

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH
BIG IDEA: Once we believe, we have a responsibility to guard, practice and share the truth.
DATE: Wednesday, November 18 and Sunday, November 22, 2026
SCRIPTURE: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; 3:7-10; 13 (CSB)

OPENING QUESTION

What is your favorite court room drama? *What did you like about it? Have you ever testified in a court of law? What was that experience like?*

An oath is a solemn, legally binding promise to tell the truth, often invoking a deity. In the United States we are asked, "Do you solemnly (swear/affirm) that you will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" Placing your hand on a Bible is no longer required while giving the oath.
As followers of Jesus, we are *all* called to testify to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help us God. This is the point of our passage today. Once we believe the truth, we have a responsibility to guard the truth, practice the truth and share the truth.

SETTING THE STAGE

Paul was a balanced Christian who had a balanced ministry, and we see evidence of this as he brought his letter to a close. He moved from prophecy to practical Christian living. He turned from the negative (Satan's lies) to the positive (God's truth), and from warning to thanksgiving and prayer. Paul's emphasis was on the truth of God's Word, in contrast to Satan's great lie, which Paul discussed in the previous section.

SCRIPTURE READING

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; 3:7-10; 13 (CSB)
13But we ought to thank God always for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. 14He called you to this through our gospel, so that you might obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, whether by what we said or what we wrote. 16May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace, 17encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good work and word.

3 [7]For you yourselves know how you should imitate us: We were not idle among you; [8]we did not eat anyone's food free of charge; instead, we labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. [9]It is not that we don't have the right to support, but we did it to make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us. [10]In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: "If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat."

[13]But as for you, brothers and sisters, do not grow weary in doing good.

DISCUSSION

Every believer has four responsibilities to God's truth: believe the truth, guard the truth, practice the truth and share the truth.

BELIEVE THE TRUTH
READ: 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

From the Commentary: Paul repeatedly expresses thankfulness in his letters to this church. He gave thanks for the way they responded to God's work in their lives. In these two verses, Paul reviewed the 5 stages in their salvation experience.

(Leaders, write these on the board – no need to include the verses).

God loved them (v. 13a).
God chose them (v. 13b).
God set them apart (v. 13c).
God called them (v. 14a).
God gave them glory (v. 14b).

You can flesh out each statement:

1. God loved them – God's great plan of salvation is not impersonal. It is rooted and grounded in His love. He proved this love at the cross.

2. God chose them – It is not love alone that saves us, for God loves the whole world, and yet the whole world is not saved. Love reveals itself in grace and mercy. God in His grace gives us through Christ what we do not deserve, and God in His mercy does *not* give what we *do* deserve – but He gave *that* to Christ!

3. God set them apart – The sanctification Paul mentioned here refers to the Spirit's work in leading the unbeliever to faith in Christ. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring conviction to the sinner.

4. God called them – The same God who ordained the end (salvation) also ordained the means to the end (belief of the truth). The greatest encouragement to evangelism is the knowledge that God has *His people* who have been prepared to respond to *His Word.* Both divine sovereignty and human responsibility are taught in the Bible. We know that "salvation is of the LORD" (Jonah 2:9),

and that lost sinners can never save themselves. We must admit that there are *mysteries* to our salvation; but we can rejoice that there are *certainties* on which we can rest.

5. God gave them glory – What began in eternity past reaches its climax in eternity future: We share in the glory of God. What begins with grace always leads to glory. This is quite a contrast to the future assigned to the lost. Believers already possess God's glory within, and once Christ returns, the glory shall be revealed.

Why does Paul review their salvation experience here, after talking so much about the end-time?

Why does each of the five stages noted matter to the young Christians? What value is there in periodically reviewing our salvation story?

Which of these stages do you think about the least? Why?

When sinners believe God's truth, God saves them. When they believe Satan's lie and reject the love of the truth, they cannot be saved. Being neutral about God's truth is a dangerous thing. It has tragic eternal consequences.

GUARD THE TRUTH
READ: 2 Thessalonians 2:15

From the Commentary: Paul had told them about the *future* rebellion against the truth, the great apostasy headed by the Antichrist. But he also warned in his letters that there was a *present* danger, and that the church must guard God's truth and not turn from it.

What does it mean to guard the truth? What is the truth we must guard? How do we distinguish between human's truth and God's truth?

In what ways can we take part in guarding God's truth?

God works in this world through the truth of His Word, and Satan opposes this truth by substituting his lies. Human nature is prone to believe a lie and resist the truth. Satan accomplishes his best work through people in so-called Christian institutions (churches, schools, and so forth) who do not believe God's truth. They have "a form of godliness" but have never experienced the power of God's saving truth.

When Paul used the word *traditions*, he was not referring to man-made religious ideas that are not based on the Word of God. Our Lord rejected man's religious traditions and Paul warned against them.

PRACTICE THE TRUTH
READ: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 and 3:7-10

DISCUSS: How do we practice truth? How is this distinct from guarding the truth? What does it look like to demonstrate the truth? How does our demonstration of the truth bring others to faith?

From the Commentary: It is not enough to believe the truth and guard it; we must also practice it. If we hear the Word but do not obey it, we are only fooling ourselves. These two verses record Paul's desire and prayer for his friends: He wanted God to encourage them ("comfort your hearts")

and establish them "in every good word and work." Both of these words are prominent in the Thessalonian letters.

When Paul was with them, he encouraged them individually as a father does his children. He sent Timothy to encourage them and Paul himself was greatly encouraged with Timothy's report of their faithfulness.

Paul encouraged them to walk to please God and to grow in their love for others. He taught them about the rapture of the church in order that they might encourage each other. To calm their fears, he explained the day of the Lord to them. In addition to his teaching, he urged them to minister to each other.

Paul was concerned about two aspects of their Christian life: their word and their work, their saying and their doing. If our walk contradicts our words, we lose our testimony. Our *walk* and our *talk* must agree; good works and good words must come from the same yielded heart.

What has a greater impact – a godly teaching or a godly example? Who has been a godly example in your life? What are some ways you are a good example for other believers? How has someone in this group been a godly example to you?

How did Paul make himself an example for the young believers in how to live out a life of faith?

From the Commentary: As an apostle, Paul had the right to expect financial support, but he deliberately gave up that right that he might be an example to the young believers. In this attitude, Paul proved himself to be a mature Christian leader. Selfish leaders use people to build up their support, and they are always claiming their rights. A truly dedicated leader will uses his rights to build up the people and will lay aside his rights and privileges for the sake of others.

The greatest influence is that of godly living and sacrifice. A Christian leader may appeal to the authority of the Word; but if he cannot point also to his own example of obedience, his people will not listen. This is the difference between *authority* and *respect*. A leader earns respect as he obeys the Word and serves His people in the will of God. Authority comes from position; respect comes from practice and example. Respect earns the leader the right to exercise authority.

Paul's policy not only encouraged the new believers but also silenced the accusers. In every city there were itinerant teachers who "peddled their wares" for what they could earn. Paul did not want to be classified with them. Nor did he want any unsaved person to say, "Paul preaches only to make money." As he stated in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul wanted to make the gospel "free of charge"; he would not permit money to hinder the winning of lost souls.

SHARE THE TRUTH:

From the Commentary: Learning and living must go together. If we **believe** the truth, it changes our lives. We **guard** the truth and **practice** it so that we can **share** it with others. We cannot share what we do not believe (unless we want to be hypocrites), and we can best share that which we have practiced ourselves.

And do not be discouraged. Our job is to sow the seed of the gospel. God is the one who saves. We can be encouraged that God's Word does not return void. **God's Word is alive; We must let it move freely.** Paul alluded here to Psalm 147:15 – *"He sends his command throughout the earth:*

his word runs swiftly." God's servants may be bound, but God's Word cannot be bound. As we practice the truth and pray for the ministry of the truth, God's Word will have **freedom to run** and accomplish God's purposes in the world. So keep sharing His Word and truth!

What does Paul teach us in 2 Thessalonians about the role of sharing our faith with others? Why was that critical to the early church? Why is that critical today?

How comfortable are you sharing your faith with others? What challenges do you face in sharing the gospel?

ASK: Does Paul tell us explicitly how to share our faith? Why or why not? What does this suggest about how each of us can accomplish that mission?

Circle up in groups of 3-4 and see who is willing to share their salvation story.
Summarize your salvation story. What drew you to Christ? What was your life like before Christ, how did you meet Him; how has your life changed because of it? What roles did other believers play in your story? Where was God throughout your journey to salvation?

IN CLOSING: He is coming for us. This has been the theme of Paul's two letters to the Thessalonians, and he related this truth to everyday practical living. Paul summed up his teaching with verse 13. *But as for you, brothers and sisters, do not grow weary in doing good.* The same holds true for us today. As we await his return, hold fast to your faith.

Share the GOING FORWARD section below and close in prayer.

GOING FORWARD

As God's disciples, we must be sharing the truth, for He will one day return and ask for an accounting of our lives. If we fulfill our duty to believe the truth, guard the truth, practice the truth, and share the truth, we will experience joy and power in our lives, and growth and blessing in our churches.

Wiersbe, Warren. *Be Ready: Living in Light of Christ's Return.* David C. Cook, ©1979
Wiersbe, Warren. *The Wiersbe Bible Study Series: Living in Light of Christ's Return.* David C. Cook, ©2014