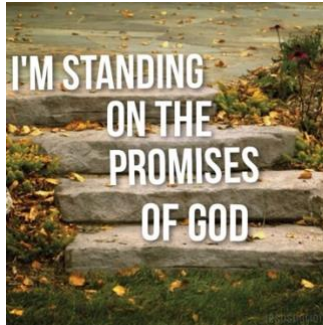




2 Thessalonians 2 New International Version (NIV) - STAND FIRM - STAND ON THE PROMISES OF GOD

The Man of Lawlessness

2 Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

⁵ Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. ⁷ For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. ⁹ The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, ¹⁰ and all the ways that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie ¹² and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

Stand Firm

¹³ But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

¹⁶ May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, ¹⁷ encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

In our last teaching, we saw Paul writing to the little church in Thessalonika encouraging them to stay steadfast in their faith, fervent in their love for one another, and to have perseverance in these times of trials that had come against them. In the midst of these terrific trials someone had passed around a fake letter, supposedly from Paul, telling the group that the "day of the Lord" had come. In the scripture today, Paul is going to talk about lawlessness that will come at the end times, and how to know for sure whether it is THE lawlessness which will accompany the coming of the Lord.

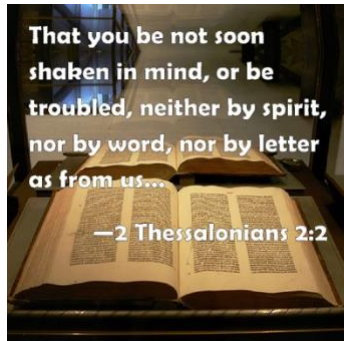
I'd like to start with a funny story about how we can get things wrong theologically. In the first year of our marriage, Sandy and I were very poor. We lived in a little apartment that was made from part of the downstairs section of a giant, grand Victorian house. We didn't have a television. We didn't have a radio. We just had two guitars, one bicycle, and a 1961 car which was broken much of the first months of our marriage. We walked to most places. Sometimes we walked to the grocery store and sometimes we walked to church. After we got married in February of 1989, Sandy joined me that spring going to my church which was called Forest Hills Baptist Church. It was a big church that looked a lot like FBC Navasota.

One Sunday, we got up, got dressed, and went to church. We pulled up into the drive and no one else was there. The door was open, so we went into our normal Sunday School room but couldn't find a single other living soul in the entire facility. We sat and talked about what in the world was happening, and we then asked each other the obvious, "Do you think the rapture happened and we were left behind?" We were totally and completely puzzled by the situation. Our minds raced and we couldn't figure out why we would have been left behind if indeed the rapture had taken place. About that time someone came in and saw us, and we asked, "Where is everybody?". And they answered, "Oh... didn't you know about the time change?"

That's how the Thessalonian church felt. They were in the midst of living their own lives, trying to survive, and in fact they were going through persecution much worse than poverty and a car not working. The persecution had gotten so bad and then to top it off someone came through with a fake letter saying the "day of the Lord" had come. Needless to say, they were scared. However, the letter had been forged by someone using Paul's name. Paul is responding to that and is going to tell them that they haven't missed the day of the Lord. Part of their fears were based on lawlessness, which was going on in the society around them, which made them feel that they were in the end of times. We sure see a lot of lawlessness going on right now in our own society, don't we? It is unsettling and it causes us to feel alarmed. It's even caused some to wonder if it's all part of the end.

Paul starts off in verse two with some really good advice. He tells the group *² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come.*"

Apparently, someone was passing around this fake letter saying that the "day of the Lord" had already come. Isn't it weird how people like to scare the stuffing out of others? I think that's a lot of what goes on in the media. If they can scare everyone enough, people will keep reading, listening to, or watching the fear mongering. These numbers increase the money they can charge advertisers. This little group was full of fear and probably were afraid that they had somehow missed the bus. Some of this even goes on today. People have been watching the mayhem in the streets and some have asked me if this is a "sign of the times." People are asking me more and more, "Pastor, do you think we're in the last days?" Is evil going to take over the earth?"



Paul starts off telling the group, "² *not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come.* ³ *Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.*

I would say to each of you today. DON'T BECOME EASILY UNSETTLED AND ALARMED. Don't be deceived. The day of the Lord will not come until "the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction." Folks, THAT day is not here. In that day, there will be chaos and destruction unlike anything we see right now.



I do think we're seeing something like "birth pangs." But when the rebellion occurs, it will be ten thousand times what we're seeing now. There will be destruction of political systems, probably the police will be disbanded. Armies will be attacking each other in all out world civil war. That will all culminate with a powerful charismatic figure taking control of the world's system. He is the one whom we call THE ANTICHRIST.

⁴ *He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."*

I don't think we as believers need to spend a lot of time trying to figure out who might be the up and coming anti-Christ. Our job isn't to identify the anti-Christ, but to recognize him when he appears (if we're even here at all).

Just in a little review, let me remind you all why I feel we, as believers, will probably not even still be on the earth when that event happens. A time line of sorts would be the following:

1. Things will heat up as we are now seeing.
2. Chaos and anarchy will be prevalent in the earth.
3. The governments of the earth will consolidate over time moving to a structure like a one-world government.

[NOTE: JESUS CAN COME BACK AT ANYTIME BEFORE OR DURING 1,2, or 3]

- 4 A world leader will arise to be head over the world as 7 Years of "tribulation" will now begin. He will restore law and order and usher in a time of renewed peace.
- 5 At the 1/2 mark (3 1/2 years into the tribulation) he will set himself up in the temple to be worshipped.
- 6 All hell will break out with unbelievable pain and suffering. This will be the time of the **GREAT TRIBULATION**. It will last for 3 1/2 more years.
- 7 Jesus will come back and come to earth bringing righteousness to the nations.

In verses 5&6, I think Paul is saying that all of these end-time events are being delayed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in the world. It is the goodness of men and women who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit that bring much peace and calm to the world. When they are removed, the Holy Spirit will be removed.

In verse 7, Paul is saying that Satan is already at work in the world. It is the power of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, that is holding him back and holding back evil. But, as we can all see, the world continues pushing towards anarchy, lawlessness, chaos, etc. This is all evidence of Satan being at work.

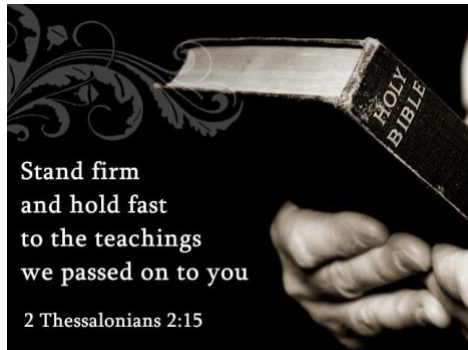
In verses 8-12 Paul describes in detail the intensity of the evil that is to come. He describes that the Anti-Christ will perform wonders and miracles. I don't know what these are but they will be convincing. They'll be so convincing that many will continue to reject the Lord and the mighty hand of God because of these "signs and wonders".

I wanted to add that even though I do not believe we will be here to see those miraculous works of evil, we are seeing in our lifetimes evil becoming bolder and more powerful. There is a divine principle of balance. Scripture tells us in the 5th chapter of Romans that "where sin abounds grace also abounds." So what does that mean? I think it means that as the works of evil become stronger and stronger in the world, so the power of the Holy Spirit will become more and more strong and evident in many ways.

STAND FIRM

In verse 13, Paul then gives the Thessalonians **AND US** some good advice on what to do in these times of increased lawlessness.

¹³ But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴ He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.



¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.

First, we ought to always thank God for one another. That means that we should love one another, be giving to one another, and to realize that we're all being sanctified through our interaction with each other. It's hard to interact with one another in a godly selfless way,

but let us each let that be our goal. It is in our interaction with each other that we hold back our frustrations and conflict. There's always a reason to criticize each other. We should do our best to build one another up in our faith and help each other to be the best versions of ourselves that we can be.

So what are we to do in these times of chaos and disorder? ¹⁵ So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. So, how do we stand firm?

1 Learn the promises of God and then hold fast to the promises of God. Don't falter. Don't fail. Most of us don't really understand all of the promises of God, so we need to learn them as well as we need to apply them. Much of success in life also comes from just not quitting. When things get tough, give it to God and keep going.

2 Make the best, most rational decisions that you can make. Pray about things (James 1:5) if you lack wisdom about how to tackle them. God promises to help us in those decisions. When you're faced with a difficult choice, do you run to the phone or do you run to the throne?

I have another way to suggest for you to learn many of the truths of God's Word. You can visit my class each Sunday morning at 9:15 (for the next couple of months) out in the Fellowship Hall room. I am going to lead us through a study to learn about REALLY LIVING OUT THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. What does that look like. I have decided to call it: ***Why do we believe what we believe: Finding it in the Bible - Living our lives in His way.***

So today, be encouraged! Be faithful! Begin to understand the promises of God and stand on them!

Let us pray!

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.