

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Take a Stand 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13 Part 2

Before a child can walk, he must learn to stand. This is also true in the spiritual arena. Before a Christian can walk victoriously, before a Christian can walk triumphantly he or she must have learned how to stand.

The New Testament frequently exhorts Christians to do this.

1 Cor. 16:13 “Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”

Gal. 5:1 “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”

Phil. 1:27 “Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

Phil. 4:1 “Therefore, my beloved brethren, whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.”

2 Thess. 2:15 “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.”

There are contrary forces continually pressing up against us. When those opposing forces strike us we must be prepared to stand firm. If we are unable to stand in the midst of these opposing forces we will never be able to enjoy a fruitful walk.

It could be that as a young person you know that the Lord would have you not to be disobedient to your parents but this may not be so easy to do. It may be some night when you want to go and do something with your friends, that your parents come to you and ask you to stay home and babysit your younger brother. At that moment in time you might feel that spirit of rebellion welling up within you, but you must for the Lord sake learn to stand against it.

It might be that you are working very hard at your job while others around you are not. It might be that you find yourself not only having to do your work but their work as well. In the midst of this you might feel a spirit of bitterness welling up within you but you must for the Lord sake learn to stand against it.

There are believers that approach their Christian life very casually. It is as if they were saying I am willing to live the Christian life as long as I do not have to buffet my body and make it my slave. I am willing to follow Jesus as long as I do not have to strive, run, or fight. We cannot live the Christian life in neutral.

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We must be willing to put our Christian life into gear and that means understanding that we must prepare ourselves to stand against those forces that would oppose us and the Lord's will.

What have you stood against this week? What have you stood against today? What are you standing against at this very moment? If we are going to walk, we need to learn to stand. WE NEED TO LEARN TO BE VICTORIOUS IN THE MOMENT.

At the time of this writing the Thessalonians were experiencing a persecution orchestrated by unbelieving Jews within their community. Within a few years the first Roman persecution under Nero would come cascading down upon the Thessalonians as well as the whole of the church throughout the Roman Empire.

When we come to Christ we cannot naively assume that our lives will be free of difficulty. The Scriptures tell us very clearly that we do not enter the kingdom of God accept through many trials. When those trials, those troubles, those temptations come we must be prepared to stand.

Paul was concerned for the Thessalonians. He had seen the Thessalonians make professions of faith. He had seen the Thessalonians nurtured in the Word of God by himself and his companions. But before he could see them actually being able to stand alone under the onslaught of the world, the flesh and the devil he and his companions were torn away from them.

But just because he is not with them it does not mean that he will be passive. In chapter 3 he seeks to minister to the Thessalonians in two different ways. First of all by SENDING A HELPER. We began to examine this ministry last week in **VV. 1-10**.

As we discovered in **VV. 1-5** Paul sent Timothy to the Thessalonians because he thought it would be best for them. He sent him in order.

To strengthen and encourage. **V. 2 “And we sent Timothy, our brother and God’s fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.”**

To remind that troubles are inevitable. **V. 3-4 “So that no man may be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. (4) For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.”**

To see how they were doing. **V. 5 “For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain.”** Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica apparently not really knowing what Timothy would find. Would they be standing or would they have been swept away. He had thought perhaps that the tempter had tempted them and that their labor had been in vain.

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HOW WOULD THAT HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED?

The first wave of opposition effecting the Thessalonian church was very frontal a direct assault. We see this recorded for us in **Acts 17**.

“Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apolonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. (2) And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths, reasoned with them from Scriptures. (3) Explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.” (4) And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a great multitude of the God-fearing Greeks, and a number of the leading women. (5) But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and coming upon the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. (6) And when they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; (7) And Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” (8) And they stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. (9) And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them. Certainly Paul would see these actions on the part of these particular Jews to be orchestrated by Satan. Paul saw the hand of Satan in Thessalonica against the church.

In this historical incident we see a mob scene. A number of Thessalonian believers were caught up in a mob action. Do you feel that they might have felt threatened. If you were in this particular situation would you have felt threatened? You might say well this was an isolated incident. Perhaps the Jews antagonism would diminish with time. This is not what we see the passage go on to say. **(10)“ And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. (11) Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scripture daily, to see whether these things were so. (12) Many of them therefore believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. (13) But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also , they came there likewise, agitating and stirring up the crowds.”**

Though these actions were directed at Paul and his companions we would have to assume that a similar kind of hostility would have had to be directed at the Thessalonian believers as well.

Certainly you would have to think that they would be discriminated against. Perhaps when they went for a job interview they would be turned away. Perhaps when they tried to find housing they would be denied. If they were in business, people would no longer come to them. It might be that friends and family members would no longer seek them out. From Paul’s statements, certainly, we would have to assume that Paul considered a very hostile environment continued to be present in Thessalonica and that the people were suffering under it.

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The Thessalonians were certainly under some form of direct assault in Thessalonica because of their faith. But it appears that Satan's primary strategy was not a direct assault, although certainly that was present, but rather an indirect assault.

PRIMARY STRATEGY WAS INDIRECT ASSAULT

Paul was not only concerned that when Timothy got to Thessalonica that he might not find a church, but that when Timothy got there he might find a church who had rejected him. This of course would leave the church exposed to false teachers and eventual defection from the faith.

Was the church still standing? Were they able to endure the onslaught against them? Timothy brought him the report and Paul is responding to that report in these next few verses.

Timothy's report was not the report he feared but rather the report that he hoped for. Timothy brought him good news. **V. 6 “But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you.”**

The word “good news” (EUANGELIZOD) you think that Paul was excited by the news that Timothy brought? This is the only time that this word is used in the N.T. to refer to anything other than the Gospel. Why is he so excited?

1. Because Timothy reports back concerning their faith. Look at **V. 6 “has brought us good news of your faith.”** In spite of all that they were enduring they still embraced the message that Jesus Christ was the Son of God came to earth.
2. Because of their love **“has brought us good news of your love.”** In spite of all that they were enduring. They continued to love one another. And more specifically they had a continuing affection for Paul and his friends
3. Because they thought kindly of Paul and his friends **“and that you always think kindly of us.”**
4. Because they longed to see Paul and his friends **“longing to see us just a we also long to see you.”**

Was this good news important to him? Look at **V. 7 “For this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith.”** Paul and his friends were continually being buffeted. They were continually being opposed. I want you to know that there is not a believer alive that is not being buffeting by Satanic forces. I am standing before you this morning and I am willing to bear witness before you to the fact that I am being buffeted. I am put in situations continually that I can fall in the snare of the devil. I am being buffeted by envy, pride, discouragement, lust, anger. I am begin buffeted with external matters that have nothing to do with me at all, but that come upon me. And all this was true of Paul as well. Paul was also being buffeted, but in spite of his distresses and his afflictions he was still standing and the Thessalonians themselves were assisting him.

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Paul was concerned that they would be standing in the midst of all their trials. And he sent Timothy to assist them in that way. But what is ironic is the fact that the report back from the Thessalonians becomes a means which in itself helps Paul and his friends stand. Sometimes people ask who encourages you? People walking with the Lord encourage me.

Why? Look at V. 8 **“For now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord.”** This is what it is all about. This is what gives meaning to my life. This is what should give meaning to your life. The very best investment that we can make with our lives is in the spiritual welfare of people. The greatest joy that we can ever experience in life is being privileged to see the return on that investment.

Can this really be all that fulfilling? Look at V. 9 **“For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,.”** This report fires Paul up. Paul becomes even more determined after Timothy’s report to get to Thessalonica. Look at V. 10 **“as we night and day keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith.”**

Notice the frequency. Night and day. Notice the fervency most earnestly. Notice the focus. They keep praying. Praying for what? That they might see your face complete what is lacking in your faith. Or in other words spiritual growth.

CONCLUSION

Paul wants to know if the Thessalonians have learned to stand in the midst of opposing forces. Therefore Paul sent Timothy to encourage and strengthen the Thessalonians. Paul sends Timothy to remind them that trials are inevitable. Paul sends Timothy to find out how they are doing.

Timothy brings back “Good News.” It was good news.

Because of the report concerning their faith.

Because of the report concerning their love

Because of the report concerning their kind feeling toward Paul.

Because of the report concerning their desire to see Paul.

The Thessalonians had learned to stand! Have you? Are you standing firm this morning. Could someone like Timothy be able to observe your life, and see your continuing faith in the gospel and your genuine love for the saints?