

STANDING FIRM

Part Eight: *perseverance*

October 22, 2023

This fall, we're studying the Apostle Paul's letters to the Thessalonians to learn how to stand firm in the Lord. Stand firm is a Greek military term that means not to retreat when the enemy attacks. Satan was using false teachers and persecution to get the young Christians in Thessalonica to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ. But the Thessalonians' faith in the Lord remained strong!

In 2 Thessalonians 1:1-2, Paul greets the church in Thessalonica.

Paul's greeting in his 2nd letter to the Thessalonians is almost identical to his greeting in his first letter to the church. He tells the Thessalonians they have a spiritual union with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4; Gal. 2:20), and he gives the church his typical blessing.

In Vs. 3-4, Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians.

1st – Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians' flourishing faith. Vs. 3a

What was causing the Thessalonians to trust the Lord more and more each day?

- Trials! God uses trials to push us to trust Him for all our needs (James 1:2-4).

2nd – Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians' growing love. Vs. 3b

What is love?

- Love is sacrificial service.

Jesus commanded His followers to love one another as He loved (John 13:34-35). Christ was a sacrificial servant, and He expects us to be sacrificial servants (1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 5:25)!

3rd – Paul thanks God for the Thessalonians' perseverance. Vs. 4

Paul boasted to other churches about how the Thessalonians refused to renounce their faith in Christ or abandon hope in His return.

In Vs. 5-10, Paul uses the justice of God to encourage the suffering church.

1st - Paul tells the Thessalonians that their faithfulness to God during persecution is proof they are worthy of God's kingdom. Vs. 5

Suffering did not save the Thessalonians, but their faithfulness to God during great persecution was evidence that they were Christians and worthy to live in His kingdom (See: 1 Peter 1:3-9).

2nd – Paul tells the Thessalonians that God will repay those who persecute them. Vs. 6

It is just (right) for our perfectly righteous God to reward believers with Heaven, and it is just (right) for our perfectly righteous God to punish unbelievers with Hell. God is just to condemn those who reject Him (Romans 1:16-3:19).

3rd – Paul tells the Thessalonians that God will give them rest when Jesus returns. Vs. 7-9

Paul tells the young believers that God will give them relief from persecution when Jesus returns to earth to judge those who have rejected God and the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

What is eternal destruction?

- Eternal destruction means to lose forever everything worthwhile in your life (1 Tim. 6:9).

Rejectors of God and the Gospel will not cease to exist, but they will experience a ruined life. Unbelievers will be separated forever from love, joy, or peace. They will spend eternity in darkness, away from God's glorious splendor and majesty (Matt. 25:46; Rom. 2:5-9).

4th – Paul tells the Thessalonians they will glorify Jesus. Vs. 10

Jesus will receive glory from all believers when He returns to earth in power at the end of the Tribulation to judge the wicked and set up His earthly kingdom (Rev. 19:11–20:4).

In Vs. 11-12, Paul tells the Thessalonians how he prays for them.

Paul tells the new Christians he is asking God to enable them to live worthy of their salvation and empower them to do God's good things their faith prompts them to do. Then, Jesus will be honored!

Takeaways...

1. God wants His children to have flourishing faith, growing love, and perseverance.
2. God is just – He will reward believers with eternal life in Heaven and punish unbelievers with eternal destruction in Hell.
3. Christians must look forward to the return of Christ to live for Him.