Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

There is no ground for justification in anything man is or does, has done or will do. Even after his being born again, called, converted, sanctified, the ground of God's verdict whereby he is justified is never in the sinner. It is not because of his faith, or because of the good works he performs by faith, that God declares him to be righteous. Nor can these add anything at all to his righteousness before God. The ground of his righteousness is never in man. It is outside of man, outside of the sinner himself. The ground of the verdict of God justifying the ungodly is Christ alone. **[Herman Hoeksema, The Triple Knowledge, Vol 2]**

www.sermonaudio.com/crc
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Don't be Deceived – The Spirit of Antichrist

(Part 5 – Lying Signs and Wonders)

October 19, 2025

Sermon Text: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Scripture Reading: Deut 13

Satan is the great counterfeiter. He is a liar and always has been. He is the anti-Christ – the "instead of" Christ. So it is not surprising that the Apostle Paul gives us this warning about Satan's man – the Antichrist:

> 2Th 2:3-12 Let no one in any way **deceive** you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, (4) who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, **displaying himself as being God.**

(5) Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? (6) And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. (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) Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

(9) that is, **the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, (10) and with all the deception of wickedness** for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

(11) For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, (12) in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

This morning as we continue with our series on the Antichrist, we want to focus our attention on this particular means of deception which the son of perdition uses and is going to use:

2Th 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

One of the reasons millions and millions of people have been and will be deceived and will bow down and worship Antichrist as God, is because they were duped by Antichrist's *"power and signs and false wonders."*

Rev 13:1-9 And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. (2) And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne

and great authority. (3) **I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed.**

And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; (4) they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"

(5) There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. (6) And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. (7) It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.

(8) **All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb** who has been slain. (9) If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

We see, for example, one such false miracle described in Revelation-

Rev 13:11-15 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. (12) He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.

(13) **He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.** (14) **And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast,** telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who *had the wound of the sword and has come to life. (15) **And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast,**

so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

It is not surprising then that Paul warns us –

2Th 2:9-10 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, (10) and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

Satan has been granted power by the Lord. He has ability. These powers and signs and false wonders are not false because they are mere sleight of hand tricks, but because they are lying wonders which are intended to deceive and to lead people away from Christ and from truth.

We know that Satan does have such power:

Exo 8:6-7 So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt. (7) The magicians did the same with their secret arts, making frogs come up on the land of Egypt.

And Satan had power to bring calamities upon Job. In our ongoing study of Ephesians, we have arrived at chapter 6 where we are told-

Eph 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

This is why the Bible forbids us from any involvement in what we commonly call the occult-

(Lev 19:31) 'Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

(Lev 20:6) 'As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will

also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people.

(Deu 18:10) "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, (Deu 18:11) or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.

(Act 8:9) Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;
(Act 8:10) and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."
(Act 8:11) And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.

Act 16:16-18 It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling. (17) Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." (18) She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

All of these wicked things – sorcery, magic, signs, wonders, calling up the dead (necromancy), mediums, witchcraft…. are commerce with Satan. We are forbidden to have any traffic with them in any form. They are of the spirit of antichrist and they will be prominent when Antichrist is revealed. They are of *the activity of Satan* as Paul puts it.

We know then that when Antichrist appears openly, he is going to do this:

2Th 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

And one of the chief ways in which he dupes virtually everyone into worshipping him as God, is through these false wonders and signs and powers. He will indeed be the "instead of" Christ – the devil's "ape" as he has been called. The great mimic of Christ's miracles, although they will never be of the order that the miracles of Christ were.

William Perkins lived from 1558-1602. From 1584 until his death he was the pastor of Great St. Andrews Church, Cambridge (England).

Perkins preached a series of sermons entitled *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft: So far as it is Revealed in the Scriptures, and Manifested by True Experience*

An interesting note in this connection is that Cotton Mather, the minister of the Old North Church in Boston, wrote a treatise entitled *On Witchcraft* giving his position on the Salem witch trials. In this work Mather refers to and relies upon William Perkins sermons on *The Damned Art of Witchcraft*.

Typically the Salem witch trials and all who were involved in them are presented as crazed fanatics and those who were convicted of witchcraft are styled as innocent victims. Perhaps most of them were, but the propaganda which we are normally exposed to on this subject leads us to conclude that this entire subject of witchcraft and divination, and trafficking with the dead and so on is always and entirely a fake. Something only believed by the stupid, the ignorant and the crazy.

That is not what God's Word teaches on the matter. While there are no doubt fakes and charlatans, the reality of Satan and of people who are actually empowered by him is reality. (Consider the

frequent accounts in Scripture of Christ encountering people possessed by demons). Cotton Mather and other Christians of his day were perhaps wrong in how they handled those accusations of witchcraft – but today's "modern man" is in more gross error in his arrogance, denying that only a fool would believe such things – including the existence and activity of Satan.

Thomas Pickering wrote an introduction to Perkins' series in which Pickering notes:

> "They do grossly err who either in express terms deny that there are witches or, in effect, maintain that there is no real covenant between them and the devil, or affirm that they can do no such miraculous works as are ascribed to them….
>
> The Word of God preached is the 'weapon' of the Christian warfare and is might through God to cast down *strongholds."*

Now, I want to spend the rest of our time this morning considering Satan's masterpiece and its very common practice of trafficking with the devil, promoting the practice of "power and signs and false wonders." Namely, the Roman Catholic counterfeit "church."

Occultism and the Roman Catholic False Church

Because the Roman Catholic counterfeit church owes its origin to the devil's deceptions, we should not be surprised to find that there are many occult practices in Roman religion. Let's consider a few:

Idolatry. The worship of idols, for all of Rome's denials, is rampant among Roman catholics. The exaltation of a false Mary, for instance is a chief example. Romes cathedrals are full of idolatrous images. And what does the Bible tell us about idols and those who worship them? –

> Deu 32:16-17 "They made Him jealous with strange gods; With abominations they provoked Him

to anger. (17) "They sacrificed to demons who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread.

1Co 10:19-21 What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? (20) No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. (21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

All worship of false gods is actually the worship of Satan.
This is witchcraft – the evil art of calling upon demons instead of God. Praying to demons.

And then Rome also practices *necromancy.* That word comes from the Greek word "nekros" meaning "dead." Necromancy is the devilish practice of communicating with the dead or calling up the dead. The classic biblical example is Saul and the witch of Endor –

1Sa 28:5-10 When Saul saw the camp of the Philistines, he was afraid and his heart trembled greatly. (6) When Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets. (7) Then Saul said to his servants, "Seek for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her." And his servants said to him, "Behold, there is a woman who is a medium at En-dor." (8) Then Saul disguised himself by putting on other clothes, and went, he and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, "Conjure up for me, please, and bring up for me whom I shall name to you." (9) But the woman said to him, "Behold, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off those who are mediums and spiritists from the land. Why are you then laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?" (10) Saul vowed to her by the LORD, saying, "As the LORD lives, no punishment

shall come upon you for this thing."

How does Rome practice necromancy? By praying to the saints. The worship of dead "saints" and praying to them is a HUGE part of every Roman Catholic's religion.

Magical Charms. Roman Catholics very commonly wear or display various medallions or charms which are said to bestow upon the bearer certain benefits.

"Saint Christopher is one of the most popular Catholic Christian heroes of the Faith. He is a saint, indeed listed as a martyr. He may have also been named Reprobus. He apparently died under the Roman Emperor Decius, in 251 AD. Most Catholics refer to him as Saint Christopher anyway, and his medals and the popular devotions to him are among the most common in Catholic piety. Patron: of bachelors, transportation, traveling, storms, epilepsy, gardeners, holy death, and toothache." [Catholic Online]

St. Catherine's feast day is April 29, she is the patroness against fire, illness, the United States, Italy, miscarriages, people ridiculed for their faith, sexual temptation, and nurses.

There are myriads of other saints to whom Roman Catholics pray and look to for blessings. This is idolatry and necromancy. You can go to the Vatican gift shop and find all sorts of bracelets and necklaces and other items which are said to be nothing less than charms with magical power for the wearer.

The Scapular – Catholics may put a scapular on a dead person as a sign of devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and faith in the promises associated with it, most notably the promise that those who die wearing the brown scapular will be preserved from eternal fire. It is considered a sacramental, or a holy object, that signifies consecration to Mary, her maternal protection, and trust in her intercession, and can be placed on the deceased as a final expression of this faith.

Rosary Beads – "Described as the "sweet chain which unites us to God" by Blessed Bartolo Longo, the Rosary is the most widely used devotional instrument among observant Catholics. Our collection of gold Rosaries is embellished with this ancient metal symbol of light, energy and wealth. Its brilliance and incorruptibility remind us of the Divine dimension. No wonder this precious metal can be used to compose beautiful Rosaries." [Vatican Gift Shop commentary on gold rosary bead necklaces, priced from $1100 to $6500 or more] Or, for less cash, you can get them made from wood or non-precious metals -

"Straight from the heart of Catholicism, our rosaries are more than mere prayer beads. They are tangible symbols of faith, devotion, and spiritual connection. From classic wooden designs to exquisite gemstone creations, our collection caters to diverse tastes and spiritual journeys. Experience the tranquility and focus that accompany the prayer of the rosary, a beloved tradition shared by millions. Let our rosaries be your constant companions on your spiritual path, offering comfort, inspiration, and a deeper bond with your faith."

After Charlie Kirk was murdered you saw Erika holding her rosary beads up in front of the crowds.

Prayers as Magical Incantations –

The Lord Jesus commanded us NOT to pray in the exact manner Rome teaches its people to pray –

> Mat 6:7-8 "And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. (8) "So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.

And yet how does Rome tell its people to pray? Go and say this many Hail Mary's or Our Fathers, etc. What is this other than meaningless repetition? You find the very same thing practiced via

the mantras of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Apparitions – "In modern-day apparitions, such as at Fatima and Akita, the Virgin Mary has specifically asked for the Rosary to be prayed as a form of penance for the world. The message from these apparitions often includes a call to pray the Rosary for world peace and the conversion of sinners."

[Appended below is a Wikipedia summary of the visions of Mary at Fatima in Portugal in the very early 1900's by 3 children]

What is all of this? It is antichrist. It is Satan. It is precisely what God's Word warns us against – *"one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who will perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved."*

Millions and millions if not billions an billions of people in this world and even at this present time have embraced these lies of Rome.

Just consider. Think about essentially every single doctrine or practice which Rome teaches. *The sacraments by which the priests have power to dispense salvation. Transubstantiation. Baptism effecting justification. The confessional where a priest can pronounce forgiveness.* What is all of this but divination, sorcery, idolatry. The Roman Catholic "church," in other words, is satanic occultism through and through.

Everyone who has genuinely professed Christ and renounced Rome, therefore, must necessarily be certain to do what the Ephesians did when they came to faith in Christ –

Act 19:18-19 Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. (19) And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them

and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

I wonder also – how many professing Christians who are Protestants/evangelicals might still be holding on to some occult trinket handed down to them by a parent or grandparent? I think that is a fair question to be asked.

These things then are what God's Word warns us against. Because it is always certain that where Antichrist is or where his spirit is operating, *the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders and all deception of wickedness will certainly be operating.* And anyone who does not love God's truth, who is not looking for the coming of Christ in the clouds, who is not born again through faith alone in Christ alone, *will most certainly be duped into joining the kingdom of darkness which ends in hell.*

Finally - *Do you see and appreciate even more in light of all these things just how great a salvation we have in Christ? This is the darkness we have been delivered from. WE were once in bondage to it, just like the myriads of human beings who worship their ancestor gods, who set up shrines to idols in their homes, who worship trees and animals, practice human sacrifice…that would have been US! If not for the amazing fact that while we were yet sinners, while we were still enemies of God, Christ came and died for us.*

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The Apparitions at Fatima

On 13 May 1917, the shepherd children reported seeing a woman "brighter than the sun, shedding rays of light clearer and stronger than a crystal goblet filled with the most sparkling water and pierced by the burning rays of the sun."[6] The woman wore a white mantle edged with gold and held a rosary in her hand. She asked them to devote themselves to the Holy Trinity and to pray "the Rosary every day, to bring peace to the world and an end to the war".[6] While the children had never told anyone about seeing the

angel, Jacinta told her family about seeing the brightly lit woman. Lúcia had earlier said that the three should keep this experience private. Jacinta's disbelieving mother told neighbors about it as a joke, and within a day the whole village knew of the children's vision.[7]

The children said the woman told them to return to the Cova da Iria on 13 June 1917. Lúcia's mother sought counsel from the parish priest, Father Manuel Ferreira, who suggested she allow them to go. He asked to have Lúcia brought to him afterward so that he could question her. The second appearance occurred on 13 June, the feast of Saint Anthony, patron of the local parish church. Lúcia would later report that on this occasion, the lady revealed that Francisco and Jacinta would be taken to Heaven soon, but Lúcia would live longer in order to spread her message and devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.[6][8] During the June visit, the children said the lady told them to say the Holy Rosary daily in honor of Our Lady of the Rosary to obtain peace and the end of the Great War. (Three weeks earlier, on 21 April, the first contingent of Portuguese soldiers had embarked for the front lines of the war.) The lady also purportedly revealed to the children a vision of hell, and entrusted a secret to them, described as "good for some and bad for others".[8] Fr. Ferreira later stated that Lúcia recounted that the lady told her, "I want you to come back on the thirteenth and to learn to read in order to understand what I want of you. ...I don't want more."

In the following months, thousands of people flocked to Fátima and nearby Aljustrel, drawn by reports of visions and miracles. On 13 August 1917, the provincial administrator Artur Santos[10] (no relation to Lúcia dos Santos) intervened. He believed that these events were politically disruptive in the conservative country. He took the children into custody, jailing them before they could reach the Cova da Iria. Santos interrogated and threatened the children to get them to divulge the contents of the secrets. Lúcia's mother hoped the officials could

persuade the children to end the affair and admit that they had lied.[8] Lúcia told Santos everything short of the secrets, and offered to ask the woman for permission to tell the official the secrets.[11]

That month, instead of the usual apparition in the Cova da Iria on 13 August, the children reported that they saw the Virgin Mary on 19 August, a Sunday, at nearby Valinhos. She asked them again to pray the rosary daily, spoke about the miracle coming in October, and asked them "to pray a lot, a lot for the sinners and sacrifice a lot, as many souls perish in hell because nobody is praying or making sacrifices for them."[7]