those who are the objects of it. They will be utterly deluded by the wiles of the Antichrist. Instead of looking for God, they will have their eyes fixed on this person, the one who most wholly manifests and embodies Satan. They will believe the lie and they will be condemned for it. As Paul says of them, "because they did not receive the love of the truth."

The "love of the truth" is speaking of the gospel of Christ which alone can save the soul. The word "because" gives the sense of judicial standing. They had, in fact, been offered the truth, but they turned it down. These people entered the tribulation period because they had refused to check on whether the Christian message was true or not. They will continue to refuse the message which will obviously be received by some who will not take the mark of the beast. A testimony to the truth will stand, but they will willingly refuse it. This is not at all a matter of predestination such as Calvin would teach, stating that they are condemned apart from hearing the truth. Rather it is a willing refusal of the truth.

This will be seen further as the next verse is introduced. For now though, Paul simply declares the fact that those who follow Antichrist will not receive the love of the truth, "that they might be saved." The obvious implication is that if they did receive it, they would be saved. Salvation

because of the truth of God in Christ does not end with the rapture of the church. Instead, it is that which alone can save, at any time and in any dispensation. However, these people will willingly receive error and falsity rather than accept the simple gospel – salvation is by grace through faith. Thus, their condemnation is just.

Life application: The words of this verse are true even today. There are countless false religions and cults out there who strive against God, introducing error and falsehood into their theology. But the truth of the message of Christ is available for any who will simply pick up the Bible and read it. But the general condition of man is to follow deception rather than truth. One must willingly put aside self, accept that we have no merit before God, and receive the simple gospel. If we fail to do this, we remain enemies of God, and our condemnation is just.

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,
2 Thessalonians 2:11

“And for this reason” is given based on what had just been said in the previous two verses. Antichrist will come according to the working of Satan. He will be infused with Satan’s power, signs, and lying wonders, as well as with all unrighteous deception. This will be “among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” Because they preferred the lies and false powers of Satan over the truth, a natural response results. It is that “God will send them strong delusion.”

The Greek literally reads, “a working of error.” It is an active power of misleading, and it is ascribed to God. However, as a Hebraism, it doesn’t require actual direct, positive influence by God. A classic example of this process is found in the hardening of Pharaoh’s heart in the Exodus account, prior to the actual exodus from Egypt. Carefully following along in that account, different words are used to describe this hardening process. God acts, Pharaoh responds. Each step Pharaoh is progressively built up in the hardness of his own heart. It will often state, “...but Pharaoh hardened his heart.” And yet it states at other times, “But the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh.”

It is this process which will come about in the people of the world. The “working of error” will be begun by God, but it will be responded to by the people in a way where they carry the blame for their actions. To understand this, we can use a boxing match as an example.

Boxer A wants to defeat his enemy, but he wants to do it in a particular way, demonstrating that he has total control over the match. He goes into the ring, and actively throws a weak, ineffective punch. The opponent perceives this as a foe who is not up to the challenge. He takes the offensive, expending energy which should be kept in reserve. Boxer A responds with a bit more force, but still with a perceived ineffective approach. The foe hardens his heart and

comes back with his own elevated response. This continues, step by step, exactly as it did with the Lord and Pharaoh. Pharaoh was lulled into complete destruction because of the incremental nature of the war against him. Boxer A eventually destroys his foe because his foe has slowly grown more frustrated, and thus more reckless as the match intensified. In the end, Pharaoh was willing to do the unthinkable by driving his army between walls of water in order to pursue his enemies. The working of error on God's part was fully effective in allowing Pharaoh to utterly destroy himself and his army. Boxer A stands over his opponent who is down for the count.

This is how God works in such matters, and there are other such examples in Scripture, each given so that his enemies "believe the lie." God does not lie, but rather, the lie is formed in their own minds by accepting the situation around them as if it is within their control, when in fact it is completely within the control of God. This is important to understand, because there were those under Pharaoh who understood what was happening. They told Pharaoh that what was occurring was "the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). They also implored him saying, "Do you not yet know that Egypt is destroyed?" (Exodus 10:7). And when Israel went out of Egypt, a mixed multitude went with them, understanding that the Lord was leading them.

Such instances show us that what will occur is God-directed, and each person will have to make their own choice. The majority of the earth will follow Antichrist and be destroyed; self-destruction will come upon them. However, the Bible speaks of a "great white multitude" who will come out of the great tribulation who are comprised of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues (see Revelation 7). They will not be caught up in the "working of error" which comes upon the world, but rather they will be willing to die for the God they had once rejected, but came to realize was the One true God.

Life application: That which has been will be again. In order to understand what lies ahead, we can look at what has already occurred. The Bible shows us the depravity of man. It shows us the hardness of the human heart as well. But it also shows us the remedy for these things. It is to love the truth, and to trust in Christ Jesus, the Lord. In this, man can and will be saved.