

Stand Firm – Part 1 – Philippians 4:1-3

Introduction / Outline

- Scripture reading: Psalm 62; Philippians 4:1-9
- No one likes to live on a roller coaster. We all prefer stability. Many work hard on making money and keeping healthy for what? Just to have a relatively stable life. But eventually they will fall before the judgment seat of God. Only Christians have a stable foundation of life.
- Yet every Christian experiences ups and downs in his spiritual life. Maybe you have also been on a spiritual roller coaster, having a climax on Sunday during worship when the preaching of God's Word fills you with spiritual power; but on Monday, you go back to school or work and are suddenly buried under all the tedious work and complicated interpersonal relationships, and your spiritual life immediately hit the rock bottom. How can we live a stable spiritual life in the Lord? Philippians 4:1-9 will give you some important specific principles.
- Outline:
 - Title: Stand Firm – Part 1
 - 1. A Loving Exhortation (v1)
 - 2. Unity in the Fellowship (v2)
 - 3. Assistance of Fellow Saints (v3)

A Loving Exhortation (v1)

- "Therefore": The exhortation to stand firm in the Lord is because of 3:20-21, that we are citizens of heaven. This confident eternal hope is our foundation. Further, the reasons for standing firm also include the aforementioned dangers facing the church, including: persecution by enemies (1:28), legalistic false teachers (3:2), and licentious false Christians (3:18-19). Therefore, stand firm in the Lord!
- "Brethren": Paul uses five loving terms in a row to express his deep affections for the Philippian church. Brethren is a kinship term. Remember, we are citizens of heaven. We have the same Father in heaven, and the same Big Brother, Christ!
- "Beloved": This is the term for God's agape love, the key of which is self-sacrifice (Gal. 2:20, Romans 5:8, Eph. 5:25, etc.). Paul calls the Philippians "my beloved," meaning you are the ones I sacrifice my life to serve, that your good is my goal, for this is how Christ loved us, so this is how I will love you .
- "whom I long to see": This is an emotion deeper than simply wanting to meet. 1:8 says "I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus." How does Christ long for us? Not just wanting

to see us, Christ longs for our souls! He longs to have intimate fellowship with us! Paul, too, longs for an intimate fellowship with them in the Lord.

- "Joy": I am full of joy when your spiritual life prospers and grows in the Lord. See 1:4; 2:2, 17; 4:10, 17.
- "Crown": The reward for the winner in an athletic game, a laurel wreath. You are the reward of my work, and your steadfast growth in life proves that my ministry is not in vain (2:16; cf. 1 Thess. 2:19).
- "My beloved brethren": Another one! Almost gives you goosebumps. What a pastoral heart Paul has! The following exhortation comes entirely out of Paul's true love for them.
- "Stand firm in the Lord": This is the main exhortation. How to do it? The general principles are in chapter 3 - press on toward sanctification, follow godly examples, and beware of bad examples whose belly is their god. The specific principles are laid out in chapter 4 verses 2–9.

Unity in the Fellowship (v2)

- "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche": Naming them directly in a letter to be read out loud by the whole church indicates that their conflict is not a secret, that it has become a big problem in the church! Everyone knows they don't get along! We saw in chapter 2 a big section on humility and unity, and here we see why!

Notice the word "I urge" is repeated twice on both parties. **Principle - In relational issues between Christians, almost always, both parties are responsible!**

Proverbs 18:17 "The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him."

The nature of the conflict has nothing to do with the truth of the gospel, otherwise Paul would have seriously corrected it. **Principle - In a church that teaches sound doctrine, the conflicts are usually not about the truth, but simply a matter of preference. What lies beneath this kind of conflict is always the sin of pride. So, chapter 2 belabors on humility and self-denial, using Christ as the example.**

- "In the Lord": Remind them of their spiritual relationship in the Lord. You are citizens of heaven, brethren whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown. **Principle—Let this relationship in the Lord direct your thinking.**

Furthermore, unity is not just by being together in the Lord in essence, but by abiding in the Lord in practical living and submitting to the Lord's will. **Principle - It is not that I submit to you, or you submit to me, but that we all submit to the lordship of Jesus, who alone is Lord.**

- "in harmony": The original text is the same phrase as "being of the same mind" in 2:2. Paul is asking them to pursue unity by the principles laid out in 2:1-8. **Principle**—It's not the kind of superficial harmony which says as long as we don't fight we're fine. We must apply the entire message of 2:1-8, follow the example of Christ's humility and self-denial, care for one another, serve one another, and be united from the inside out!

Assistance of Fellow Saints (v3)

- "true companion": "Companion" here is actually a proper noun, just like Euodia and Syntyche. It's a name. This brother's name is "Companion," or, more literally, "Yoked-together". Mr Companion is yoked together with Paul with the yoke of gospel ministry, so Paul calls him "true companion." Paul says: Brother Companion, please help sisters Euodia and Syntyche to be in unity in the Lord.
- "Help": present tense, continuous help. **Principle** - Relational reconciliation can take time. It can't be done with just one word of exhortation, especially when the problem is deep-rooted. Be patient in dealing with them. The church must continually and patiently provide spiritual help and seek unity as long as the individual is not hard-heartedly rejecting explicit teachings of God's Word.
- "shared my struggle": These sisters likely participated in the hard labor of the early founding of the church in Philippi (cf. Acts 16). **Principle** - No one is immune to conflict. Those who serve most zealously, the core co-workers, may also be involved in conflict.
- "whose names are in the book of life": The book of life is the roster of the kingdom of heaven, which records the names of all the citizens of heaven. How does Paul know their names are in the book of life? Because kingdom citizens must have the character of the kingdom life. Paul must've seen such characteristics while working with them. **Principle** - keep your eyes on eternity!

The text is unclear as to exactly who are included in "whose names." It is certain that "Clement ... and the rest of my fellow workers" are included. As for the two sisters, the original grammar may or may not include them. This is perhaps to give a gentle warning to the two sisters: If you continue to live in a state of hostility to each other, that you clearly violate God's important will for Christian unity, if you remain hard-hearted and would not repent and pursue peace with each other, then I can't be sure whether you really are in the book of life.

If, at this very moment, your heart is clearly harboring hostility toward a certain brother or sister, repent immediately! Don't allow it to affect your own spiritual stability and the stability of your church!

Summary

These verses reflect some specific principles of Christian conflict and reconciliation: 1. Responsibility lies with both parties so both need to be exhorted; 2. Humility and self-denial are key when the matter isn't about the truth; 3. Be watchful and make sure to abide in the Lord always; 4. Let go of preferences and focus on relationship; 5. Even faithful co-workers are not immune to conflict; 6. Seek assistance from fellow saints when it becomes too hard to bear; 7. Persevere with patience and do not be discouraged; 8. Focus on eternity as we strive together.