

“Core Training for the Disciple - Stand”

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Pastor Jon Haakana

INTRO: There are times to take a stand. There are times when enough is enough, and we put a stake in the ground and declare, "This is where I will take my stand." Luther did that at the Diet of Worms. And Paul, in Philippians, encourages us to "stand firm." People around us might be living in ways of the flesh. Some might be exercising a discipleship of comfort and convenience. Most might be falling for whatever seduction the world has to offer. But, in Christ, we want to take a stand! Even when taking a stand might be the most unpopular thing to do. We know when we keep on standing up for Jesus and standing in Him we will stand with Him in heaven someday. Until that time we need the encouragement of today's text. The last words of our text serve as our theme: "Stand firm in the Lord, my beloved!"

I. Many think only of earthly things.

A. As we read the words of our text we are aware the church at Philippi faced many challenges. The believers were mostly new believers to Christianity. These believers came from different and even opposite social and racial backgrounds. In verse 17 Paul offers himself as an example of how God changes lives to serve Him.

B. In verse 18 Paul was saddened by those who still lived as "enemies of the cross of Christ". Paul was also saddened by the fact he had spent too many years as an enemy of Christ.

C. There is only one result of rejection, Paul tells us - The destiny of every unbeliever is destruction. They live their lives selfishly. They live only to eat, drink, and be merry. Paul says earthly things vanish. Eternal things last forever. Man's glory ends in shame. These are harsh words of God meant as a wake-up warning for all who reject salvation.

D. We must admit that our lives today are quite worldly. We live in an age called the "information age". We know of news around the world, right now. We know of events on a global basis. We become enthralled with knowing and learning more and more about things that have no eternal benefit for us at all. The reality is, is that we are quite friendly with the ways of this world. God warns us over and over of the danger in worldliness. In James 4: "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." The world can and at times does very easily turn our hearts, mind, and attention away from God. No one can serve two masters. He will hate one and love the other. This is the danger of being too friendly with this life.

Jesus warned, "Anyone who loves father or mother, son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me". How easily it happens that we do not fear, love and trust in God above all other things. When our mind is on earthly things God's love is somewhere else. "Stand firm in the Lord, my beloved!"

F. God's word warns us what to be on guard against. God's word also encourages what to do as believers in God's power. By faith we can say no to things of this world. By faith we order Satan to get behind us. Pride was the downfall of Adam and Eve. Behind that sin of pride was lust and greed. Adam and Eve were greedy to have all of God's glory for themselves. They lusted after what Satan was offering to them. BUT Satan had nothing to offer. Satan promised knowledge concerning good and evil. Adam and Eve already had knowledge of good. They knew God's mind. They walked and talked with God. Satan lied. Satan only offered evil. Satan still uses earthly things to tempt us to think only on earthly things. "Stand firm in the Lord, my beloved!"

II. Our citizenship is only in heaven - A. Paul wanted these believers to know that others had given up much to live their lives for Christ. Paul was chosen and changed by God to follow him forever. Peter, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy and the Apostles all forsook earthly things for Christ.

Paul was a Roman citizen. This meant special privileges for him. But, he knew heavenly citizenship was best. Jesus had died and was alive again to forgive his sins and the sins of the whole world; to redeem him and reconcile the world to Himself. He knew Jesus was in heaven and would return again. So do we. "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 20).

B. God helps us to look at those things we ought to do and not just all the things we are to avoid. The Bible is filled with many great things for the believer to think on, work on, and grow in. In 1 Tim. 6 Paul writes, "But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses." God says to hold on to the faith. It will be a fight. But it will be "the good fight of the faith". How are we to fight that fight? We have the list: "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness." Paul, in the words following our text says "Finally friends, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable...think about these things." (v 8) "Stand firm..."

Gideon's International tells the story of a young Colombian girl who received a New Testament in her school. She read the New Testament until one day her father caught her reading it...and told her not to read it anymore because it was full of lies and fantasy. But the girl kept on reading until one day her father came home unexpectedly

and found her with the NT grabbed it from her hands and put it in his pocket. The father went off to work where he was a mining engineer. Several hours later sirens went off in the community. There had been a cave-in at the mine. The father was trapped in the mine. The rescue workers took 5 days to finally reach the men, but it was too late. All 31 men died including the father of this little girl. Curiously, workers found the man clutching the NT between his praying hands. When they opened the front cover they read a note "To my daughter: Keep reading this NT, it is true and right and I will see you one day in heaven." Then they turned to the back page where the father had signed the commitment card after having said the sinner's prayer. But that was not the end of the story. Turning the page there were the signatures of the other 30 workers.

How will you stand firm in the Lord today, this week, or in the near future...

"Stand firm in the Lord, my beloved!" There is an overwhelming feeling of fear and dread in our nation today. It is all earthly. Too many think only of earthly things. Their destiny is destruction. Our citizenship is only in heaven. We eagerly look forward to our Savior's return. Ephesians chapter 2 states: "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone." God makes us His people, His family. Christ is our chief Cornerstone. And He will help us to stand, even when others around us fall. "Stand firm in the Lord, my beloved!" Amen.