# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“Stand Firm”**

**2 Thessalonians 2:13-15**

 **February 13, 2022**

This morning we are in the second chapter of Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians. Paul opens the chapter with a word of clarification. It seems that some in the church had become unsettled and alarmed by those who said that Christ had already returned. This idea, if true, would have meant that they had missed the big day. “Don’t believe it,” Paul says, even if those championing the idea claim to have had some new revelation from God or a letter from Paul supporting the idea. Paul goes on in verses three through twelve to show how that idea simply isn’t true based on what both the Old Testament and Jesus himself had said about his return. Then, in verses thirteen to fifteen, in order to help them not to get confused by any other ideas like this that might lead them astray, Paul give them the instruction to stick to what they have received. Don’t let the crazy things that other people tell you influence you and make you veer off into strange and troubling places. Stand firm in the foundational truths of your faith by keeping a strong grip on the Bible’s teaching. I invite you to turn with me to 2 Thessalonians 2:13-15

As for us, we can’t help but thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are always thankful that God chose you to be among the first to experience salvation—a salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy and through your belief in the truth. He called you to salvation when we told you the Good News; now you can share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on the teaching we passed on to you both in person and by letter.

What allows us to stand firm when crazy ideas are swirling around us? And, what keeps us from becoming unsettled and alarmed by those ideas? Stand firm in the truths that the Bible has taught you: you are loved by God the Son, you are chosen by God the Father, and you are made holy by God the Spirit. In short, you have been saved by God, and there is no new idea, no new revelation, no new word alleged to be from God that will ever change that reality. With these things in mind, stand firm.

Jesus told the parable of two men who each built a house. The first man built his house on the firm foundation of solid rock, and when the winds and the rain came, it remained standing. The second man built his house on the shifting sand, and when the winds and the rain came, it fell. The first man, Jesus said, is like the wise person who hears his teachings and follows them. The second is like the foolish person who hears Jesus’ teachings and does not follow them. Wisdom or foolishness, standing firm or falling down, keeping a strong grip on the truths of the Bible or letting go of those truths in order to follow the ideas of the world.

The writer of Psalm 53:1 said: “The fool says in his heart there is no God.” They are not a fool because they are a person of low intelligence. Some of the smartest people in the world say there is no God. What makes a person foolish is believing that their ideas are superior to the revealed truth of God. The reason that some of the Christians in Thessalonica became so shaken in their faith is that they had become fooled by ideas that were in direct opposition to what God had already made clear through his Son, Jesus, and his apostle, Paul.

Instead, we need to be wise as described in Proverbs 3:5-6: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths.” It is not that our own understanding is irrelevant to how we live our lives as followers of Christ, but we should not lean on it. We should not trust our own understanding to work our way through all the crazy ideas that swirl around us, whether ideas about culture or politics or religion. Trust in the Lord, acknowledge his truth as revealed in his word, and he will direct us as we travel the path of this life. Then, Paul says in Ephesians 4:14-15, “We will no longer be immature like children. We won’t be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.”

The Christian life is a long walk in the same direction as Christ. Along the way, people will present us with new ideas. They will claim to have previously unknown insights into God or the Bible or our faith, and we may find ourselves a bit unsettled. In these times, stand firm. Hold fast to what you know by keeping a firm grip on God’s Word.

Read the Bible daily and read it carefully; meditate on what you read, asking the Holy Spirit to give you insight; and, internalize the Bible by determining to act on its teaching – these are the activities they will help us keep a firm grip on God’s Word. And, as we keep a firm grip on God’s Word, we will be able to stand firm in the face of the challenges and difficulties that confront us, even as others become alarmed, unsettled, or even deceived.