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Stand Firm in the Lord

4: 1

Stand firm in the Lord DIG: What can we expect from the world? How did the Philippians show their love for Paul, and how did Paul show his love for the Philippians? How were they Paul's crown and joy? How does Paul explain what it means to stand firm?

REFLECT: How are you standing firm these days? On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being rock solid, are you the rock of Gibraltar, or a jellyfish? If you are not where you want to be, which of the seven basic principles below can you start with?

The Lord Yeshua Messiah is our perfect example of standing firm.

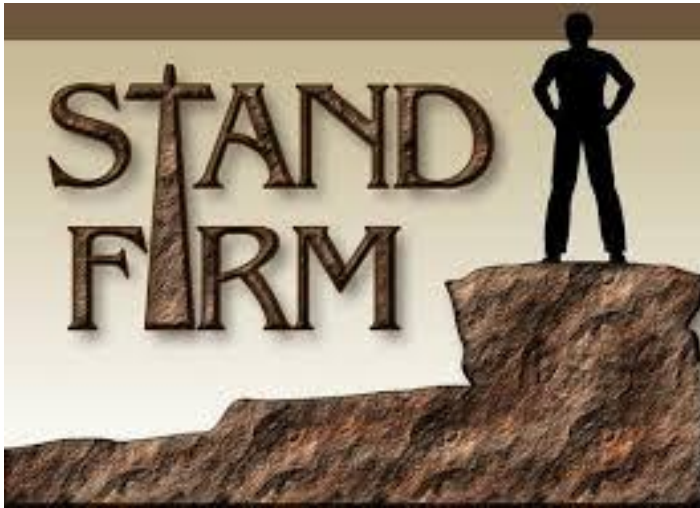
As John MacArthur relates in his commentary on *Philippians*, the congregations of **God** are under attack, just as **Yeshua** predicated it would be. **He** warned: **In this world you will have trouble. But take heart; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).** Paul echoed **the Lord's** warning when **he** said: **It is through many persecutions that we must enter the Kingdom of God (14:22)**, and wrote to **Timothy: Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Messiah Yeshua will be persecuted (Second Timothy 3:12).** Not surprisingly, the Church has faced persecution from the very start (see **Acts, to see link click [Au](#) - The Apostles are Persecuted**).

The assault on the Church comes from three sources. **The world (First John 2:15-16)** with all its charms tries to entice us away from obedience to **the Word of God** and a godly lifestyle. It also persecutes the Church, both openly and subtly. The Church dares not to **compromise** with the world (see the commentary on **Revelation [Bd](#) - The Church at Sardis**) because **whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4)**, and **if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (First John 2:15).** Our **old sin nature** is another source of attack (see the commentary on **Romans [Br](#) - The Significance of the Messianic Mikvah**). **Yeshua** exhorted:

Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41). Even after **Paul** was saved, **he** could still cry out: **Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death (Romans 7:24)?** Energizing both **the world** and **the flesh** is **the devil**, who **prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (First Peter 5:8).** **The world** is tempting, **the flesh** is vulnerable, and **the devil** is **lion-like** in his aggression. As a result, we, as believers, face a great amount of instability.

Paul was so concerned about spiritual instability of the churches under **his** care that **he** wrote to **the Thessalonians: Now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord (First Thes 3:8),** and so **brothers and sisters, stand firm** and hold onto **the Word of God** that you were taught (**Second Thessalonians 2:15**). **James 1:8** describes the person lacking spiritual stability, being **double-minded and unstable in all his ways.** As **he** closed out **his** first letter, **Peter** pleaded: **I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it (First Peter 5:12)!** In **his** second letter **Peter** warned of **false teachers** who were **enticing unstable souls (Second Peter 2:14).** **He** also cautioned believers to beware of **untaught and unstable false teachers** who **distort [Paul's inspired letters],** as they also do to the rest of the Bible, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness (2 Peter 3:16-17).

Spiritual instability leads to disappointment, doubt, discouragement, and ineffective witness. **Unstable people** are likely to be crushed by **their** trials. **They** are so susceptible to **temptation.** An example of an **unstable person** from the Torah who fell into **sin** is **Reuben, Jacob's firstborn son.** In **his** patriarchal **blessing** of **his sons, Jacob** said of **Reuben: Unstable as water, you shall not excel, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it - he went up to my couch (Genesis 35:22).** **Reuben's instability** led **him** to **sleep with one of Jacob's concubines** (see **Genesis 1k - Reuben Slept with His Father's Concubine Bilhah**). As a result, **he** lost the birthright that should have been **his** as **Jacob's firstborn son (First Chronicles 5:1).**¹⁶²



In this passage, **Paul** addresses the vital question of how we can be spiritually stable. The passage opens with the traditional word **therefore**, which indicates that what Paul is about to write builds on what he has just written. The previous file described the believer's pursuit of being **conformed into the image of Messiah**, which is both **the goal** in this life and **the prize** in the next (see [Bi](#) - **Pursuing the Prize**). **Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends (4:1)!**

The Lord Yeshua Messiah is the perfect example of **standing firm** for us to await our **prize of perfection**. **He** faced persecution, but never **compromised**; **He endured . . . hostility by sinners against Himself** without wavering (**Hebrews 12:3**). **He was tempted in all things as we are, but without sin (Hebrews 4:15)**. Facing a trial that was more severe than any of us will ever endure, **Yeshua . . . for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2)**. **Yeshua Messiah** is the perfect model of **standing firm** that we are to follow.

The phrase **my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown** expressed **Paul's love for the Philippians (1:3-9)**. The apostle's **loving concern for the Philippians' firmness** caused **him** to send **his** coworkers **Timothy** (see [Bc](#) - **I Hope to Send Timothy Soon**) and **Epaphroditus** (see [Bd](#) - **Send Epaphroditus at Once**) to **Philippi**. The bond between **Paul** and the **Philippians** was strengthened by **their** faithful financial support (**4:15**).

Not only did **Paul love the Philippians**, but **they** were also **his joy** (cf. **1:4, 2:2** and **17, 4:10**). **Paul's joy** didn't come from circumstances because when **he** wrote

Philippians he was under house arrest in Rome, chained to a Roman **soldier** (**Philippians 1:12-13; Acts 28:16,20, and 30**). Not only that, some teachers, motivated by jealousy for **Paul**, were preaching **Messiah** out of selfish ambition, **thinking that they could stir up trouble for him while he was in chains (1:17b)**. But that didn't steal **Paul's joy** or **love** for the church **he** had founded. To **the Thessalonians** he wrote: **For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Yeshua at His coming? For you are our glory and joy (First Thessalonians 2:19-20)**. Later, in the same letter **he** added: **For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account (First Thessalonians 3:9)**. The **joy** of seeing **his beloved Philippians** grow to be more like **Yeshua Messiah** motivated **Paul's** exhortation to **stand firm**.

The Philippians were also **Paul's crown**. *Stephanos* (**crown**) does not refer to a royal crown, but to the laurel wreath, the interlocking branches and leaves of the bay laurel tree, given to victors in athletic events (**First Corinthians 9:25**). Or given to those honored by their peers, much like the trophies or plaques given today. A person receiving such an honor would have a feast held in his honor where he would receive his wreath. **The Philippians** were **Paul's** trophy or wreath of honor; **they** were the evidence of **his** ministry (**First Cor 9:2**).

The question naturally arises as to how **Paul's** command to **stand firm** was to be applied. **The apostle's** answer, introduced by the phrase **in this way**, unfolds in **verses 2-9**. He lists **seven basic, practical principles** that lead to spiritual stability: **(1)** living in **harmony (4:2-3)**, **(2)** maintaining a spirit of **joy (4:4)**, **(3)** maintaining a **gentle spirit (4:5a)**, **(4)** being **calm** in every situation (**4:6a**), **(5)** reacting to problems with **prayer and petition (4:6b)**, **(6)** thinking about **godly virtues (4:8)**, and **(7)** obeying **God's** standard (**4:9**).¹⁶³

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being such a wonderful heavenly **Father**, who lives within those who trust in **Him**. **Standing firm** is important for me to do. How encouraging it is to be able to read the many stories of **Your** children who **stood firm** for **You** despite many hard trials and temptations. **David** is an excellent example of **standing firm**, when **he** had to flee to the wilderness because **his** life was in danger. **He** could feel at peace **because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise You. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands (Psalms 63:3)**. **Praising You** often, as **Paul** encourages me to do and as **David** did is very wise. **Praising** not only blesses **You**, but it also encourages me. **Praising** is meditating on all **Your***

wonderful character traits and on what **You** have said. By doing this, **I will be like a planted tree over streams of water, producing its fruit during its season. Its leaf never droops,** and I can have confidence that I am on the right path **(Psalms 1:3)**. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection.
Amen