

Standing Firm in Christ

Phil 3:12-4:1

SS Lesson for 01/27/2013

Devotional Scripture: 2 Cor 1:20-24

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson teaches how best to **Stand Firm in Jesus Christ**. The **study's aim** to understand the dynamics of spiritual growth and some steps of how to stand firm for Jesus. The **study's application** is to adopt and incorporate the principles learned in the lesson into our lives.

Key Verse: Phil 4:1

4:1 *Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.*

Commentary on Phil 4:1 from Barnes Notes Commentary

[*Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for*] Doddridge unites this verse with the previous chapter, and supposes that it is the proper close of the solemn statement which the apostle makes there. The word "therefore" has undoubted reference to the remarks made there; and the meaning is, that in view of the fact that there were many professed Christians who were not sincere—that the "citizenship" of all true Christians was in heaven, and that Christians looked for the coming of the Lord Jesus, who would make them like to himself, the apostle exhorts them to stand fast in the Lord. The accumulation of epithets of endearment in this verse shows his tender regard for them, and is expressive of his earnest solicitude for their welfare, and his deep conviction of their danger. The term "longed for" is expressive of strong affection; see Phil 1:8, and Phil 2:26.

[*My joy*] The source of my joy. He rejoiced in the fact that they had been converted under him; and in their holy walk, and their friendship. Our chief joy is in our friends; and the chief happiness of a minister of the gospel is in the pure lives of those to whom he ministers; see 3 John 4.

[*And crown*] Compare 1 Thess 2:19. The word "crown" means a circlet, chaplet, or diadem:

- (1) as the emblem of royal dignity—the symbol of office;
- (2) as the prize conferred on victors in the public games, 1 Cor 9:25, and hence, as an emblem of the rewards of a future life; 2 Tim 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4;
- (3) anything that is an ornament or honor, as one glories in a crown; compare Prov 12:4, "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband;" Prov 14:24, "The crown of the wise is their riches;" Prov 16:31, "The hoary head is a crown of glory;" Prov 17:6, "Children's children are the crown of old men." The idea here is, that the church at Philippi was that in which the apostle gloried. He regarded it as a high honor to have been the means of founding such a church, and he looked upon it with the same interest with which a monarch looks upon the diadem which he wears.

[*So stand fast in the Lord*] In the service of the Lord, and in the strength which he imparts. As noted in 1 Corinthians 15:58 standing firm means: Seated, sedentary (Robinson); perhaps with an allusion to a statue (Bloomfield); or perhaps to wrestling, and to standing one's ground (Wolf). Whatever may be the allusion, the sense is clear. Be firm, strong, confident in the faith, in view of the truth that you will be raised up. Be not shaken or agitated with the strifes, the temptations, and the cares of life. Be fixed in the faith, and let not the power of sin, or the sophistry of pretended philosophy, or the arts of the enemy of the soul seduce you from the faith of the gospel

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The concept of the major outlines came from Butler Analytical Bible Expositor and was determined by reviewing the Scriptural Text to find out what it teaches us about how best to Stand Firm in Jesus Christ. I found the following lesson points from the Scriptural Text phrases as outlined:

Verse	Phrase	Major Outline
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Verse	Phrase	Major Outline
12	I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me	Pursuit of Standing Firm
17	Join in following my example, and note those who so walk	Performance of Standing Firm
4:1	Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved	Rewards of Standing Firm

Lesson Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

In last week's lesson, we examined the interplay between Paul's exhortation to rejoice and his warning regarding false teachers. Paul reminded his readers that if right standing before God were based on personal pedigree and accomplishments, then he (Paul) would be at the head of the line. Indeed, Paul's personal background is vital to the power of his argument. Paul, as Saul in his younger days (Acts 7:58), had been sent from Tarsus to Jerusalem to study under the famous rabbi Gamaliel (22:3). That man was a leading teacher of the day among the Pharisees (5:34). By today's standards, Pharisees were highly educated laypersons. To study successfully under a great teacher such as Gamaliel was the equivalent of doing doctoral work at a famous university. We surmise that Paul was one of the most educated people in all of Judaism, even in the entire Roman world (see Acts 26:24). Yet Paul declared that he considered all he had accomplished to be loss for the sake of Christ (Philippians 3:7). Paul was no fool. He gave up certain things so the way could be clear to gain something better. That "something" to be gained demands special attention.

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

We notice first that Paul had a goal in mind that would take perseverance to achieve. When looking at setting personal goals in life, we should consider what it would take to reach them. A young person starting out in life will most likely think of what career he is best suited for. He then will look for a school that offers him the best education to achieve that end. Of course, there are some goals that do not take much effort. But there are others that take many years of hard study and commitment. Paul's goal was singular, and his aim was to "press" toward that goal. The word that he used involves following after, giving oneself to, and suffering persecution. Indeed, his was not an easy goal; it demanded total commitment if he was ever to arrive at his intended mark. Paul also wrote of a "prize." A prize is given for something that one has achieved. It is not a common thing to receive a prize for doing nothing; rather, it is given for completing an assignment well. If the task is extremely difficult, the prize is honored to the degree of effort one puts into it. No doubt the apostle saw in his goal a prize beyond all measure of value—something that he was willing to give his all to attain. We see this state of mind illustrated in some parables that Jesus told in Matthew. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (13:45-46). Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is worth all that we have, for this is the greatest treasure of all time. Paul continued by saying that the kingdom is a "high calling," that is, high in value compared to all else. It is worthy of our surrendering all that we may have to attain it. It calls for a passion that knows no boundaries and allows nothing to stand in the way of attaining it, for it is a call from God. God Himself gives this call to serve Him and be united in the ministry of His commission. What is that commission? "Go ye therefore, and teach (make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). The way to the great prize can be found only "in Christ Jesus." It can never be found in human strength or in the will of man. Man can never rise above himself. He is estranged from God by his sin and can never bridge that gulf. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). So no matter how much a person wishes or how hard he works, he can never come to victory over sin

outside of the love of God in Christ Jesus. Once we see ourselves as sinners, we need to face the reality of death without Christ. Should this not move our hearts to "press toward the mark"? God has given us only one door to His love, and that is the cross of Calvary. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Pursuit of Standing Firm (Phil 3:12-16)

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

Humbleness while standing firm (12-13)

Humbleness in weaknesses by being strong in God's grace (2 Cor 12:10)

10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Humbleness by knowing where competence comes from (2 Cor 3:5)

5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

Humbleness versus pride (1 Cor 10:12)

12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

Humbleness by only boasting in God's power (1 Cor 1:31)

31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

Seriousness of standing firm (13-14)

Serious about not letting anything move us (1 Cor 15:58)

58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Serious about being firm in our faith (1 Cor 16:13)

13 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.

Serious about being firm in Christ (2 Cor 1:21)

21 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us,

Serious about being firm because Jesus' second coming is near (James 5:8)

8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.

Actions of standing firm (15-16)

Be mature

Be mature through edification within the Church (Eph 4:11-13)

11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Be mature through perseverance from God (James 1:4)

4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Seek and apply understanding from God

Get understanding from God's Word (Ps 119:104)

104 I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

Seek understanding from Jesus (1 John 5:20)

20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true — even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

Apply understanding by doing good works (James 3:13)

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.

Live God's Word

Don't just hear the word but be a doer of the word (James 1:22)

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

It is a blessing to live God's word (Luke 11:28)

28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Living God's Word makes one righteous in God's sight (Rom 2:13)

13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Performance of Standing Firm (Phil 3:17-19)

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame — who set their mind on earthly things.

Follow examples (17)

Follow the example of those who follow Jesus (1 Cor 11:1)

11 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Follow the example of godly leaders (Heb 13:7)

7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.

Follow the example of the blameless and upright (Ps 37:37)

37 Consider the blameless, observe the upright; there is a future for the man of peace.

Beware of false leaders (18-19)

Beware of false leaders who masquerade as teachers (2 Cor 11:13)

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ.

Beware of false leaders who teach false doctrines (1 Tim 6:3-5)

3 If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, 4 he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions 5 and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

Beware of false leaders who deny Jesus (2 Peter 2:1)

2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves.

Beware of false leaders and test every spirit (1 John 4:1)

4 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

False leaders that come as wolf in sheep's clothing (Matt 7:15)

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

Rewards of Standing Firm (Phil 3:20-4:1)

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

4:1 Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

Citizenship in Heaven (20)

Citizenship by being a member of God's household (Eph 2:19)

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

Citizenship by being a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9-10)

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Citizenship by being baptized into Jesus (Gal 3:26-29)

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Citizenship through the promise in Jesus (Eph 3:6)

6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Transformed body (21)

Transformed body that will be imperishable (1 Cor 15:42-44)

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Transformed body that will be with Jesus in glory (Col 3:4)

4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Transformed body that will be glorified (2 Thess 1:10)

10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Rewards of steadfastness (4:1)

Reward of access to the tree of life (Rev 2:7)

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

Reward of not being hurt by the second death (Rev 2:11)

11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Reward of being acknowledged before God and His angels (Rev 3:5)

5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.

Reward of sitting with Jesus on His throne (Rev 3:21)

21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Concluding Thoughts from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

Here is a beautiful true story of perseverance, of what we might call stick-to-itiveness. It illustrates Paul's life and ministry for Christ in this week's lesson, "Straining for the Prize." Hours behind the runner in front of him, the last marathoner finally reached Olympic Stadium. By that time, the drama of the day's events was almost over, and most of the spectators had gone home. Limping into the arena, the Tanzanian runner grimaced with every step, his knee bleeding and bandaged from an earlier fall. His ragged appearance immediately caught the attention of the remaining crowd, who cheered him on to the finish line. Why did he stay in the race? What made him endure his injuries to the end? When asked these questions later, he replied, "My country did not send me to Mexico City to start the race. They sent me to finish" (The Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad). We must be sure we understand that the runner in the above story was not persevering to get into the race. He was straining to finish the race.

Indeed, that was the reason his country had sent him. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior need not strain and labor to get into the family of God. But we are called upon to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1) as children of God, with eyes fixed on Jesus. The main point Paul stressed for the Christians at Philippi was to press on toward the goal, the finish line—the upward call of God. We might call this the heartbeat of this week's lesson. Paul's determination for the prize was not that he wanted to hear the Lord's "Well done." That ought to be our heart's cry as well. No believer should live out his life with the attitude that it is OK to just get inside the pearly gates, even if only by the skin of his teeth. The driving force in Paul's heart was that he was forgiven. He was a child of God, a member of God's spiritual family. His whole purpose for living changed drastically when he met the Savior that day on the road to Damascus. When he was persecuting the church and even destroying those who called on the name of Jesus, he was sincere and thought he was doing God a favor. However, that all changed instantly and drastically when he embraced Jesus. Not everyone who becomes a Christian has been such a belligerent, terrible sinner as Paul was. But everyone outside of Christ is alienated from God and without hope. Every one of us was lost spiritually and needed the Savior. We must not think Paul's need for salvation was greater than that of anyone else. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. It takes just as much of the love and grace of God to redeem the person who has led a good and upright life and has never committed any of the most terrible sins as it does to redeem the most horrible sinners. Paul called on those who were mature in Christ to be in agreement with his words. They should be pressing on to know God more fully. It was Paul's goal to strive to finish his Christian life well. It should be our goal as well. We should not wait around for God to reveal to us all we need to do to grow in Him. We need to live by what has been revealed to us in His Word. We may be at different stages of progress in godliness, but we need to be faithful where we are.

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Even when we fail, God continues to support us (Phil. 3:12)
2. Persistence in serving Christ lets us concentrate on the ultimate goal of Christian maturity (vs. 13)
3. When we brood about already confessed sins, we imply that God has not forgiven them
4. We attain our goals in Christ not by leaps but by many individual steps (vs. 14)
5. Sometimes God shows us the insufficiency of our own ideas so that we will learn to prefer His plans for us (vs. 15)
6. As we live up to God's standard, we can assist those who fail to do so (vs. 16)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The Christian life as lived in a fallen world is not easy on the best of days. We are placed in a position where we need to take a stand for Christ against the wisdom of the world and the norms of the culture we live in. Just as the Philippian church discovered, "enemies of the cross of Christ" are alive and active in our world. The lure of earthly things is simply a few keystrokes away on a computer connected to the Internet. Access is easy, and accountability is nearly a foreign concept. Our ability to communicate in various forms of media and in speeds that have never been seen before is a double-edged sword for our Christian maturity. On the one hand, it allows us to get nearly instant help from many fellow believers scattered all over the world. On the other hand, such access exposes us to false doctrine and immorality with unprecedented speed and scope; this deepens the challenge we face in staying firm in the faith. The continuing challenge is to take Paul's words to heart and remember that we are called to be conformed to the likeness of Christ. In doing so, we must follow the examples set forth by Christ, Paul, and the mature believers around us. Sanctification is a goal we keep in front of us, relentlessly pursuing it each day of our lives.