

Philippians 3:17 – 4:1
March 17, 2019 – 2nd SUNDAY IN LENT

Stand Firm in the Lord

✠ **Recognize enemies of the cross. (vv.17-19)**

✠ **Eagerly await your homeland Savior. (vv.20 – 4:1)**

Dear fellow redeemed, solid on the Rock which is Christ:

One of our professors likes to warn pastors to be careful about too many personal references in sermons. “Your life is just not that interesting. Mine, maybe, but not yours.” That’s a tongue-in-cheek way of describing the human condition, always more interested in personal affairs, and barely anyone else. You know, sarcastic TV characters listening a second then crudely, “And this interests me how?”

They make you feel like a foolish kid in an old Minnesota schoolyard whose friends dared him to lick a flagpole in the dead of winter. Paul is like the teacher who brings warm water to unfreeze your tongue. He’s not just caring about his personal friends here when he says: **Stand Firm in the Lord.**

✠ **Recognize enemies of the cross. (vv.17-19)**

What’s Paul crying about? This is not the whining of tired and hungry children whose parents are trying to be patient themselves. Paul feels genuine sorrow for those who hate him. Note Dr. Luke’s report about Paul’s first trip to Philippi. Beaten bloody, but then singing hymns from chains inside the prison cell. Earthquake...doors open...the jailer is ready to kill himself, but Paul stops him. The jailer cries, “*What must I do to be saved?*” They answer not what to do, but, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.*” The whole family was baptized and filled with joy because they all believed in Jesus by that miraculous gift of faith. (Acts 16:25-34)

Paul cared so much about everyone else’s story, especially their faith-story, that he could not write about **enemies of the cross** without tearing up again: “*Brothers, join together in imitating me and in paying attention to those who are walking according to the pattern we gave you. ¹⁸To be sure, many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. I told you about them often, and now I am saying it while weeping. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their appetite, and their glory is in their shame. They are thinking only about earthly things.*”¹ When your whole story is only about this life, you idolize your stomach. You praise everything shameful in God’s eyes. You can’t be sure of anything beyond this earthly existence. So the plight of this planet is terrifying for you. Government becomes your god.

Yet you, dear Christian, have been called out of darkness into the glorious light of God’s truth. He poured warm grace-water on your head and heart to stand in fellowship with God. He confirmed you in the common-union of faith with fellow believers. **Stand Firm** with Paul, cry for lost souls, but don’t stop there. Imitate Paul by walking in line with the Holy Spirit following Christ. We too have been rescued by Jesus for a new life with God on earth and ever after in heaven. Prayerfully **Recognize enemies of the cross** and **Stand Firm in the Lord** who won the victory by living, dying, and living again for you.

✠ **Eagerly await your homeland Savior. (vv.20 – 4:1)**

Why is it that we don’t have to loose our minds over cultural corruption and dirty politics? How can Christians see through all the media hype and not fall for the blind leading the blind? We **Stand Firm** as strangers here, foreigners from another land, not meant to assimilate? Christianity has always been counterculture. In fact, God’s ancient people of Israel had special laws in the Promised Land that

¹ EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2017. NPH: 800-662-6022; also Amazon-Kindle.

were meant to build a fence around them to keep them different, set apart for God's holy purpose. "I'm but a stranger here," as we sing in a favorite hymn. (CW 417) When your friends make fun of your faith, they're really saying, "You're not from around here, are you?" Answer, "No, I'm not."

Here how the Holy Spirit says it through Paul: "***But our citizenship is in heaven. We are eagerly waiting for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹By the power that enables him to subject all things to himself, he will transform our humble bodies to be like his glorious body.***"

What are we waiting for? The transformation of these "***humble bodies.***" What did the ancients do without eyeglasses? Didn't need them? What about computers? Ancient Egyptian builders could figure engineering problems without calculators, squaring up a whole pyramid, lining it up with the sun, using technology largely lost today. Somehow the Incas moved huge stones high in the Andes mountains where travelers today barely have enough oxygen to breathe. No mortar, but smoothed stones so close a credit card won't fit between. What's happening that so many need glasses, pacemakers, a computer in your pocket? Are we really living longer? The Bible says pre-flood lifetimes were almost a thousand years. Evolutionists deny this, but the oldest book in the world, God's Holy Book, says it's true. Scientists who believe God's Word can demonstrate by making copies of copies of copies how mutations degrade the human species. We are not evolving. Humanity is devolving. If you wonder why the secular world is so afraid of climate change, it's because they have no hope beyond Mars. And how's the climate up there?

But our Hope is alive at God's right hand! We look forward to transformed, glorified bodies "***like his glorious body.***" Since Jesus rose from the dead, He cannot die again. He's immortal. Movies can play with this idea; God demonstrates it in Christ. Ever since He rose on Easter morning, Jesus is no longer bound by time and space. We have trouble keeping up with Him on Easter. The Emmaus disciples hurry back about seven miles to Jerusalem to tell the rest they saw Jesus. They're all meeting behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. Then Jesus just stands among them. He says, "***Peace be with you.***" He shows His hands and feet and side – still bearing the trophy-scars of His suffering and death for us. But it doesn't hurt anymore. Jesus can eat, but He doesn't have to. Like Him, you will be pain free there. Able to eat, but not to die. When we asked our professor how we will get around in heaven, he answered, "Beam me up, Scotty." Ever wish you could just blink and be there with loved ones?

What will it be like, God's "***new heavens and new earth***" ? Again, not subject to any effects of sin, but fully submissive to the Lord Jesus Christ, Ruler and Judge of all. Animals in heaven? Maybe. Outer space? More like worlds on worlds where God is everywhere with us...endless playgrounds where serving God is like putting your boat in the water on a favorite lake. No storms. The fish are biting, but nothing is dying? Just a big game for nature fully in sync with God? Interplanetary travel of the instantaneous sort? Right now we're more like goldfish trying to imagine what it's like outside our tiny fish bowl. We can't live beyond until these bodies are changed with new schematics for eternity.

You're not a foreigner there. In Christ, you already belong. He washed you clean in the flood of grace in Baptism. He stands firm with you in His body and blood all through life. Finally He is leading you to your true home, your forever mansion in glory with God. See, Jesus kept His promise to suffer and die the first time He came. How could He fail to keep His promise to come again to take you home? He was willing to suffer; He's good for glory eternal. No I.D. needed. God knows your heart because He lives there by faith. You're a citizen of that place ever since God put His name on you. Doesn't that make you all the more eager to wait for Him to come again, your Savior and Lord from there?

More than anything, that's how we **Stand Firm in the Lord**. All the details aren't given. Our earthbound minds couldn't grasp the facts and our hearts aren't big enough to hold infinite feelings of eternal joy, bliss and elation. It's enough to know we'll be with Jesus. *Jesus, the very thought of thee with sweetness fills the breast. But sweeter far, thy face to see, and in thy presence rest. (TLH 350) Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus, can my heartfelt longing still. (CW 348) Eagerly await your homeland Savior.* Looking forward to Him, never give up, never give in. **Stand Firm in the Lord.** Amen.

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