



## World Christian Fellowship

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### Philippians 38 Stand Fast

**Philippians 4:1-4**, *Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. <sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*

The church of Jesus Christ in our present time has experienced a great amount of instability. From the leadership on down, it tends to be an unstable church.

The leaders are not able to stand against the wiles of the devil. We hear so much about well known Christian leaders and Pastors falling into sin and love of money driving them away from the real purpose God had called them into.

The church has not come to grips with the biblical principles of stability. It tends to pursue stability in areas where it does not live, reside, exist. It tends to be seeking answers that aren't there, solutions that are short-term, at best.

Jesus warned us very clearly that we will have tribulations and trials in this world in John 16.

The Scriptures warn us that we must be watchful. Jesus said, "Watch and pray." Be alert, be aware is a ringing theme in the words of Peter and Paul. The devil moves around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

The church of Jesus Christ is always under assault.

When you live for Christ alone then you will endure persecution. We will also face personal trials and troubles that cause us to break down.

Where do we go to get fixed?

We have problems in our marriages and in our families, struggles and dilemmas, and we pursue solutions and resolution. We fight even in our own lives' strong temptation to sin.

Don't be under any illusions about the Philippian church.

- It is true that the Philippians had a special love bond with Paul. There's no question about it.
- It is true that they alone had shared with him when he was in need.
- It is true that he had a love for them that maybe surpassed some others, a bond that was perhaps unique and had been cultivated through the years mutually.

- It is true that he had a passionate longing to fellowship with them.

There was a deep caring between them. But that does not mean that the Philippian church was in all respects everything it ought to be and that does not mean that there was not instability there.

Reading through Philippians we have noted very clear hints that,

- there was selfishness in that church,
- there was self-interest in that church,
- there were people who had stumbled,
- fallen from their spiritual stability into conceit,
- proud were more concerned about the things of their own life than the things of others.

They did not have the mind of Christ.

We also know that there was some conflict in that church. Which is in verse 2 and 3 of this chapter.

Two sisters who apparently may have been able to lead factions that could have split the church. They had an intense disagreement, and others were no doubt party to the quarrel.

Two women who couldn't agree doesn't seem like a lot of problems except the fact is, these were two prominent women,

and apparently it was significant enough for Paul to have identified the women by name.

What may be equally troubling is that Paul has to ask somebody to fix it up. Which means apparently the leadership of the church had not really done what they should have done in dealing with the problem.

Some instability in leadership as well as in the congregation. It brought sorrow, harshness of spirit, anxiety, failure to take prayer seriously.

- There were some troubled minds.
- There were some minds filled with all the wrong kinds of things who needed to think on the right kind of things.
- There were some people who weren't trusting God.
- There were some people who weren't thankful.

Paul is deeply concerned for the stability of this congregation. But it wasn't just Paul.

Jesus was concerned about the stability of the church. In the restoration of Peter in the Gospel of John 21<sup>st</sup> Chapter, as Peter begins immediately then to manifest another weakness.

**John 21:22**, *Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."*

Jesus was concerned about the strength of His disciples.

Matthew chapter 10, Jesus clearly outlined for them to anticipate difficulty and trials. He repeatedly pointed out to them the weakness of their flesh, the weakness of their faith, wanting in some ways to instruct and insulate them from future instability. Stability becomes a constant theme in the New Testament.

We have a very unstable church. Unstable leadership, unstable congregations, and sadly trying to prop themselves up with all the wrong things.

Peter wrote about false teachers and agents of Satan who were always attempting to entice unstable souls.

**2 Peter 2:14**, *having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.*

Part of pastoral duty is to try to protect those unstable souls.

Why did Paul warn for three years in his ministry in Ephesus with tears?

Why does Peter repeat things and said when I am not there you can stay strong”?

Because they concerned themselves with the stability of unstable souls.

**2 Peter 3:16**, *as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.*

What a statement!

They are not alone. There are many untaught and unstable people today who are distorting the teaching of Paul. Who are distorting the teaching of Scripture, confusing people, and misinterpreting the Word of God.

James warned about the same thing.

James said that the spiritually unstable are the double-minded, people who waver about things.

- They don't know what they believe, what is right, and they can't make decisions.
- They are the spiritually unstable.
- They are not single-minded.
- They are not fixed on righteous truth.
- They are not focused on the character of God.

Jude, who said that God alone is able to make you stable and keep you from falling.

**Jude 1:24-25**, *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, <sup>25</sup> To God our Saviour, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.*

We find in the Old Testament has concern with instability.  
Jacob gathers his sons and grants to them the legacy.

**Genesis 49:2-4**, *“Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob, And listen to Israel your father. <sup>3</sup> “Reuben, you are my firstborn, My might and the beginning of my strength, The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. <sup>4</sup> Unstable as water, you shall not excel, Because you went up to your father’s bed; Then you defiled it— He went up to my couch.*

What disqualified Reuben?  
His spiritual Instability.

It’s not a new problem. it’s a very old problem. Reuben had unequalled privilege, unequalled potential, unequalled opportunity, and he forfeited all of it because he was as unstable as water.

Specifically, what he did was commit fornication in his father’s bed, in his father’s house, with his father’s concubine.

**Genesis 35:22**, *And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father’s concubine; and Israel heard about it.*

He was a fornicator, a demonstration of spiritual instability, and he was disqualified. His father said, *“You shall not have pre-eminence.”*

Spiritual instability is a disqualifier for many things.  
Spiritual instability is a disappointment to everyone.

Nobody wants to be unstable, nobody wants to fall to false doctrine, not a true Christian. We don't want to fall under trials and get crushed. We don't want to fall to temptation.

### **How can we overcome?**

Spiritual stability with godliness, Christlikeness, holiness, maturity. But it is nonetheless very basic to Christian living in the heart of God as He views the church today must be over this tremendous demonstrable instability.

### **How can we be stable?**

### **How can we stand firm?**

**V 1,** *“Stand firm in the Lord.”*

Stand firm in the Lord, spiritual stability.

Paul knew what the Philippians were undergoing.

**Philippians 1:28-29,** *and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup>For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*

They were suffering very severely.

**Philippians 1:30**, *having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.*

So, they were suffering very severe persecution, so they were vulnerable to instability at that point.

**Philippians 2:2**, *fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

He told them already that they need to have same mind.

**Philippians 1:27**, *Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,*

Obvious that there was some real disagreement in that church. So, they were falling not only under persecution but under temptation.

**Philippians 2:14-15**, *Do all things without complaining and disputing, <sup>15</sup> that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,*

They were having a tough time holding forth the word of life with clarity in the midst of a hostile, perverse, and crooked generation.

Everything wasn't going the way they thought it ought to go! They were grumbling and disputing. They needed to sort of recharge their joy.

**Philippians 2:18**, *For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.*

They were encountering the enemies of the cross.

**Philippians 3:18**, *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:*

They were encountering Judaizers who were called, dogs, evil workers, and the false mutilation (In **Philippians 3:2**)

The Judaizers saying to be saved you have to add works to the cross. The libertines saying after you are saved you don't have to add works to the cross, and so these enemies of the cross were attacking. They were getting it from a lot of sides.

When we come to chapter 4, we have got the debate with the two women.

When we get into verse 6 and it's obvious that some of them were worrying and anxious.

So, they were falling victim to personal temptation, to corporate attacks, to persecution, and Paul commands them to stand firm in the Lord.

First time Paul told them in **Philippians 1:27**,

Now the second time Paul is urging them to stand firm in the Lord.

The Greek verb here is *stete*.

It's an imperative command, and it is a military word, which means to stand your ground, stand your post in the midst of battle.

It means to hold your position while under attack.

**Ephesians 6:10**, *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.*

In the middle of battle, you have got your armour on, and having done all, to stand.

- Stand against the wiles of the devil.
- Stand firmly no matter what comes.
  
- You don't crumble under persecution and compromise.
- You don't crumble under testing and complain.
- You don't crumble under temptation and sin.
- You stand firm, spiritually stable.

Please do remember this is not a suggestion but this is a command from God.

This is a command from the living God through His Holy Spirit by means of the apostle Paul.

God says, "I want you to stand firm."

This is a command.

Better you take God's commandments seriously.

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

Notice the first word is "therefore," which always relates back to what has been said.

If we were to summarize the third chapter how would we describe it?

We could summarize it this way:

- ❖ We are pursuing Christlikeness, which is both the goal and the prize of our Christian life.
- ❖ We are waiting for that upward call of God in Christ Jesus.
- ❖ We are waiting for that day when we, as heavenly citizens, meet the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ❖ We will be transformed into conformity with the body of His glory.

- ✓ We are pursuing Christlikeness,
- ✓ We are citizens of heaven,
- ✓ We are waiting for the Saviour who will make us like Himself.

Since we are heavenly citizens and since the goal of our life and the prize of our life is Christlikeness, therefore, stand firm.

**Did Christ stand firm?**

Yes

**Did He ever waver?**

No, never!

**Did He ever compromise?**

No.

**Did He ever sin?**

No.

He who knew no sin, says the Bible. He was without sin, the perfect high priest.

Jesus Christ, then, is the model, and He stood firm against it all and never violated God.

**Did Jesus Persecuted?**

Yes.

**Did He fall?**

No.

**Did He compromise?**

No.

## **Was He Tempted?**

Yes.

## **Did He fall?**

No.

## **Did He sin?**

No.

Put through all kinds of trials of life, did He crumble under those trials, collapse, lose His confidence in God and wander around looking for a human fix?

No.

He stood firm, and since He is the prize and the goal of our life and since we are citizens of heaven and since someday, we will be like Him and that is our present desire, we therefore must do as He did!

Stand firm.

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

Paul concludes, “my beloved.”

We can see the heart of a pastor Paul!

*“my beloved and longed-for brethren.” “*

Paul uses the strong word for love, the rich and deep word for love.

He does love them in a very special and unique way, and back in chapter 1 we noted that. He is so thankful for them.

**Philippians 1:8**, *For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.*

**Philippians 1:23-25**, *For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. <sup>24</sup> Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. <sup>25</sup> And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith,*

He deeply loves them.

He acknowledges that love even in chapter 2 and how he is concerned about them.

**Philippians 4:15**, *Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.*

Paul does love them.

There is a bond of love that invites them to obey the command!

Paul felt the deep pain of separation from those he loved. He was a supreme theologian. But he was also a man of deep passion and had a capacity to love people.

Here we see the passion of his heart, “I long for you.” He was a man who cherished relationships. Some people get along without them, not him. He deeply felt the pain of separation.

**V 1, “my joy.”**

You give me joy. The joy of my heart is over you.  
Paul didn’t get his joy out of his circumstances.

While Paul was writing this letter, he was chained to a Roman soldier as a Roman prisoner in a private house in Rome. He didn’t get his personal joy out of circumstances. That would have been very difficult to do, not only because of the physical but even because of the things going on around him.

Paul had very difficult circumstances. He never gave much thought to them, but he found his joy in people. He found his joy in the people that loved him and that he loved.

He said the same thing to the Thessalonians when he wrote.

**1 Thessalonians 2:19-20**, *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? <sup>20</sup> For you are our glory and joy.*

My joy is seeing your salvation.

My joy is seeing your growth and that’s why I’m saying this to you.

## V 1, "my crown"

That is a wonderful statement.

Not '*diadma*', diadem, not a kingly crown!

The word used here is *stephanos*, a laurel wreath.

Basically, in that culture two people received a laurel wreath.

One was the athlete who won an event and they gave him a laurel wreath to wear.

That was the corruptible crown.

**1 Corinthians 9:24-25**, *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. <sup>25</sup>And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*

But there was another person who got a laurel wreath and that would be a man who was honoured by his peers. A great feast or banquet would be held, and this man would be brought as the guest of honour. As the guest of honour, he would receive a laurel wreath.

what does Paul mean when he says to the Philippians and to the Thessalonians, "You are my crown"?

He means "you are my reward."

The wreath was a trophy.

This man has lived a fruitful life. The trophy in a track meet says this man has run a great race.

Paul says that,

You are my trophy.

You are the proof of my effective service.

You are my crown.

You are the reward that says this has been an effective life.

What affirmation Paul gives to these dear people!

**1 Corinthians 9:2**, *If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. Rich affirmation.*

Paul says, *"I love you, I love you so much I long to be with you. I long to be with you because you are the source of my joy and you are my reward."*

**How?**

Next few weeks we will look at it in detail.

**Conclusion:**

**Acts 11:22-23**, *Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. <sup>23</sup> When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.*

That's what every pastor does.

You encourage your people with a resolute heart to remain true to the Lord.

That is spiritual stability!

Peter says, "Don't fall; stay firm."

**2 Peter 3:17**, *You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked;*

Paul is strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraged them to continue in the faith.

**Acts 14:22**, *strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*

So, he strengthened them, he encouraged them, told them to expect tribulation. That's just ministerial function.

Paul wrote to the Galatians.

**Galatians 5:1**, *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

Epaphras is praying that the church Colossae would stand firm, complete in the Will of God.

**Colossians 4:12**, *Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.*

That's a cry throughout the New Testament.

**1 Thessalonians 3:8**, *For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.*

**2 Thessalonians 2:15**, *Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.*

**1 Corinthians 15:58**, *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

- ✓ It was Peter's concern,
- ✓ The concern of Paul,
- ✓ The concern of James,
- ✓ The concern of Jesus,
- ✓ The concern of Jude
- ✓ The concern of John,

The concern of the Triune God Himself that we have spiritual stability.