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SERMON TITLE

What is Truth? Part 3

SERIES

DATE

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KEY SCRIPTURE

2 Thessalonians 2:9-15

SYNOPSIS

In these last days deception is prevalent, so we must be well grounded in the Word of God.

HIGHLIGHTS





☞ What is Truth, part 3

Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" but he didn't really want an answer. To him truth was relative and subjective – something to be controlled rather than simply accepted. Our society today is much like Pilate, thinking truth is negotiable and flexible, but here at OBC, we understand that God is the source of truth, and he is unchanging. He doesn't just know and speak truth, he establishes truth, exposes truth, and the real truth will endure through all eternity.

--John MacArthur... "Error does not become Truth because it is widely accepted; Truth does not become error, even when it stands alone!"

In 2 Thessalonians 2, the Apostle Paul warns us about the dangers of falsehood and the eternal importance of embracing the truth.

☞ 2 Thessalonians 2:9-15

9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that **deceives** those who are perishing. **They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.** 11 For this reason God sends them a **powerful delusion** so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who **have not believed the truth** but have delighted in wickedness. 13 But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to **be saved** through the **sanctifying work of the Spirit** and **through belief in the truth.** 14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. 15 So then, brothers, **stand firm** and **hold to the teachings we passed on to you**, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

There are some strong warnings here regarding truth, deception and the threat of delusion. I found a few quotes regarding delusion online: *"I told my therapist I'm not delusional, and the voices in my head agreed!"* *"I'm not living in a fantasy world—I'm just on an extended vacation from reality!"* Those are a little humorous, but this next one is almost serious for some: *"I'm not delusional—I'm just practicing for the reality I'd prefer!"* Sounds like some in our society today... "whatever my preferences are – that's my truth." But today, Paul cautions us about veering away from the truth.

☞ The Danger of Deception v. 9-10

☞ The world is not neutral—it is a battleground between truth and lies. **Satan**, the father of lies, **uses deception to lead people astray** with counterfeits that impress, but ultimately destroy.

Paul begins by describing the "lawless one," commonly considered to be the Antichrist, who will be empowered by Satan, deceiving many with counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders. Jesus and the Apostles all warned about the dangers of deception, especially in these last days. Consider what Jesus said in **Matthew 24:24**... "false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect — if that were possible."

I don't know who the Antichrist is, and I don't know just how deep into the last days we are, but I think we all understand the concern over deception. It's all over the place. There are so many contradicting



voices that it's hard to know what is really true and what is not. We are being set up for the ultimate deception which will come with this "lawless one." Some will be deceived, while others will deliberately embrace things that are not true.

☞ **Deception is seductive**, but it ultimately leads to bondage. We must ask ourselves: Do we love the truth or do we prefer comfortable lies that affirm our desires? The consequence of rejecting truth is severe... God sends a "powerful delusion" so that those who delight in wickedness believe the lie.

☞ That's scary! **When we persistently turn away from God's truth, we become vulnerable to delusion.** The question for us is: Do we love the truth of God's Word, or are we swayed by the counterfeit?

☞ **The Lure of the Lie** v. 11

One of the reasons deception is so dangerous is that it sounds so good. Satan is the master of deception and **2 Corinthians 11:14** tells us that he "masquerades as an angel of light." He can make deception look and sound really good. **He can even make deception seem godly.** **2 Corinthians 11:3** gives a warning: "I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

Adam and Eve were in the garden of Eden, living the perfect life, in close harmony with the Lord every day, but were led astray by the serpent. Eve was deceived and Adam went along with it all because the lie sounded so good. Satan's strategy hasn't changed much after all these centuries – he continues to lie and he is very good at it. He knows how to twist the truth just right, so that it sounds great.

John 8:44

He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

***To Tell the Truth** was a television show where four celebrity panelists were presented with three contestants and had to identify who was the "central character" whose unusual occupation or experience had been read aloud by the show's host. When the panelists questioned the contestants, the two impostors could lie whereas the "central character" must tell the truth. After questioning was complete, each member of the panel voted on which contestant they believed to be the central character. Once the votes were in, the host asked, "Will the real [person's name] please stand up?" It was typically very difficult to determine who the truth teller was.*

The lies of the enemy can be very convincing and lure you right in. **Romans 16** talks about how deception happens through smooth talk and flattery. **2 Peter 2** says that the tactics include **appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature**. In truth, we are all susceptible to smooth talk, flattery and lustful desires. But John 3 cuts to the core with this:

John 3:19-20

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.



Ultimately, people fall for the lure of the lies because, as Paul says, “they refuse to love the truth and so be saved” (v. 10). Notice that it’s not just a lack of knowledge but a refusal to *love* the truth. This is a heart issue. When people reject God’s truth, they are lured into the lie. Somebody said, *“I got deceived so well, I gave a standing ovation to the lie!”*

☞ God’s truth brings light into our lives, but **our sinful nature loves the darkness**, so we are all vulnerable to the lure of the lie. Therefore, we need to **be committed to the truth**.

Casting Crowns, The Voice of Truth

Out of all the voices calling out to me, I will choose to listen and believe the Voice of Truth

It’s more than simply knowing the truth, it’s being sold-out to the truth. And, since we are so prone to sin and deceit, we need the work of the Holy Spirit within our hearts and minds.

☞ **The Sanctifying of the Spirit** v. 13

Sanctification is the ongoing process of being made holy, becoming more like Jesus, and living a life that pleases God.

When you initially come to Christ, you are justified in God’s sight. He sees your sin-debt as paid in full, or “just as if” you had never sinned. That’s the power of the blood of Christ and the grace of God. When we put our faith in Jesus, he instantaneously makes us right with God – he justifies us. But that is just the beginning. There is a continuing process called sanctification which makes us more and more like Jesus.

☞ **The more we are sanctified**, the more we are like Jesus, **the less we are influenced by the deceit of the enemy and the pressures of this world**. After all, the Spirit is not and cannot be deceived. He is the Spirit of truth (**John 14:17**), who guides us into all truth (**John 16:13**). He teaches us all things and reminds us what Jesus taught (**John 14:26**). And, in **Romans 8**, the Spirit helps in our weaknesses and intercedes for us in prayer.

We need his help and ongoing work in our lives. As I said earlier, we are all very susceptible to our own sinful nature and being deceived by the lies of the enemy.

☞ So, **keep on being filled with the Spirit and invite his sanctifying work within**. And, remember, the Holy Spirit uses God’s Word to do this work. Jesus prayed for this in **John 17:17** when he asked God to “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

☞ **The Grounding of the Gospel** v. 15

Paul admonishes us to stand firm and hold to the teachings he and others passed on to us. This is not a new concept; it actually began way back in the Old Testament when God spoke to Joshua as he was taking over leadership for Moses...



☞ Joshua 1:8

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; **meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.**

Psalms 119:11

I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

☞ Paul tells us to stand firm and hold to the teachings of the Word. To “stand firm” means to **resist the lure of deception**, to **remain rooted in scripture**, and to **run the race of faith** with courage. It’s a call to action: hold fast to what is true, even when the world pressures you to compromise.

Matthew 7:24-27

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

When we stand firm on the truth, it protects us from the storms of life and the seductions of the lie. But it’s not easy; standing firm requires effort. **We must know the truth, study God’s Word, and test everything against it.** We must resist the temptation to conform to the world’s values or to chase after counterfeit wonders. We must cling to Christ, even when culture pressures us to compromise.

So, here’s the truth: Deception is dangerous and the lies of the enemy have an appealing allure. The sinful nature within each of us actually wants to embrace deception, so we must be sanctified by the Spirit and grounded in the Gospel. So, as a matter of application...

☞ **Examine your heart:** Do you love the truth? Are there areas where you’re tempted to embrace lies—whether about God, yourself, or the world? Confess those to God and ask him to renew your mind.

☞ **Embrace the Truth:** Immerse yourself in Scripture. The Bible is our anchor in a world full of deception. Commit to reading, studying, and applying God’s Word daily.

☞ **Endure firmly:** The pressures to compromise are real, but God has equipped you to stand. Lean on him, stay connected with other believers, and cling to the teachings of Christ.

The truth is under attack and deception is rampant, but the Word and the Spirit will help us to avoid ☞ being led astray. So, **let’s be people who are planted in the truth, pursuing the truth, and proclaiming the truth.**