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Sermon Notes

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## Standing Firm for Joy, Part 1

### Philippians 4:1-4:9

#### I. Mystery: Standing Firm While Making Progress

##### A. The Call to Stand Firm

***Philippians 4:1 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!***

1. Paul refers to the need to face great opposition with unmoving courage

2. Christians live out their faith in a very hostile environment

a. the world:

entices and allures you to sin through temptation

persecutes you viciously if you refuse to give in

b. the flesh

wants to sin, to indulge sensual pleasures, to have a comfortable, easy life free from trouble

c. the devil

hates you and hates Christ

wants to steal, kill, and destroy

3. Thus there are MANY calls to stand firm

***1 Corinthians 16:13 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.***

***Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.***

**2 Thessalonians 2:15** *So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.*

**Ephesians 6:9-15** *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*

Paul clearly looks on our battle with the world, the flesh and the devil as a vicious one which will take everything you have not to get swept away

It is necessary, then, for us to take our stand and not be moved in the day of temptation and persecution

#### B. The Drive for Progress

1. Ironically, the call to stand firm connected deeply to Philippians 3

**Philippians 4:1** *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!*

He has been teaching them the secret to standing firm in Philippians 1-3

2. Central message of Philippians 3: I press on

**Philippians 3:12-14** *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

3. Work out salvation with fear and trembling: Philippians 2:12-13
4. Also Paul's drive in Philippians 1: PROGRESS

- a. growth globally... worldwide advance of the gospel

**1:12** *Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.*

- b. growth individually... personal growth in Christ for each Christian... for the Philippians and for others

**1:25** *I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith*

Note: Both verses use the same Greek word: προκοπη “progress, advancement”... advancement of the Gospel around the world, and advancement of the Philippian Christians and others in their personal walks with Christ

C. This Message: The Need for Stability in Order to Make Your Journey of Progress

***Philippians 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel***

Illus. Imagine crossing a raging mountain stream... white water all around, at flood stage; there is a rope, and you must hold on... each footstep on the riverbed below you must be a strong one, and your grip on the guiding rope must be incredibly strong or you cannot make progress... and you have to make progress or you will drown to death

Or imagine trying to climb along a snowy mountain ridge in a howling windstorm... you have steel crampons connected to your hiking boots, and every step you plant in the snow must be strong and firm, or the wind will sweep you over the cliff and you will fall to your death... **BUT YOU MUST MAKE PROGRESS** or you will freeze to death

Thus the images come together: stand firm **SO THAT** you can make progress... you can't stay where you are, you **MUST** make progress; but each step of progress must be made with strength and firmness or you will be swept away

1. Without great stability you will NOT make progress in your personal walk with Christ
2. Without great stability, you will NOT make progress in advancing Christ's Kingdom through evangelism
3. You must **STAND FIRM** in order to **MAKE PROGRESS**

D. Great Assurance: God Sufficient for Both Standing and Progressing

1. For Standing

***Romans 14:4 Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.***

2. For Making Progress

***Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

3. We are NOT to look to ourselves for **STABILITY** and for **STANDING FIRM**

***1 Corinthians 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!***

We are warned never to overestimate our own strength...

4. Neither are we to look to ourselves for MAKING PROGRESS

5. Both our standing firm AND our making progress are gifts of God's grace

***Philippians 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.***

***2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.***

In Philippians 4:1-9, Paul gives the Philippians seven steps toward building a foundation for joy

- Cultivating Harmony in the Church Fellowship (vs. 2-3)
- Determining to Rejoice NO MATTER WHAT (vs. 4)
- Learning to be Gentle (vs. 5)
- Developing a Confident Trust in the Lord (vs. 5-6)
- Reacting to Problems with Thankful Prayer (vs. 6-7)
- Controlling Your Thought Life (vs. 8)
- Imitating Godly Examples (vs. 9)

## II. Yearning for Spiritual Stability as a Foundation for Joy

### A. Foundation for Joy

What is Joy? Would we look in a dictionary to find it? No... it must be experienced!

A blind person could hear the definition of the color red or blue, but would never be able to understand it

Neither do we learn joy from a dictionary definition

#### 1. Education in joy from physical life

Our education of joy comes from earthly circumstances... that's how we learn what joy is:

All our lives we've been educated in joy from earthly things

We knew what joy was before we could speak: joy came from a mother's smile, from a father's game of chase

My children know how to laugh and run and play without me teaching them

They know the joy of their favorite kind of ice cream, or of a victory in a basketball game, or of the beauty of a fall day looking for miles over a mountain valley, or of seeing a friend again, or of opening a birthday gift with the new toy they've been waiting for

They know the joy of watching a kite soar through the sky, or of snuggling warm and comfortable in their beds at night after getting a hug and kiss and prayer from daddy

All their lives, the physical world has taught us joy

Joy is a deep condition of happiness and contentment... and we were created for it!!

## 2. Biblical instruction about joy from physical things

### a. feast of booths... harvest complete

***Deuteronomy 16:15 For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.***

### b. joy of plenty to eat

***1 Chronicles 12:40 There were plentiful supplies of flour, fig cakes, raisin cakes, wine, oil, cattle and sheep, for there was joy in Israel.***

***Ecclesiastes 9:7 Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do.***

### c. cheerful looks and good news

***Proverbs 15:30 A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones.***

### d. a good son

***Proverbs 23:24 The father of a righteous man has great joy; he who has a wise son delights in him.***

### e. perfume and incense, and good friends

***Proverbs 27:9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.***

The Bible presents physical things and favorable circumstances as a valid ground for joy... but it points to a vastly superior joy than these... because all of these joys are temporary and will change quickly

## 3. In the same way the Bible uses material joy to teach spiritual joy

### a. Isaiah, when predicting the coming of the Messiah, likened it to earthly joy

***Isaiah 9:3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.***

***Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.***

Isaiah also compared the joy of salvation to the joy of a delicious banquet:

***Isaiah 55:1-2 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.***

***2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.***

- b. the Psalmist likened his joy over the Word of God like those who get rich

***Psalm 119:162 I rejoice in your promise like one who finds great spoil.***

- c. Jesus Himself likened salvation to the joy of finding earthly treasure

***Matthew 13:44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.***

We cannot imagine the kind of pure spiritual joy that awaits us in heaven, so Christ lowers Himself to compare the Kingdom to a box full of gold and diamonds... there really is no comparison, but if it weren't for this kind of language, we could never understand the joy of heaven

Next, however, God wants us to learn to rejoice in heavenly treasure while suffering on earth

- 4. Paul has been proclaiming a joy that is independent of earthly circumstances
  - a. the kind of joy that will survive imprisonment
  - b. the kind of joy that will survive beatings and public shame
  - c. the kind of joy that will survive poverty and many defeats

Christ came to save us for the sake of joy... but that joy could only be obtained through IMMENSE SUFFERING

***Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***

What joy did Christ set before Him? The joy of having us with Him in the presence of God forever:

***Psalm 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.***

This treasure chest of joy is worth everything in the universe... and God wants us to be willing to trade all earthly joys to have it

It is a joy with NO ROOTS WHATSOEVER in earthly circumstances... it doesn't get better or worse with any events in the newspaper or on the television... no earthly gift can improve it, no terrorist can blow it up, no thief can steal it, no artist can make it more beautiful, no engineer can make it stronger

It is kept up in heaven for us... a joy that never changes, because it is NOT earthly

And that joy must have an unshakeable foundation... or it cannot survive, and cannot prove itself in this world

### B. Stability = Not Easily Moved

Illus. Kobe earthquake, 5000 people died... every building shaken to its foundation; Akashi Kaikyo Bridge being built at that time; anchorages on each side of the Inland Strait had to be very deep so they would never move; huge manmade foundation made, circular in shape, measures 85 meters in diameter and 63.5 meters deep, making it the largest anchorage foundation in the world; anchorage contains 140,000m<sup>3</sup> of concrete and weighs 350,000 tons.

If the bridge did not have such a deep and strong anchor, it would be moved by the wind, the ocean current, the weight of the bridge, and a possible earthquake!!

***Colossians 1:22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel.***

***1 Corinthians 15:58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you.***

1. Constant theme in Scripture: everything is temporary
2. Someday, the WHOLE EARTH WILL BE SHAKEN... only Christ will not move!!!

***Hebrews 12:26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens."***

Christ is coming to shake the whole earth, and all created things—physical things—will be removed and replaced by a new heaven and a new earth

3. Christ ALONE is the unshakeable foundation

***1 Corinthians 3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.***

***Matthew 7:24-27 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26***

***But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."***

4. God's commitment to His chosen people will never be shaken

***2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his,"***

### C. Stability: A Measure of Maturity

1. Immature people are easily shaken by temptation and doubt

***James 1:6-8 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.***

2. Immature people are easily shaken by fear and anxiety

***Isaiah 7:2 Now the house of David was told, "Aram has allied itself with Ephraim"; so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.***

***1 Samuel 13:7 Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear.***

3. Immature people are easily shaken by persecution

***Matthew 26:31-34 Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' 32 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee." 33 Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will." 34 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."***

***Acts 15:37-38 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, 38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.***

Whole book of Hebrews written to people who are severely tempted to stop coming to church because of persecution and spiritual immaturity:

***Hebrews 2:1 We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.***

***Hebrews 6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity***

4. Immature people are easily shaken by false teaching

***Ephesians 4:14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.***

5. Mature people are unshakeable... solid and immovable for Christ

***Psalm 16:8 I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.***

***Psalm 46:1-3 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah***

Because Paul is committed to our joy, he wants us to be stable, firm, with a solid foundation

### III. Seven Steps to Spiritual Stability

***Philippians 4:1 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!***

Note Paul's incredibly tender, gentle affection for them

Speaks with great affection... also great pride: "My joy and crown"

On Judgment Day, Paul will glory in the crown of faithful ministry in these churches... so he must labor for their stability and joy in Christ

Here he gives them seven steps to joyful stability in Christ

#### A. Cultivating Harmony in the Church Fellowship (vs. 2-3)

***vs. 2-3 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.***

1. Few things as upsetting as conflict in the church
2. This was the whole point of Philippians 2:1-11... of Christ's example as a humble servant
3. Now personally applied... two women who just can't get along
4. Not a doctrinal issue at all... or Paul would have written to correct whatever false doctrine
5. They just didn't see eye to eye... didn't agree
6. Shocking... they were highly dedicated to the gospel mission, contended at Paul's side in the cause of the gospel

7. Sometimes, disagreeing people need help from others... “loyal yokefellow” (or Syzygus) is asked to help them get along

8. Gentle reminder: all of them have their names in the Book of Life

B. Determining to Rejoice NO MATTER WHAT (vs. 4)

***vs. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!***

1. This is the fourth and fifth time he has commanded them to rejoice

***Philippians 2:18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.***

***Philippians 2:28 Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you.***

***Philippians 3:1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord!***

2. Apparently joy is something that can be commanded... it is an act of the will

Paul is calling them to a continual, habitual joy... a conscious decision to rejoice

C.S. Lewis: God threatens terrible things if we will not be happy!!

NOTE: Not rejoice in your circumstances, but **REJOICE IN THE LORD...** in His unchanging attributes, in His unchanging plan:

- Rejoice in Christ’s birth in Bethlehem
- Rejoice in Christ’s sinless life, resisting every temptation
- Rejoice in Christ’s astounding miracles... making blind eyes see, driving out demons, stilling storms, walking on water, raising Lazarus from the dead
- Rejoice in Christ’s perfect teachings... words unlike any that any teacher had ever taught before
- Rejoice in Christ’s humble sufferings: never once did He open His mouth
- Rejoice in Christ’s accomplishment at the cross: shedding His blood for our sins, removing forever the wrath of God
- Rejoice in Christ’s mighty resurrection: death could not hold Him in the grave
- Rejoice in Christ’s ascension into heaven... there He sits at the right hand of God, ruling over the universe in power

- Rejoice in Christ's advancing kingdom... that Satan is powerless to stop it
- Rejoice in Christ's salvation in your own life... that He took hold of you and will NEVER let you go
- Rejoice in Christ's promise that He will take you to see His glory someday
- Rejoice in Christ's second coming to earth and in His immense power to bring everything under His control

None of those things are affected by time... they are kept in heaven safe from any thief or any terrorist or any invader

Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS!!!

3. Pattern your joy after Christ's... look beyond the immediate suffering to the joy of heaven

***Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.***

Christ did not rejoice in the cross, but in what the cross would accomplish

So Paul did not rejoice in his sufferings like some masochist... but in what the sufferings would accomplish

True stability comes from learning to set your hearts on things above, and in rejoicing in the Lord no matter what

Without that perspective, you will be very emotionally unstable... rising and falling with the circumstances

C. Learning to be Gentle (vs. 5)

***vs. 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all.***

1. Confident joy makes you able to be gentle and gracious even to vicious persecutors

Displayed in Paul and Silas when, after being beaten and thrown in prison by a jailer later that evening called out to prevent the jailer from harming himself, and that same evening graciously and gently explained the gospel to him. The Philippians jailer and his whole family came to Christ

Illus. As William Tyndale was being burned to death, he prayed "Lord, open the King of England's eyes." As John Huss was being burned to death, he was singing a child's song of worship to Christ... and did so cheerfully

During the reign of communism, a pastor in Romania was sitting at the breakfast table with his wife and six small children. Suddenly the police broke into his home to search the house and arrest him. The police asked him, "Don't you have anything to say? Have you no sorrow or regret? The pastor said, "You are the answer to what we prayed today. We just read in Psalm 23 that God prepares a table before us in the presence of our

enemies. We had a table but no enemies. Now you have come. If you would like anything that is on this table, I would like to share it with you. You were sent by God.”

The man replied, “How could you say such stupid things? We will take you to prison, and you will die there. You will never see your children again.” With contentment that came from God, the pastor said “We also read about that today: ‘Though I pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear.’” The officer shouted, “Everyone fears death. I know because I have seen it on their faces.” The pastor answered, “A shadow of a dog can’t bite you, and a shadow of death can’t kill you. You can kill our bodies or put us in prison, but nothing bad can happen to us. We’re in Christ, and if we die, He will take us to His world.”

2. Incredible power in being able to be gentle and patient no matter what is happening to you

***Proverbs 16:32 Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.***

Illus. “Faith means not having to panic.” Faith also means ability to be gentle and gracious even in the worst situations

NEXT WEEK (God willing):

- D. Developing a Confident Trust in the Lord (vs. 5-6)
- E. Reacting to Problems with Thankful Prayer (vs. 6-7)
- F. Controlling Your Thought Life (vs. 8)
- G. Imitating Godly Examples (vs. 9)

Summary:

God calls you to make steady progress in your Christian life... AND ALSO to stand firm

We are to make our journey with JOY, and for that we must have stability

Paul gives the Philippians seven steps toward building a foundation for joy

- Cultivating Harmony in the Church Fellowship (vs. 2-3)
- Determining to Rejoice NO MATTER WHAT (vs. 4)
- Learning to be Gentle (vs. 5)
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- Reacting to Problems with Thankful Prayer (vs. 6-7)
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If you do these things as well, you will have a strong foundation for joy in daily life, and you will make progress in Christian maturity