



1 THESSALONIANS

STANDING FIRM



We've been learning lots from the letter Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica.

After a visit in 49-50AD that probably lasted just three weeks, 'the church of the Thessalonians in God' had been planted. There was real evidence of a genuine and remarkable work of God in each of them. But the opposition to his preaching had grown so intense, so quickly that Paul had to make a humiliating night flight from the city (Acts 17:1-14).

Timothy has since brought the wonderful news that they were still **standing firm** (3:8). And that's terrific! But Paul is looking ahead to the coming of the Lord Jesus, and he longs for them to continue right until that final finishing tape!



Paul's second missionary journey

FOCUS ON MARK 4:14-20

At this point in the gospel, Jesus is explaining to his disciples why teaching is his priority (cf 1:38-39).

What happens as a result of the seed being sown? Compare the short-term, the medium-term and the long-term effects:

short term	
medium term	
long term	

How does Mark 4:16-19 help us to understand the concerns that Paul is likely have about the church in Thessalonica?

FOCUS ON 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-20

- What do we learn (in v 17-18) about Paul and what he wants? Why? (cf 3:2-3, 5, 10)
- What do we learn (in v 19-20) about Paul and what he wants longer term?

Read these next two quotations.
What do you make of what they
tell us about why Christians
will find it hard to
stand firm?

One form of an allurements we have all been exposed to since our Christian lives began is to conform without thinking. We go with the flow, following the path that the secular community (and often too the institutional church to which we belong) is on already: and we identify with the standards and assumptions that we find dominating the culture around us. This is one aspect of what the Bible diagnoses as love of the world, or worldliness.

Jim Packer: *Finishing our Course with Joy*

I do not want to be alarmist about what it costs to be faithful to Christ. Yet I feel I must point both to Scripture and to the course of church history. I want to awaken the Western church with the blast of a trumpet, warning her that the normal conditions under which the church bears witness are not those we now experience, but are conditions hostile to Christian witness. I believe that the darkness may be descending again, and I fear that few of us are prepared for it.

John White: *The Cost of Commitment*

Which of these two things – worldliness and opposition – feels like the bigger pressure on your Christian life? Why?

FOCUS ON 1 THESSALONIANS 5:23-24

This is Paul's third prayer for the Thessalonian Christians (see 1:2-3 and 3:11-13).

- What do we learn from here that we could also pray for other Christians?
- What confidence does Paul have in his God? What is the 'it' that God will surely do?
- How might this confidence be ...
 - (a) overemphasised ... leading to Christian complacency?
 - (b) underemphasised ... leading to Christian insecurity?



Looking back on the themes of the whole of 1 Thessalonians, jot down ...

ONE PLEDGE

What is one thing that you will think or do differently because of 1 Thess?

ONE PERSON

Who will you tell about this?

ONE PRAYER

What one thing will you now ask your Connect Group to pray for you, from what you've learnt from 1 Thess?

