



## "Standing Firm In The Lord" (Philippians 3:1-4:1)

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v.1a Finally, my brothers...don't let that mislead you. Paul is only halfway through with what he has to say to them...

\* Did you hear the one about the pastor known for his lengthy sermons? He noticed a man get up and leave for part of the service. After church, the pastor asked him where he had gone. "To get a hair cut," the man said. "But," said the pastor, "why didn't you do that before the service?" "Because," the gentleman replied, "I didn't need one then."

\* Is that where some of are going during the message?

v.1b Finally, rejoice in the Lord. He's not talking here about happiness. Happiness is from hap...hap is a circumstance, happenstance, happenings, happiness, all the same word group. True joy persists in weakness, pain, illness and death. It is different from the fun of a party with its laughing friends and music because it persists in the dark when someone is all alone. It is different from the delight of a new house or a new car or a new dress or a new anything because it persists through the loss of everything. Why? Because it is the joy that comes from my relationship with Jesus Christ. He never changes. He is always present. He is ever close (see Phil.4:4-5). Rejoice in the Lord.

v.1c Not only is he only halfway through his letter, he's not saying anything they have not heard him say before!

\* Rom.15: 15 I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me

\* II Tim.2: 14 Keep reminding them of these things...

\* Jude 1: 5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.

\* II Peter 1: 12 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.

13 I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 14 because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

\* "Like any good teacher, Paul was not afraid of repetition. It may well be that one of the

mistakes we make is our desire for novelty...We do not tire of the foods which are essentials of life...We may like the fancy things at meal times, but it is the basic foods on which we live. Preaching and teaching the side issues may be attractive, and have their place, but the fundamental truths can never be spoken too often for the safety of our souls." (Barclay, p.65).

vv.2-3 Beware of those "dogs," those "mutilators" of the flesh

\* They tell me the Greek has three clauses here, so it literally reads "Beware, beware. Beware" or "watch out, watch out, watch out."

\* Two words in the New Testament for dogs, both from the same root. One is kunarion, & it means a little pet dog. The word here is kuon, a word used of dogs that were not pets (and most of the dogs in that culture were not pets). They were scavengers.

\* In the book of Revelation when it wants to identify the people who are not allowed into the gate of the holy city, in [Revelation 22:15](#) it says, "Outside are the dogs." They are not the warm and fuzzy little pets. They were the lowest of the low, the scavengers, the scoundrels...And because they were so base and such filthy animals, the Jews had come to use the term "dog" as a title for Gentiles.

\* Then finally he literally scorches them with the blowtorch of terms. He says, "Beware of the mutilators." You talk about offensive, that is offensive. You see, the Jews prided themselves on circumcision. The word for circumcision in the Greek is peritome, it means to cut around. Paul says you're not the circumcision, you're the katatome. You think you're circumcised? You think you fit God's design in the symbolism of circumcision? Forget it, there's nothing spiritual about it. All it was was physical mutilation. In [Galatians 5:12](#) he says, "You say you're circumcised? I would that you were castrated" (no longer able to reproduce your kind).

\* Matthew 23: 15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

\* Note: He's referring here not only to Jews who had rejected Jesus as the Christ & were still depending on the law of Moses for righteousness & salvation, but also those who had come to faith in Christ, but would not let go of certain aspects of the Law, especially circumcision (see Acts 15:1ff; Gal.1:6-7).

vv.4-9 A testimony of Paul's past confidence in the flesh

#### 1. Circumcised on the eighth day

- Gen.17: 12 For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner-those who are not your offspring. 13 Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.

- It is interesting to note that in reading ancient Egyptian literature, this custom of circumcision began to show up in Egyptian culture. For them it had not the significance that it had for Israel, but for them it was hygienic. And God knew of its hygienic benefits as well. And medical science today tells us that it lowers significantly the risk of cancer, & certain kinds of inflammation that can be very serious. So it has a medical hygienic

purpose. God knowing that authored it in the life of His people, but that was not the major purpose for it, although it is hygienic, that was not God's primary design. God ordained it as a symbol, as a sign (Gen.17:11), a very important one. Not just for physical benefit but as a spiritual reminder. And the reminder is simply this, at no point is a man's depravity more manifest than in the procreative act. We know man is a sinner by what he says, we know man is a sinner by what he does. We can see on the outside sinful deeds. But how do we know man is a sinner at the base of his character? How do we know man is a sinner at the root of his existence? The answer, by what he creates. Whatever comes from the loins of man is wicked because man is wicked. So I say to you, nowhere then in the anatomy of a man or in the activity of a man is depravity more manifest than in the procreative act because it is at precisely that point which he demonstrates the depth of his sinfulness because he produces a sinner. Jesus Christ had no human father because there was no human father who could produce a perfect person. The Spirit of God had to plant a perfect seed in Mary and bypass a human father. So when God demanded that they circumcise the male, He was giving them a symbol that the outward part of man's procreative organ was cleansed to remind them that man needed to be cleansed of sin at the deepest root of his being. That was the idea. Man needed to be cleansed of his sin through a spiritual surgery, at the very root of his nature. And that very graphic symbol was chosen because that is the procreative point at which man produces sinful man. So man in his natural condition is a sinner and he produces sinners. So every time they circumcised a person and every time they circumcised a little eight-day-old male child, they were reminding themselves of the fact that man at his very base nature was a wicked sinner and desperately in need of a cleansing. It was an illustration of the sinfulness of man.

- [Leviticus 26:41](#) talks about the circumcised heart. [Deuteronomy 10:16](#), the circumcised heart. Deuteronomy 30 verse 6, the circumcised heart. [Jeremiah 4:4](#), the circumcised heart. [Ezekiel 44:7](#), the circumcised heart. So when God said, "I want an outward sign," He was saying, "I also want an inward reality." But over time they exalted the physical sign but ignored the spiritual counterpart. They were religious to the T in terms of external ceremony, but they were not righteous. Their hearts were wicked.

- Note: Salvation is not by ritual, by rite, by ceremony, by symbol, by sacraments, masses, religious washings and baptisms. It doesn't matter if we're talking Jewish symbols and Jewish sacraments and Jewish ordinances and rituals and ceremonies or whether you're talking about Roman Catholic rites and rituals, or whether you're talking about Protestant baptism or Protestant sacraments or the Lord's table or whether you're talking about lighting candles or praying through beads or praying certain formula prayers, none of them make a person righteous. None of them will cleanse his heart and saved his soul!. That's what Paul is saying. He considered the truest Jewish rite, circumcision, as manure. As far as salvation is concerned it's useless. It's waste, it's garbage, throw it out, it can't help. It might make *your more* healthy *but not more holy*.

## 2. Of the people of Israel

- The Ishmaelites traced their descent back to Ishmael, the Edomites to Issac (Esau was Issac's son). But only truly "purebred" Jews could trace their descent back to Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.

- Note: Your religious heritage grants you no standing with God. The fact that you were born into a Christian nation grants you no standing with

God. The fact that you were born into a Christian family grants you no standing with God, no salvation, it's useless, it's garbage, it's rubbish.

- Rom.2: 28 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical.

29 No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

### 3. Of the tribe of Benjamin

- Of all the twelve patriarchs, only Benjamin was born in the Promised Land (Gen.35:17-18); The first king of Israel came from this tribe (I Sam.9:1-2). Saul of Tarsus was no doubt named after Israel's first king!; When, under Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided and ten tribes went with Jeroboam, the tribe of Benjamin remained faithful to Judah (I Kings 12:21); The tribe of Benjamin had the place of honor in the battle lines when going to war.

- Hosea 5: 8 "Sound the trumpet in Gibeah, the horn in Ramah. Raise the battle cry in Beth Aven ; lead on, O Benjamin.

- The Feast of Purim commemorated the great deliverance recorded in the book of Esther. The central figure in that story is Mordecai, a Benjamite.

### 4. A Hebrew of Hebrews

- Born of Hebrew parents; Still fluent in the Hebrew language, even though many of his people had become more fluent in Greek than Hebrew as a result of their having to live in the midst of a Greek speaking environment. Paul had deliberately and laboriously retained his Hebrew tongue.

- Paul was raised in the Gentile city of Tarsus, which he describes in Acts 21:39 as "no ordinary city." But he never mixed Greek culture with his Hebrew culture. Those who did were called Hellenist Jews.

- Note: Just because you're loyal to your parents Catholicism or your parents Judaism or your traditional Protestant background, you're a Lutheran because your parents are Lutheran, or you're a Presbyterian because your family has always been that way, or you're Baptist because everybody's always been Baptists, that kind of loyalty to a tradition is worthless as far as a means of salvation.

### 5. A Pharisee

- These were the spiritual "athletes" of Judaism. Their name means "The Separated Ones." They had separated themselves from all normal life and tasks in order to aim at keeping even the smallest "jot" and "tittle" (detail) of The Law.

- If you wanted to see a man who didn't smoke and didn't chew and didn't go with girls who do, Paul was that man!

6. To a Jew, zeal was the greatest quality in religious life.

- Paul led the charge to wipe out the greatest threat to Judaism in his day, the church! Paul says he loved Judaism so much that he hated Christianity. That's zeal." You know what? He was sincere, wasn't he? I hear people say, "Well, it doesn't really matter what religion you are, as long as you're sincere." It's like saying it doesn't matter what poison you drink as long as you're sincere, you'll be all right. Mental attitude has nothing to do with it, it's a matter of truth.

- Rom. 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. 2 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

7. Faultless regarding legalistic righteousness

- His religious record could not be criticized

NOTE: Paul wants to make sure people like he used to be do not influence them. This kind of influence makes one self-righteous & proud...Peter, Gal.2; It causes one to lose thier joy (Gal.4:15), & it leads people away from the only truth that can save their souls (Peter in Galatians misrepresented the gospel; see Gal.1:6-7), and finally, it makes one legalistic (Gal.5:1ff).

\* John 12: 42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagoue;

43 for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.

v.8a Truth is, there is nothing not worth giving up in return for a relationship with Jesus Christ...

w.8b-9 First of all, I am righteous as a result of my relationship with Christ...

\* If anyone could be declared righteous based on religious accomplishments, it certainly would have been Saul of Tarsus!

w.10-11 Once someone really comes to know Christ, they want to know Him more and more...

\* See Eph.3:16-19

\* The power of his resurrection is manifest in my life by me living a new life. I have been born again. I am not the same person!

\* The fellowship of sharing in his sufferings is a tremendous & wonderful mystery. The times I have felt closest to the Lord are not the mountain top experiences, but the deep valleys of my Christian walk...

\* v.11 Paul uses a word for resurrection never used anywhere else in the Bible. It's the out resurrection, it adds the preposition ek, it's the out resurrection, it's graphic. Then the phrase "from the dead," it means from the corpses, from among the corpses. This is the way it reads literally, "I

want to attain the out resurrection from among the corpses." What's that? It's the Rapture. He's saying, not that my life is no longer simply filled with religion, but with Christ, I want to go on in His power living my new life for Him, going deeper in my fellowship with Him through suffering, & one day to be raptured to my heavenly home...

v.12 I want to be like Christ. I'm not there yet, but this is my # 1 goal in life...

w.13-14 Leaving the past in the past and striving to be like Christ

\* Leave the old life in the past, but also leave the mistakes you've made as a Christian in the past...

w.15-16 Are you where you ought to be in your growth as a Christian? If not, why not?

\* See Heb.5:11-6:1a

\* As Paul closes this section, he tells us how to "live up to what we have attained, or, as he closes this section, how to "stand firm in the Lord."

3:17-4:1

\* 4:1 This is connected to the previous verses. It really should be verse 22 of chapter 3.

\* v.17 Follow the right crowd

- "Join with others" = 4831. summimetes, soom-mim-ay-tace'; from a presumed comp. of G4862 and G3401; a co-imitator, i.e. fellow votary:--**follower together**.

- I Cor.15: 33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."

- When I first read v.7 years ago I thought about all the things I had given up when I gave my life to Christ. I gave up the drugs, the party life, the immorality. But that is not what Paul is talking about. He is talking about giving up all his religious accomplishments, giving up his self-righteousness, giving up his religious reputation, even his religious position...Paul had to leave that old religious crowd in order to follow Christ. Perhaps that's the crowd you need to leave...

- Matthew 15: 14 Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

\* Note: He is also saying lead others in the right direction; Paul in writing to Timothy says, "Be an example, be an example." And he even delineates the categories in which that exemplary living is to take place. Be an example in speech, conduct, love, faithfulness and purity. Live an exemplary life. Why? You're showing people the path.

\* I Timothy 4: 16 Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

\* w.18-19 Say no to fleshly appetites

- Many live as enemies of the cross; the cross represents more than self-denial, it

represents death.

- Col.3: 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

- Carl Dixon telling me about a man who moved in with a woman that came from CCSP...beware, beware, beware! He said he's a Prov.7 man...

\* vv.20-21 Keep your head in the clouds

- II Tim.4: 10 for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica...- Develop a heavenly diet...Israelites who despised manna and desired the food of Egypt; Israel at the end of the Babylonian captivity, when it came time to go back to the promised land, many of them decided that they wanted to stay where they were...

- In many churches today, there is very little emphasis on heavenly things, very little concern about the life to come, but there is lots of preoccupation with this world, this life, how I feel, how I get along, how I succeed, how I prosper, on and on and on and on, so that death becomes the enemy because we assume that this is the best, when it isn't.

## CONCLUSION

\* Are you a Christian? Not a Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc. Inner witness of the H.S., circumcision of the heart, no confidence in religious heritage or accomplishments.

\* As a Christian, are you standing firm?