

Standing firm in the Lord

“Blessed is the man who having nothing to say,
abstains from giving wordy evidence of the fact.” George Eliot

In today’s Scripture, Paul gives some final advise for for those desiring to stand firm in their faith. **How can believers be effective?**

When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians he concluded with specific lessons for effective Christian living.

He begins in verse one,

¹Therefore, my beloved brethren, whom I long to see, my joy and crown,
in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

Stand firm – stekko – **spiritual stability**- the main verb

“Like soldiers on the front lines believers are commanded to hold their position while under attack...”

In this way... Describes the process that something comes about.

Outos -- “Thus” – the results of something that was said or done.

“Now the birth of Jesus was as follows.” [thus was] Matt. 1:18

This is the way to stand firm in the Lord

To the question: “How should we live?” Paul gives six directives:

²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to **live in harmony** in the Lord.

³Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴**Rejoice** in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

⁵Let your **gentle spirit** be known to all men. The Lord is near.

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but **in everything by prayer** and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

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.

⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, **practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:1-9

Paul states in the first verse that this is how the Christian commitment is lived out. **“This is what standing firm in the Lord looks like.”**

I call them *“Six things Christians should do to stand firm.”*

I. **Live in harmony within the fellowship.**

²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to **live in harmony** in the Lord.

³Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Sometimes members of God’s family struggle to get along with other family members. People have differences in the way they do things, but love works through difficulties to accomplish Jesus Great Commission to make disciples

Two ladies who were prominent workers in Paul’s ministry weren’t getting along. Their disagreements could potentially damage the church. So Paul begged them to **live in harmony**. Lit. “to be of the same mind.” He even asked for Clement’s help to mediate their restoration.

Infighting, when it occurs can be very *distracting, draining and discouraging*.

Some believers, caught in the crossfire stop attending, and unplug from serving, totally undermining Jesus work of building His church.

Someone has rightly said,

“The general strength of the fellowship becomes the strength of each individual.” Peter wrote, “All of you, be harmonious sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit.” (1 Pet. 3:8).

The first great necessity is make every effort to keep loving unity in the church. Treat others with tender acceptance and patience – *seek peace and pursue it!*

II. **Be joyful**

⁴**Rejoice** in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

This is a double command to always be joyful.

The theme of the book of Philippians is joy. Here Paul repeats the command for a double emphasis.

Chairete (rejoice) – [present imperative] Believers are called to a continual, habitual practice of rejoicing. Nothing should keep us from rejoicing.

This joy is apart from circumstances.

[Paul was in prison at the time of writing this.]

The key to joy is in the phrase - *In the Lord* – the Lord is the source of joy.

Our knowledge of Him is the key to rejoicing:

A. W. Tozer in the Knowledge of the Holy wrote,
What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God.

For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God. This is true not only of the individual Christian, but of the company of Christians that composes the Church. Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for her silence is often more eloquent than her speech. She can never escape the self-disclosure of her witness concerning God.

Were we able to extract from any man a complete answer to the question, "What comes into your mind when you think about God?" we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of the at man.¹

Rejoicing is the fruit of knowing much about God. Whenever a circumstance tries to steal your joy rejoice *in the Lord*. We are chosen for joy.

III. Be Gentle

⁵Let your **gentle spirit** be known to all men. The Lord is near.

Epieikes – *Sweet reasonableness or graciousness*. Earl Palmer has written that this word carries the idea of "Chilling out," resting in the Lord no matter what happens.

MacArthur writes that this is "the graciousness of humility ... that produces the patience to endure injustice, disgrace, and mistreatment without retaliation, bitterness, or vengeance. It is contentment."² – a focus that isn't on self, because the Lord is near. He can be near in space or near in time.

IV. Pray about everything

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (Reprint; New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 9.

² John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Philippians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), p. 276.

This speaks about the priority of prayer

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but **in everything by prayer** and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Prayer is the answer to anxiety: **Reality, Remedy, & Results.**

1. Reality: Anxiety

Kenneth Wuest writes in his word studies in the Greek New Testament,

The Greek construction indicates that we have here a prohibition which forbids the continuance of an action already habitually going on. The Philippian saints were habitually worrying. Paul exhorts the to stop it. The word nothing is literally “not even one thing.”³

Paul again brings a double command:

Don't worry about anything but pray about everything.

Why do we worry? “People become worried, anxious and fearful because they do not trust in God's wisdom, power or goodness.”

Anxiety (a synonym for worry – from an old English word – to choke)

It is the signal to pray.

2. Remedy: Prayer

- Prayer – general worship and prayer
- Supplication- specific petitions for one's personal needs
- Requests – objects asked for, things requested.
- Thanksgiving – The secret ingredient of faith and praise -- Give thanks even before receiving His answer.
- Made known to God – our needs brought into God's presence.

3. Results: Peace

How long shall we pray? Until we receive his peace

⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

V. Think Right.

The next vital key to effective Christian living is to think right.

Henry ford said,

³ Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans publishing Company, 1966), p. 109.

“Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it.”

Think right about yourself, others, and God.

⁸Finally, 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.

Dwell, let your mind dwell on these things

– logizomai – “to evaluate,” “to consider,” or “to Calculate.”

Habitual discipline of the mind to set all thoughts on these spiritual values.

People’s lives are the product of their thoughts.

“For as he thinks within himself, so he is” (Pr. 23:7)

Jesus said,

That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.” (Mark 7:20-23)

The battleground of the mind.

Satan’s tactic is to get someone to believe a lie.

If it’s about yourself, Satan accuses and demeans us, trying to get us to believe that we have no value, no hope, no future

If it’s about a relationship, Satan wants to divide people by getting them to believe something about that other person that isn’t true.

--That they are speaking evil of us, that they think we are hopeless heathen, or that they hate us.

Once we believe what is untrue about another Satan will have successfully driven a wedge between friends, spouses, or church members.

If it’s about God, when he tempted Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, he got Eve to believe what was untrue about God – that He withholding good from them.

Then Satan said, “You shall not die, but you shall be as God!” Temptation complete; fall of man accomplished!

Once Satan had planted doubts about God's character, the next step was simple.

When the circumstances are filled with cares, what we think about matters. When Peter saw Jesus walking on the water He asked Jesus if he could come to Him and when Jesus said 'yes' Peter walked on water; but then he looked around at the wind and the waves, at the storm, and took his eyes off Jesus He sunk. We have to keep our mind on the truth. On God's promises, On God's person, On God's power. Then we'll keep it together – we'll learn to ride the wave.

We'll get along with others when we think the best of them

We'll live rejoicing when we believe that the best will result because God over all and knows all.

We'll stay in peace because we believe that God has heard and will answer our prayers according to His perfect will. We'll focus on God instead of the storm.

When my gasoline tank registers empty, I know it is full – that is, it is full of air. But the automobile was not built to run on air. To displace the air, I must fill it with gasoline. God's cure for evil thinking is to fill our minds with that which is good. G. S.

Pray right, think right, and Live right.

VI. Live Right

Live the Truth, don't just believe it.

⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, **practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you.

Practice as a habit "These things habitually practice..." (Wuest's Transl.)

A lot of practicing makes more perfect the performing.

Righteous living benefits us personally and everyone who knows us. The pattern of discipleship is first that we watch someone whose life we can model our own after. Then others watch how we live and we can mentor them. Follow a mentor, be a mentor to others who will be models for others to follow.

in this way stand firm in the Lord