

Stand Firm and Hold Fast

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and go to 2 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians 2 we're going to study this morning the whole chapter and I wanted to direct our attention a bit more on the details about in times given the circumstances in our world today because we started, well, excuse me, I'll restate that. We repeated

Matthew chapter 24 verses 1 through 35 last Sunday and we started that nine weeks ago in Matthew chapter 24.

So I thought, well, let's kind of do a little bit of digression, but a little bit more of information. It's what we call progressive revelation. Something is revealed in the Old Testament and then you get more fuller information about this as you come to the New Testament and then more fuller as you come later on to the New Testament until you have a greater amount of understanding of what's going on in the book of Revelation, especially in regards to end times.

So let's read 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. We're going to do the whole chapter this morning. Let's read it and then we will dive in. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2.

Paul says, Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him that you may not be quickly shaken from your mind or be disturbed either by a spirit or a word or a letter as if from us to the effect of the day of the Lord has come.

[2:12] Let no one in any way deceive you for unless the apostasy comes first. And the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God displaying himself as being God.

Verse 5. Do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now so that in his time he may be revealed for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work only he who restrains is until he's taken out of the way.

And then, verse 8 That lawless son will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of his mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of his coming.

The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan with all power and signs and false wonders and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.

And for this reason, verse 11 God sent upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe the lie nor that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness.

[3:36] But we, verse 13 should always give thanks to God for you brethren beloved by the Lord because God has chosen you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the spirit and faith and the truth.

And it was for this he called you through our gospel nor that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then brethren stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught whether by word or by letter from us.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father who's loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace comfort and strength in your hearts in every good work and word. Yesterday Chris and I celebrated we've been married for 28 years. Yes, yes. Hooray for her that she actually she actually put up with me for 28 years.

Poor thing. We've known each other for 36 years. It's going to be 36 years since we were 12. And there's been great times in our marriage and for those of you who have been married you know that there's great times and there's hard times too.

[5:05] There's difficult times. Conflicts. Struggles. And it's in those hard times where we need to remember the covenants the commitment the promise that we've made to Christ to each other.

It's in those hard times where you're holding fast you gotta stand strong. It's in the hard and difficult times where we as Christians need to stand firm and hold fast to the gospel truth.

When everything around us in our world is screaming at us to give up and throw in the towel or to respond in fear and anxiety worry panic now is not the perfect time to panic.

And one of those reasons that we can stand firm and hold fast is the return of Christ. That's only one reason that Paul's gonna give us today. But I titled the message if there's anything you get out of this you saw as I emphasize there in verse 15 stand firm and hold fast fast there in verse 15 so then brethren stand firm and hold fast we'll look at that more in detail in a moment.

This chapter is about us standing firm and holding fast as Christians stand firm and hold fast longer this is kind of put the message in one statement because excuse me Jesus will return because God loves us and because we will share in Christ's glory we must stand firm and hold fast and know this God will help us stand firm and hold fast.

[7:08] We need to ask pray ask for his help. That's the message today because Jesus will return because God loves us and because we'll share in Christ's glory we must stand firm and hold fast and God will help us to do that.

So if you want to take a nap now you can do that because that's the message in a nutshell. So again I want to take some more time and give a little bit more details about end times given the circumstances in our world today.

Now do I believe the end of the world is happening right now? No not necessarily I don't. Yet realize we are in the last days because Christ has come.

When Jesus came he inaugurated the messianic age or the last days so his return can be at any time but today we're going to see some key aspects for us to look for so we can be better prepared for the return of our Lord.

So this is not the end. This is not the end of the world. Yet realize this every single event in history that's happening right now is all moving in a direction to the return of Jesus.

[8:42] Everything. Everything. All these little details all the big events that are happening everything is moving in one direction to the coming of Christ.

So is it the end of the world? No. But yet realize everything is moving to the end of the world. So then it kind of is right? See what I mean? Paul starts here with the reasons for us to stand firm and hold fast.

We'll look at that in just a moment but notice reason number one. Because Jesus will return dot dot dot verses 1 through 12. Because Jesus will return notice how he begins this part verse 1 now we request you brethren with regards to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the gathering together to him.

Notice how this corresponds to Matthew chapter 24 verse 29 to 31 which we looked at last week which speaks about Christ's coming and then the gathering of the elect.

You see that? So Paul's doing it in the exact order that Jesus talked about in Matthew 24. He's going to come gather the elect. Paul says about the coming of our Lord and the gathering of his elect.

[10:09] Gathering of us now specifically. And he says that you may not be quickly shaken verse 2 from your mind or disturbed either by spirit or message or letter word to the fact that the day of the Lord has come.

It's clear some were teaching in the church maybe that the day of the Lord had already come and they missed it somehow. Oh man missed it.

Man I thought it was I don't know. They were shaken in their mind. He says no no don't be shaken in your mind or by a word or a letter.

Then he says spirits in other words it means like some type of revelation that had come from Paul other than what he had instructed them previously.

Paul needed to clarify the information for them thinking that the day of the Lord has come. Now there's much debate as to what this phrase means and really depends on the context which drives the specific aspect of what's being mentioned.

[11:21] It seems here when Paul says the day of the Lord Paul spoke holistically of Jesus coming gathering the elect judgment etc.

In other words the coming judgment and the signs that precede that. So it seems like he means here. But however what he's talking about notice what he says in verse 3 don't be deceived let no

one in any way deceive you because two events must happen first.

He says here in verse 3 unless the apostasy comes first. So two events must happen number one the apostasy comes.

This corresponds as well with what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 24 verse 9 to 10. By the way I'm going to keep referring to that in this first point because Jesus will return.

Matthew chapter 24 Matthew chapter 24 Matthew chapter 24 Paul is giving clear revelation as to what Jesus meant. There's going to be a huge falling away from the truth.

[12:37] An anti-God wave. We described it last week and nine weeks ago people's love for God and for others would grow cold.

There would be a huge falling away from the truth. The visible church would forsake the gospel truth as betrayers and persecution increases.

So the first event that needs to happen is the apostasy. It's the apostasy.

A huge falling away. But notice he says here number two again verse three and the man of lawlessness is revealed.

The man of lawlessness number two is revealed and notice the characteristics of this man of lawlessness. First lawlessness stands in opposition to God and his law.

[13:46] No law lawlessness. Notice a second aspect of his character the son of destruction there at the end of verse three or the son of perdition or the son of hell which was his destiny.

So he stands in opposition to God lawlessness. He's called the son of destruction. That's his destiny. Notice as well oh wait I have it up here sorry.

He stands in opposition to God and his law. Number two he's called the son of perdition or of hell which was his destiny. Number three he opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God. Verse four or object of worship so that he takes his seat in the temple of God displaying himself as being God which is why he's also given the synonym title of antichrist.

So he opposes and exalts himself over every or over every so-called God or object of worship and even worse he would take his seat in the temple of God and display himself to be God.

[15:07] Now if you know anything about Old Testament prophecy specifically the book of Daniel is exactly what Daniel says in Daniel chapter 11 verse 31 and also Daniel chapter 11 verse 36 to 37 which is the abomination which parallels or Matthew chapter 24 verse 15 remember when Jesus says that when you see the abomination of desolation as is spoken by Daniel the prophet and I mentioned this last week this tells us this means that the temple must be rebuilt in the future.

now mind you some people take temple here to mean the church and understand that we are called the temple of God.

Paul says this in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 21 using the same word but this doesn't make sense in the context taking his seat in the temple of God.

how is that figurative? Not to mention again Daniel chapter 11 makes it clear this would be a literal temple. I also mentioned this last week as well.

Historical desolations anticipate a later future eschatological desolation. When Daniel spoke of this in Daniel chapter 11 he was prophesying something that was going to happen later on which it did in 167 BC Antiochus Epiphanes went into the temple that was rebuilt sacrificed a pig desecrated it that was the abomination it was blasphemous and happened in 70 AD when Jesus predicted this in Matthew chapter 24 was going to happen it happened in 70 AD the Romans came in and desecrated the temple that was blasphemous and it will happen again in the future by this guy this Antichrist this man of lawlessness he will do this he will set himself as the object of worship which is blasphemous he's desecrating the temple so they say temple is figurative here is no warrant it's helpful to look at history though to see what this man would be like in the future was he

[17:49] Antiochus Epiphanes no but he's going to be like him was he Nero no he's going to be like him was he Diocletian the emperor no going to be like him was he one of the popes yes some of our reformed brethren actually thought that the antichrist was going to be one of the popes was he one of the popes no but going to be like him I will say this as well John in the book of Revelation one of the passages Caleb was going to read from we're debating John gives us even fuller revelation of who this guy is he is probably the second beast of Revelation chapter 13 he will definitely be an adversary of God and especially of God's people he will make war with them notice how else he describes the man of lawlessness the son of perdition this antichrist we will drop down to verse 9 for that notice verse 9 the one who's coming is in accord with the activity of Satan with all power and signs and false wonders he's empowered by the dragon

Revelation chapter 13 and he do miracles signs and wonders which parallels what Jesus says in Matthew chapter 24 verse 23 to 24 and then John's full of revelation Revelation chapter 13 verse 13 to 14 so he would perform these signs and wonders he would delude people to accept the lie as truth he'd deceive all it would look so real and it would look so good that if possible Jesus says this in Matthew chapter 24 it could deceive the elect but God keeps his own yet notice what he says here verse 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved so as these who perish they who did not receive the love of the truth they will embrace the deception of antichrist put another way but those who are not chosen before the foundation of the world and who choose to go their own way and thus do not receive the truth they will be deceived by this second beast they will be deceived by this man of lawlessness they will be deceived by antichrist and notice

Paul continues this verse 11 and for this reason what reason that they rejected the love of the truth as to be saved there from the end of verse 10 and for this reason God sent upon them a deluding influence or a powerful working of error to the effect so that they might believe what is false literally the lie which is from the activity of Satan from the dragon and this embracing of the lie will lead them farther and farther away from truth because notice what he says here in verse 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth they willfully rejected God so God brings about a delusion for them to believe the lie they're moving away from the truth the lie that's from antichrist the lawlessness so then therefore what will happen they will be judged who did not believe the truth but instead what did they do they took pleasure in wickedness they willfully chose the pleasure of wickedness so

God would judge them yes God elects people for salvation that's true it's unconditional and though he renders certain everything that happens every little decision has been rendered certain by God he is not responsible for people rejecting the truth you will never see that in the Bible people are culpable people are responsible they should embrace Christ they should trust God they should embrace the gospel but they willfully reject God and his truth they close their minds to the truth and they open their minds to foolishness so this gives us more information characteristics again I'm on that part about the second event that takes place and he's describing this man of lawlessness antichrist and the people follow him he starts describing them now jump back up to verse five if you would

Paul says do you not remember that while I was still with you I was telling you these things he taught them these things he told them about this don't you guys remember and then he says this verse six and you know what restrains him now who's him antichrist man of lawlessness so that in his time he may be revealed so he told them about these things and in teaching them he told them what was holding back the man of lawlessness what was holding back antichrist or what was restraining him well who or what is restraining antichrist who or what is restraining the man of lawlessness I don't know there are actually multiple choices that have been proposed the Thessalonians knew but we don't and notice

[24 : 38] Paul says you guys know what's doing that well why didn't you tell us he doesn't do that and like I said many choices have been proposed I think one commentator counted I think there's nine choices you can choose from one of the better choices is the Holy Spirit but again it's hard to state a case for that so we're just going to let it stand as it stands someone or something is holding back or restraining this man of lawlessness and no it's not Donald Trump either that's not one of the things look at what he does though verse seven for the mystery of lawlessness is already at work well if you know your Bibles he would say oh that sounds familiar lawlessness antichrist is already at work remember what John says in his first letter first epistle first John antichrist has already come it's already here the working is already in the world first John 2 verse 18 the mystery of lawlessness is already at work you see already a lawlessness and an anti-God taking place in our world do you not but once this restrainer is removed notice only he now restrains is until he is taken out of the way whatever the restrainer is he is going to be removed and then verse 8 and then that lawless one will be revealed whom the

Lord will slay with the breath of his mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of his coming he brings us now back to the coming of Jesus the return of our Lord once this restrainer is removed the lawless one will be revealed and the Lord Jesus would personally come to earth and slay this lawless one with his breath and bring him to an end for Matthew we saw that Jesus returned here Paul gives us more information about that coming that when Jesus comes he will slay that lawless

one with the sword of his mouth and then John gives us even more revelation of this the sword of his mouth will slay the second beast the beast and what's called the false prophets there in Revelation chapter 19 verse 20 to 21 so in all these things

Paul has given us one of the biggest reasons why we should stand firm and hold fast Jesus will return he's coming don't fear so number one again reason standing firm and holding fast number one because Jesus will return reason number two and because God loves us look at what he does here in verse 13 but we should always give thanks to God for you on the flip side Paul thank God for the Thessalonian Christians because notice first beloved excuse me brethren beloved by the Lord because God has chosen you from the beginning they were beloved by the Lord God chose them to be saved from the beginning before the foundation of the world how does

God show his love to his people the very first way he does that is by electing them choosing them picking them to be his own because that's how they become his people so election and thus salvation comes in time in the setting apart of the Holy Spirit and then faith in the truth of the gospel notice how this is structured and I'm reading it from Greek from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the spirit and faith in the truth so salvation in the sanctification of setting apart by the Holy Spirit and faith in the truth how does the election come in time the spirit sets you apart and you respond to the truth and faith setting apart of the

Holy Spirit and then faith in the truth of the gospel in other words Paul was thanking God that he loved them God loved them so much as to choose them which brought about the work of the spirit in time to sanctify or set them apart and then for them to trust in Christ God planned it in eternity and what he plans in eternity he will carry it out in history that's what he does that's how sure election is God loves us because Jesus will return second because God loves us third reason and because we will share in Jesus glory look at verse 14 and it was for this he called you through our gospel to what did God call them the whole phrase given above there in verse 13 and he did that through the gospel this is the event in time because in actuality election doesn't save you faith in [30 : 58] Christ saves you Jesus is the one who saves you through the means of faith through the gospel that's the event in time and then notice what he says here through our gospel unto the gaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ what's he saying in other words they will participate in Christ's glory at his coming when he comes he glorify them when he comes he would glorify them they will participate they will be a part of this glory of the coming of Jesus another phrase you can put it what's the final purpose for

God calling us to salvation that we may share in the glory of Jesus Christ when he comes again what encouragement what hope what assurance what surety you have this is our promise this is why we can thank God or I'll put it this way Christian because Jesus the Messiah will return because God loves us choosing you for salvation and because one day when he comes you will share in his glory stand firm and hold fast verse 15 so then brethren now this moves us from the what to the so what Jesus is returning we got all those details so what how does our lives change because of the return of

Christ because of election because we're going to share in his glory how does our lives change so then brethren stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught whether by word or by letter from us Christ Christ coming and God's election of us drives us to responsible action stand firm and hold fast amid this world crisis God's Paul's calling us as his readers not to slouch in laziness or lethargy to be lethargic he tells us to do just the very opposite be steadfast and stable keep grasping be unmovable and cling fast to the teaching of

God's word to the gospel to the truth of who Jesus is and what he's done who he's died for our sins he resurrected from the dead and our response to repent and trust Christ and if you're here and you're not a Christian you must respond that way you must repent and trust Christ you must turn away from your sin and follow Jesus realize that you have no hope without him it's this gospel that we must stand from and hold fast to this this is how we should respond not in fear anxiety worry or doubting like the world around us this should be our response how can I stand firm how can I hold fast to the gospel even more now should we be looking and watching who this anti crisis man of lawlessness will be sure should be looking be aware yeah but not at the expense of the positive commands that God gives us in his word you can go down that road and just end up maybe just going crazy over this or getting so distracted maybe that might be a better way to put it we get distracted towards trying to figure out who this man of lawlessness is and who this antichrist is and what's all this stuff going on remain steadfast in the faith be stable in the truth keep standing firm in

it keep clinging to Christ notice he says the traditions which were taught

[36:19] Paul's authoritative teaching given to the Thessalonians they were given it by Paul whether it was orally or by a letter obviously the letter was 1st Thessalonians chapter all the 1st Thessalonians specifically he says this in chapter 3 verse 7 to 8 one more thing one more point for us to look at stand for him to hold fast because Jesus is going to return God loves us right because we're going to participate and share in his glory our faith is weak it's hard it's difficult so God help us to stand firm and hold fast this is a prayer verse 16 to 70 is a prayer God help us stand firm and hold fast

God we need you to help us to stand firm God we need you to help us to hold fast to the gospel not be influenced by fear and worry and anxiety and Paul prayed for them because he knew they needed God's grace in order to stand firm and hold fast now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our father notice both the son and the father they love God's people who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope both of them love us both of them gave to us the son gave did he not give when he took on flesh his incarnation did he not give when he sacrificed himself on our behalf as our substitute and does not the gospel give us eternal comfort and good hope the gospel gives eternal comfort and good hope because it's based upon

God's promises of redemption and glorification in Christ we have eternal comfort we have the comfort for eternity we are going to be with our creator forever and enjoy him forever that's eternal comfort that's comfort that lasts not just for a lifetime it lasts forever and it's such hope it's hope that's good it's solid it's truth that's factual all because of God keeping his promise of redemption glorifying his son surety and notice the end of verse 16 by grace you see that all this comes by the grace of God his unmerited favor towards us his undeserved favor towards us so here the father the son and the father they're loving us as his people giving themselves may they comfort and strengthen your hearts may they encourage and strengthen your heart stand firm hold fast when they give this encouragement and strength it brings about notice in every good work and word it brings about good words and good actions

God motivates us towards right living God's the motivation towards right living his work in us will cause us to act and speak in ways that truly display real faith in our lives that Jesus is our savior and lord that we trust in the fact that one day he'll come again that we trust in the fact that he loves us that we're holding on to the truth the promise that we're going to participate in his glory so his work we pray for this God do your work in us and it will cause us to act and to speak in ways that truly display this faith in the truth we need him to help us because our faith is weak and praise the name of the lord that when we have weak faith and we sin that's why

Jesus had to die right he took that very sin in our weak state of our faith because Jesus will return and because God loves us and because we will share in Christ's glory we must stand firm and hold fast and God will help us will you pray with me we need your help oh son of God father by your spirit we need your grace help us to stand firm help us not to be clouded by false teaching help us to cling and hold fast to the gospel not to be carried away by the events that take place in our world may we be known as a group of people who are standing firm in the gospel holding fast to the gospel and we thank you that when we fall short of that that's why

[43:03] Jesus you had to die because we will fall short and you thank you that you give us grace you pick us up and you give us grace to keep standing strong you're encouraging us you command us to stand firm and hold fast and then you encourage us and give us the strength and the comfort to stand firm and hold fast thank you help us as a church to do this we pray in the name of Jesus amen one more song we'll sing oh yeah this is you Jesus thank you you may stand are you done you you you you you