

“WEEBLES WOBBLE...”

November 9, 2025 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Have you ever listened to an **engineer** describe their project: For example, “In order for the object to work as intended, the shape must have a bottom which is a more or less smooth hemisphere and from the central vertical axis the shape must be nearly cylindrically symmetrical. Next, the shape must be filled with two basic types of unmixed solids, and the volume of the lighter solid must be greater than that of the heavier solid. Next, the overall shape must have constant positive curvature. Next, the relationship between the heavy solid and the light solid must be such that any orientation of the object off of the vertical axis line must cause the object's centroid to raise and to become offset. Lastly, the object must have only one position in which it can achieve stable mechanical equilibrium.”

Just in case you don't understand mechanical engineering language what I am describing to you is the physics behind the children's toy called a **Weeble**. **Weebles** are a range of children's roly-poly toys that was introduced in 1971 by the toy company Playskool.

The **Weebles** are egg-shaped toys designed with a weighted bottom-center. When tilted, the center of mass is raised, and upon release, gravity returns the toy to its original upright position. This prompted the advertising catchphrase "**Weebles wobble, but they don't fall down**". Over the years **Weebles** have been designed with a variety of shapes, including some designed to look like people or animals. The whole idea

behind the toy is no matter how hard a child knocks a Weeble around, they always return to their upright centered position.

When we read the Apostle Paul's second letter to the church in Thessalonica, we quickly discover the Christians there are being knocked around. They are in an emotional and spiritual crisis, "**shaken in mind and alarmed**", as Paul writes. The words he uses border on hysteria. The people are anxious and wobbling in their faith. Paul writes this letter to help them stop wobbling, right themselves, and recenter the church in Christ. These are valuable words because who among us hasn't experienced wobbling in our faith and life? There are times we fall down, need help back up and be recentered in Christ. Let's listen then to Paul's guidance.

I. FAKE NEWS

In 1916, the price of eggs having risen to an unprecedented 80 cents a dozen in some parts of the country, the women of America decided to boycott eggs. For instance, the Milwaukee club women appealed to members to stop buying eggs for six weeks. Mrs. Ellis Logan began collecting signatures on a petition to Washington to ask Congress to provide relief from the high cost of America's morning eggs.

Then on Friday, December 8 of that year, an apparent victory was in sight. Headlines appeared in the Chicago newspapers "**Eggs Drop Ten Cents**" and "**Cost of Living Smashed**" but the following day, it became apparent that this was nothing but **fake news** since the retail grocers in the city continued selling eggs at the same price. It was alleged that the

newspapers were in cahoots with the food retailers and the cost of eggs continued to rise steadily in the years following the 1916 boycotts.

I tell you that story because even though **Fake news** became a buzz word in recent years, it has been going throughout history. Disinformation, whether it be intentional or unintentional causes harm by distorting reality, loss of reputation, and misrepresentation of a product's safety or claims. The prevalence of fake news has been exacerbated by the use of social media.

Fake news is what's upsetting the Church in Thessalonica. Apparently, they had received a report that the second coming of Christ had already taken place, and somehow, they didn't make the cut. The people thought they had been **Left Behind**, rejected as unworthy of God's salvation. It left the church wobbling. Thus, Paul writes this second letter to disabuse them of that notion. He explains that Christ will return on God's timetable and that certain things must first occur. But Paul's main agenda with this letter is not to give its recipients a checklist of events that must precede the Parousia, but to focus them on the salvation they have already received through Jesus.

While we might laugh at the Thessalonian's gullibility, we shouldn't laugh too hard. How many doomsday reports have we bought into? How anxious do we get over news reports, virus outbreaks, recessions, asteroids hitting the earth, climate change, nuclear plant meltdowns, food poisoning, hurricanes, and religious nuts predicting the

end of the world? How do we know which news is real and which is fake? It can be difficult to tell. Perhaps we need some guidelines too.

II. BE ON GUARD

Paul's first advice to the church is "Be on **guard.**" **"Let no one deceive you in any way, for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction. He opposes and exalts himself above every so called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God."**

Paul said be on guard, don't be naïve, because there is evil in this world. Be on guard by learning to discern between good and evil. Paul gives us some guidance here. For instance, evil thrives on chaos, lies, strife, manipulation, deception and destruction, usually to gain power and wealth. Evil doesn't care about people but wants to convince them it does. Paul labels this evil as rebellion and lawlessness, no respecter of the Law. The rebellion isn't just about denying or opposing God, but rather to put themselves in place of God. Beware of those especially in leadership and power who exalt themselves. Those who believe they have all the answers, know what's best for everyone, who in essence proclaim they are the savior of the church, the country, and even the world.

Essentially, Paul is telling the church not to be naïve and taken in by every story that comes down the line. Know that there are forces that oppose God's goodness and life-giving power. But fret not. God will ultimately triumph and can even work in the chaos of life.

III. GOD REACHES OUT TO US

Recently, I rewatched director Peter Jackson's three **Lord of the Rings** movies, which are based on J.R. Tolkien's novels. In one of the final scenes, two men called Hobbits, have completed their mission to destroy a ring of evil power by throwing it into the volcano from which the ring was created. In the process, the one called Frodo falls over the cliff and is hanging on by one hand as the lava sputters and steams below him. His faithful friend Sam stretches out his hand from above and cries out, **"Don't you let go. Take my hand. Reach!"** Frodo, with his last bit of strength, launches himself upward as Sam grabs his arm and pulls him to safety.

Paul abruptly turns from the topic of evil and writes, **"But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. For this purpose he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

I know, Paul packs a lot in a couple sentences, but the basic idea is that God is like Sam. Jesus has reached over the precipice we were at risk of falling into and pulled us into the safety of his love and glory and grace and kingdom. Regardless of when Jesus returns, we have already obtained salvation. God has made this so by taking the initiative and reaching down to us because we could not reach up to solid ground on our own. The good news of the gospel is life does not end in time but in eternity and glory.

No matter what happens in this life we can rejoice, because God is holding on to us and will not let go. “**Because of this Paul says I give thanks to God...**” So stop fretting and take comfort in the truth.

IV. PARTICIPATION REQUIRED

I have always been fascinated with how people learn. It is inspiring to see a struggling student, who has been tutored in how to study, take notes, and read, go from a **C average to getting A's**. Often the struggle with learning is we haven't been taught how to learn, meaning understanding how our brains process and store information. There are a lot of misconceptions about this activity. For instance:

- **Rereading and highlighting are enough**
 - **The misconception:** Simply reading through notes and textbooks or underlining important sentences is an effective way to learn.
 - **The reality:** These are passive activities that create a "false sense of competence" or familiarity, tricking your brain into thinking it knows the information well. In reality, this process does not help with genuine recall or deep understanding.
- **Cramming is an effective strategy**
 - **The misconception:** Waiting until the last minute and studying intensely for hours (cramming) is the most efficient way to prepare for a test.
 - **The reality:** Cramming stores information in your short-term, or working, memory, which means you will likely forget it

soon after the **exam**. A far more effective method is called **spaced repetition**, which involves reviewing material in shorter, repeated sessions over an extended period. This practice moves information into your long-term memory for better retention.

Paul was concerned about learning also. Instead of fretting, Paul tells the Thessalonians, “...**stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us,**” Part of standing firm in our faith is understanding our faith. That understanding or learning provides a firm foundation for the beliefs we trust in. Without it we can be easily deceived, and trip under pressure. One of the reasons most of us are so bad at evangelism is we don’t really know what and why we believe in Jesus Christ. Paul said hold fast to what you were taught.

One of the ways we stand firm in our faith is by regularly reading our Bible, but I think we need to read it with the intention of learning. I like to take one of Paul’s pastoral letters and read it all the way through. It enables me to see the flow of the letter; however, it doesn’t really help me learn or gain much. To truly benefit from the reading of scripture we need to meditate on it. That means we dwell on the words, think about what they mean, ask God what he may be saying to us, and then apply those learnings to our life. By going through this process we develop a living faith and a firm foundation. When the world throws its stuff at us, we may wobble but we are able to stand our ground.

V. GET TO WORK

Over a year ago my daughter asked me to build her a **kitchen island**. Last Saturday, I began this process. Nothing like procrastinating! I don't know about your experience, but there is something wonderful about working with my hands and creating something from imagination and scratch. Even though I find woodworking relaxing and rewarding, it is still work. I don't do it when I'm tired because it takes up my full concentration plus, I hate making costly mistakes. I need to be present in the moment, not thinking about all the other items on my to do list.

Paul ends this section with these words, “**...comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.**” Instead of sitting around worrying about the future get to work. There is nothing quite like putting our faith into action that quiets the noise of the world. When we are doing kingdom work with all our heart, soul, and body we are in the present moment not the anxious moments.

When we embrace the firm foundation of our faith and apply it to the kingdom work, we bear witness to our anxious world an unshakeable faith, that there is another way to live, and that there is a God who not only holds us but is holding this world together. I take comfort in knowing that we don't need to wobble over every news report and threat because the future is in good hands. We need to be discerning, meditating, and get to work. I think we can handle that. Amen.

First Presbyterian Church in Hawley
Sunday, November 9, 2025
Second Scripture Lesson

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5

¹ As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters,

² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here.

³ Let no one deceive you in any way, for that day will not come unless the rebellion comes first and the lawless one is revealed, the one destined for destruction.

⁴ He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God.

⁵ Do you not remember that I told you these things when I was still with you?

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17

¹³ But we must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

¹⁴ For this purpose he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by our letter.

¹⁶ Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and through grace gave us eternal comfort and good hope,

¹⁷ comfort your hearts and strengthen them in every good work and word.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be To God.