

Stand Fast – 2 Thess 2:15

Introduction - These are evil days. These are days when we are beginning to experience a full on assault on the Christian faith in our culture and nation. While we pray for repentance and God's mercy, it is all the more critical that we are giving our children, the next generation, a fully Christian education. Joseph Stalin (of all men to quote??) said, "*Education is a weapon, whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed.*" Centuries earlier, Martin Luther wrote, "*I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt...I am much afraid that schools will prove to be the great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth.*" But why am I "preaching to the choir" again? Because the purpose of this sermon is to encourage the church, where she is being faithful, to "*stand fast.*"

Stand Fast in the Teachings (2 Thess 2:15) – To stand fast is to "*persevere, to persist*" – to stay put no matter what. The command assumes trials, pushbacks, persecutions, and fatigue. Standing fast is something Christians are commanded to do in many situations. We are to *stand fast* in our liberty (Gal 5:1). We are to *stand fast* in one spirit, considering others better than ourselves (Phil 1:27-2:3). We are to *stand fast* in the Lord (Phil 4:1), which is the same thing as saying we are to *stand fast* by taking up the whole armor of God (Eph 6:13). We are to *stand fast* in the faith (1 Cor 16:13). We will find ourselves alive if we *stand fast* in the Lord (1 Thess 3:8). And with that in mind, "*therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you were taught...*" (2 Thess 2:15).

Stand Fast in the Teachings – The "*traditions*" are the things given over. The word could be used referring to the surrender of a conquered city, or to the writings/teachings of a people given over to the children. In our context, we have been given a rich understanding of the Gospel and its implications over everything. Jesus is Lord of all; all authority over the earth has been given to Him. That teaching conquers the city of Man, and that teaching with all its implications needs to be given over to the next generation so that they might join us as we stand fast against the enemies of the Gospel (Psalm 127).

Rediscovering What We Are Recovering – It is wonderful how the Lord will remind you and equip you in new ways with this truth as we move into another school year. There are new applications for you:

The Command (Eph 6:4)– "*And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the paideia and nouthesia of the Lord.*" Let's focus in on three words: fathers, paideia (training), and nouthesia (admonition).

Fathers – To be a father is to be placed in an official role. From the moment of conception, fathers bear a particular responsibility for which they will answer to God the Father. Faithful fathers (and fathers to be) must know their heavenly Father – and know Him deeply. And then, they must imitate Him in His role as father.

Paideia of the Lord – This is an enormous word. It encompasses the entire enculturation of a child into his or her people. It includes the discipline of children with the rod (Heb 12:5-11), as well as the formal education and worldview in which the instruction is applied. This means it begins with worship – "*Liturgy is the first form of Christian discipleship training, of paideia, of induction into the culture of the Church*" – Leithart. Generally speaking, the Church today has abdicated its role in culture-building due to its pessimistic view of this age and its gnostic tendencies to think that Jesus is only Lord of the spiritual. This is central to the reasons that the church is losing the cultural and worldview battle today in our nation and over what was once called Christendom. But we have been given a different paradigm, a reformed, optimistic, and bible-soaked paradigm. This is something to "*stand fast*" in.

Nouthesia of the Lord – The verb form means "*to set right, to lay on the heart*" and "*to have a corrective influence.*" It is translated "*admonish,*" "*instruct,*" and "*warr*" (see Acts 20:31). It is the foundation of biblical counsel; taking the Word and applying it into every situation, struggle, and problem. It even includes what we do towards one another with our singing (Col 3:16).

Christian Education in the Victory of God, Equipping the Army of God, to the Glory of God – This view of Christian education is not about running away into our little evangelical ghettos (and we must constantly be careful that we do not do so). It is not about being disobedient to the Great Commission or being salt and light to the world. It is actually taking the Great Commission more seriously (we are to disciple nations, not simply sign people up for heaven). It is about preparation for engagement, discipling young men and women who will be leaders shaping the culture around them under the Lordship of Jesus.

Stand Fast in the Evil Day (Eph 6:13) – But remember, "*... the culture that we want to shape under the Lordship of Christ is a culture that does not want to be shaped under Him. So expect resistance. You will not accomplish anything worthwhile out there in the culture while the secularist worldlings stand politely off to side, wearing white gloves and offering golf applause. So ignore the fact that the world is just flat against you. That is fine, for if you paid attention in class, you yourself are contra mundum. When conflict arises, this is not a sign that something has gone terribly wrong. Perhaps it is a sign that something is finally starting to go right. Ignore those voices that see conflict as an automatic sign that you are in the process of wrecking everything*" – Wilson. Stand fast in the conflict, because the conflict might just be a sign that things are starting to go right. They are afraid of us for some reason. Maybe they know more than we do...

Stand Fast in the Promises (Deut 7:9) – God has promised. On those promises, school begins.