

**STAND FIRM**

**2 Thessalonians 2:15-17**

**By Andy Manning**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Every once in a while a Christian leader makes the headlines because he has abandoned the faith, or because he has drifted into false teaching.
  - i. Matt Chandler is the pastor of The Village Church in the Dallas, TX area. It is one of the largest churches in the country, and he is one of the most well-known preachers in America. Unfortunately he has gotten caught up in Critical Race Theory and Wokeness. In a sermon in 2018 he said if his church was hiring a pastor, and they were choosing between an Anglo 8 and an African American 7, go with the African American 7. Last time I checked, the Bible teaches that we should treat according to the content of their character, not the color of their skin.
  - ii. Pastor J.D. Greear was elected as the president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2018. But later videos began to surface of him preaching a watered-down version of the gospel. In 2019 he said, "The Bible appears more to whisper on sexual sin compared to its shouts about materialism and religious pride." He was trying to say that according to God, sexual sin is not as bad as other sins, so we need to stop harping on it so much. Last time I checked, in the OT the punishment for sexual sin was execution. The New Testament sexually immoral people will not inherit God's kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-10). Sexual immorality isn't the only sin the Bible condemns, but the Bible doesn't whisper about it. It's a major sin.
  - iii. In 2018 the popular Christian singer, Lauren Daigle, was being interviewed on iHeart Radio. When the host asked her about her views on homosexuality, on whether it is a sin, she answered, "I can't honestly answer on that, in the sense of I have too many people that I love and they are homosexuals. I can't say one way or the other. I'm not God. When people ask questions like that, I just say, 'Read the Bible and find out for yourself. And when you find out let me know because I'm learning too.'" Come on, man. The Bible is extremely clear about the sinfulness of homosexuality. I'm embarrassed for her home church where she grew up. This is an indictment against them for not discipling her well.
2. If Christian leaders fall into false teaching, and sometimes abandon the faith, then people in the pews do as well.
  - i. In the first couple of years of the church, there was a man in our church whose family got sucked into the false teachings of the Apostolic Church. The Apostolics deny the Trinity, they demand that you get baptized in the name of Jesus only, they demand that you speak in tongues to be saved,

- and they demand that you follow all kinds of man-made holiness rules about dress-code. So, we warned him about the Apostolics. We pointed out their false teachings, and showed him in the Bible why they were wrong. But after a while, the pull of his family was too strong, and he fell. He left our church and joined the Apostolic church.
- ii. I've heard stories of college students who were raised in church, but when they went to college they succumbed to the lies of atheism, and communism, and wokeism, and environmental alarmism, and Darwinian evolution.
  - 3. This is why the apostle Paul was always writing to the churches to "stand firm in the faith." Look at what he says in 2 Thessalonians 2:15-17.

## II. TEXT

- 1. **2 Thessalonians 2:15-17** "15 So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold to the traditions you were taught, whether by what we said or what we wrote. 16 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal encouragement and good hope by grace, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good work and word."
  - i. "Stand firm." Paul used this phrase nine times in his letters. It means to be constant; to persevere; to stand firm in faith and duty. To put it negatively, it means don't fall away from the faith; don't fall away from the truth; don't fall into false teaching. Stand firm!
  - ii. "Hold to the traditions you were taught." The word "traditions" in the Bible refers to doctrines, sometimes the teachings of men, but in this context the teachings of God. Paul is saying, "Hold to sound doctrine."
  - iii. So today my message is to stand firm. Stand firm against false teaching.
  - iv. I want to look at ten false teachings that many Christians in America have fallen into. In most cases it is simply a matter of ignorance. Many Christians don't know what they are supposed to believe; they haven't heard clear Biblical teaching on these subjects.
  - v. Where am I getting these false teachings from?
  - vi. Every two years Ligoneer Ministries and LifeWay Research partner on a nationwide study to evaluate the theological temperature in America. They just released the findings of their 2022 study in September. And it revealed that many evangelicals in America have fallen into false teaching.
  - vii. What is an evangelical? It is word to describe a certain type of Christian. For this study, evangelicals are people who strongly agreed with the following four statements:
    - 1. The Bible is the highest authority for what I believe.
    - 2. It is very important for me personally to encourage non-Christians to trust Jesus Christ as their Savior.

- 3. Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the only sacrifice that could remove the penalty of my sin.
- 4. Only those who trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior receive God's free gift of eternal salvation.
- viii. So according to this definition, we are evangelicals. Churches like ours are evangelical churches.

### III. POPULAR FALSE TEACHINGS

1. **Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not God.**
  - i. According to the study, 43% of evangelicals agree (compared to 30% in 2020).
  - ii. This is what Muslims and many Jews believe.
  - iii. What does the Bible say?
    1. Paul declared that Jesus was "God over all." Rm 9:5
    2. Paul referred to Jesus as "our great God and Savior." Titus 2:13
    3. Peter referred to Jesus as "our God and Savior." 2 Pet 1:1
    4. **Colossians 2:9** "For the entire fullness of God's nature dwells bodily in Christ"
    5. **Hebrews 1:3** "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature"
  - iv. The Bible very clearly states that Jesus is God, co-equal with the Father.
2. **Jesus is the first and greatest being created by God.**
  - i. According to the study, 73% of evangelicals agree with this.
  - ii. This lie is perpetuated by the Mormons who believe that Jesus is the firstborn spirit child of God the Father and God's heavenly wife. He is a created being, so He is not eternal but had a beginning.
  - iii. The Jehovah's Witnesses also teach this false doctrine. They believe that Jesus is not god, not eternal, but was Jehovah's first creation.
  - iv. These false teachings arise out of some mistranslations of the Bible.
    1. **Colossians 1:15** "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."
      - a. "Firstborn" is interpreted to mean that Christ had a beginning; He was created.
      - b. But the word "firstborn" does point to Christ having a beginning. It points to His position of rank, privilege, and authority. In Bible times, the king's firstborn son would receive the kingdom. He had a higher rank, privilege, and authority than everyone else. Notice that the verse says that Christ is the firstborn over all creation. This verse is not a statement about Christ having a beginning, but about Christ being first in rank, privilege, and authority.

2. **John 3:16 (KJV)** “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
    - a. “Begotten” in the dictionary is defined as coming into existence by the process of reproduction. If Christ is begotten, then that sure sounds like He has a beginning.
    - b. The problem is that “begotten” is a terrible translation. The Greek word literally means one and only, unique, one of a kind. This is why none of the modern translations use the word “begotten.”
    - c. **John 3:16 (CSB)** “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”
  - v. The Bible teaches in fact that Jesus is eternal. He never had a beginning. He always was.
  - vi. **John 1:1** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”
- 3. The Holy Spirit is a force but is not a personal being.**
- i. According to the study, 60% of Americans agree.
  - ii. What does the Bible teach?
    1. **John 14:15-17** “15 “If you love me, you will keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever. 17 He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn’t see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you.”
    2. Notice that Jesus refers to Holy Spirit multiple times in this passage not as “It,” but as “He and Him.”
  - iii. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is a personal being. He is God, co-equal with Father and the Son, living inside believers.
- 4. God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.**
- i. According to the study, 56% of evangelicals agree.
  - ii. There is an assumption behind this belief. It is the assumption that all religions are worshiping the same god, but just calling him by different names. Anyone who says that is either not being honest, or is not educated on the different world religions. The world religions do not worship the same God.
  - iii. Let’s just take the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Do they worship the same God? No.
    1. According to Christianity, Jesus Christ is God and is worshiped.
    2. According to Jews, Jesus is not God.

- 3. According to Muslims, Jesus was a great prophet, but not as great as Muhammad, and definitely not God.
    - 4. They are not worshiping the same God.
  - iv. In the Old Testament, did God accept the worship of the Canaanites? Of course not. They were not worshiping God by another name. They were worshiping false gods. They were worshiping idols.
  - v. The Bible is very clear that there is only one true God, we must only worship Him, and the only way to heaven is through faith in Jesus Christ.
  - vi. **John 14:6** Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.
- 5. The Bible, like all sacred writings, contains helpful accounts of ancient myths but is not literally true.**
- i. According to the study, 26% of evangelicals agree.
  - ii. What does the Bible say?
    - 1. **2 Timothy 3:16** “All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness”
    - 2. Christians hold two core beliefs about the Bible:
      - a. The inspiration of Scripture. God is the author of the Bible. Every word. This doctrine is often called the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture. Verbal means word, and plenary means all. The entire Bible, Genesis to Revelation, was authored by God – every single word.
      - b. The inerrancy of Scripture. The Bible is true without any mixture of error. If the first is true – God is the author of the Bible – and He does not lie or make mistakes, then every word of the Bible is true.
  - iii. So, should take the Bible literally? We should read the Bible like any other book. Those parts that are meant to be literal should be taken literally, and those parts that are meant to be take figuratively should be taken figuratively.
    - 1. The creation story in the book of Genesis is written as a literal history of the origin of the universe. It is to be take literally.
    - 2. But when Jesus claimed to be the door, clearly He was being symbolic. That is to be take figuratively.
- 6. Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.**
- i. According to the study, 57% of evangelicals agree.
  - ii. What does the Bible say?
    - 1. **Romans 3:23** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
    - 2. **Romans 3:10-12** “There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have

turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.”

- iii. This is an essential doctrine. People are not just a little sinful. We are deeply sinful. The Bible says that we are so sinful we deserve hell. Nobody is good enough to deserve heaven. The only way we can be saved is through Jesus Christ. God sent Christ to pay the penalty for our sins on the cross. If we will turn from our sins and put our faith in Jesus, then we can be saved. If you could be good enough to go to heaven, then Jesus died for nothing.

## 7. Gender identity is a matter of choice.

- i. According to the study, 37% of evangelicals agree.
- ii. In other words, many Christians believe that a man can transition into a woman, and a woman can transition into a man. They believe that a man can have a baby. They believe that men should be allowed to use the women’s restroom and compete in women’s sports.
- iii. What does the Bible say?
- iv. **Matthew 19:4-6** 4 “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that he who created them in the beginning made them male and female, 5 and he also said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?, 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”
- v. There are only two genders – male and female – not multiple. Gender is not a matter of choice, but of creation. God made you male or female, and this coincides with your biology.
- vi. The body God gave you is not to be despised and mutilated. It is God’s way of teaching us about ourselves. If God has given a male body, then you are a male, and you have been formed and fashioned to have sexual relations with a female.

## 8. The Bible’s condemnation of homosexual behavior doesn’t apply today.

- i. According to the study 28% of evangelicals agree.
- ii. What does the Bible say?
- iii. **1 Corinthians 6:9-10** “9 Don’t you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolaters, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, 10 no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God’s kingdom.”
- iv. If we’re going to say that the Bible’s teaching on homosexuality is outdated, then we have to say the same thing about sexual immorality, greed, drunkenness, stealing, greed, and verbal abuse.
- v. The Bible is crystal clear that homosexuality is a sin, and that marriage is the union of a man and a woman.

vi. **Robert Jeffress** “We cannot condone what God has condemned.”

**9. Modern science disproves the Bible.**

- i. According to the study, 30% of evangelicals agree.
- ii. What does the Bible say?
- iii. **Psalm 19:7-8** “The instruction of the Lord is perfect, renewing one’s life; the testimony of the Lord is trustworthy, making the inexperienced wise. The precepts of the Lord are right, making the heart glad; the command of the Lord is radiant, making the eyes light up.”
- iv. Science has not disproven the Bible.
- v. Not only has science not disproven the Bible, but the founders of modern science were Christians.
- vi. **Stephen Meyer** “the giants who established modern science—astronomer Johannes Kepler, chemist Robert Boyle, physicist Sir Isaac Newton and others—were deeply religious men. They didn’t see any conflict between science and religion. On the contrary: they thought that by doing science, they were discovering God’s design and revealing it to mankind.”
- vii. Cambridge historian of science Joseph Needham argues that it was Christianity that made it possible for the scientific revolution in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- viii. Science provides the best arguments for the existence of God and the truthfulness of the Bible. For example, scientists have discovered that the material universe – matter, space, time, and energy – had a beginning. They know this because they found that the universe is expanding outward like a big great balloon. So scientists believe the universe had a beginning. And scientists know that something can’t come from nothing. There had to be something that existed before the universe, something outside of space, time, matter, and energy, to create the universe. So, science proves the Bible; it doesn’t disprove it.

**10. Christians should be silent on issues of politics.**

- i. According to the study, 30% of evangelicals agree.
- ii. The same people say that preachers shouldn’t preach about politics.  
Here’s what I have to say about it. If God cares about it, then I need to preach about it. And if the Bible addresses it, then I need to preach about it. God cares about politics, and the Bible addresses it.
- iii. The Bible has a ton to say about politics. The first five books are called the law. Two books of the Bible are called “Kings.” Romans 13 is written about the purpose of government, and how Christians should relate to the government.
- iv. Think of how discriminatory and prejudiced it is to say that Christians should be silent on issues of politics. Say that about any other group, and you’ll see how crazy it is. What if we said...

1. Atheists should be silent about politics.
  2. Blacks should be silent about politics.
  3. Women should be silent about politics.
  4. Gays should be silent about politics.
- v. The people who want Christians to be silent about politics have an agenda. They have a vision for our country. They want to lead our nation away from its Judeo-Christian roots. They want to destroy the family. They want to destroy traditional marriage. They want to destroy capitalism. They want to destroy our freedoms. They want to destroy the freedom of religion, the freedom of speech, the right to bear arms. They want to destroy traditional values and morality. And there's only one thing that stands in their way – committed Christians. So, they have convinced many people, including many Christians, that Christians should be silent.
- vi. But we refuse to be silent because evil prevails when good people do nothing. We refuse to be silent because freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We refuse to be silent because God created government; and the Bible is the best source of wisdom for how a good government should operate. The Bible is the best guide for justice and fairness and morality. We refuse to be silent because if it weren't for Christianity and the Bible, the United States wouldn't exist. If it weren't for Christians, the United States wouldn't be the greatest nation in the world.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

1. Today false teaching abounds. You can find it on the TV, on the internet, in our public schools and universities. And so I echo the words of Paul from 2,000 years ago: Stand firm and hold to sound doctrine.
2. **Booker T. Washington** "A lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right, and evil doesn't become good just because it's accepted by a majority."