

Stand Firm & Hold On To The Scriptures

The battle for truth has always been raging, but now it is raging as if it was World War V. Sadly, most people do not know it. In this life knowing truth is a more serious issue than disease, failing at work, losing respect, being alone, or physical death. Without truth, we are like a blind man walking down a new street for the first time. Without truth, we do not know where we are going.

When we were young children, we believed whatever our fathers and mothers told us. Some of us were told that Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy were real. When we were older, our parents finally disappointed us by telling us the truth. Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy were not real. Our parents had lied. Later in life, we discovered that we lied like our parents. The first time we lied was probably when we tried to avoid being disciplined for doing something that our parents said we could not do. Our parents lied, and we lied.

As we continued growing up, we learned that other people lied or practiced deceit too! The battle to know what is true is not simple! We learned that our friends lied, and sometimes our teachers lied. We learned that authors of books lied. We learned that some pastors and Bible teachers lied. It seems that almost every politician and business on the planet lies. It seems that often advertising is a lie. When I went to the university, I learned that those who do research often bias their results. Sometime this happens unintentionally, but most often it is intentional. Researchers often have an agenda and want to

influence people. So, they deceive! Our supposedly objective scientists are not exempt. Someone once said that every attorney is a liar. They said that is how you define an attorney. As adults we have learned that there are few people we can trust. The Internet is full of lies. The Internet is probably the clearest proof of human depravity. Married couples lie to one another. People slander other people. This happens even in the church. Ministers lie to their congregations and other pastors. To know what is truth is very difficult. The deception is so great. Remember that without truth we are like blind men walking a new street.

SPIRITUAL TRUTH IS THE WORST BATTLEFIELD. The most important truth in this life is not that two plus two equals four, that humans need air, food, and water to live, or that

someday we will die. The most important truth is spiritual truth. That is the arena in which the battle is raging the strongest. This ongoing war is staring us in the face. It has been raging since Satan lied to Eve. As a result, she believed the lie and ate the for-



bidden fruit. Those who tell us that she ate an apple have lied too! Scripture never tells us what type of fruit she ate. They are simply guessing, but it sounds good. Such lies reveal what happened to us after Adam ate the fruit too! We all became liars! Psalm 14:1 tells us that only a fool tells himself or herself that there is no God. That is the granddaddy lie of all lies. That verse reveals there are a lot of fools in this life. If there is no God, then we are free to lie without consequence. For these

individuals, lying is not absolutely important. But Jesus said in Matthew 12:36 that someday every man and woman will be judged for every careless word. That includes lies.

In Numbers 23:19, Balaam makes an important statement about God and men. He told us the truth when he said,

God is not a man, that He would lie,
Nor a son of man, that He would change His mind;
Has He said, and will He not do it?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
Numbers 23:19 (NASB)

Balaam told us that God always speaks the truth, but we do not. There is only one person we can always trust. That is God. People lie! Scripture tells us that Abraham and Isaac lied. Jacob deceived Isaac. King Saul lied to Samuel, the prophet. Ananias and Sapphira lied and died because they lied. The early Christians learned that lying to God can result in quick death. But we do not take that news very seriously. So, the battle for spiritual truth still rages.

SATAN IS THE FATHER OF LIES. The warriors in this battle are God, Satan and his follow demons, and men and women are caught in the middle. John 8:44 records that Jesus told the Pharisees they were like their father. Then He added that their father was the devil, who is the father of lies. He is like a general in this battle to deceive. The Greek word for devil means slanderer or false one. These religious leaders were great deceivers.

1 John 5:19 warns us,

... the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 1 John 5:19 (NASB)

This slanderer controls the world! He slanders, deceives, and lies. He wants the world to reject spiritual truth and believe lies. That is the first important fact to remember about Satan. He is a liar.

The second important characteristic is that Satan will snatch away truth from unbelievers. He does not want them to believe the Truth, especially the Bible. The third important characteristic of Satan is found in 2 Corinthians 11:14. It says

Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. The important word in this verse is “disguises.” He works hard at deceiving people into believing his lies. He wants them to reject all truth, especially spiritual truth.

The fourth important characteristic about Satan is given in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4,

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they will not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 (NASB)

The point is that Satan is blinding the eyes of unbelievers, so they do not see the truth of the gospel. Another way he does this is to motivate people to reject the truth contained in the Bible. We must remember that 2 Timothy 2:15 calls the Bible the Word of Truth. It gives us truth about God Himself. It tells us about our sinful condition. At birth we are sinners going to hell. It is by faith in Jesus Christ that we can avoid an eternity in hell. The Word of Truth tells us how to live in this life. The Word of Truth tells us about God’s plan for our future. The point is that the most important battle in life is over truth! Everyone lies, except our God.

REVIEW OF LAST STUDY. In our last study we learned three principles. The first is that those who are going to hell are called the perishing. They are the perishing because they do not love truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10) — the Word of Truth and Jesus Christ. They reject the truth that exists in the universe that demonstrates God does exist (Roman 1:18) and the moral standard written in their conscience (Romans 2:14-15). The second principle that we learned is that they love their wickedness more than truth. They are not truth seekers (2 Thessalonians 2:12). They are pleasure seekers! They love their sin! As a result, they are the walking dead people, the spiritual skeletons watching television, driving our streets, and buying food in the grocery stores. They are just as spiritually dead now as they were at birth. Listen to Ephesians 2:1-2,

And you were dead in your offenses and sins, in which you previously walked according to the course of this world, according to

the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 2:1-2 (NASB)

Another principle from our last study is that in the tribulation, those who are perishing will be greatly deceived in the tribulation by the Antichrist, and Satan. Another principle is that God will help the Antichrist and Satan to deceive the perishing into believing lies. The point is that those who finally and ultimately reject Jesus Christ will be blinded so that they can no longer know spiritual truth. They will believe whatever the Antichrist and Satan want them to believe. That will be part of God's judgment upon the perishing. It will start in the tribulation. The battle for truth is raging . . .

BE COMFORTED—SALVATION IS THE WORK OF GOD. This brings us to our study. You will soon discover that on the flip side, believers know Truth, the Word of Truth, and have placed their faith in the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). We will start by reading 2 Thessalonians 2:13, which says,

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB)

Here Paul thanks God for the believers in the church in Thessalonica. He had already thanked God in chapter one, verse 3 for their faith. Paul had already thanked God for the perseverance of these saints while enduring suffering. He had already told them that they were believers. They were not one of those who were perishing already mentioned in verses 8-12.

In this verse, Paul continues his comforting words. He says, "God has chosen you from the beginning." It is interesting that Paul uses an unusual Greek word for "has chosen." He uses a Greek word that means "choice." The Greek grammar also reveals that God Himself made the choice, and not the believers in Thessalonica. That is, these can take comfort that God wanted them and that is why they are Christians. When did God do this? Paul said, "From the beginning." That is, God made His choice before the world was created, before they were born. This doctrine is not unique to the apostle Paul.

In Ephesians 1:4-5 Paul said,

. . . just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will . . . Ephesians 1:3-5 (NASB)

Some teach that in verse 4 Paul was only saying that God chose us to become holy and blameless, as a result of our faith — our decision to believe. But notice that in verse 5 we are told God predestined us to adoption. That is, He predetermined who would be added to the family of God. Also notice that at the end of verse 5, we are told that God did this "according to the kind intention of His will." That is, this was God's will.

Now listen to 1 Timothy 1:9. Paul is writing about our God, and says,

. . . who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity . . . 1 Timothy 1:9 (NASB)

Once again, notice that God has called believers not because of our work, but according to His purpose. There are several other passages that also teach God chooses men and women to be saved from the foundation of the world (John 6:37-30, 44, 65; Acts 13:38; Romans 8:29-30; Titus 1:1-2; 3:5; 1 Peter 1:1; Revelation 13:7; 17:8). This is not an isolated doctrine. The last one we will look at is Revelation 13:8,

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. Revelation 13:8 (NASB)

If we connect this verse with Revelation 20:11-12, we learn the truth that the names of those who would be saved were written in the Lamb's book of life before we were ever born.

The Sanctification of Believers Will Continue. In the last part of 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Paul tells us that God does not

save believers and then abandon us. He praises God that the beginning of salvation starts the process of sanctification. This process will continue until we die. Philippians 1:6 is a great summary of the process. It says,

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6 (NASB)

When Paul says that God began a good work in us, he means that the process of sanctification started on the day that every believer is saved. Then Paul says God will continue the process until the day of Christ. That takes from the present time into the future. There are other passages that teach us the same truth (John 3:3-8; Romans 6:6; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 4:29).

Faith is the Human Factor.

In the last part of 2 Thessalonians 2:13, we find another truth. God had planned that our salvation would be activated by faith. This is the human response in salvation. God has chosen us and we must believe (John 1:12-13; 3:16; Romans 10:9-10; 1 John 3:23). We must remember that Ephesians 2:8-9 says that even the faith we respond with is a gift from God. It says,

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

Do you see that our faith is a gift? Romans 10:14, 16-17 ties faith and truth together when it says,

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. Romans 10:14, 16-17 (NASB)

We could add, faith comes by hearing the Word of Truth. You see, God has chosen believers for salvation. The process of sanctification then begins, and it all started by faith in the truth.



God planned their salvation.

All of this should have been a comfort for every true Christian in Thessalonica after being told that God would bring a deluding influence on the perishing in the tribulation. God would not bring a deluding influ-

ence on them. This verse reveals that believers in the tribulation will know the truth.

BE COMFORTED—BELIEVERS ARE GOING TO GLORY. Also, these believers should have been comforted by the words in verse 14. In this verse Paul gives us another reason believers should be comforted. He says,

It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Thessalonians 2:14 (NASB)

When we read this verse, it sounds like it is uncertain if a believer will gain glory. But to properly understand this verse,

we need to know that the phrase “you may gain” is not a verb. It is a noun, and the words “may gain” are added by the translators. It is not in the original Greek. The Greek word that is translated as “may gain” is *peripiesis*. It is a noun. It refers to a possession, or something owned. The idea is that believers will obtain something. Paul is saying believers will obtain glory. Paul’s message is that the moment someone is genuinely saved, they are going to heaven. They will be glorified. This truth is repeated throughout the New Testament in many places. Let me give you one example. Jesus said this in John 10:27-29.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one. John 10:27-29 (NASB)

Jesus’ point is that no one, and that includes you or someone else, is able to snatch us out of Christ’s hand or the Father’s hand. That means our salvation is doubly secure. There are a number of other passages about the believer’s eternal security (Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:42-49; Philippians 3:21; 1 Peter 1:3-8; 1 John 3:1-2).

So, every believer should be comforted if you are a real Christian. Why? Because true Christians will never lose their salvation. They will be glorified. God chose us before we did anything, good or bad. He promises to sanctify us (Philippians 1:6) until Christ comes. God will continue making us more holy until we die. It is a promise and not a hope! Our salvation is secure. What a great comfort for any Christian in the tribulation! Believers will not be treated like those who will be perishing.

BE COMFORTED—STAND FIRM & HOLD TO TRUTH. Verse 15 gives us Paul’s third point. His point is that believers can take comfort in the fact that God has given them the truth. Therefore, they should be standing in and holding on to the Word of Truth. Here is the verse,

So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. 2

Thessalonians 2:15 (NASB)

When Paul urges believers to stand firm and hold on to the traditions, He is not referring to some oral or extra-biblical traditions outside of the Bible. The Romans Catholics have oral and written traditions that they consider to be equal to the Bible. But that is not to what Paul is referring.

Paul defines what he means by traditions at the end of the verse. He says, “whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.” That is, Paul was referring to what he had already taught them or to a letter he had written to them. Today, we do not have anyone who has the authority of an apostle. But we do have the letters of all the apostles or someone, such as Mark and Luke, who wrote with the approval of the apostles. The New Testament contains the traditions of the apostles. The Greek word that is translated as “traditions” actually refers to “something that has been handed over.” That is, believers are to stand firm in and hold on to what the apostles have handed over.

Do you see the importance of truth? Those who are perishing are perishing because they have rejected spiritual truth. They also reject truth about our Creator and the origin of the universe. They have rejected God’s truth about how to raise children, how to control crime, how to make love, how to have a successful marriage, and how to be wise. God has gone to great effort to give us all the truth we need to live life!

I rejoice that God has given us the Word of Truth. I rejoice that as a Christian, God has chosen to let me know truth and to help me know the truth. I rejoice that I can know the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. It is the light that leads us to Christ and to eternal life.

THE BENEDICTION. Then in verses 16-17, Paul praises God with a benediction. Notice that Paul refers to comfort twice in the benediction. He says,

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NASB)

Paul concludes chapter 2 with a call to be comforted. I love

the truth that God has given us eternal comfort. The point is that we should be eternally comforted. God chose us in eternity past. He is with us. He is in the process of making us holy (Philippians 2:12-13). He will keep doing this until we die. Then we will be glorified and live with Him for eternity. God has given us comfort for all eternity.

We are in the battle for truth. Believers have the Word of Truth. Let us read it, share it and live according to it to please Him who gave it to us! Let us rejoice that God is telling us truth.

Let us praise our God for what He has done, is doing, and will do for us! To God be the glory!!