



Chico Alliance Church  
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## "Stand Firm in the Lord" Part 2

Paul's letter to the Philippians offers some key elements to "Maintaining the Joy of the Lord No Matter What".

The true secret is Deeping relationship with and commitment to Jesus Christ.

Truly knowing Jesus bring true joy and enables us to experience inner joy even when our outer world seems in chaos.

The first ingredient is found in the first chapter where Paul calls us to adopt the

### **I. ADOPT THE RIGHT AXIS -- SUPERIOR PERSPECTIVE**

*The Exaltation of Christ in Everything  
Passion to Praise Jesus*

### **II. MAINTAIN THE RIGHT ATTITUDE -- SUPERIOR PATTERN OF LIVING**

*Humble Obedience modeled by Jesus  
Passion to Please Jesus*

### **III. PURSUE THE RIGHT AIM – SUPERIOR PURSUIT 3:1-21**

*Knowing and Living Christ  
Passion to Pursue Christ above all else*

### **IV. Practice the right actions – Superior Practice 4:1-8**

*Passion to live well*

To adopt the right axis, maintain the right attitude, pursue the right aim brings a level of joy no matter what.

It is another thing to practice the right actions which produce joy.

Joy comes from practicing the right behavior.

There is joy in living well before God.

Pleasing God brings joy.

*What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:9*

Last time we focused on the command in verse 1 to stand firm in the Lord.

Because there are so many different areas related to standing firm we only briefly referenced the last time, I want to take a bit more time to dive a little deeper.

There are over a hundred passages related to “standing firm” with many more referencing the same concept with different terms like persevere, endure, don’t grow weary etc.

## **EXPOSITION**

### **A. Stand firm in the Lord 4:1**

*Therefore, my brothers, dearly loved and longed for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, dearly loved.*

#### **1. Paul’s passionate connection**

Paul issued this instruction with a deeply relational tone.

He used “dearly loved” twice, “brothers”, “longed for”, “my joy and crown”

#### **2. Paul’s solemn instruction**

##### **a) *The logical connection “therefore”***

Paul used two connector terms “therefore” and “like this” to tie his instruction to details previously expressed and further details coming up.

The motivation to stand firm lies in our privileged position as citizens of a heavenly kingdom awaiting a victorious Savior living in a hostile world including “enemies of the cross whose end is destruction, whose god is their stomach (fleshly passions), whose glory is their shame and who set their minds on earthly things.”

Paul encourages them to stand firm in such an environment.

He also told them to stand firm in the Lord “in this way” followed by some specific ways in which they should stand firm which we will expand upon later.

- Live in Harmony in the Lord 4:2-3
- Rejoice in the Lord 4:4
- Radiate the Gentleness of the Lord 4:5
- Pray to the Lord about everything instead of fretting. 4:6-7
- Meditate only on good things of the Lord 4:8

## **b) The solemn instruction to “stand firm”**

Paul used a military term meaning to hold your ground.

He already encouraged such perseverance several times in this short letter.

*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; Philippians 1:27*

*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; Philippians 2:12*

*Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Philippians 3:16*

He was confident that such perseverance was God’s will for them.

*for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:13*

*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. Philippians 1:6*

He used verb tense indicating habitual action directed at the entire group (ya’ all). He admonished the WHOLE church to keep on standing firm together.

The opposite of standing firm could be to fall, stumble, defect, give up, lose heart, grow weary, doubt, run away, lose focus on knowing Christ, get distracted, be tossed to and fro.

## **c) The divine connection “in the Lord”**

To be in the Lord has reference to our identity with Him; our connection to Him.

Stand firm due to your connection to the Lord.

Stand firm in the strength He provides.

Stand firm in the grace He gives.

Stand firm in His presence.

Stand firm in His truth.

Stand firm in the heritage He granted i.e. children of the Living God, citizens of a heavenly kingdom.

Stand firm in the future He promised.

## **APPLICATION OF STANIND FIRM IN THE LORD**

Some of the specifics of standing firm in the Lord will be discussed as we address the rest of this passage.

Last time we mentioned a few areas in which Scripture instructs us to stand firm.

I plan to spend a few messages expanding of some of those Scriptures.

### **Stand firm against persecution and false teaching**

Our current passage has this area in mind.

We are to stand firm against those who would pervert or oppose the gospel. Paul wrote of “enemies of the cross”.

Paul declared his purpose to write concerning these things as a safe guard against the “dogs, evil workers, false circumcision.”

Peter wrote to those living in a culture of “untaught and unstable” “mockers following after their own lusts” who distort the Scriptures.

*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 2 Peter 3:17*

His solution to being carried away...

*but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:18*

Paul waned Timothy concerning the difficulty of the “last days”.

*But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these... Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings... You, however, continue (stand firm) in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that*

*from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:1-17*

It is interesting the emphasis on discovering the good and evil centers around behavior.

The purpose of the inspired Scriptures is to equip for every good work.

It is clear we live in a culture characterized by the things just cited.

This encouragement to “stand firm in the Lord” in a hostile environment is seriously relevant to us right now.

Last time, I shared the horrendous persecution from evil people suffered by Christians in Aleppo Syria.

Although we may not experience such life-threatening persecution here in America, the blatant attack on those who embrace Christianity more evident by the day.

Just ask the Christian bakers, the Christian florist, the Christian photographer. Just ask the pastors who recently the State of Georgia and the city of Houston subpoenaed all their sermons and notes and even the Bible of one of them to find incriminating evidence.

One lost a government job for his religious beliefs.

Most will gladly grant freedom of beliefs only to be expressed in the confines of their homes and places of worship.

They are not willing to grant as the first amendment guarantees the right of religious **EXPRESSION**.

Kevin Wirth has been involved in a long-time tracking of blatant and even vicious discrimination against Christians and their beliefs in the academic world.

I have asked him to briefly share his findings.

There are two “How” questions that readily rise to the surface.  
How do we find the strength to stand against this opposition?  
How are we supposed to respond to this opposition?

### **What enables us to stand up to this opposition?**

Paul included a clue already discussed.

#### **Be strong IN THE LORD.**

Our connection to Christ dramatically affects our stand.

Constantly cultivating a close relationship with Him is essential.

It enables us to hear His specific direction.

It enables a Biblical perspective.

It strengthens faith; know what and why you believe.

Peter encouraged those in difficulties to entrust their souls to a faithful Creator.

It is God who promises and can enable us to stand in every circumstance.

Later Paul will testify to the fact that, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

Resisting evil people may include resisting the devil who drives them.

Ability to resist the devil requires standing in the strength of the Lord as well as putting on the whole armor of God.

Given the nature of the specific armor mentioned in Ephesians 6, I think that the armor listed there would serve as protection in the case of the opposition of people.

### **Trust the Holy Spirit to give you the words.**

Jesus gave instruction for those facing persecution in the last days.

*But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute. But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death, and you will be hated by all because of My name. Yet not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives. Luke 21:12-19*

These atrocities have and are happening to many faithful followers of Jesus.

God may not always save you from martyrdom but promises to walk you through it.

The balancing principle in this regard is that we are also instructed to prepare. We just don't sit around doing nothing.

*But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame. 1 Peter 3:14-16*

This is another way of saying “stand firm IN THE LORD”.

In this case, we are to stand in readiness.

### **Have each other's back**

There is strength in numbers.

God plus nothing always makes a majority but He also intended and instructs the community to rally together against the opposition.

*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 all are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me. Philippians 1:27-30*

Stand firm IN THE LORD!

### **How are we supposed to respond to opposition?**

The Bible is not a manual that gives exact directions for every situation in life.

The Bible provides the framework to address life issues.

At times there even seems to be contradictory instructions.

One passage advises if you see a brother sinning – confront him.

Another passage counsels if you see a brother sinning – pray for him.

Yet another passage instructs us to avoid a sinning Christian.

One passage tells us there is wisdom in many counselors.

Another informs us that the majority is not always right and may lead you astray.

I call this a range of responses or actions.

Any of the suggested actions may be within the will of God.

We need to develop a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit as to which response best glorifies God in this particular circumstance at this time.

In the case of standing firm in persecution or opposition there are several choices.

### 1. **Stand against / resist them or confront them with the truth**

Jesus strongly stood up to His persecutors at certain times of His ministry.

The money changers.

The Pharisees on numerous occasions.

The religious rulers

The prophets regularly denounced evil.

Paul often stood up to false teachers and enemies of the cross.

It is about how we stand firm as much as what we stand firm for.

Act with the shrewdness of serpents and the innocence of doves.

*Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves. Matthew 10:16-20*

Respond gently

*The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Timothy 2:24-25*

Respond with salt seasoned speech

*Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person. Colossians 4:5-6*

Whenever you must resort to name-calling and angry harsh rhetoric you may win an argument but will lose the opportunity to share the message of the gospel.

In our day, I don't know of anyone who exhibits the perfect blend of shrewdness and gentle innocence.

Ravi Zacharias regularly stands firm against those who oppose the Christian faith all around the world from every religious persuasion and lack thereof.

He does it with such grace and gentleness.

His arguments slice into pieces while his spirit extends such grace and mercy.

## **2. Rejoice, Pray and bless**

Jesus also told us how to respond to those who persecute us.

*Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:10-12*

*You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5:43-48*

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Romans 12:14*

*But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Luke 6:27-28*

*But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:35-36*

## **Keep Silent**

Peter called his readers to follow the example of Jesus when suffering at the hands of persecutors.

*For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH; and while being*

*reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 1 Peter 2:21-24*

In that passage we see what He didn't do.

He didn't sin in any of his responses.

He didn't deceive.

He didn't revile even though He was ruthlessly reviled.

He didn't threaten those causing the suffering even though He could have retaliated.

He did keep entrusting Himself to His Father.

He offered Himself to bring healing to others.

### **Live Godly**

Peter wrote to those suffering great persecution.

He strongly urged them to live differently because Christ made them different.

*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:12*

As we all seek to stand firm in the midst of suffering we need to keep focused.

*Prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13*

Stand firm in the Lord.

Expect the Holy Spirit to bring you the necessary revelation which provides continual grace, empowerment to continue on to the glory of God.