

in our day. Yet this is not the cause of all of it. Modernism has swept our country in recent years. In many a city where God was praised on every corner a few decades ago, you would now have to hunt a long time to find a place where the true Word of God is proclaimed. We can well imagine a man who looked forward with such hope to the conquest of the world for Christ in this generation, looking about him today and saying: "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously."

This has been the experience of many generations in this age. Everything moves forward as if all the world would soon be won to Christ; then something goes wrong. People settle down to worldliness and indifference; subtle unbelief sweeps over an area; some new cult leads thousands astray; personality problems disrupt the work of God. Whatever the cause, the result is frustration and disappointment.

We must never forget that this is Satan's world. We know that God controls all things and Satan can go only as far as God permits; yet God permits Satan, during the present age, to be the prince of this world. He is constantly deceiving the nations and disrupting the work of God. It has been true from the very beginning of Christian history, and it is true today. It fits exactly with the suggestion that we found in the use of the word "fires" in verse 15.

Verses 17 and 18 continue the picture of the unpleasant side of the history of this age. "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth." Verse 18 shows fear and terror on every hand. The one who escapes from one adversary falls a prey to another.

Only a few years ago, it was generally thought that the world would enjoy peace and happiness if only the aggressive force of Hitler were destroyed. It was frequently said: "If the Allies win this war, there will be such an opportunity for Christian missionary work in the Orient as the world has never seen." When the war ended it looked as if this would be the case; then a foe came from another direction, and godless Communism spread over large portions of Europe and the greater part of Asia, and tried to stop all preaching of the Word of God in those regions.