

Philippians 4:1-8

Stand Firm in the Lord When Faced With Obstacles

One of the consistent themes throughout the book of Philippians is learning to have joy and to rejoice in less than desirable circumstances. Paul knew a lot about bad circumstances. He wrote the book of Philippians from his imprisonment in Rome. But he had also spent time in a jail cell in the city of Philippi (Acts 16) with his friend Silas. They had been arrested and accused of being trouble makers in this primarily Roman city. They also had been beaten and thrown into the high security section of the prison. But, despite their circumstances, they sang praises to God from their cell in the middle of the night. Paul had learned to stand fast in the Lord in the midst of opposition. Standing fast means to be unwavering – and even his greatest obstacles did not cause his faith in the Lord to waver.

Throughout the book of Philippians, Paul speaks about conflicts and oppositions. He talks about defending the gospel (1:7, 17), his bonds (1:7, 13, & 14), envy & strife of others (1:15), contention from others (1:16), afflictions from others (1:16), terror of adversaries (1:28), suffering (1:29), conflict (1:30), avoiding strife (2:3), the crooked and perverse world we live in (2:15), and to beware of dogs, evil workers and Judaeisers who oppose believers (3:2). Now, in chapter 4, Paul gives the believer 4 things that will keep them from standing fast in the Lord. He loved the believers at Philippi. He called them his dearly beloved, his joy and his crown. He did not want to see them waver in their faith. Will these things keep you from standing fast in the Lord?

Verses 2-3 Conflicts with your brothers & sisters in Christ

Be of the same mind.

Being of the same mind does not mean you always agree on everything. But you must work on your conflict resolution skills! You cannot ignore conflicts and hope they go away. For believers, you do have the ability to be of the same mind. It will mean having the same values and the same mindset. This only comes by getting the mind of Christ (comes from the Word of God) – 1 Cor. 2:16 If you are not walking daily in the Word of God, you will tend to have conflicts with other believers (especially those who are not walking in God's word either)

Be a fellow-laborer in the gospel

When you are laboring, you don't have time for trivial squabbling. It's amazing how your problems with other believers go away when you get focused on sharing the gospel with the lost. The answers to problems in the church are often outside the church! When you are focused on helping and serving others, you will not be focused on yourself. Selfishness will derail you from standing fast in the Lord.

Verses 4-5 Lack of joy

Be in an attitude of rejoicing. Joy is not the natural response to problems or conflicts – it is supernatural. As a believer, you can choose in any situation to have joy.

Be moderate in all things. Being moderate means to not be excessive. When you live a life of excess, you will tend to lose your joy and contentment. Example – if you start focusing on making money, you will lose contentment and joy in the things that you have. When you always want more than you have, you will not be thankful and appreciative of what you already have and this will rob you of joy.

The Lord is at hand. This means that the Lord is coming back soon. If your focus is on Jesus coming back, you will tend to not be greedy and selfish. This will keep you joyful

Verses 6-7 Worry and fretting

Be careful for nothing. The word careful here means to worry or fret. Luke 10:38-42

Be in prayer. Everything should be taken to God in prayer. If you don't think you've got it; pray. If you think you've got it; pray.

Pray with thanksgiving. When you just pray to get what you want, you have the wrong heart – James 4:3. A thankful heart will change your prayer life! Being in prayer often will keep you from worrying and fretting.

Be at peace. The peace of God passes understanding. What does this mean? Just what the bible says – you will not ever fully understand the peace that comes from God. There is a difference between having “peace with God” (Rom. 5:1) and the “peace of God” (Phil. 4:7). Peace with God happens when you trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You get the peace of God when you place your worries in God's hands. The peace of God keeps your heart. Your affections and attitudes will be right. The peace of God keeps your mind. Your thoughts will be right

Bad thinking. Six things are mentioned as things you should think on. The first 3 things have to do with your character. The last 3 things have to do with your cleanness. All six will be sharpened by spending time in the Word of God.

Be thinking true things. Have a correct view of biblical truth. “If it's new, it isn't true.” “If it's true, it isn't new.” Spend your time handling the truth of God's word and you will know when something is false teaching

Correct view of all truth. You can mess up your thinking by worrying about things that aren't even true! Don't speculate – find out what is real and think on that. Don't fret and worry about “could be's” or “possibilities.” Spend your time thinking about things that are real and you won't have time to think about the things you don't know for sure.

Be thinking honest things. Dishonest thoughts will eventually turn into dishonest words & actions. You must be honest with yourself if you want to lead an honest life with others. Learn to separate honesty from dishonesty by asking yourself the hard questions. "If I said _____, would it be completely honest?" "Would it be honest for me to _____?"

Be thinking just things. Justness is fairness. Are you fair in your thinking? Do you give people the benefit of the doubt? Are you a respecter of persons – giving partiality to some people and quick to judge others? This is bad thinking!

Be thinking pure things. Something that is pure has no element of uncleanness in it. It is difficult to maintain pure thoughts in the world we live in. So how can you have pure thoughts? By putting only pure things into your mind!

Be thinking lovely things. Your flesh will naturally take you down ugly paths. You will not naturally think about lovely things. Can you think of ways to be gracious and kind to others? Can you see the good in people, even when others can't?

Be thinking things of good report. Bad opinions you have of people will eventually come out in your speech to them or about them. You can't hide these opinions. Your expressions, your actions, and eventually your words will give you away! The mind that is standing fast in the Lord will think about things that edify and build others up. It doesn't matter what your opinion is about a certain person, you can still think rightly by thinking about things of a good report

1. How do you handle conflicts with your brothers and sisters in Christ?
2. How can being in God's Word regularly and sharing the gospel with the lost resolve conflicts in your life?
3. What are some things that "steal your joy"?
4. How do you handle it when you don't get what you want?
5. Would you describe yourself as a worrier? If so, what do you tend to worry about?
6. Is it difficult for you to be thankful in everything? Explain.
7. Do you remember a time when you received "peace with God"? Are you experiencing the "peace of God" in your life right now? Explain.
8. Which of the six things (true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report) do you struggle with the most in your thinking? Why?