

Stand Firm

Lent 2

Pastor Josh Frazee

Php. 3:17-4:1

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Former quarterback Colin Kaepernick is quoted as saying “Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything.” “Believe in something.” What a great thought according to today’s standards. There is no truth, no reality, so create your own, and don’t worry about what you believe in, so long as you “Believe in something.”

Make a stand for what you believe in—then you’ll be renowned and remembered. Make a stand for gay pride. Make a stand for abortion. Make a stand for illegal immigrants who refuse to go through the legalization process. Then you’ll be renowned and remembered by today’s society. “Believe in something” and make your stand.

So is pastor saying it is wrong to take a stand? Is pastor saying it is wrong to believe in something? What about Paul? Even he wrote to “stand firm” at the end of our Epistle text.

Pastor agrees that Paul wrote about standing firm at the end of the text; but before we get to the standing firm part, we must first look at what Paul is encouraging us to stand firm on. Before we get to the conclusion, we need to see the path to getting there. So we turn to our Epistle text from Philippians to see what Paul—indeed, God Himself, would have us to hear, and what He would have us stand firm on.

Verse 1

Paul wrote to the believers in Philippi: “Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”

Paul wrote to the Philippians to imitate him, watching those who walk with him. So was Paul on a gay-pride march? Or a Pro-choice march? No, he was walking in line with the other apostles. He was walking with those who believed God’s words that sin would prove condemnable to the unrepentant, God-less human being.

There are certainly arguments that can—and should—be used in courts to demonstrate that homosexuality is bad for society. In writing his letter to the Romans, Paul correctly labels homosexuality as a sin. In the ESV Study Bible, we learn that “A Roman who read Paul’s letter might think, ‘Yes, homosexual behavior is bad because it is bad for society. We don’t do such things!’ However, to Paul’s readers who shake their heads in self-righteous disgust, he springs a trap with these words: ‘Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless’ (1:28-31). Each item in the list...undermines society. And no Roman (or person) today) could claim to be free from such sins. Starting with homosexuality, Paul indicts all people for doing things that destroy society. Everyone is born with a depraved mind that leads to every kind of wickedness. Homosexual behavior is no more (condemning) than gossip, greed, or jealousy. Those who commit such sins will face God’s judgment unless they repent. The one who practices homosexual behavior will face the same Judge as a gossip, slanderer, or liar (ESV Study Bible, p.1911).”

Granted we don't have marches in the streets for gossips and slanderers and liars, but is it God pleasing to march proudly for homosexuality and abortion? No, it is not. So we don't just "Believe in something." Then, what do we believe in?

Verse 2

Paul, writing from God, continues, "(O)ur citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself."

We believe, dear brothers and sisters, in our Lord Jesus Christ—we believe in Him and His Word. And it is on Him and His Word that we are called to make a stand, and to stand firm.

We are called to recognize that we are sinners, who are unable to do anything to save ourselves. The strictness of the Law is too great for any of us to complete. And without fulfilling the entirety of the Law, we should die, and die eternally. Yet Jesus came to be our Savior. He came to be the one to pay the price we owe, and for us to turn to for our salvation. Making the stand of faith does not mean living according to the Law perfectly on our own to earn our own salvation. If we attempt to do that, we steal from Jesus, who came to do that for us. Rather, we stand on Him. We stand on Jesus as the Christ, the one who came to save us.

How do we stand on Jesus? We stand on Jesus through faith and the Holy Spirit. We cannot believe of ourselves, but with the Holy Spirit, we can, not only believe, but truly live. By believing in Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin, we no longer need to keep the Law perfectly to be saved. We already are. And from that, we can keep the Law, not to save ourselves, but in faith. We can stand together as ones saved by our Lord Christ Jesus, and we can live the Ten Commandments. Standing on Jesus as our Savior, we can resist the temptations of the Evil One, Satan.

And standing on our Lord Jesus, we know that "Our citizenship is in heaven." We know where we're going, and we have faith that we're going there because of the merits of Jesus' death and resurrection. Today we can live as the people He has saved, not abolishing the Law, but living it, standing on Him and His salvation, rather than our own works. When we stand on Jesus, we do not get rid of the Law, we uphold it. We uphold it looking forward to that day when "the Lord Jesus Christ...will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him...to subject all things to himself."

Verse 3

"Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved."

Outside of faith, there is no peace with God, no good, no hope—it is all believing in this something or that something, none of which is the right thing to stand on. But in faith, we believe—not in "something" but some One: namely, Jesus Christ. In faith, we stand on Jesus and we find that we can and do keep the Law. When we stand on faith, then love follows. The Confessions put it this way: "the faith about which we are speaking exists in repentance, that is, it is conceived in the terrors of the conscience that experiences the wrath of God against our sin and seeks forgiveness of sins and deliverance from sin. In such terrors and other afflictions, this faith ought to grow and be strengthened. Therefore, it cannot exist in those who live according to the flesh, who take pleasure in their lusts, and who succumb to them. Accordingly, Paul asserts [Rom.8:1,4], 'There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.' Again [Rom.8:12-13], 'We are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the

flesh—for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.’ Therefore the faith that receives the forgiveness of sins for the heart that is terrified and fleeing sin does not remain in those who succumb to their lusts, nor does it coexist with mortal sin (BoC, pp.142-143).” “Therefore we cannot truly keep the law until we have received the Holy Spirit through faith [John 16:15]. Therefore Paul states that the law is established, not abolished, through faith, because the law can be kept only when the Holy Spirit is given (BoC, p.141).”

In other words, we can only truly stand for that some One of importance and not just “something” when we come to faith. And now that we are in faith by receiving God’s Word and being baptized into our Lord Jesus Christ, we can not only stand on Him, we can also rightly make a stand on His Word, establishing and upholding His Law as the only perfect way to live, not to justify ourselves, but as ones who have been justified by Him, by Jesus Christ. So stand firm—stand firm on Jesus. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

The Holy Spirit who has begun this good work in you will bring it to completion on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.