

BACKGROUND:

Acts 16 gives us details about Paul's visit to Philippi. It's where he preached the gospel to ladies who were praying by the river and Lydia got saved, it's where a demon possessed girl was freed from her bondage, it's where Paul and Silas were beaten imprisoned, sang songs and were miraculously set free from their chains, and where the prison jailer and his family came to salvation.

- Even though the pagan culture were not happy about Paul and Silas being there, those that believed were and they held a special place in Paul's heart.

Philippians has been called the book or letter of JOY. Most of Paul's letter's to the churches had a loving, but direct rebuke. This letter doesn't really have that. It is a letter of joy and encouragement.

Paul wrote this while he was in prison (most likely in Rome). Let's keep that in mind as read. One of the most joyful and encouraging letters Paul wrote was while he was in prison. Let it be a lesson for us that we too can have joy and encourage others, even when life is hard.

Despite all that Paul had accomplished in his short life, he realized he was not perfect, and he humbly admitted that his main goal and purpose was to "pursuing the upward call of God." (3:14)

APPLICATION:

Q: Can we say that of our own life – that our main goal and purpose is to pursue the upward call of God? Or are we pursuing something else? Where would the Lord say our focus is?

OUTLINE:

4:1 – Stand Fast:

- **3:12-16 – by Growing Spiritually**
- **3:17 – by Gleaning from Others**
- **3:18-19 – Warning**
- **3:20-21 – Because We are Citizens of Heaven**
 - **Because We Will All Answer to Jesus**

MAIN THEME OR CENTRAL POINT OF EMPHASIS:

Stand Fast in the Lord (4:1)

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

Notice Paul uses the word "beloved" twice. Paul had such a great love for God's people, he even calls them his joy and his crown.

- He had suffered a lot to bring them the gospel, but to see the church walking with Jesus was worth it all.

¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Php 4:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- And He gives them this important charge regarding their relationship with Jesus – “stand fast in the Lord”

“Stand fast” – be immovable, stationary in the Lord.

Proverbs 4:26-27 –

²⁶ Ponder the path of your feet,
And let all your ways be established.

²⁷ Do not turn to the right or the left;
Remove your foot from evil.²

- When it comes to our relationship with Jesus, there is nothing more important than being grounded in the faith and staying there.

NIV84 - Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, **that is how you should stand firm in the Lord**, dear friends!³

- And that is what we are going to be talking about today – is how to stand firm in the Lord.

3:12-16 – We stand fast in the Lord by Growing Spiritually

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. ⁴

V. 15 –

*“My ambition is the true goal of the spiritually mature adult:
Make it yours too”*

-J.B. Phillips

Q: And what is the goal of the spiritually mature believer?

A: To be more like Jesus. To know God and be known by Him – intimately and deeply.

In the life of every believer in Jesus Christ there should be **a hunger to be spiritually mature**.

- There should be a gradual and evident spiritual growth in your life.

ILLUSTRATION – My Apple Trees – About a month ago, my apple trees were loaded with fruit. But they were still small and green, which is the perfect color and size for that time of year. However, this month is when those apples are supposed to be harvested and they would not be perfect if they were still small and green. These particular apples should be growing and changing color to a light yellow with beautiful brushstrokes of red as they spend time in the sun.

APPLICATON:

Our lives are like those apples – the important question to ask yourself is: “Am I growing and changing?”

² [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Pr 4:26–27). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ [The Holy Bible: New International Version](#). (1984). (Php 4:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁴ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Php 3:12–16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

- Have you started to notice your life changing as you spend time with the Son – with Jesus?
- Is there a notable progress toward spiritual maturity in your life Christian life?
- Is there a hunger and a thirst for the things of God?
- Are you taking action to lay hold of that upward call of God in your life?
 - Are you learning and applying God’s Word to your life and are you serving others with your God given gifts and talents?

1 Timothy 4:12-15 - ¹² Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴ Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵ **Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.**⁵

- Is our spiritual progress evident to all?

3:17 – We stand fast in the Lord by Gleaning from Others

¹⁷ Brethren, join in **following my example, and note those who so walk**, as you have us for a pattern.⁶

Paul said something similar in:

1 Corinthians 11:1 - Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.⁷

There are many believers who we can follow as examples in the faith – none of which are perfect, but we have much to learn from them.

- What an amazing thing to say as Paul did, *If you don’t know how to do this, then watch me.*

All of the godly men I have looked up to in the Christian faith have all had amazing Jesus like qualities about them, but they have also not been perfect because only Jesus is perfect.

- It’s important to keep in mind that spiritual mentors, even though they are not perfect, can still teach us many things as we take away the good qualities they exhibit and learn from their short failures.

APPLICATION:

- But how many of us would be so bold to say the same thing Paul did here – follow my example?
- If we don’t feel that we could say that, why not?

If someone observed your life, what would they see?

Would they see Jesus in you?

Would they see Jesus ever?

⁵ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Ti 4:12–15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Php 3:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (1 Co 11:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Would they see a life of patience and self-control?

Would they see a life that loves others and is kind and compassionate?

Would they ever see you open your Bible or pray?

What is the pattern of your life?

- Let's keep in mind that we should all have this goal, to say as Paul did, "follow my example".
- People are watching us - our unsaved friend or neighbor, our kids, other believers, etc.

1) We stand fast in the Lord **by Growing Spiritually**

2) We stand fast in the Lord **by Gleaning from Others**

3:18-19 – WARNING – example of those not standing fast in the Lord.

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.⁸*

As a point of contrast, Paul gives us the other side of the story – those who don't live for Jesus.

- Have you ever wondered why people don't follow Jesus? So much of it has to do with wanting to fulfill their own evil desires – living for the here and now.
- The problem with this is that it ends.
- And look at the end result (V. 19) "whose end is destruction".
 - I don't care how much "fun" the ride is, if it ends in an explosion I don't want any part of it.

*V. 19 – "These men are heading for utter destruction – their god is their own appetite, they glory in their shame, and **this world is the limit of their horizon.**"*

-J.B. Phillips

- In other words, these people are living for the here and now. They have no care of what lies beyond this life. They seek after their own desires. They are selfish. They even take pride in shameful or evil things.

But a believer isn't investing in this life for this life, he is investing in things that will make an eternal difference:

3:20-21 – We stand fast in the Lord **Because We are Citizens of Heaven**

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.⁹

We stand fast in the Lord **Because Our Citizenship is in Heaven**

Deed to a house here on earth – you actually never really own it. Because even if it's paid off and you have the deed in hand, you still have to pay what is called property taxes to the

⁸ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Php 3:18–19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Php 3:20–21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

government. Guess what happens if you stop paying those? They will come and take your home. Do you know when you stop paying property taxes? Never.

But we have a citizenship in heaven – something that can't be taken away from us. Paul wrote at the end of Romans 8 that not even death can separate us from the love of Christ.

We stand fast in the Lord **Because We Will All Answer to Jesus**

V. 20 - we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ
May I remind you that we will all appear before Jesus Christ and

2 Corinthians 5:10 - ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.¹⁰

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4:1 – Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so **stand fast** in the Lord, beloved.¹¹

- The martyrs who have gone before us cry out to us “stand fast”
- The cloud of witnesses from Hebrews 11 in the hall of faith encourage us to “stand fast”
- And here Paul, from his prison cell, after all he had brutally endured for the sake of Christ tells the church to “stand fast”

Stand fast church!

PRAY

¹⁰ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (2 Co 5:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

¹¹ [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Php 4:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Extra Notes:

Background:

Another thing to keep in mind is that there are no chapter breaks or verses in the original text. They were put there later, and we are glad that they were because it makes it easier to study the Bible together. Today we will be reading from the end of chapter 3 into chapter 4.

Chapter 3 Paul is talking about the difference between true and false righteousness. Many people believe "If you do not live rightly you will not be saved." But Paul makes the argument "If you do not live rightly you have not been saved."

- I think it was William MacDonald who said – "Works are not the root, but the fruit of salvation."
- It's good for us to look at our lives and ask the question, "Am I trying to earn my salvation by being good or am I being good because I love God?"

V. 15 -

*Here would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come;
No more a stranger, or a guest,
But like a child at home.*

-Hymn by Sir Isaac Watts "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need"

That word citizenship means a whole different way of living:

"It means the total way of life; it means a new life-style."

-J. Vernon McGee

- When you give your life to God, it effects **every** area of your life.