

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

## Standing Firm Philippians 4:1

**Intro:** Therefore... that wonderful word that is used to bridge a current truth with a previous truth. Paul has just taken his Philippian readers through a theological crash course of powerful Christian doctrines. In **ch3**, Paul has discussed the power that resulted from the resurrection, a divine power that produces a visible change in the lives of those who accept the risen Lord as their Savior. Most recently, Paul discussed the true citizenship of believers: citizens of heaven who are looking for heaven's Lord. Now, **vs1** provides a glorious link between the great doctrinal statements of **ch3** and the extremely practical chapter that's before us. It sums up the previous doctrines in one practical issue. . Because of what Jesus Christ has done for us—because of His life, death, and resurrection and the victory it brought over sin and Satan—we are now to stand fast in Him, united as God's soldiers against a spiritually hostile world.

**1** – *beloved*... Paul here is expressing his heart, his true feelings for the believers in Philippi. If they were having some disputes among themselves or a breakdown in Christian unity, Paul is clearly not put off by it. Yes, he takes great pains to share the truth of their position in Christ but he is also careful to share this truth in love – not for fear of offending the guilty and not to ensure that they accept the truth – Paul speaks the truth in love because he sincerely loves these believers. These are people that he has personally ministered to, suffering pain and imprisonment for. And, these are people who have personally ministered to him. Time, distance and circumstances haven't dampened his love for these Christians not one bit and he is pouring out his heart to them right here.

crown... Paul uses 2 more interesting words to describe his intended audience. Joy isn't difficult to understand as we often use that term to describe our children or grandchildren (pride and joy). The word Paul uses for crown is not the one we would expect. Our normal concept of a crown is usually represented by the Greek word diadema which refers to a crown that is given to a king. But, the word Paul uses is stephanos, which is a crown of achievement that was awarded to an athlete who had won a race. Paul is actually saying that they are both his joy and his trophy. What makes

these terms interesting is that they are both conditional. The Philippian believers would continue to bring Paul joy and continue to be his trophy as they stand fast in the Lord, as they continue to walk in truth.

The Apostle John, towards the end of his life, states the exact same principle in his 3<sup>rd</sup> Epistle (v4). To walk in truth means more than just living with correct doctrine. Note that John doesn't say "walk in the truth" but walk in truth. John wasn't overjoyed merely because they were conscious of the truth, that they were sound in their doctrine. That is important, of course, but that's not what he's talking about. To walk in truth means to walk consistent with the truth you believe. If you believe you have the tendency to sin, walk wary of your inherent sinfulness. If you believe you're a citizen of heaven, walk like it. If you believe you are forgiven, walk like a forgiven person. To walk in truth means to walk in a way that is real and genuine, without any phoniness, concealment or hypocrisy.

stand... It's a remarkable fact that at several critical junctures in Paul's Epistles the practical result of the Christian's warfare against the world and Satan is defined simply as a matter of standing and it's even more remarkable that it's actually a military metaphor. In the last chapter of Ephesians, Paul describes the life of the Christian as warfare. But even as he writes of the Christian's warfare, Paul says that the practical outcome for the believer is not so much to attack as it is to stand (**Eph 6:11-13**). If we were writing this using Paul's imagery, we'd most likely mention invasion, marching, or conquest. But Paul does not do that; instead, he speaks of standing. If we're to stand as believers then we should understand that there are things we're to stand against, things to stand for and things to stand on. The passage in Ephesian illuminates what we are to stand against.

**Eph 6:11-13** – Right away, we are instructed to stand against the wiles of the devil. That sounds pretty serious so how in the world are we supposed to do that? By putting on the whole armor of God. God has graciously given every believer a complete set of necessary equipment (G.I. – God issued). He sends us out into the battle to stand against the wiles of the devil with everything we need at our disposal. This armor is of God both in the sense that it is from Him and in the sense that it is His actual armor. In the OT, it's the Lord who wears the armor (**Isa 59:17**). Now, He shares that same armor with us!

As we put on the armor of God, we express the strength we have in God by standing against the wiles of the devil. Satan's schemes and tactic against us come to nothing when we stand against them in the power of God. Satan's tactics alternate between intimidation and insinuation. He plays both the bully and the beguiler. Peter tells us that he goes about as a roaring lion – making a lot of fierce noises – but the truth is, against believers, he has no real teeth or claws. He can't take away anything of value from us, unless we willingly surrender it. Force and fraud constitute the majority of his attacks against Christians. That's why James tells us to simply resist the devil (4:7). But, of course, in order for that to be successful, we must first submit ourselves to God. We cannot successfully resist the devil in our own strength because our flesh is allied with Satan and is constantly working for our spiritual destruction.

But, what are the wiles of the devil specifically. Paul explains it in some detail in v12. This is our true field of battle. This is where we get our hands dirty, where we are exhausted from the fight, where we succeed or fail depending on if we employ the armor that God has given us. Paul lists several entities that are arrayed against us and some take them as describing the different ranks in Satan's army. Most likely, the distinction made by Paul here is not between any imagined levels of demonic authority but between the different areas of life they exert an evil influence over.

When Paul talks about principalities, he's thinking about the devil's control of certain geographical regions. A prince governs a certain territory, a certain piece of real estate. In human terms, a ruler presides over England, one over France, another over the US, and so on. Apparently, demons operate the same way. They would have to since they are not omnipresent. Unlike God, they can't be everywhere at once. They're finite creatures of great power; but they can only be in one place at a time. Paul's thinking of their regional presence. We know that in some areas of the world the power of Satan is very strong and obvious. In other places, particularly where the gospel of Jesus Christ has gone, it's comparatively weaker.

What about powers (authorities)? Authority has to do with values. So when Paul speaks of powers he's saying that the values of our culture, as well as specific territory, are demonically controlled. We need to see that the dominant values of our culture—the "me first" philosophy, pleasure for its

own sake, materialism, and other things—are not Christian but are controlled and manipulated by Satan for his own base ends. We are to stand against them.

Rulers concerns control. The rulers are those who control what people think and do. A good illustration of this comes by relating this to the secular media, which controls so much of our modern moral philosophy. Consider all areas of media: 24 hr news channels, TV programming, magazines, movies – social media! Each area is constantly screaming (streaming) a particular set of values and in so doing, they manipulate and twist the national mindset in a certain direction. But it's not just the media! It also refers to rulers that stand behind these powerful media outlets and the spiritual rulers that stand behind these media figures.

The final words make clear that Paul's not just thinking of particularly evil men and women, like Hitler, who somehow control others for their own dark designs. Instead, he's thinking of "the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." The emphasis here is upon the evil of this spiritual control. It is possible to have a holy, beneficent power. In fact, that power exists. It's the power of God in which we as believers are encouraged to be strengthened (10). But the spiritual forces against which we struggle are not holy or beneficent. They are wicked and destructive. Christians have been called and equipped by God to stand against these things. But, what are Christians to stand for?

Again, God doesn't command us to march into battle or to conquer, in spite of the hymn Onward, Christian Soldiers. He tells us to stand and the implication of that command is that God has already done or is doing the conquering. We're only to hold the ground He conquers. The difference between defensive and offensive warfare is that in defensive warfare - I have the ground and just need to keep it; in offensive warfare - I don't have the ground and am fighting to get it.

That's exactly the difference between the warfare waged by the Lord Jesus and the warfare waged by us. His was offensive; ours is defensive. He warred against Satan in order to gain the victory. Through the cross He carried that warfare to the very threshold of Hell itself, to lead captivity captive. Today we war against Satan only to maintain and consolidate the victory He has already won. By the resurrection God proclaimed Jesus

victor over the whole realm of darkness, and the ground Christ won He has given to us. We don't need to fight to obtain it. We only need to hold it against all challengers.

This is also true in regard to our text. When Paul exhorts the Philippian Christians to stand fast, he's pointing back to the statements of what Jesus Christ has done for us in [ch3](#). He's teaching that it's on the basis of these conquests that the Christian warrior must stand. What are we to stand for? What are the conquests that Jesus has made for those who trust Him? The 1<sup>st</sup> one is referred to in [3:9](#), which tells us that Christ died to bring us salvation. In Paul's terminology, salvation is to "be found in Him..."

According to the NT, Christ's death on the cross accomplished 2 things. Negatively, it's the means by which our sins were removed and punished. Christ bore our punishment, and since there's no such thing as punishing the same crime twice with God, we no longer need to fear anything at God's hand. The Bible says God has removed our sins from us "as far as the east is from the west" ([Ps 103:12](#)) and that He will remember them against us no more ([Isa 43:25](#)). Positively, the cross is the means by which God offers us Christ's righteousness in place of our own inadequate righteousness. God must refuse all attempts you might make to please Him by your own righteousness and, instead, grant you the goodness of Christ. God put Christ to death that you might be able to be found in Him, having His righteousness. This is the first great truth of Christianity.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> achievement of Jesus Christ is found in His resurrection. Christ conquered death so that He might live and be known by His followers. Paul speaks of this experiential knowledge in verses [3:10-11](#). There's a vast difference between being saved impersonally and coming to know the Savior. If you were drowning, it'd be wonderful to have a lifeguard come and save you. But it would be quite another thing to have that same lifeguard fall in love with you and marry you. In that case you would not just know them impersonally as your savior, but personally and intimately as your spouse. In the same way, Jesus lives to know and to be known by His followers.

Knowing the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't mean life will always be smooth. As a man, Jesus knew temptations and suffering too. Even as Paul wrote these words he was experiencing suffering. But he was experiencing something else as well. He was experiencing Christ's power in the midst of his

sufferings, and he knew that the trials had entered his life not to depress or defeat him but to be an opportunity in which the supernatural power of Jesus Christ could be seen. It should be true of us also. We should look to the power of Jesus' resurrection as the ground of our own victories for Him.

**Ch3** suggests 3 more things that Jesus does for us. First, He has promised to reveal His will to us (**15**). This teaches that God has marked out a path for us to follow in life and promises to warn us if we deviate from it. Next, Jesus has also given us a rule of conduct (**15-19**). The Bible contains the principles that we should follow in order to live a godly life. It contains words that will speak to us directly as we seek God's will in particular matters. It's the food our spiritual natures require for proper growth, and the ammunition with which we should fight against Satan. Do you use it? Do you read it daily and memorize it? You should, for it's the weapon Jesus has given us to help us stand.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Jesus does for us is live within us to lead us in the upward way. Paul writes that it's for this he's been seized by Christ (**12**). How thankful we must be that the Lord Jesus did not merely give us the Bible to show us the way we should go, or merely give us His life as an example of holiness. We need more than an example. Fortunately, when Jesus called us to Himself, He also came to live within us through His Holy Spirit. In His strength we can press on toward the mark of God's calling.

These are the things we stand against and stand for but what are believers to stand on? The old hymn says we're "Standing on the Promises" but the Bible is a little more specific. **Rom 5:2** says we are to stand in grace; **Rome 11:20** says we stand by faith while **Rom 14:4** says we are made to stand by God! **I Cor 15:1** exhorts us to stand on the gospel; **Gal 5:11** to stand in liberty; **Phil 1:27** stand in one spirit, with one mind; **Col 4:12** stand in God's will while **II Thess 2:15** sums it all up by exhorting believers to stand fast in the truth. These are the things we are called to stand upon. These are the things that, if believed on and employed in our lives, will enable us to stand fast in the Lord!

Although we face a great and terrible enemy, the victory doesn't belong to our enemy, it belongs to our God. And; God's victory is our victory, too; if we arm ourselves as we are instructed to – with God's armor - and we persevere to the end – through God's strength. If we trust to ourselves, we

will fall. But if we know our own weakness and turn to God as our necessary defense against Satan, then we will be able to stand against the devil's schemes. Not one of us can stand against the spiritual forces of evil in our own strength—not even for a moment. But in Christ we can stand, we can fight and we can come out victorious because He has already won the victory.

Standing on the work of Jesus and on His promises doesn't mean there won't be work for us to do. There will always be testing. There will often be much strenuous activity. It doesn't mean escape. But it does mean that even in the activity and the testing there can be an overriding confidence in God and in His promises. We will know that we are merely standing on the ground that He has already won and given to us. By His grace we can expect at the end of the battle to still be standing with Him victorious and in possession of the field of battle.

There is 1 more verse that deals with standing, in [Rev 6:17](#). It asks an important question: who is able to stand in the great day of the Lord's wrath? The short answer is: nobody! The Lord gives us the spiritual power, authority and equipment to successfully stand against Satan and his minions and allies. But, if we refuse God's power, if we reject the power of Christ's resurrection by refusing to accept the salvation He has won at so great a cost to Himself, then there is nothing that will help us stand against Him in the day of His wrath.

Obviously, the only way to ensure that you never have to fear standing against God in the day of His wrath is to stand with Him today in the salvation He has already provided. Stand with Him in the victory that Jesus Christ secured on the cross. 😊