

2 THESSALONIANS CHAPTER 2

LESSON 8

STAND FAST – IN GOOD TIMES

21 March 2014

REVIEW: Believers in Thessalonica were initially persecuted severely for their faith in Jesus Christ. Gradually, the persecution decreased and they began to experience times of peace and safety. They were taught that the biblical order of events for believers was: 1) persecution. 2) The coming of the Lord. 3) A time of peace. Since they were in a time of peace, they worried that they had missed the coming of the Lord. Paul writes to assure them that those events are still future and that they should enjoy the time of peace as long as they can, but not to grow careless in their Christianity. He tells them to stand fast even in the good times.

THEME: Today, we may not be able to relate to the parts of this epistle that speak of persecution—because we've never had to face any real persecution. But we certainly can understand the difficulties of maintaining our Christian fervency when life is easy. We know how hard it is to be passionate about leading lost souls to Jesus Christ when it seems like everything is okay without Him at the present time. We know what it is to get careless about holiness and lean back toward our old worldly ways because we know we'll go to Heaven regardless of how we live. But Paul warns us that we need to stand fast even in the good times. Be steadfast when you don't have to be. Be fervent when it's not required of you. Be on guard when you're not under attack.

HISTORY: **Acts 17:1-6.** Paul preached the Gospel in the synagogue in Thessalonica. Many people were saved. The Jews became envious and began to persecute these Christians with support from the rulers of the city.

1 Thessalonians 1:5-8. The believers were persecuted and afflicted, but it didn't discourage them. In fact, they got stronger.

1 Thessalonians 3:2-4. Paul sent Timothy to establish and strengthen the Thessalonian believers so that they would stand fast in all their afflictions and tribulations and keep serving the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. They were troubled, thinking that they had somehow missed the coming of the Lord because they were no longer persecuted. Paul reassures them that those future events had not yet taken place. The Antichrist had not been revealed yet (vs. 8).

TEXT: **2 Thessalonians 2:14-17.** You have a great future. You're going to be with the Lord Jesus Christ! Therefore, don't let the easy times cause you to slack off. Stand fast! Don't move from your position.

LESSON: It's very hard to stand fast when it doesn't cost you anything; much harder than standing fast when you are being persecuted or experiencing some sort of trial. It's very difficult to stay right when you have freedom to do wrong.

Historically, whenever Christians are challenged or persecuted, they get much stronger.

Ephesians 4:14-15. We have a tendency to be blown about by "every wind of doctrine." Therefore, we'd better make sure we're well grounded so we don't move. Stay with Jesus! Stay with the Bible!

Romans 12:2. When the world is not persecuting you, you may be inclined to conform to its ways (music, dress, speech, character) because you think, "They're not that bad, they're not bothering me." You'd better look carefully at yourself if you are one who likes to say, "It's not that bad." Learn to keep standing for what's right—when what's wrong isn't hurting you.

CHALLENGE: Be as sold out to God in your freedom and ease—as Christians are in other parts of the world where their faith may cost them their lives.

Genesis 49:3-4. Don't be "unstable as water." Water doesn't have its own shape. It conforms to the shape of any shape that you pour it into. It is easily moved and molded by the outside pressure that is placed upon it. It "fits in." --Don't fit in. Stand fast.
