

站立得稳（下）：思想的操练、实践的操练——腓立比书 4:8-9

Stand Firm – Part 3

Introduction、Outline

- Scripture reading: Philippians 4:1-9; Psalm 15.
- Sermon text; Philippians 4:8-9 (NASB95)

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, []dwell on these things. **9** The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
- In order to “stand firm in the Lord,” Christians must practice these principles in vv2-9. Five principles were mentioned previously: Unity in the fellowship (v2); Assistance of fellow saints (v3); Joy in the Lord (v4); Reputation of gentle humility (v5); and prayer with thanksgiving (vv6-7). The last two principles are given in our text today.
- Outline:
 - Title: Stand Firm – Part 3
 - 1. Discipline of the Mind (v8)
 - 2. Discipline of Practical Living (v9)

Discipline of the Mind (v8)

The importance of the mind: “Sow a thought, reap an action; sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.” Even this non-Christian author has made such an observation which is in accordance with the biblical truth.

Proverbs 23:7 “For as he thinks within himself, so he is.”

Mark 7:20-23 “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.....All these evil things proceed from within.....”

Romans 12:2 “.....but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

- “dwell on these things”: Paul wants you to install a thought filter in your mind. Filter your thoughts! If there is no filter, all kinds of light signals will randomly enter into your picture so you can’t see where the true light is. You must filter out the distracting lights in order to have the true light of Christ shine brightly in your life.

Note: Only Christians have these filters (Colossians 2:3) and the ability to install them. There is only one set of filters in the mind of unbelievers: sinful desires (Genesis 6:5, Ephesians 2:2)! Even what may be good things on the outside can only enter their mind after being filtered by selfish and sinful motives. So Romans 3:10-18 accurately describe the conditions of sinners.

Alert: Having the right filters doesn't mean they'll be automatically and permanently installed. You must intentionally filter everything with biblical truths! This verse is a command, a responsibility of every Christian! Why does Jesus call Satan “the ruler of this world”? Just think how much of this world is the work of Satan. Evolution theory, LGBTQ... Ideologies like these have already been widely accepted and embraced in this world, and these are just some of the most obvious examples against the Bible. How can you not filter your thoughts?

- “true”: The first layer of filter is God's truth. Anything that goes against God's truth must be rejected right away: whether it's the obvious lie of evolution theory or subtle trickery such as modern psychology that makes excuses for sin with lies such as: “It's not your fault. You are the product of the environment you grew up in.....” Only God's Word is absolute truth.
- “honorable”: Synonyms——dignified, respectable, noble: antonyms——contemptible, frivolous, vulgar, despicable. Which kind is more common in the world? Look at pop culture: movies, TV shows, music.....Some will say, Christians have freedom to choose their own ways of entertainment. Really? Think about this verse!
- “right”: Things that agree with God's moral standards. Synonyms——righteous, just, upright; Antonyms——unjust, unrighteous, wicked, unprincipled.
- “pure”: Synonyms——clean, innocent; Antonyms——filthy, dirty. Also a moral concept. Young brothers/sisters are especially prone to be affected by filthy thoughts. What to do? Put on pure thoughts!
- “lovely”: Christians should love what God loves. Love is not a spontaneous emotion, but affections that are guided by biblical truth.
- “of good repute”: Well-spoken of by others, and not just your own judgment. This of course isn't saying we should follow the secular worldview for judgment (The first layer of filter is God's truth), but we must humbly consider others' opinion on the basis of truth. Truth usually

Romans 12:17 “Respect what is right in the sight of all men.”

Beware: Don't go to one of the two extremes: 1) There is no virtue in this world. Better lock yourself up with a Bible and cut off from the world completely; 2) There's so much virtue in the world, that it effectively becomes an excuse to love the world and not desire God's Word fervently. The latter is especially deceitful, so guard against it! The apostle John reminds us:

1 John 2:15 “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

- “if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise”: Summary of the first six points. These two words are often used to describe God in the Bible (1 Peter 2:9, 2 Peter 1:3, Philippians 1:11 etc). Only those who know God can know what is excellent and worthy of praise.

Practical suggestion: 1) With these filters, you can see God’s goodness even in seemingly bad things. When you see the rampant evil in the world, you can ponder on God’s patience and the preciousness of the gospel. When you see news of natural disasters, you can ponder on God’s power, God’s wrath, and pray for those affected by the disasters. 2) But if certain things can only arouse your sinful thoughts and not guide your thoughts toward God’s goodness, you must filter them out! Don’t even try to seek out some good virtue from them!

Discipline of Practical Living (v9)

- “practice these things”: “Practice” is the kind of repetitious, continuous and habitual action. Not a one-time thing, but a habit. Not occasionally to imitate some heroic act of faith, not to go to camps to be pumped up twice a year, but to form a godly habit of submission to God in your daily living!

Illustration: Driving habit. Many experienced drivers from China can’t even pass the road test in the US. Bad habits such as not signaling for a turn and not looking back when changing lanes are very difficult to get rid of. It is very important to form godly habits!

“these things” in original grammar connects to those good virtues in the previous verse. These virtues they have learned and received and heard and seen in Paul, and now they are to first ponder them in their mind, and then to practice them as a lifestyle that glorifies God and depends on the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

- “have learned”: Refers to the discipleship kind of learning. Not just head knowledge, but a lifestyle. It’s the lifestyle that’s built on the foundation of real deep knowledge.
- “received”: One step further than learned. It is to embrace wholeheartedly what has been learned, treasuring it as absolute truth (cf 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 4:1).
- “heard”, “seen”: The discipline of practical living must include godly examples who teach not only with words but with their life. Doesn’t mean simply to copy everything they do (no one can copy Paul’s missionary lifestyle exactly), but to see how they apply the principles they teach. Paul’s life is not in contradiction to his teaching in any way, but a demonstration of the truth he teaches. This kind of example is an important principle for discipleship training.

Application: The most important discipleship training place is your home, because that’s where your daily living is most seen. The most important way a husband leads the family is by living out a life of trusting and obeying God day by day in front of his wife and children, by leading the family to study God’s words, to pray and to seek God’s guidance, and to deal with

various problems in life, including facing his own weakness and failure. It is the same for parenting. If God gives you a family, your main disciple training place is your home.

- “the God of peace will be with you”: God’s peace was already promised in v7. Here goes even further. Not just His peace, but His presence. Peace includes vertical peace (forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with God), horizontal peace (Christians loving one another in the bond of unity), internal peace (spiritual stability without anxiety and fear), and eternal peace (the full effect of God’s peace must wait for the future kingdom).

Note: *How can there be conditions for God’s presence? Isn’t God always with believers, having indwelt them by the Holy Spirit? True, but it doesn’t mean you can always enjoy the presence of God. God’s presence sometimes means chastisement. The kind of presence promised here is the joy of having intimate fellowship with God.* Think about David:

Psalm 51:12 “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation” (When believers sin, they don’t lose salvation, but the joy of salvation.)

Psalm 51:3 “my sin is ever before me” (“All I can see is my sin and I can’t see the presence of God!”)

Psalm 16:8, 11 “I have set the Lord continually before me.....In Your presence is fullness of joy” (This is the enjoyment of intimate fellowship with God)

“When thou art absent all sorrows are here; When thou art present all blessings are mine.”
— One Puritan writer