

“Stand Firm”  
Philippians 4:1  
(Preached at Trinity, May 28, 2017)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we begin **Chapter 4** we once again hear Paul's great love for the Philippian church. In the previous chapter he sent warnings: he warned of the Judaizers, whom he referred to as "dogs." In **Verses 17-19** he wept over those he considered "enemies of the cross of Christ" who are heading for destruction. But now he returns to consider the Philippians. Every thought of the Philippian congregation filled Paul's heart with joy.  
**Philippians 1:3-4 NAU** - "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,"
  - A. He refers to them as "my beloved brethren." He uses the word ἀγαπητός twice in **Verse 1**.
  - B. Then he adds, "my joy and crown" – Their continuance in the faith was a great source of joy for Paul.
  - C. In the previous chapter Paul declared he was like an athlete reaching for the prize. **Philippians 3:14 NAU** - "I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."  
Now he is declaring that he sees them as very much a part of his reward. They are the fruit of his labors.
  - D. Paul had a wonderful Gospel heart. While most are busy filling their lives with earthly treasures Paul had a higher goal.  
**1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 NAU** - "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? <sup>20</sup> For you are our glory and joy."
  - E. Now, as Paul brings this letter to a close, he gives several words of admonition.
2. Paul begins with the familiar "therefore" linking us back to the previous section. Paul has declared the Christian priority and focus. We are citizens of another Kingdom and we are anxiously awaiting the coming of our King and the transformation of our earthly body.  
**Philippians 3:20-21 NAU** - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; <sup>21</sup> who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."
3. Therefore, "stand firm." He begins this final chapter with a charge to perseverance. στήκω – Stand firm – the idea of remaining steadfast. The picture of stability.  
**Philippians 1:27 NAU** - "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"  
**1 Corinthians 16:13 NAU** - "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong."  
**Galatians 5:1 NAU** - "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."

4. This is the continuing admonition of the New Testament.
- A. Those who have the hope of eternity press on in holiness.  
**1 John 3:2-3 NAU** - "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."  
**2 Peter 3:13-14 NAU** - "But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. <sup>14</sup>  
Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,"  
**1 Corinthians 15:58 NAU** - "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord."
- B. Eternal reward is reserved for those who persevere until the end.  
**Matthew 10:22 NAU** - "You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved."
- I. The Christian must remain firmly fixed in Christ.
- A. The life of a believer is a great battle, an unceasing warfare
1. The imagery of warfare is used over and over in the NT.
  2. As soldiers of Christ we must remain faithful to our calling  
**2 Timothy 2:4 NAU** - "No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."
  3. Standing firm is at the heart of fighting any battle.  
The image is of a soldier standing his ground. We must not retreat or flee in fear. We must not surrender and give ourselves over to the control of the enemy. We must not lay down our weapons or slumber in the midst of the battle. Perseverance is the order of the day—Stand firm!
  4. Our firm foundation is the result of being united to Christ. Paul charges us, "Be strong in the Lord." We have no sufficiency in ourselves.  
Like a stately oak we remain immovable through every storm because we have been firmly planted.  
**Psalms 1:1-3 NAU** - "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! <sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He will be like a tree *firmly* planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers."

B. Saving faith is an unwavering faith

1. Faith and steadfastness are inseparable  
**2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 NAU** - "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. <sup>14</sup> It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup> So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word *of mouth* or by letter from us."
2. Our salvation is sure. It is certain. And yet, there is always the tension, the warning that the genuine believer endures. He presses on. He stands firm. He holds fast.  
**1 Corinthians 15:1-2 NAU** - "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup> by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."
3. Those who have trusted in Christ are built upon a rock, a sure foundation  
 The mark of a genuine Christian is perseverance  
**Philippians 1:6 NAU** - "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

II. Standing firm has several implications

- A. It has a moral dimension
  1. John Eadie, Scottish theologian from the 19<sup>th</sup> century wrote:  
 "To stand, or stand fast, in the Lord, is neither to wander out of Him, nor even to waver in connection with Him, but to remain immovable in fellowship with Him, —to live, in Him with out pause—to walk in Him without digression—to love Him without rival—and to serve Him without compromise."<sup>1</sup>
  2. The winds of compromise are always blowing. We are continually being tempted to act like the citizens of this world. Paul reminds his readers,  
**Philippians 3:20 NAU** - "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;"  
**Philippians 4:1 NAU** – Therefore "stand firm in the Lord, my beloved."
  3. The pleasures and riches of this life can appear irresistible. It has caused the faith of some to suffer shipwreck upon the rocks of worldly pleasures.  
**1 Timothy 6:10 NAU** - "For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

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<sup>1</sup> Eadie, John, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books, reprint 2005), Page 235.

4. Temptation can come even from within our own home  
**Matthew 10:33-36 NAS** - "But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. <sup>34</sup> "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> "For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; <sup>36</sup> and a man's enemies will be the members of his household."
  5. The pressures are great. We must stand fast.
- B. It has a theological dimension
1. Paul often warned of the danger of abandoning the doctrinal teachings of orthodoxy. Many a young person has left home only to abandon sound doctrine. In our age of the internet doctrinal winds blow from every direction.  
**2 Timothy 4:3-4 NAU** - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths."
  2. Paul opened **Chapter 3** with the warning, "Beware of the dogs." He was referring to the Judaizers who were perverting the Gospel of Christ. Paul is admonishing them, "Stand firm in the faith!"
  3. Standing fast in the faith means standing firm upon the truths of the Christian faith
    - a. We should not consider every point of doctrine a matter open for debate – There are certain truths upon which we stand. Martin Luther famously declared – "Here I stand, I can do none other."
    - b. Paul spoke of the work of pastors in maturing the church  
**Ephesians 4:14** – "That we *henceforth* be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;"
  4. Standing firm demands having a high view of Scripture and standing unwavering upon it. We rest upon truth, not human opinion, wisdom, or philosophy. We do not compromise God's Word
- C. It has a congregational dimension
1. We are standing firm when we continue together in humility and harmony  
**Philippians 2:2-4 NAU** - "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; <sup>4</sup> do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."
  2. There were two ladies in the church who were dearly beloved by Paul, his joy and crown, who were at odds with each other.
  3. This disunity threatened the wellbeing of the entire church. Paul's counsel was clear:  
 "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord."

4. When we hold bitterness or animosity; when we selfishly try to outdo one another we are not standing firm in the Gospel.

Conclusion:

1. Standing firm in the raging battle that is all around us is an act of futility if we attempt it by our own might. Human weapons are completely impotent against these foe.

Martin Luther:

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.*

2. John Owen writes of the Holy Spirit's work in our sanctification: "He only is sufficient for this work; all ways and means without him are a thing of naught. In vain do men seek other remedies; they shall not be healed by them. I might here bewail the endless, foolish labour of poor souls, who being convinced of sin, and not able to stand against the power of their convictions, do set themselves, by innumerable perplexing ways and duties, to keep down sin, but being strangers to the Spirit of God, all in vain. They combat without victory, have war without peace, and are in slavery all their days."<sup>2</sup>
3. Paul wrote:  
**Ephesians 6:10-11 KJV** - "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."
4. We are in a spiritual war and we need spiritual weapons. Our two most powerful are the Word of God and Prayer. Only by God's power are we able to "stand firm in the Lord." And yet, Paul puts it in the form of an imperative. Our lives must be lived in Christ. Through Christ we can live above this world and stand firm against whatever crushing force may rise against us.  
**Matthew 7:25 NAU** - "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock."

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<sup>2</sup> Owen, John, *Works of Owen, Vol. 6*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), pages 16, 20.