**Therefore Stand**

**Philippians 4:1**

**February 16th, 2025**

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**So then, my brothers and sisters, dear friends whom I long to see, my joy and crown, stand in the Lord in this way, my dear friends!**

**INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever felt like the things going on around you were about to knock you off your feet? Health problems and family squabbles. People are arguing about stupid stuff. And then there are things in this world that are so alluring that we can barely resist. “Standing” in this passage is about holiness and perseverance. Stand! Hold your ground! Hold that hill! We can stand because, as we learned, Jesus will save us by his appearing. And He will save us by keeping our minds and hearts focused on him even in the middle of a world filled with so many things that wear us out. God will refresh us and give us the strength to stand.

**PREACHING THE TEXT**

**Vs 1 So then, my brothers and sisters, dear friends whom I long to see, my joy and crown**

At the end of chapter 3 Paul told the Philippians that the Lord would appear and transform their lowly bodies to be like his. What a word of encouragement in the face of suffering and death. Now Paul begins chapter 4 with tender words of encouragement.

 He calls the people in the church of Philippians brothers and sisters and dear friends. This is not an apostle who is aloof and speaking from the balcony. This is someone who had deep love for other believers. He also calls them “my joy and crown.” We need rest and food and encouragement of our heart to be able to stand. And Paul is feeding spiritual food and encouragement. Is that what we are doing? Encouraging people so they can stand. Feeding spiritual food so we, and those around us can stand.

Paul gives them words of encouragement and then he tells them to stand their ground. You can do this! I am for you! I love you dear children, so stand!

Warfare = Stand (our ground)

**STAND IN THE LORD (Phil 4:1)**

Paul does not tell us to stand by determination or by human effort. We do not stand in the flesh and just get snarky and snappy. The way we stand in The Lord is to clothe ourselves in Jesus Christ. Stand, not by human might or power or determination, but stand IN THE LORD! Paul gives us the means of standing in the Lord. He wrote to the Ephesians;

**Ephesians 6:11-14**

**11Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.**

PUT ON THE ARMOR OF GOD

 What does it mean to put on the whole armor of God? Putting on the armor of God is about intention and focus and leaning into Jesus. It is about leaning into Jesus as He fights for us. It is the armor of God not the armor of man. We put on Christ and put on the mind of Christ and He fights for us. Are you putting on the mind of Christ? What does it look like for you to put on the mind of Christ? Are you daily feeding on Jesus the bread of life?

STAND AGAINST WHAT?

The schemes of the devil are what we stand against. So, what are the schemes of the devil? The schemes of the devil are that he wants believers and unbelievers to be so enamored by things in the world that we forget about God. God is calling all people to join him in adoring and loving His Son. But the devil wants us to worship ourselves or things in this world. He wants us to believe that we do not need to repent of our sins. Trust yourself and rely on yourself instead of trusting and relying on Jesus. We see three strategies that the devil works in to turn our eyes away from Jesus Christ.

The World

 The world relates to worldly philosophies. In almost every movie or show we see the world’s philosophies fed to us. Do what is right for you. Follow your heart. Love is love. You deserve to be happy. We are here to enjoy life. These are values of self-worship that the devil feeds us in large portions through Hollywood and through our screens. And as we watch movies and shows and reels, we swallow these values and adopt them as our own.

 When we make a decision about dating the philosophy of love is love is bounding around in our head. So, we feel attraction and give into our unexamined and untested feelings with no discernment or prayer. Or we invest all our resources in entertain and vacation our life away instead of investing in the gospel and missions. After all, we are here to do what feels right for us.

 One of Satan’s most brilliant tricks is to promote good works and moral causes as the plan of salvation. He wants to replace salvation by grace through faith in Jesus, with a gospel of doing good works to be saved. Good work is good but they do not save us. Doing good now does not erase the sins of our past. Only repentance and salvation by grace through faith will save us and result in pure motives. And our service should be motivated to glorify Jesus. But Satan has a brand of good works that REPLACES faith in JESUS!

For example, one of Satan’s favorite replacements is the social justice gospel. The social gospel suggests that we are redeemed, saved, and worthy of heaven by fighting social injustice. This is called Liberation Theology. The lie is that we are saved by taking political action or fighting injustice. Fighting true injustice is good, but it is not the plan of salvation.

But we can’t even fight social justice well. Many people who think they are fighting injustice join organizations and march and chant or express great anger at what looks like oppression or injustice. But those with good intentions don’t realize some of these organizations are really funded as some psy-op to push communism in our country. We can’t even do social justice right because we are blind to the motives of the organizers of such activities. We think we can be saved by social justice, but we can’t even do social justice well.

Feeding and clothing the poor and digging wells for people with poison water is an excellent thing. God is pleased. But a non-Christian can do some of these good things and still be doing all kinds of evil things behind closed doors. No, the social gospel does not save us, but Satan wants you to believe good works (which are good) will save you. Good works becomes the replacement gospel. Repentance of sin is hidden behind human efforts to save ourselves.

True liberation will be delivered by the Lord on his return. But liberation theology or the social justice gospel suggests that our main work is not to lead people to repent of their sins and trust Christ as Lord and Savior, but to find or even invent oppression and liberate people. How do they suggest we liberate people? With socialism and with marginalizing those who are rich. Balance the scales and make everyone financially equal. But that is a demonic doctrine because it takes Jesus out of the picture, hides the real gospel of repentance, and encourages jealousy. It is fighting with human systems and methods. All believers should be concerned with injustice, but taking on injustice without sharing the gospel is like giving a band aid to a cancer patient. The gospel is received through repentance, not by joining a cause, even if the cause is good and well-focused. Satan wants you to buy into any cause that will distract you from Jesus and His true plan of salvation and liberation. If God leads you to join some cause, go ahead, but know it does not save you.

The Flesh

 The second way that the schemes of the devil are seen is in alluring us to give into our temptations of the flesh. If you have a computer or phone screen it is certain you have seen images that are tempting to you. Satan wants to turn us into zombies that glare at alluring images and dive into our temptations. Sex appeal and desiring money and the best cars and houses and things that appeal to the flesh are front and center. Millions of people spend their time doing tricks and dances and spouting nonsense to get people to like them and look at them instead of getting people to look at Jesus.

 And some demonic churches teach us to lust after riches and wealth and health and name and claim and declare so we can get money. But this is exactly the opposite of what Jesus taught. The love of money and temptations of the flesh are rebuked by Jesus, but the prosperity gospel does the devils work and puts God’s name on the love of money! Jesus tells us to store up riches in heaven and they say, “store up riches now.”

 Lust of the eyes and desires of the heart search for people or things that will fulfill us. Don’t get your life from other people or things, but from Jesus, the true-life giver. Get your needs met by Jesus and resist the misdirected desires of the flesh.

The Devil

The last scheme of the devil is to tempt people to worship or pray to or communicate with evil spirits instead of Jesus. Spirit guides and life forces and enlightenment take the place of true communion with Jesus. Many practices encourage people to contact angels or spirit guides or unseen forces. But this usually ends up in contacting demons who want to steal glory from Jesus. Trust us to guide you, they say. Don’t trust Jesus but trust us to guide you!

 For example, yoga can simply be stretching and exercise. But some forms of yoga like Reiki encourage people to get a spirit guide (which is really a demon!) God tells us to resist the urge to contact spirits of the dead or fortune telling because we trust these forces instead of Him. Satan wants you to trust and rely on anything instead of Jesus. That is why this is such a big deal. Resist the urge to rely on spirits, forces, energies, or practices that do not preach Christ crucified and raised. Stand in your faith and trust in Jesus alone.

**Verse 12 of Ephesians 6** says;

**12For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.**

 Our fight is not against people. It is against the devil and all the schemes he uses to lure us from the true faith in Jesus. We can find a person who has glaring doctrinal or moral errors and demonize them and fight against them with our whole heart. But what if that person repents and receives Jesus Christ? Now there is one fewer soul who does the work of the devil.

 We are called to judge well. According to 1 Cor 2 the spiritual man makes judgments about all things. But we must remember that any person we confront for doing evil has been blinded by the devil and his schemes. And we also must remember that the Apostle Paul and each one of us were once in the category of enemies of the cross. Jesus tells us to bless those who persecute us. They can be redeemed too. We can rise with hatred for unbelievers because of their evil deeds but that is hating our mission field. Instead, we can pray for them, that Jesus transforms their minds and hearts. Speak the truth in love but don’t act like any person is the ultimate enemy. They are carried along by the devil, but they can be redeemed and saved. That must be our continual focus.

**SUMMARY / APPLICATION**

Today we learned that Satan has three primary areas of attacking and enslaving people. He pushes worldly philosophies into almost all media and entertainment. He temps us with things that appeal to our flesh. And he temps us to rely on spirits or practices that diminish or replace Jesus. Paul tells us to stand. Stand not by human effort but stand in Jesus Christ. Get your life from him. Get your needs met by him. Get your truth from Him. Stand in Jesus Christ.

**TAKING IT HOME**

1. What are the specific ways that you are putting on Jesus Christ and the mind of Christ?
2. In what areas are you most susceptible to the devil?
	1. (The worldly philosophies, the draw of the flesh, or relying on horoscopes, or spirits instead of Jesus)