



Almont Vineyard Church

Week 3 Targeted Series

September 19, 2026

Opening Monologue

Welcome to the AVC APP — this is where we go deeper into the sermon. It's where you'll find spiritual reflections and commentary that line up with in-depth teaching on the sermon topic of the week. Other app features include submitting prayer requests, sign-ups, listening to the Bible or reading the Bible, and many other things. Dive in and enjoy.

Welcome to Week 3 of our series called Targeted. This week's message is titled Standing Firm in Jesus. If you missed week one or two, here's a link to our YouTube channel where you can listen

<https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>... You can also find the sermons right here in the application.

The war that was thrown out of heaven has come to earth. Make no mistake about it: Satan's targeting is real, it is strategic, and it is personal. I understand that a message like this can feel heavy. It can leave us wondering if we even stand a chance.

Be encouraged. 1 John 3:1–8 reminds us of who we are. We may have earthly parents, but we are children of God — children of the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. On our own, we do not stand a chance. But 1 John 3:8 says, the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. Jesus Christ is the One who fights and protects on our behalf. As Christians, we are called to stand firm in Him.

All too often we want to take matters into our own hands. That is human nature. But spiritually, the battle that is aimed at us is really aimed at Jesus, because we belong to Him and He protects His children. Our hope in Christ is not wishful thinking. It is confidence in Him, not in ourselves.

That is why we must guard against the rinse-and-repeat of habitual sin — the same patterns that open the door to moral failure and strongholds. By the power of Jesus Christ, we can stop. We can stand firm in Him.

We must learn to put Jesus in front of the target. 2 Thessalonians 2:13–16 and 3:3–4a calls us to stand firm and hold to the truth we have received. They remind us that the Lord is faithful. He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. Our confidence is in the Lord.

This Sunday we will go much deeper into the Scriptures that teach us how to stand firm in Jesus — Scriptures that strengthen our faith and remind us we are not fighting alone. Christ is the One who brings the victory. Come and be encouraged and equipped from God's holy Word for the warfare we are in.

In Christ,
Rev. Pastor Brad

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Week 3 Targeted Series" Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Text

1 John 3:1-8

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%203%3A1-8&version=NIV>

2 Thessalonians 2:13-16 & 3:3-4a

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%202%3A13-16%20&version=NIV>

(3:3-4) <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Thessalonians%203%3A3-4&version=NIV>

1 Corinthians 16:13

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2016%3A13%20&version=NIV>

Galatians 5:1

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%205%3A1%20&version=NIV>

Ephesians 6:11

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%206%3A11%20&version=NIV>

1 Thessalonians 3:8

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians%203%3A8&version=NIV>

Spiritual Reflection

STANDING FIRM IN JESUS CHRIST

The War Already Lost — and Still Being Fought

Satan and his demons lost the warfare that occurred in the heavens. Revelation 12 says it in a sentence we can fly right over if we read too quickly:

Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.— Revelation 12:7–9

Hear those words. He was not strong enough. They were not strong enough to overthrow heaven — not strong enough to overthrow the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Their sin, as Isaiah (14:12-15) and Ezekiel (28:12-17) make plain, was to exalt themselves. But evil cannot stand in the presence of God. So they were thrown to the earth — and now the warfare continues against the children of the Most High God. That is us. That is the church. That is you.

The first truth of this reflection is this: the enemy already lost the war that mattered most. He is furious because he knows his time is short. He still schemes. He still accuses. He still lies. But he does not stand on equal footing with the Triune God. He never did.

Who We Are — and Who Has Our Backs

If we want to be protected and set free, we must know who the real enemy is. Christians, in this spiritual war we are in, we must know who we are... and who has our backs. We must also know how to guard our hearts, minds, and souls.

John writes it with holy astonishment:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! ... Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. — 1 John 3:1–2

Think about that. Our Lord and Savior calls us His children. Earthly parents, in most instances, look out for our best interest. We tell them our wants and needs. We need their protection — especially as infants, then as children, then as teenagers when life gets wild and we need covering we do not even know how to ask for.

Now set that next to Jesus. We are His children. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords is our Father in heaven, looking after us and over us. He is attentive to our prayers. He is attentive to our lives. He longs to protect us — and He does.

Hope is the confidence we have in Christ. That hope does something to us: “Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). Purity here is not a cold rule. It is the awakening of awe — the internal cleansing of mind, heart, and soul. We guard ourselves from habitual sin. We resist. We repent. And we take John’s warning seriously: “Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray” (1 John 3:7). Not a person. Not a friend. Not family. No one.

It Is Not Our Job to Take Satan Out

Let’s be honest. It is in our human nature to take things on ourselves.

Look — it is not our job to take Satan out. It is impossible. We must learn not to take matters into our own hands, not to take thoughts into our own hands, and not to imagine we can defeat the enemy by our own muscle, strategy, or spiritual grit. We cannot. It cannot be done.

John does not leave us guessing about who can: The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. — 1 John 3:8

That is the assignment. That is the victory. That is the ground under our feet.

What then are we called to do? We are called to put Jesus in front of the target.

When the enemy aims at your mind, your marriage, your children, your calling, your church, your peace — do not step in front of the arrow as if you were the shield. Put Jesus there. He is the One who already destroyed the devil’s work. He is the One the enemy could not overthrow. He is the One who still stands.

Standing Firm Is Not Your Achievement Alone

Over and over in the New Testament, Paul tells believers to stand firm. Not by our own muscles. Not by our own strength. Stand firm in Christ.

Theologian Geoffrey Bromiley comments on those words “stand firm”:

“When Apostle Paul commands believers to stand firm in Christ, he’s invoking something far more dynamic than stability. Standing in faith means standing in the Lord, for faith looks to the Lord, and he enables it to stand. This isn’t your achievement alone — Christ provides the ground upon which you stand.” — Theological Dictionary of the New Testament

So stop trying to wrestle Satan on your own. He has been a liar from the beginning, and he will play the long game of cat and mouse with you. He will keep you spinning. He will overpower mind, body, and soul if you insist on fighting him in your own name. That is not courage. That is pride dressed up as spiritual warfare.

Scripture for Your Arsenal

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.

Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

1 Thessalonians 3:8

For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 2:13–15; 3:3

...from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ... So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you... But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

Christian Warriors, This Is How We Win

Friends, we must stand firm in Jesus.

Christian warriors, we win the battle when we stand firm in Him. We shall not be overtaken. We shall not be overcome. Jesus is our victor.

The enemy was not strong enough in heaven. He is not strong enough now against the child of God who stands on Christ. The Father has lavished His love on you. He has called you His child. The Son appeared to destroy the devil's work. The Spirit sanctifies and keeps you. Your part is not to overthrow hell. Your part is to stand — in Him, on Him, with Him in front of the target.

I am standing firm in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer:

Father, thank You that You have lavished Your love on us and called us Your children. Thank You that the war in heaven is already settled — that the enemy was not strong enough, and that Jesus appeared to destroy the devil's work. Forgive us for taking the battle into our own hands. Teach us to put Jesus in front of the target. Strengthen us to stand firm in Christ, not in ourselves. Guard our hearts, our minds, and our souls. Do not let anyone lead us astray. We stand with one another, and we stand in You. In the name of Jesus our Victor. Amen.

(Rev. Standfest, Logos Bible Theologians)

Spiritual Reflection

Identity and Transformation

A Theological Reflection on 1 John 3:1–8

John does not begin with a warning. He begins with wonder. Before he draws a line between two kinds of people, before he names the devil's long practice of sin, before he tells the church why the Son of God appeared, he stops the reader in front of the Father's love and asks us to look at it until we feel how strange it

is.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. — 1 John 3:1

A Love From Another World

The opening words are not casual. Behind “How great” stands the Greek *potapēn* — a word that does more than measure size. It asks a question: Of what sort? From what country? What manner of love is this? John is telling us that the Father’s love is exotic. It has been poured out from another world entirely. It does not arise from human sentiment, family resemblance, or earned affection. It is lavished — spent, poured, not dribbled — upon people who had no claim on it.

This is why identity in Christ cannot be treated as a motivational slogan. Something has happened to us that did not originate in us. The church does not invent her name. She receives it.

Title and Reality

John will not let the gift stop at language. “That we should be called children of God” would already be mercy. He adds the sentence that changes everything: “And that is what we are!”

This is not merely a title. It is a solid fact. God gives His people both the name and the nature of the thing named. He makes them to be what He calls them. Adoption in the New Testament is never a legal fiction that leaves the child unchanged. The Father does not point at rebels and politely agree to use nicer vocabulary. He begets. He claims. He places His own life where another life used to rule.

If that is true, then Christian identity is received before it is performed. You do not become a child of God by finally behaving like one. You are called a child because the Father has lavished love, and that calling creates the reality it names. Obedience will matter — John is about to say so with force — but obedience is not the door into the house. It is the family resemblance beginning to show.

The Tension of Being Unknown

Yet this identity creates immediate tension. The world cannot recognize God’s children because it did not know Him. If the world missed the Son when He stood in front of it, it will miss His brothers and sisters too. You should not be surprised when holiness looks strange, when hope sounds naive, or when belonging to the Father is read as arrogance or irrelevance. The world’s confusion about the church is first a confusion about Christ.

That means the ache of being misunderstood is not always a sign that something has gone wrong. Sometimes it is evidence that something has gone right. Children of God live in a household the world cannot see, under a love the world cannot categorize, toward a future the world does not want.

Already Children, Not Yet Like Him

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. — 1 John 3:2

You inhabit a paradox. You possess full status as God’s child now. The word is “now.” Not after you get your habits in order. Not after death. Not after the appearing. Now. And at the same time, what you will become has not yet appeared. The future is not a guess, but it is still future. John holds both truths in one breath so that the church will neither despair of the present nor settle for it.

Notice what John does and does not claim to know. He does not pretend to have a catalog of every glory waiting for the children of God. “What we will be has not yet been made known.” Mystery remains. What he does know is enough to live on: when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. The sight of Jesus as He actually is will finish the work that faith has already begun. Transformation is not a technique we apply to ourselves. It is what happens to a people who finally see the Son without remainder.

This is the already and the not yet of Christian hope. You are not waiting to become a child. You are waiting to become the kind of child whose resemblance to the Son is complete. That distinction keeps two errors away. One error says, “I am still only trying to get in.” The other says, “I have already arrived.” John will allow neither.

Hope That Purifies

The future vision becomes present power. Hope, in John’s mouth, is not a soft feeling reserved for funerals and hard weeks. Hope is confidence placed in Christ — confidence that He will appear, that we shall see Him, that we shall be like Him. And that confidence does something to a person today.

The future transformation you anticipate becomes the moral weight that shapes your choices now. You cannot stare at the appearing of a pure Christ and then treat impurity as a small matter. The One you expect to see is already the standard of the life you are living toward Him. Purity here is not a cold rule handed down to keep religious people busy. It is the awakening of awe — the internal cleansing of mind, heart, and soul by a hope that has a Face.

This is why Christian ethics cannot be separated from Christian hope. People live toward what they expect. If the last word over your life is chance, appetite, or self-invention, you will purify nothing. If the last word is the appearing of the Son, you begin even now to put away what cannot survive that sight.

Trajectory, Not Perfectionism

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. — 1 John 3:4–7

John then draws a sharp line between two kinds of people. No one who lives in Him — who abides, who remains, who makes Christ the place he stays — keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him.

This is not a perfectionistic impossibility, as if the child of God never stumbles and any failure proves the whole thing was false. John has already made room for confession and advocacy in this same letter. What he is describing is trajectory and allegiance. Which way is the life aimed? Who is being practiced? Sin, John says, is not a slip of manners. It is lawlessness — a refusal of God’s good claim. A life that settles into that refusal is not a confused Christian life. It is a life still belonging to another father.

So he warns the family: “Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray.” The danger is not only the devil in the abstract. It is a voice — a person, a teaching, a friendship, even a family loyalty — that would tell you identity can be claimed while transformation is postponed. No one gets to rename lawlessness as freedom and still speak in John’s church with authority.

Two Families, One Destroyer

He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. — 1 John 3:8

John will not leave the line blurry. There are two practices and, behind them, two origins. Whoever makes a practice of sin belongs to the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The first rebel did not dabble. He exalted himself. He lied. He has never stopped. Those who settle into his pattern are not merely “struggling.” They are family with him.

Against that dark continuity John sets the appearing of the Son. The reason the Son of God appeared was not first to give the world a better philosophy, a warmer spirituality, or a more useful ethic. He appeared to take away sins. He appeared to destroy the devil's work. Incarnation has an edge. The Child of God came to unmake what the father of lies had made.

That is why Christian hope is never only comfort. It is conflict with a settled outcome. The devil's work is real — in the world, in the mind, in habitual sin, in the voices that lead astray. But it is not the deepest fact in the room. The deepest fact is that the Son has appeared, and He appeared as Destroyer of that work. Children of God do not invent their holiness. They take sides with the One who has already invaded the devil's project.

The Theological Heart

Here is the center of the passage, and the center of Christian hope: your identity as God's child and your hope in Christ's appearing are inseparable from moral transformation. You cannot pull one of those threads without the other two coming with it.

You cannot genuinely anticipate becoming like Christ while remaining indifferent to sin. That indifference is already a verdict on the hope you claim. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous. Present action begins to correspond to ultimate destiny. Holiness is not a burden imposed from outside, as if God were an employer loading extra duties onto people He barely knows. Holiness is the natural expression of who you already are and who you are becoming.

This is good news for weary believers. The call to purity is not God asking you to become someone unrelated to yourself. It is God calling you to become yourself — the self He named when He called you child, the self that will be unveiled when you see the Son as He is. The gospel does not say, “Change, and perhaps you will belong.” It says, “You belong. Now live from the love that named you, toward the appearing that will finish you.”

So the church learns to hold three words together and refuse to drop any of them:

Identity. You are a child of God. That is what you are.

Hope. When He appears, you shall be like Him, for you shall see Him as He is.

Transformation. Everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Drop identity, and holiness becomes grim self-salvation. Drop hope, and holiness becomes brittle moralism with no horizon. Drop transformation, and identity becomes a slogan that leaves the devil's work untouched. John will not let the family drop any of the three.

Source: 3

Commentary on Main Texts

1 John 3:1-8

John wrote this letter to defend the apostolic proclamation of Jesus as the eternal, preexistent Word who became flesh, a message that false teachers in the Johannine congregations had begun to deny. These opponents were sophisticated and subtle in their error, representing a developing system that needed strong counteraction. The heresy was Gnosticism, which operated from cosmic dualism dividing the universe into good and evil, matter and spirit—and because matter was seen as essentially evil, Gnostics denied Jesus' humanity.

They denied Christ's incarnation as a logical consequence of believing matter was evil, proposing instead a doctrine called docetism—the view that the divine Word only seemed to have human form, and that Christ's body was a phantom. These false prophets had separated themselves from the main body of believers, claiming special “anointing” by the Holy Spirit and true knowledge of God.

John's Pastoral Response

John's primary purpose was to bolster his readers' assurance by showing them they were in the truth, explicitly stating: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life”. Rather than primarily attacking false teachers, John pastorally protected his beloved “children,” seeking to establish them in Christian faith and life, desiring joy, holiness, and assurance in his flock.

Chapter 3 in Context

Chapter 3 stands as the theological heart of this pastoral strategy. Building on 2:28–29's call to abide in Christ and practice righteousness, John opens chapter 3 by marveling at the Father's love in making believers his children (1 John 2:28–3:24). He establishes the paradox of Christian identity: believers are God's children now, yet what they will become hasn't appeared; when Christ appears, they'll be like him because they'll see him as he is (1 John 2:28–3:24). This future vision becomes present moral imperative—everyone who hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1 John 2:28–3:24).

The passage then draws sharp lines between genuine and spurious faith. No one abiding in Christ keeps sinning; whoever practices righteousness is righteous as he is righteous, while whoever practices sin belongs to the devil, whom the Son of God appeared to destroy (1 John 2:28–3:24). John's strategy is brilliant: he doesn't argue theology abstractly but shows his readers that their moral transformation proves their genuine knowledge of God—precisely what the Gnostics claimed but couldn't demonstrate.

3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. John's statement at the end of chapter 2 that believers have been “born of” God caused him to marvel here at such love. The Greek word behind the English expression “how great” is *potapen*; it speaks of something that has come from another country—something exotic, something beyond what has previously been experienced. The translation could read, “Behold, what exotic love the Father has poured on us.” The love of God comes from another world; it seems foreign to the human race. And this love has been lavished on us, poured out on us, as shown by the fact that God allows us to be called children of God. The Greek word for “children” emphasizes birth rather

than infancy. John, here, was calling attention to the wonderful fact, carried over from the last verse (2:29), that God has actually “given birth” to believers as his very own children.

While “children of God” is a title for believers, it also reveals a solid fact. God’s children—that is what we are! God gives his people both the title and the reality. When he calls Christians his children, he makes them to be just that. Great as he is, God has brought believers into the loving, intimate relationship of children with their Father. John was emphasizing the assurance believers can have that they really are God’s children.

But being God’s children separates them from the world. They are strangers, as though the world does not know them. It can’t—because it did not know God. The world does not desire to know God, and it even refused to recognize Christ as God’s Son (John 1:10; 15:18–19), so believers can hardly expect the world to understand their special relationship with God as his children. Believers’ self-worth is based on the fact that God loves them and calls them his children. They are his children now, not just sometime in the distant future. For other references about being part of God’s family, see Romans 8:14–17; Galatians 3:26–27; 4:6–7.

3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. John reinforced his statement in 3:1, calling the believers beloved (a term of endearment, like “dear children” in 2:1) and saying again that they were now ... children of God. Not sometime in the future, not when Christ returns, but now. Yet God’s people have a future, as John further explained that it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. Something inconceivably wonderful is waiting for God’s children, even more glorious than what they now possess. Christians have been born into God’s family, and they presently enjoy God’s kindness and blessings through Christ. But in the future they will also fully share in his glory. Believers have a vision of it now, but it will be reality when their bodies are resurrected. Believers don’t yet know the specifics because these haven’t been revealed, but they do know that when He is revealed, [they] shall be like Him. This hints of what this future glory will be like, though the world is completely ignorant of it: Christ will be revealed to his people and in his people in all his glory, as the very likeness of God (2 Corinthians 4:4)—and his people will be like him! In the same way, believers will be revealed to the world as God’s children, sharing in Christ’s glory and beauty.

CHILDREN OF GOD

John provides a wonderful biblical image of our true identity as “children of God.” How does this miracle happen? What does it mean?

- It is a privilege reserved only for those who have “received” (that is, believed in) Christ (John 1:12).
- It becomes a reality the moment we are “born again” (spiritually regenerated, see John 3:3; 1 Peter 1:23).
- We are adopted by God (Ephesians 1:5).
- We are the recipients of God’s infinite, lavish love (1 John 3:1).
- We are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ (Romans 8:17).
- We are expected to live up to our identity as God’s children (Ephesians 5:8).
- We will be disciplined if we go astray (Hebrews 12:5–11).

Let us hold fast to this privileged relationship, remaining loyal to God.

Every believer has this hope of sharing in his glory—even all of creation itself has this hope. As the apostle Paul said, the whole creation waits for the day when the children of God will be revealed in all their glory, reflecting the image of Christ (see Romans 8:18–30). When this happens, they shall see Him as He is. By constantly gazing at Christ, believers will become like him and reflect his glory (see 2 Corinthians 3:17–18). The Greek

word for “see” involves more than a merely physiological occurrence; it means “perceiving,” “recognizing,” even “appreciating.” In order for people to truly know each other—to see each other as they really are—they have to share similar experiences. Therefore, in order to see Jesus as he really is, Christians must experience the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. This was Paul’s aspiration (see Philippians 3:7–14); it was also John’s, as expressed in the following verse.

WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM

John tells us that one day, in heaven, we will be like Jesus. The resurrection is a precious promise to believers, yet many wonder what exactly their “new life” will be like. The Bible doesn’t tell us everything, but it does give us some clues:

- Our resurrection will include both body and soul. Christianity affirms that the body and soul will be united after resurrection. Many Greek believers had a difficult time believing in a bodily resurrection because most Greeks did not believe that people’s bodies would be resurrected after death. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15 to clear up this confusion about the resurrection.
- Our resurrected body will be eternal. We will be recognizable in our resurrected body, yet it will be better than we can imagine, for it will be made to live forever. We will still have our own personality and individuality, but these will be perfected through Christ’s work. The Bible does not reveal everything that our resurrected body will be able to do, but we know it will be perfect, without sickness or disease (see Philippians 3:21).
- Our resurrected body will be different than our present one. Our resurrected body will be very different in some, but not all, ways from our earthly body.
- Our resurrected body will not experience present limitations. Our present body is perishable and prone to decay. Our resurrection body will be transformed. Our spiritual body will not be limited by the laws of nature. This does not necessarily mean we’ll be superpeople, but our body will be different from and more capable than our present earthly one. Our spiritual body will not be weak, will never get sick, and will never die.

3:3 And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. Because Jesus Christ lived without sin (he was pure), believers who have this hope of seeing Christ and being like him will want to purify themselves. To “purify” means to be morally and ethically free from the corruption of sin. People can do this only through Christ’s Spirit in them because, as Jesus said, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5 nlt). This is an ongoing cleansing process, beginning at rebirth and continuing until the day Jesus returns. The more pure his people become, the clearer will be their view of Jesus, who is pure through and through. God also purifies Christians, but they must take steps to remain morally fit (see 1 Timothy 5:22; James 4:8; 1 Peter 1:22). The word “hope” offered John’s readers a reminder that their spiritual lives were in process. Hope means confident expectation, anticipation of future blessing. Some false teachers were claiming “completeness,” or some sort of total understanding of all things spiritual. John reminded his readers, however, that they were purified from sin by Christ and then were to continue purifying themselves as they worked out their salvation during their time on earth. They then trust in the hope promised to them that, when they see Christ face-to-face, they will be made completely perfect.

THE CHRISTIAN’S HOPE

What does John mean by hope? God has a distinct plan in mind for each of our lives. He has prepared us for a lifetime of good works (Ephesians 2:10). Beyond that, he has a higher and nobler goal: to make us like Christ (3:2; Romans 8:29; 1 Corinthians 15:49; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:21)! Christlikeness is our destiny, and to those who struggle to overcome stubborn sins, it brings great hope. God’s plan cannot and will not be

thwarted. In the words of John, one day “we shall be like him”! The question is, Are you working with God or against him in his great transformation project?

3:4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. After defining purity, John next defined sin, presenting negatively the same truth he just expressed positively in 3:1–3. Since being born of God demands self-purification, then a life of sin, or a continual lack of purity, demonstrates that one cannot really be God’s child. Sin cannot coexist with the new nature derived from the new birth. Sin is lawlessness provides a basic definition of sin. The Greek word for “sin” (hamartia) means “missing the mark,” and God’s law gives people this mark or standard. If God does not tell his people what they should be like, they would never realize how sinful they are. One can see how crooked a line is by putting it next to a straight edge. The Greek expression behind “lawlessness” means “opposes the law of God.” Lawlessness means more than an absence of law; it conveys an active rebellion against law. Those who keep on sinning are active rebels against God.

There is a difference between committing a sin and continuing to sin. Even the most faithful believers sometimes commit sins, but they do not cherish a particular sin and choose to commit it. A believer who commits a sin repents, confesses, and finds forgiveness. Those who continue to sin, by contrast, will not repent of what they are doing. Thus, they never confess and never receive forgiveness. They live in opposition to God, no matter what religious claims they make.

3:5 And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins, for there is no sin in him. Besides the fact that sin is rebellion against God, another reason that Christians should not sin is because Jesus came to take away [their] sins. In other words, to know of such a sacrifice and then to keep on sinning depreciates that sacrifice. The reason Jesus came to earth was to take away people’s sins. This could only happen because there is no sin in him, so he could provide a suitable sacrifice. Under the Old Testament sacrifice system, Jews offered a lamb without blemish as a sacrifice for sin. Jesus is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29 nlt). Because Jesus lived a perfect life and sacrificed himself for sin, people can be completely forgiven (2:2). He suffered for their sakes, bearing their sins in order to make them acceptable to God. Only he could bridge the gap between the sinless God and sinful people. Jesus died on the cross in our place, taking all our wrongdoing upon himself, saving us from the ultimate consequences of our sin—eternal judgment.

Jesus’ death enabled God to forgive sin; Jesus’ death also made it possible for believers to stop living a life of sin. He came to abolish sins, “to destroy these works of the Devil” (3:8 nlt). Therefore, believers must renounce sin and never become complacent about sin in their lives.

Note John’s use of the present tense—as in 3:3, “he is pure,” and in 3:7, “he is righteous.” This emphasizes his eternal nature. He still “is” all of these things because he is eternal. Because Jesus still lives and still has no sin in him, it follows that he is totally opposed to sin. It also follows, then, that those who claim to be his people must be totally opposed to sin.

3:6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. John argued that those who are joined to Christ should live as Christ lived—pure, without sin. The Greek word behind “lives in him” (menon) indicates “abiding” and “remaining.” John used this same verb in his Gospel in the passage about the branches abiding in the vine (John 15:1–8). As a branch lives in the vine, it draws its life from the vine. As believers live in Christ, they are free from the power of sin. This complete union with Christ and separation from sin portray the ideal Christian. Living in sin and living in God are mutually

exclusive, like darkness and light. The sins that believers commit (1:8–10; 2:1–2) do not come from, or belong to, their lives in Christ.

John was confronting various types of false teachers. Some taught that they were sinless, actually unable to sin. They claimed superiority over everyone else. These teachings are refuted in 1:8–10. To this group, John explained that while Christians should indeed be “sinless,” it was not the kind of sinlessness that the false teachers claimed to have. Experience bears out the fact that sin is still very much in every believer’s life (see 1:7; 2:1). Yet believers can stop living a life of sin through sensitivity to sin when it occurs, sincere repentance from sin, and acceptance of forgiveness from the one who already took the punishment.

Some claimed to have a special relationship with God despite their sinful conduct. They assumed that their behavior did not matter to God. These teachings are refuted in 1:5–7 and 2:1–6. To this second group of false teachers, John explained that sin was indeed very important to God. In fact, to keep sinning proves that they did not “live in God” at all: no one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Christians seek to remain “sinless” in God’s eyes by continually confessing sin to God and repenting of it. But they do not “continue to sin,” meaning that they do not impose upon God’s forgiveness by taking it for granted in order to keep on living as they please. When they repent of sin, they truly desire to remain free of that sin.

The statement “Christians don’t sin” presents the ideal. In this verse, John purposely used the present-tense verb to denote sin as an ongoing action. He was not saying that one who sins even once has never known God, but he was insisting that as far as people continue in sin, to that degree they do not know God. This is God’s ideal for all believers. One day they will be completely sinless, even if they cannot attain that perfection here on earth. During the sojourn on earth, they claim God’s power and the help of the Holy Spirit to stay away from sin as they prepare for what God has in store for them.

WILL TRUE CHRISTIANS SIN?

While translators, theologians, and commentators discuss what these words of John (3:6) really say and what they really mean, Christians keep on sinning. We all do, every day. We may be able to slam the door on really obvious (and obnoxious) sins like sexual immorality, stealing, or using profane language, but what of other “lesser” sins? Whether it’s impatience, worry, inappropriate anger, jealousy, lack of contentment, or lust—some kind of failure is always present. That old part “continues to sin,” and thus we continually need God’s grace. But the more we understand that we are new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17) and the more we yield ourselves to the indwelling Holy Spirit, the more we will conquer temptation. It is this “born of God” part of us that cannot and will not sin. Ask God for the wisdom and power to renounce sin in your life.

3:7 Dear children, don’t let anyone deceive you about this: When people do what is right, it is because they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous. Apparently the false teachers who were denying the doctrine of Christ (2:22) were also claiming that they knew God, yet they were living unrighteous lives (see 1:6). John warned his dear children not to let anyone deceive [them] about this.

When people do what is right, it is because they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous means not that doing righteousness makes people righteous but rather that their righteousness given to them by Christ naturally leads to doing righteous acts. In the same way, a tree that bears good fruit is a good tree. The fruit doesn’t make the tree good; it shows that it is good.

3:8 But when people keep on sinning, it shows they belong to the Devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy these works of the Devil. The devil, in the form of the serpent, was the first recorded liar and rebel against God (see Genesis 3:1). Satan is the founder of lawless rebellion against God. Therefore, when people keep on sinning, it shows they belong to the Devil. The devil cannot create or produce children, but people become his children by imitating him. The devil has been sinning since the beginning—even before the creation of the world. Since then, as the prince of this world, he has been both sinning and causing people to sin. The false teachers who spoke lies and sinned without remorse showed that they belonged to the devil himself (see 2:22). Those who followed these teachers were aligning themselves with the devil and thus fighting against Christ.

John's words here are very similar to what Jesus told the Jewish leaders who refused to accept his message. In the first part of John 8:44, Jesus told them, "You are the children of your father the Devil, and you love to do the evil things he does" (nlt). This statement, which is developed here in 3:7–15, indicates that people's actions are a manifestation of their true source of being. The intent to murder comes from the father of murder, the devil. Satan was the instigator of Jesus' murder and the perpetrator of the lies that the Jews believed about Jesus. "He [the devil]," Jesus continued, "was a murderer from the beginning and has always hated the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44b nlt). Satan, through his lies to Eve (Genesis 3:4–5), gave a way for death to enter into the world, causing Adam and Eve and all their posterity to be alienated from God. In this sense, the devil was a murderer and a sinner from the beginning.

There is a cure for sin, however, because the Son of God came to destroy these works of the Devil. The Greek word behind "destroy" does not mean to annihilate; rather, it means "to break down" (see Ephesians 2:14), "to undo," "to render ineffective." Though it would have made more sense, humanly speaking, for Christ to have obliterated Satan, he didn't. Instead, Christ came to undo Satan's work and thereby free people from sin and all its awful consequences. John was therefore arguing that Christians cannot be involved in what Christ came to destroy.

THE DEVIL'S DOSSIER

Several times in this chapter John mentions the devil. What is true of our enemy? He is described as one who has been "sinning from the beginning" (3:8 niv). He is said to have children—all who are not children of God—whose lives are marked by sin (3:10). He is also called the "evil one" who produces murderous offspring (3:12, 15; cf. John 8:44). Other places describe Satan as a tempter (1 Thessalonians 3:5), believers' accuser (Revelation 12:10), the father of lies (John 8:44), and one who would like to destroy God's people (1 Peter 5:8). All these sobering facts raise the obvious question: Are you alert to Satan's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11) and wearing the full armor of God so you can stand strong against them today (Ephesians 6:11)?

Sources: 4-9

Commentary

1 John 3:8b "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."

The Greek is even sharper than the English. John writes that the Son of God *ephanerōthē*—He was made visible, unveiled, brought out into the open—*hina lysē ta erga tou diabolou*: in order that He might loosen, undo, dissolve, dismantle the works of the devil.

Lyō is the word for untying what is bound, tearing down what has been built, breaking a chain. Jesus did not come merely to out-argue Satan or model a better life. He came to unmake what the devil has made. That is why John puts this sentence where he does. Verses 1–7 have already named you children of God, given you a purifying hope, warned you about habitual sin, and said, “Do not let anyone lead you astray.” Then verse 8 names the enemy and names the reason Jesus stepped onto the field. The appearing is not a footnote. It is the war plan.

What “the devil’s work” actually is... John will not let you treat the devil as a mood or a metaphor. “The devil has been sinning from the beginning.” His work is not random chaos. It is personal, strategic, and patterned.

Across Scripture, that work looks like this:

- Deception — “He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). Leading people astray is not a side hobby. It is his mother tongue.
- Accusation — He is “the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night” (Rev 12:10). He targets identity: You are not a child of God. Look at your sin.
- Bondage through fear of death — “He too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Heb 2:14–15).
- Lawlessness that becomes a lifestyle — “Sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). The rinse-and-repeat cycle you named in the sermon is not just bad habit. It is the devil’s construction project in a human life.
- Dominion that must be bound — “How can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man?” (Matt 12:29). Jesus treats Satan as a squatter with real, but stolen, authority.

So when John says Jesus appeared to destroy the works, he means the whole apparatus: the lie, the chain, the accusation, the fear, the habitual grip of sin, the claim on people who now belong to the Father.

The appearing is an invasion

Genesis 3:15 already told you how this war would be fought. The offspring of the woman would crush the serpent’s head, and the serpent would strike His heel. Victory would come through wounding, not around it. The incarnation is that promise arriving in flesh.

Watch the campaign unfold:

In His ministry, the kingdom does not arrive as a seminar. “If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). Every exorcism, every restored mind, every forgiven sinner is a demolition site. The strong man is being tied.

At the cross, the “ruler of this world” is driven out (John 12:31). Paul says God “disarmed the powers and authorities” and “made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col 2:15). The heel is struck. The head is crushed. The weapon looks like defeat. It is not.

In the resurrection and reign, the victory is not paused. “He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death” (1 Cor 15:25–26). The devil’s sentence is already written: “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur... They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:10).

Already accomplished. Not yet consummated. That is why standing firm is possible now, and why the fight is still real now.

Source: 10

2 Thessalonians is Paul's short follow-up letter (likely AD 50–51 from Corinth) written to restore balance after the church swung from one extreme to the other on the Lord's return.

In 1 Thessalonians they were in danger of losing hope under persecution. By the time of this letter some had gone the opposite direction: unsettled by a prophecy, report, or letter supposedly from Paul claiming “the day of the Lord has already come” (2:2). That rumor produced both doctrinal panic and practical disorder. Paul writes to comfort the persecuted, correct the eschatological error, and discipline the idle. The three groups the Life Application commentary identifies—persecutors, false teachers, and lazy people—map directly onto the three chapters.

Occasion and overall flow

Paul, Silas, and Timothy planted the church on the second missionary journey (Acts 17). They left under pressure; the young believers then faced ongoing hostility from both Jews and Gentiles. 1 Thessalonians commended their faith and love and clarified the resurrection and the coming of the Lord. Shortly afterward a new report reached Paul: some thought they had missed the gathering to Christ and were now facing wrath. Others, apparently assuming the end was so near that ordinary work was pointless, had become idle and disruptive.

The letter's movement is therefore:

- ** Chapter 1** — Thanksgiving and encouragement under persecution; God's justice will repay the persecutors and give relief when Jesus is revealed.
- **Chapter 2**— Doctrinal correction: the Day of the Lord has not come; certain events must precede it. Stand firm in what you were taught.
- **Chapter 3** — Pastoral and disciplinary correction: live responsibly while you wait; work, do not be idle, and deal with those who refuse.

Chapter 1's prayer (1:11–12) leads straight into the body. Chapters 2 and 3 are the two sides of the same correction: what you believe about the future must shape how you live in the present.

How chapter 2 fits

Chapter 2 is the doctrinal heart of the letter. Paul addresses the rumor head-on:

“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. 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.” (2:1–3, 1984 NIV)

He reminds them of teaching he had already given in person (2:5). The sequence is: the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; a restrainer holds it back until the proper time; then the lawless one is revealed, who exalts himself in God's temple; the Lord Jesus will overthrow him “with the breath of his mouth and

destroy [him] by the splendor of his coming” (2:8). Those who refuse the truth are given over to delusion (2:9–12).

The chapter then turns from warning to assurance and exhortation (2:13–17). God chose them “from the beginning... to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.” Therefore: “stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.” The forged-letter problem in 2:2 is why Paul later signs the letter in his own hand (3:17).

In the flow of the epistle, chapter 2 answers the theological crisis created by the false claim. Until they know the Day has not already arrived, they cannot have stability. The man of lawlessness and the rebellion function as the “not yet” that keeps them from panic.

How chapter 3 fits

Chapter 3 applies the corrected eschatology to daily life. If the Day has not come and they must continue living in the present age, then idleness is disobedience, not spirituality.

Paul first asks for prayer that the word would spread and that they would be delivered from wicked men (3:1–2). He expresses confidence that the Lord is faithful and will strengthen them (3:3–5). Then comes the command:

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.” (3:6)

He points to his own example: he worked night and day so as not to be a burden (3:7–9). The rule he had already given them was simple: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (3:10). Some were “idle... not busy; they are busybodies” (3:11). They are to settle down and earn their own bread (3:12). The rest of the church is not to grow weary in doing right, but they are to note the disobedient person, not associate with him so that he may be ashamed, yet still treat him as a brother, not an enemy (3:13–15).

The idleness problem is the practical fruit of the doctrinal error in chapter 2. If some believed the Day had already come (or was so imminent that ordinary responsibilities no longer mattered), quitting work and living off others became a logical—if sinful—response. Chapter 3 therefore completes the letter’s purpose: correct the timeline so that they will live faithfully until the Lord comes.

The three troubles and the letter’s unity

The Life Application notes you quoted capture the structure well:

- Persecutors (1:4–10) — God will repay them and give the church relief.
- False teachers / deceptive reports (2:1–3, 2:2) — the Day has not come; stand firm in the apostolic teaching.
- Lazy people / loafers (3:6–15) — work, follow the example, and practice church discipline.

All three are held together by the same themes: God’s faithfulness, the need to stand firm, and living in light of a future that has not yet arrived. Chapter 1 gives the persecuted church hope that justice is coming. Chapter 2 gives them a corrected map of when that day arrives. Chapter 3 tells them how to occupy themselves in the meantime—working, praying, holding to the traditions, and not growing weary in doing good.

The letter ends with Paul’s handwritten greeting as the authenticating mark (3:17), closing the loop on the forged-letter problem that started the whole crisis in 2:2. The result is a compact, pastoral letter: comfort the afflicted, correct the confused, and command the idle so that the church remains a faithful witness until the Lord Jesus is revealed.

BELIEVERS SHOULD STAND FIRM / 2:13–17

Having just painted the picture of the world with the undercurrent of evil waiting to be unleashed, and a period of time when evil will reign and people will worship it, Paul countered by encouraging believers to stand firm in their faith. Every passage in the New Testament about the Lord's return ends with ethical mandates such as those found in this section and in chapter 3.

2:13 As for us, we always thank God for you, dear brothers and sisters loved by the Lord. We are 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 by your belief in the truth. Once again, Paul and his companions paused to thank God for what he had done and was continuing to do through the Thessalonian believers. In contrast to people who will rebel against God and face eternal destruction, those who believe have a glorious future. God chose [the Thessalonian believers] to be among the first to experience salvation; they were among the early believers, the first in Thessalonica, and they had been chosen by God for that special privilege. Paul consistently taught that salvation begins and ends with God. People can do nothing to be saved on their own merit—all must accept God's gift of salvation. There is no other way to receive forgiveness from sin. Paul was encouraging the Thessalonian believers by reminding them that they had been chosen by God from the beginning. Present and future persecution and suffering should not lead to panic. Instead, believers should stand firm. Their faith should be in the One who will win the battle. He can be trusted to bring them to heaven, no matter what happens on earth.

Salvation comes to those who believe in the truth—that is, they accept the gospel message of salvation through Christ. Then a process begins by which believers are made holy like Christ. This is called “sanctification.” This is a gradual, lifelong process that will be completed when believers see Christ face-to-face. “Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is” (1 John 3:2 nrsv).

2:14 He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. God's “call” came to these Thessalonians through his human emissaries, Paul and his companions. God worked through Paul, Silas, Timothy, and others to tell the Good News to the Thessalonians so that [they] might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Thessalonians were facing persecution for their faith; Paul had just finished describing a time on earth of even more intense persecution. There was no doubt about the outcome. Those who believe will share in Christ's glory when he comes to restore justice on the earth (see 1:5–10). Believers will reflect his glory back to him as they praise him.

The system has not changed. God still invites people through the simple gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. And that gospel message is presented by other human beings who have experienced God's grace. The privilege of all believers is to take that message into a lost and sinful world and find others to join them in glorifying Christ.

2:15 With all these things in mind, dear brothers and sisters, stand firm and keep a strong grip on everything we taught you both in person and by letter. Paul knew that the Thessalonians would face pressure from persecution, false teachers, worldliness, and apathy to waver from the truth and to leave the faith. With all these things in mind, Paul urged them to stand firm and keep a strong grip on everything that Paul and his companions had taught. The Thessalonians had received much teaching in person, and they had Paul's letters. They would need to hold on to the truth they had been taught.

It will take faith to hold on when persecution becomes intense; it will be important to continue to work for God no matter what happens (see Mark 13:13; Hebrews 3:6). Just because Christians are saved and certain of victory doesn't mean that they can sit out during the battle. Their own salvation does not excuse them from working to bring others to faith in Christ. They will need to be braced and ready, with all their armor on (Ephesians 6:13–18), but they are not alone. They can draw strength from other believers and know that the Holy Spirit will give them inner confidence.

A STRONG GRIP

How do we “stand firm and keep a strong grip”? We should hold on to the truth of Christ's teachings because our lives depend on it.

To believe in Jesus and stand firm will take perseverance because our faith will be challenged and opposed. Severe trials will sift true Christians from fair-weather believers. Enduring to the end does not earn salvation for us but marks us as already saved. The assurance of our salvation will keep us going through times of persecution.

Because Christ lives in us, we can remain courageous and hopeful to the end. Without this enduring faithfulness, we could easily be blown away by the winds of temptation, false teaching, or persecution.

2:16–17 May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word.

This prayer is similar to the one at the end of the main section of his first letter (1 Thessalonians 3:11–13). Notice that Paul gave the full title of the Lord Jesus Christ, showing his majesty and power. God is called our Father and the following words, “his grace,” are singular, showing that Jesus and God are really one person. Through that grace—undeserved kindness—God and Christ gave ... eternal encouragement and good hope to the believers. Christianity is not a faith of questions and worries—not a faith in which believers must wait until the end to see if they will make it. Instead, believers are given hope and encouragement through the certainty of God's promises.

It always helps, however, to pray for believers everywhere, especially those facing persecution for their faith, that God would encourage [their] hearts and strengthen [them] in every good deed and word. The encouragement of hearts gives inner conviction; the good deeds and words reveal that inner conviction to the world.

ETERNAL ENCOURAGEMENT

Even the strongest people get tired at times, but God's power and strength never diminish. He is never too tired or too busy to help and listen. When you feel all of life crushing you and you cannot go another step, remember that you can call upon the Lord Jesus Christ to renew your strength.

Hoping in the Lord means expecting that his promise of strength will help us to rise above life's distractions and difficulties. It also means trusting God and his Word. Depend on God as your source of encouragement.

2 Thessalonians 3

PAUL REQUESTS PRAYER / 3:1–5

Paul had been writing about the future, describing the coming of the Antichrist and the future days of rebellion and lawlessness. That man of evil has not yet come because he is being held back. Yet, even so, Paul stated that “the secret power of lawlessness is already at work” (2:7 niv). Evil is at work in the world, but it is also being held in check. What does that mean for Christians? How then are they to live in this present evil world as they are preparing for the next?

3:1 Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you. Paul prayed regularly for the believers in the various churches, and he did not hesitate to ask for their prayers in return (see the chart “Paul’s Prayers” in 1 Thessalonians 1:2, page 16). So here, as he prepared to offer final words of advice to the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica, he first asked them to pray for him and his fellow missionaries (the Greek word means “keep on praying”). The focus of Paul’s desire was that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you. The “word of the Lord” as used here may be contrasted with the word of the false teachers (2:2, 15), and it refers to preaching of the gospel. The Greek word for “spread rapidly” (*treche*) literally pictures a runner, perhaps like one who would participate in races in the Isthmian Games held in Corinth (from where Paul was writing). Paul saw the gospel message “running” across the known world, finding converts in every place, just as it had in Thessalonica. The preaching of the gospel would result in honor being given to the Lord because of the marvelous results in the lives of those who believe. The Thessalonians had been an exemplary congregation (1 Thessalonians 1:6–10). Paul wanted them to pray for God’s power to intervene in other places so that many would be saved and God would be glorified.

3:2 And that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people; for not all have faith. In addition to praying for more converts, Paul asked the believers to also pray that we may be rescued from wicked and evil people. As the gospel message advances, it always faces severe opposition. The spiritual battle rages intensely for people’s souls, and Satan does not easily let go of his own. Thus, the missionaries would need prayer for safety. If Paul asked for it, how much more should believers today pray for one another as they seek to share the gospel message—whether across the street or across the world. In Greek, the phrase “wicked and evil people” has a definite article, so Paul was referring to a particular group, perhaps some of his detractors there in Corinth (see Acts 18:12). These people were “wicked and evil” because they did not ... have faith. In Greek the word has a definite article, “the faith,” referring to the Christian faith. But as it is used here, it most likely refers to faith or faithfulness, meaning a believing response to the gospel. Paul’s enemies were those who did not believe in the gospel message and were actively working against it.

PRAYER POWER

Beneath the surface of the routine of daily life, a fierce struggle between invisible spiritual powers rages. Our main defense is prayer that God will protect us from the evil one and the he will strengthen us. We will need the full armor of God as we face spiritual attacks and we will be attacked, for Christians are Satan’s prime targets, his avowed enemies. The following guidelines can help you prepare for and survive satanic attacks:

- Take the threat of spiritual attack seriously.
- Pray for strength and help from God.
- Study the Bible to recognize Satan’s style and tactics.
- Memorize Scripture so it will be a source of help no matter where you are.
- Associate with those who speak the truth.
- Practice what you are taught by spiritual leaders.

3:3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. There is a play on words in verses 2 and 3: “Faith” in 3:2 is *pistis*; “faithful” in this verse is *pistos*. While many people may be without faith, that does not change the fact that the Lord is faithful. As at the end of his first letter (1 Thessalonians 5:24), Paul reminded the believers of God’s faithfulness: God can be depended upon to keep his promises, he is loyal, and he is constant. (See the chart “God Is Faithful” on pages 94–95 for verses in both the Old and New Testaments that describe God’s everlasting faithfulness.) Because God will not change, neither will his faithfulness to his promises.

Because of that faithfulness, God will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. As the spiritual battle intensifies, the true enemy of all believers is really only one person—the “evil one,” Satan himself. Because the Lord is faithful, he will protect his gospel message, and it will continue to spread across the world and achieve results. Because the Lord is faithful, he will strengthen and protect the believers. This does not mean that they will never face difficulties; it just means that God is faithful. Although there have been and will be persecutions, death, difficulties, suffering, problems, and even failing churches, there will be no ultimate defeat because God has already won the war. Neither the Word nor the church will fail—because God is faithful. Through any situation, God can be depended upon to strengthen and protect his people. The result for all believers will be eternity with God. That promise will never change.

Yet even so, prayer is a vital factor behind all of this activity. As the missionaries spread God’s message, they understood that spiritual forces were at work—the faithful Lord with them, the evil one against them. They realized that they were not involved in a merely human endeavor; they were on the Lord’s battlefields, under his command, with his authority, knowing they would win, yet needing his guidance and the constant prayers of believers every step of the way.

3:4 And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, that you are doing and will go on doing the things that we command. Christ is faithful, but his followers must do their part in being obedient. Paul had confidence in the Lord concerning the Thessalonians. His confidence rested not in the Thessalonians themselves but in God who had chosen them. They had more than shown their obedience to the teachings of the apostles, even as they had experienced persecution. Paul knew that God would strengthen them so that they could do and go on doing the things that [he commanded]. Believers at this time did not have the New Testament, so they had to listen carefully to the teachings of the apostles; therefore, Paul spoke of them doing what he and the other apostles did command because their teaching came from God. This principle of imitation is taught also in 3:7, 9.

Paul may have been referring to the specific command to pray, which he had just mentioned in the previous verses, or, more likely, these words are a prelude to the following verses that give practical advice regarding living out the faith (Paul used the word “command” again in 3:6).

Source: 11

Standing Firm in Jesus

A theological reflection on four “stand firm” passages

1 Corinthians 16:13

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.

Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

1 Thessalonians 3:8

For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.

(All quotations NIV 1984.)

Theological Reflection

Standing firm is not a personality trait. It is a posture in Jesus. These four texts form one Pauline call: remain where Christ has already placed you—free, armed, watchful, and alive in Him.

1 Corinthians 16:13 — Watchful soldiers who do not break ranks

Paul ends a messy letter with four staccato military commands. David Guzik notes that they are essentially one idea said four ways: Christians are to live like soldiers who stay awake, hold formation, refuse to flinch, and draw strength when the line is pressed. “Watch” is the same word Jesus used for staying alert for His coming and against temptation. “Stand firm in the faith” means holding the content of the gospel, not merely a feeling of faith. “Be men of courage” (*andrizomai*) is the only New Testament use of the word; it means act like mature men rather than children tossed by every wind. “Be strong” belongs to the same family of language as Ephesians 6:10.

Life Application emphasis is practical and communal: a believer who is spiritually drowsy will be surprised by false teaching, moral compromise, or cultural pressure. Standing firm is not grim isolation. The next verse immediately adds, “Do everything in love.” Vigilance without love becomes suspicion. Strength without love becomes harshness. The church stands together or it does not stand well.

Theologically, this is not self-generated grit. The faith we stand in is the gospel already preached and received (1 Corinthians 15:1–2). We hold what Christ has already secured.

Galatians 5:1 — Free people who refuse the old yoke

Guzik is especially clear here: Christ has made us free; we do not free ourselves. The liberty in view is not “do whatever you feel.” It is freedom from the tyranny of earning God’s favor, from the penalty and power of sin, and ultimately from sin’s presence. “Stand firm” takes effort because a legally freed person can still live like a slave if the old master—legalism or license—talks them back into chains. Paul calls the Law, when used as a system of self-justification, a “yoke of bondage”—heavy, entangling, and frustrating.

Life Application presses the same point into daily life: many believers leave the slavery of “I must perform to be accepted” only to become slaves of “I can do whatever I want.” Both miss the gospel. Freedom in Christ is freedom to love and serve, not freedom from holiness. The indicative (“Christ has set us free”) grounds the imperative (“stand firm”). We do not stand in order to become free; we stand because we already are. This is the heart of Christian identity: our standing is in a Person, not a performance.

Ephesians 6:11 — Armed people who hold the ground

Guzik stresses two things: the armor is whole, and the goal is to stand. God does not send us into battle half-equipped. The armor is “of God” in two senses—it comes from Him and it is the armor He Himself wears

(Isaiah 59:17). Jesus has already disarmed the principalities and powers (Colossians 2:15); we now wear what He has won. “Stand against the devil’s schemes” means Satan’s tactics of both intimidation and insinuation—the bully and the beguiler. We do not invent new ground; we hold the ground Christ has taken.

Life Application turns this into daily habit rather than a one-time prayer. Truth must be buckled on. Righteousness must cover the heart (Christ’s, not ours). Gospel readiness must be on the feet. Faith must be lifted as a shield when accusations fly. Salvation must guard the mind. The Word must be taken up as a sword. Prayer is the atmosphere in which the armor is worn.

Theologically, standing firm is defensive and occupying. We are not trying to win the war; we are refusing to surrender territory already purchased by the cross. The strength comes first (“be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power,” Ephesians 6:10), then the armor.

1 Thessalonians 3:8 — Living people whose steadfastness gives life to others

Paul had been in anguish, fearing that affliction had shaken the young Thessalonian church. Timothy’s report that they were standing firm revived him. Guzik captures the pastoral heartbeat: their perseverance made Paul feel alive again. Standing firm in the Lord is not a private achievement; it is life-giving to the body and to those who labor among us.

Life Application notes the realism: affliction is appointed, not accidental. The question is never whether pressure will come, but whether we will be moved by it. Steadfastness in the Lord is evidence that the gospel has taken root. It also becomes a ministry: when one part of the body holds, others are strengthened. Theologically, “in the Lord” is the key phrase. We do not stand near Jesus or for Jesus as a slogan. We stand in union with the risen Lord who already stands victorious.

How we stand firm in Jesus

These texts do not describe four separate techniques. They describe one reality viewed from different angles.

- The ground is Jesus Himself. He set us free (Galatians 5:1). We stand in the Lord (1 Thessalonians 3:8). The faith we hold is the gospel of His death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 16:13; 15:1–4). The armor is His (Ephesians 6:11). Standing firm is remaining where He has already placed us.
- The power is the Spirit, not stoicism. “Be strong” and “put on” are present-tense commands that assume ongoing dependence. Legalism and self-effort both collapse. The same Spirit who raised Jesus empowers watchfulness, courage, and endurance.
- The manner is love. 1 Corinthians 16:14 is not an afterthought. All the watching, standing, courage, and strength must be done in love or they become another form of bondage.
- The context is the church under pressure. These commands were written to real congregations facing false teaching, persecution, internal division, and spiritual attack. Standing firm is never only personal; it is corporate. One believer’s steadfastness “gives life” to others.
- The enemy is real but already defeated. We take our stand against schemes, not in frantic fear. The devil’s tactics—accusation, deception, intimidation, the pull back into slavery—are expected. They are not ultimate. Christ has already won.

Practically, standing firm in Jesus looks like this: stay awake to what is shaping your mind and affections; refuse both legalism and license; daily appropriate the gospel resources God has already given; remain in the Lord rather than in your own resolve; and do it all in love with the people God has placed around you.

Sources: 12-14

Resources: (1) Rev. Brad Standfest, (2) Logos Bible Commentaries [3] Identity and Transformation, Logos Bible Theologians [4] Barton, Bruce B., and Grant R. Osborne. 1998. 1, 2 & 3 John. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. [5] Andreas J. Köstenberger, A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 264. [6] David Jackman, The Message of John's Letters: Living in the Love of God, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 13–14. [7] Derrick McCarson, Living in the Light: An Exposition of the Letters of John (Eugene, Oregon: Resource Publications, 2013). [8] Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John, ed. D. A. Carson, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; London: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 2020), 27. [9] John R. W. Stott, The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 19:43. [10] Logos Biblically Exegeses [11] Barton, Bruce B., and Grant R. Osborne. 1999. 1 & 2 Thessalonians: Life Application Commentary. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers. [12] Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used for all Scripture quotations above. [13] David Guzik, Enduring Word Bible Commentary: 1 Corinthians 16; Galatians 5; Ephesians 6; 1 Thessalonians 3. Available at enduringword.com. [14] Life Application Study Bible notes and Life Application Bible Commentary series (Tyndale House), especially the volumes on 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and 1 Thessalonians. Themes summarized rather than quoted at length.

Sermon Notes:

Good morning and happy Sunday to everyone.

Welcome to those joining us online.

I just want to say church life is in full action. We started our Wednesday night discipleship groups... Kids 4 Truth and childcare, Youth, YA, and Adult classes. If you didn't come out, we would love to have you.

Very quick, here are the AVC Connections: YouTube, App, Facebook / Website, Text Alerts — if you're not in the system, let us know.

[Let's Pray]

We are in a series called "Targeted."

Week 1 — we talked about the cosmic war in heaven in Revelation 12. Satan and his demons were thrown out of heaven.

Week 2 — last week we talked about the targeting Satan uses through a spirit of confusion.

Today, Week 3 — I am going to talk about "Standing Firm in Jesus."

Unfortunately for us, the war was thrown out of heaven... and it has come to earth.

Make no mistake about it...

Satan's targeting is real.

The targeting is strategic.

The targeting is personal.

I understand that this message is heavy. It can leave us feeling like we don't stand a chance.

The truth is... if we want to be protected and set free, we must know who the real enemy really is.

Christians... in this spiritual war we are in... we must know who we are... and who has our backs.

Let's hop into 1 John 3:1-8 to be encouraged, equipped, and challenged.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

The reason the Son of God (JESUS) appeared was to destroy the devil's work!! (v.8)

Let's be honest... it's in our human nature to take things on ourselves.

Look... it's not our job to take Satan out... it's impossible.

Jesus Christ destroys the devil's work.

We must learn to put Jesus in front of the target.

Friends... we must stand firm in Jesus.

Theologian Bromiley comments on the words "Stand Firm"... I quote: "When Apostle Paul commands believers to stand firm in Christ, he's invoking something far more dynamic than stability. Standing in Faith means standing in the Lord, for faith looks to the Lord, and he enables it to Stand. This isn't your achievement alone- Christ provides the ground upon which you stand." (Theological Dictionary of the N.T. 85, 1082)

Let's read 2 Thessalonians 2:13-16 & 3:3-4a.

But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope... (v. 3-4a) The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord...

Let's say this together: "I am... Standing Firm... In Jesus Christ"

I conclude with some power punch passages for your arsenal.

1 Corinthians 16:13 - Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.

Galatians 5:1 - It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Ephesians 6:11- Put on the full armor of God and take your stand against the devil's schemes.

1 Thessalonians 3:8 - For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord.

I am Standing Firm in Jesus Christ — Amen!

Stand with me in closing prayer.

Devotional Questions:

1. Read 1 John 3:1–2. What does the Father actually call you—and what does John say is already true of you now? How does that identity change the way you hear “Satan is targeting you”?

2. Read 1 John 3:2–3. John says the hope of seeing Jesus “purifies” us. What does that hope produce in a person’s mind, heart, and soul that mere willpower cannot?

3. Read 1 John 3:4–6. John talks about keeping on sinning, not a single stumble. Where do you see “rinse and repeat” sin in your own life, and what does living in Him do to that pattern?

4. Read 1 John 3:7. “Do not let anyone lead you astray.” Who has the most pull on you—person, friend, family, voice, or habit—and what would standing firm look like with that person or voice this week?

5. Read 1 John 3:8. Why did the Son of God appear? Write the reason in your own words. Then ask: where have you been trying to “take Satan out” yourself instead of putting Jesus in front of the target?

6. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:13–15. Paul says God chose you, the Spirit sanctifies you, and the gospel called you. What, then, are you told to do—and what teachings are you actually holding onto right now?

7. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17 and 3:3–4. What does God give (encouragement, hope, strength, protection)? What does that tell you about whose job it is to keep you standing when the targeting feels personal?

8. Read Ephesians 6:11 and 1 Corinthians 16:13 together. Standing firm is not passive. What does “take your stand” and “be on your guard” require of you this week—specifically with your heart, mind, and soul?

9. Read Galatians 5:1. What “yoke” would Satan love to put back on you? What would it look like to stand firm in the freedom Christ already won rather than fight that battle in your own strength?

10. Read 1 Thessalonians 3:8. Paul says he really lives because they are standing firm in the Lord. Who in your life is strengthened when you stand firm in Jesus—and who needs to hear you say, “I am standing firm in Jesus Christ”?