

Stand Firm Philippians 3:17-4:1

Introduction:

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Adam Bailey and I am the Lead Pastor of Multiply Church in West Des Moines. My wife and I were sent out last fall from Coram Deo to plant a church.

A church that both Magnifies Christ and Multiplies Disciples. And you all are very much a part of this journey. And we want to just extend our gratitude for your support this past year. So Coram Deo, thank you for being a church who desires to multiply churches.

Thank you Pastor Rob. So let's continue to worship by opening up our Bibles to Philippians chapter 3.

So some of you know this, but for those who don't my wife and I had our baby boy, Nolan, 3 months ago.

Lately I have been gripped with this question... how am I going to raise a kid? How am I going to raise a son in 2020 America? Is anyone else feeling that? Where's my new parents at? Shoot where's my parents who have a teenager? How am I going to do this? And I am not talking about how am I going to change diapers, or getting enough sleep, or finally being able to put pants on him. I don't know what it is about pants. Can't get it.

But it's not those things, it's...How am I going to teach him the things I want to teach him? How am I going to raise him in a society where they are preaching find your own truth, follow whatever makes you happy?

And really this just started down a ripple affect, because this isn't just about being a new dad. How am I going to stand firm as a husband, how am I going to stand firm as a Pastor when suicide continues to rise amongst those in ministry? And where it all culminated for me, how am I going to remain firm to the end of my life following Jesus?

Some of you might be fretting over these questions. Feeling a little shaky in this race that we are running. Feeling...I don't know. This is hard. Can I really stand firm, can I really remain faithful in my walk?

Here it is... this is what we will find here in this passage... You Can. IF...

The Main Idea: If Jesus is the foundation of your life, you can stand firm (Repeat).

And we find what standing firm looks like here in this passage. Let's read...

Philippians 3:17-4:1

17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

[Chapter 4] Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Don't freak out that I included verse one of chapter four. Like how can he do that? We can because verse one of chapter four acts as a hinge verse for what comes before it and what comes after it. It's the tip of the spear, the culmination of what is just said.

Stand Firm. IN Christ. Remain steadfast, but it's only IN Christ. In union with him, in relationship. When you become a believer, your life is now hidden in Christ. John likens this to a metaphor of a vine and branch. So when I say you can stand firm in this life, that's true, but it's only because Christ is in you, around you, and fueling you.

And the verses that precede verse one will give us 2 handles that we as believers in Jesus Christ can hold onto, as we stand firm in Christ today. Here's the first...

Follow Faithful Examples (v. 17-19)

Paul gives us a clear distinction in paths in these two verses. As Paul is wrapping up this letter to the Philippians he wants to make things as direct as possible.

Verse 17... Be like this. ...Verses 18 and 19... don't be like this. Two paths. And in both paths the act is the same. Did you notice that?

They are both walking. Nothing complex. Both walking.

But the directions and the destinations are vastly different.

He says... "*Join in* (participate in) *imitating me, and keep your eyes on* (I love that translation, but literally to observe or watch intently) *those who walk according to the example you have in us.*"

I was a math tutor in college. I would tell the students watch me, see what I am doing, and then you do it. Observe closely. And then imitate. Do what I just did. That's what Paul is saying.

But let's be clear, this is in no way arrogance or pride from Paul here. No way.

How do I know that here?

Because it is the same Paul that says in 1 Corinthians 11:1... "Imitate me, as I imitate Christ." Paul has such an understanding of life and what it means to be in union with Christ that he is calling all people to follow him as he follows Jesus. Saying the only reason I should be followed is because I am following Christ. So follow Christ with me.

And we today should too. We should follow faithful examples who are **Pursuing Christ-like Humility.**

Just verses prior to this... verse 12, Paul says... "*Not that I have already obtained this* (this full knowledge, power, fully sharing in his suffering) *or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own.*"

Faithful examples pursue the selflessness of Christ. They adopt humility that places their neighbor above themselves. They set aside time in their schedule to invest in their family, in their kids, and in their church ahead of themselves. We should look for people who exhibit selfless, servant-minded, Christ-like humility.

Not only that, but we should follow examples who are... **Enduring Well in Suffering.**

Paul says verses prior "*Forgetting what lies behind, and straining forward.*" In the midst of trial and hardship, the faithful rests in their foundation in Christ and endures, strains forward well when circumstances are bleak.

Do you know people like that?

Jim and Elisabeth Elliot were those kinds of people. Jim and Elisabeth Elliot were missionaries in the 1950s, who ministered amongst the ingenious people in Ecuador. And at one point in their lives, Jim felt the compulsion of Christ to share the Gospel with a people group that no one had visited because of the severe persecution and the danger that it would cause them. But Jim and a few other men went to visit with the tribe to share the Gospel, and they were killed. Right away. His fear of persecution did not stop him from the call to make disciples in Ecuador. For Elisabeth she didn't spend the rest of her life ignoring the call they had, but continued to live amongst the women of the same tribe that murdered her husband. Why? Why would she do that? How could she do that? Because she knew "to live is Christ, to die is gain."

She said this later in life...

"The secret is Christ in me, not me in a different set of circumstances."

Elisabeth Elliot is an example of someone who counted the cost of following Jesus, set aside her desires, and endured well knowing that she could stand firm in the midst of violent suffering because Christ was in her.

Do stories like that not spur you on to love and good works? They do. When I look at someone who has the unshakeable faith to say, they spur me on to hold fast to my convictions even when there is society pressure to cave. Learn from them. Know their habits. Adopt their way of thinking, thinking that is deep in humility and endurance.

But listen, the Apostle Paul understood something very important here. That these faithful examples are not only pursuing Christ, but are **Refusing the Worldly Path**.

Look at verse 18...

"For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ."

"For Many." Two of the most sobering words. Many, walk as enemies of Christ.

Jesus says this in **Matthew 7:13**...

"Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many." Many.

Paul knows what walking towards these two gates looks like. One walk is easy. It's covered with smooth sounding talk. It might even be covered with religious sounding language. But Jesus is nowhere on this path. And many are on this path.

"Their end is destruction. Their god is their belly, they glory in their shame, they set their minds on earthly things."

I want to drill down here just for a moment because it will help you understand why he chooses these phrases.

Paul is either communicating about just worldly Gentiles in general people who have indulged in worldly things or he is talking about specific Judaizers who Paul condemns back in the beginning of chapter 3. People who start to follow this Jesus, but place additions and restrictions to the Gospel message.

In short I think Paul is hitting both camps.

Whether it is the Jew who is boasting in their dietary laws... their belly. Who have made their god their keeping of the law. Or they are boasting in their shame... a word

many times referring to their circumcision. His mind, that Judaizer, is set on things of this earth. It's not on Jesus.

Or whether it is the Gentile who's god is their own sexual desires and appetite, or they are boasting in their shameful acts of idolatry.

Both camps... both set their minds on earthly things. Whether it is legalistic pride in what they can do, or it's the full on indulgence of sin.

Both sets of people are choosing to worship their own appetites rather than the God who made them.

Romans 16:17...

"Watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites."

Appetites. Same word in our text... Belly. They do not serve Jesus but their own bellies, their own desires. They are living for themselves.

And that thinking, both lifestyles... lead to death.

This is what this is saying for you... avoid such people. And not only avoid, but refuse to become those types of people. Reject the skewed thinking that you have to add something else to the Gospel to make it complete. Refuse to believe that just because you have forgiveness that means you can live however you want... that you just need a little Jesus sprinkled in your life and you are fine. Refuse to accept those beliefs.

Students in the room, refuse to believe that you have to do whatever the popular kids are doing. Refuse to buy into the narrative that God isn't real and that you create your own destiny.

That path seems to lead to happiness and satisfaction, but it will leave you constantly wanting more.

******(Summary)**

Instead adopt the mind of Christ and stand firm to your Biblical convictions. Even when it's hard. Even when people are telling you that you believe an outdated theology. It's difficult. That is why you need faithful people surrounding you who you can follow.

Let me put it like this... I went to England a couple years ago, and man I was speaking in a British accent within an hour. Why? It's not just that they sound awesome, but it's because my surroundings influenced the way I spoke. Same is true of your life.

If you begin to let the worldly culture be the loudest voice in your life, then you run the risk of letting them influence you more than Scripture. Let God's Word be the loudest voice in your life. And let God's people be the ones you are surrounded with.

The question remains... will you? Will you follow faithful examples?

Our relationship with the Lord is personal, but it was never meant to be private.

For some of us, that means actually letting people into your life.

In Christ you can stand firm in your faith, and he has blessed you with a church family that will surround you, love you enough to steer you away from false teaching, and point you back to Christ. Follow Faithful Christ following examples.

That's the first. Here's the second thing we can hang onto, as we stand firm in Christ... **Embrace an Eternal Perspective (v. 20-21, 4:1)**

Paul, after laying out this dramatic contrast of Do this, don't do this, he continues the comparison. Their end is destruction...

...Verse 20...

“But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.”

The contrast that Paul puts forth is remarkable. From those whose god is their own fleshly desires and their own sinful appetites where pride is taking root or indulging in sinful practices, to this.

Their end is destruction. Our end is final restoration. Their end is death. Our end is life. Their end is shame. Our end is glory. Their end is pain. Our end is perfect joy.

Their god is themselves. Our God is on his throne.

And we await him.

When I am on a trip, whether its vacation or work, I do not sleep very good. I have no idea what it is. I get into a nice hotel bed and nothing. I am restless, my stomach seems to always not be settled, I stare at the ceiling for most of the night, it's awful. But man, I tell you when I get home it's like lights out. My head hits my pillow and my bed and my sheets, and I am in my happy place.

Four of the most soul resting words I can give you...you are not home. Friends, just like I am restless away from my own bed, so the follower of Jesus is not at home here. And I think we can feel that.

Every time I see masks, every time I see another person dying of this virus, I am reminded that this place isn't for me. And I long for the day that the affects of sin will be gone. I long for that day.

And we need to cling to this certainty. Did you catch it? He will transform you. Those who have placed faith in Jesus, receive full transformation at the end of time.

How do I know that? Because Jesus Christ said it and proved it. Jesus was the one who was dead and then wasn't. I will trust that if that man says he's coming back, I will no doubt take him at his word.

That same power that rose Jesus from the dead, (verse 21) enabled him even to subject all things to himself... that power... is the power that will give us a new glorified body. In other words, the power that will raise us, is the power that Christ has holding all things together and the power that rose him from the dead.

Embrace that future.

But it's fully embracing this perspective. When your identity is found in Jesus Christ it is not just a future reality we can just hang our hat on, but it is an identity that has present realities. Christ has given us life in eternity and also, check this, life today.

God has given us the Spirit who enables us to stand firm in Christ today and live lives to its fullest today. Not just waiting idly. We wait expectantly. Our goal is to wait as Kingdom citizens.

But loved one, here me on this, my biggest worry as a pastor is that some of us have a confession does not match their demonstration.

My worry is that we would proclaim that our citizenship is in Heaven, but live as if our home is here. That we would give lip service to say yes my home is waiting for me in glory, but your life reflects someone who thinks all they need is right here. And here me, that is a dangerous place. It's a dangerous place, because if you are solely a Christian in name only, then your citizenship is not in Heaven.

You cannot be citizens of God's Kingdom, if you have never followed the King of that Kingdom.

The issue that many, many are facing is that they are continually turning to all these man made “messiahs” to try and fix their circumstances. They look inward instead of heaven ward and try to let their own power and pride fuel their life.

And I think, Christian, that we can fall into this from time to time as well. Especially as of late. I think there are times when we get so wrap around the axle about politics, money, you name it, and are seeing life with a earthly perspective.

What would it look like if we actually embraced a Kingdom perspective?

It would look like people who read the King's words, and do them. It would look like moms and dad pouring the Gospel into their children instead of leaving that to the church. It would look like people who when disagreeing with one another, don't spread hatred and gossip, but spread grace and generosity.

Christian, you have been bought with a price and your citizenship is with Jesus, it's not here. Embrace your home where Christ is.

But maybe, there are some here who don't want to embrace their destination. Because their destination is not with Christ. Some of us today are feeling... I can't stand firm because Christ is not the foundation of my life. So if that's you, we believe that if you call upon God now he can and will transfer you from the Kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of his beloved Son. Settle that now.

If you want a hope for a future, you have to embrace Jesus now. And that is the only hope we have of standing firm to the end. When we embrace our hope in eternity, when Christ is our foundation, we can stand firm.

****(Summary)

Conclusion:

Don't you want that?

When the tides of culture push you back and forth, you can stand firm only if Christ is in the boat with you. We can stand firm because our lives are hidden in Christ. And that is incredibly good news to souls who find themselves weary and souls who feel like maybe they can't do it. And the reality is, you can't do it on your own. If my standing firm in my faith were up to me and my power, I would have messed it up a long time ago.

I don't know how good of a dad I'll be. I'm not sure exactly what this next year is going to hold. I don't know what life is going to flare up in your life. But this I do know...

If Christ is at the foundation of your life, you are going to stand firm being a person who pursues Jesus and has faithful people around them to follow. Being a person who embraces your kingdom identity and longs for the day where the Father transforms your body and says well-done good and faithful servant.

Let's pray...

Father, you have multiplied your great and mighty works among us. None greater than the work of your Son on the cross so that I could be deemed citizen of the Kingdom of God. You have made a way so that we could have a future. You have given us your Spirit so that we could actually stand firm in Christ as we finish the race that is many times filled with circumstances that are hard. But you God have given us everything in Christ. As we wait for his return, we wait standing in Christ, our only hope. In Jesus' name, Amen.