**Big Idea:** Standing firm in the Lord.

**Purpose Then:** To exhort the Philippians church to stand firm in the Lord, and to reconcile a division in the church.

**Call Now:** Stand firm in the Lord, in all the ways Paul has described.

* Paul has just spent chapter 3 presenting a theological discussion of joy in God
  + 3:1 is a command to rejoice in the Lord
    - It is an instruction Paul has said to them before, but something which he has no problems repeating
  + Warning against those who say they must be circumcised
    - Points out that by their qualifications he at one time was the greatest
    - But he left that behind, and now sees it as loss, because there is something *so much* greater
  + All of this is a reply to the circumcision group, but in fact is a more general presentation of the greatness of Christ, and the joy that can be found when we put our confidence in Him
  + From v12 Paul moves the discussion deeper into gaining the ‘benefits’ of Christ
    - Paul presses on to take hold of that for which *Christ Jesus took hold of him*
      * Christ initiated, but he works at it
  + Simply says that this is the view every mature Christian should take!
    - Should follow Paul’s example
  + Warns that there are many, both within and without the church, who are enemies of Christ
    - Their glory is their shame – they have no joy in Christ
    - Their mind is on Earthly things – not on Christ
  + But true believers have a citizenship in heaven, and so eagerly await Christ’s return
    - Christ will transform their bodies, so they will be like His
* In 4:1 he closes off the argument, by saying simply: “that is how you should stand firm in the Lord”. How? By Rejoicing in the Lord!
  + By putting confidence in Christ – the surpassing greatness of Christ – and so seeing that when we put confidence in *anything* else, we lose out, because it detracts from the joy we have in Christ
  + But also by pushing on to obtain what Christ has called us to obtain
    - This means having our minds set on heavenly things, and yearning for the day when Christ will return to transform us to be like Him
* Paul is incredibly affectionate in this verse, talking of them as those whom he “loves and longs for”, who are his “joy and crown”.
  + For Paul, part of experiencing the joy in Christ, setting his mind on Christ’s greatness and part of pushing on to achieve what Christ has prepared for him, is Paul’s relationship with this Church in Philippi.
    - He wants them to experience the joy he has in Christ, and as they do so he himself grows in joy, seeing God at work in them
    - One way he takes joy in Christ is in encouraging and building the church up
* And so Paul zooms in further, to a specific relationship which is distracting from the greatness of Christ.
  + Remember this is a letter to an entire church, which would have been read publicly for all to hear. Calling out two ladies like this is a big deal, and so could lead to shame, and so Paul is very tactful in commending these ladies to the church (and giving a witness to the work of the women in Clement), while at the same time calling the entire church to be involved with reconciling their dispute.
  + He doesn’t take a side in the argument, but asks these two ladies to look to an eternal context. He calls them to agree with each other *in the Lord.*
    - Yes, in this world we may have disagreements and arguments, conflicts and quarrels; but these are disagreements of the flesh, and we have no confidence in the flesh.
    - Every discussion needs to be focussed on the Lord, so that we might be able to agree with one another in the Lord.
* But don’t forget that this is all in the context of rejoicing in the Lord.
  + In 4:4 Paul comes back to this exhortation: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”.
  + Rejoice in your salvation
  + Rejoice in pressing on to obtain what Christ has prepared for you
  + Rejoice in the resurrection to come
  + Rejoice in your local church
  + Rejoice in the relationships between individuals within the church
  + Rejoice in the Lord *always*

**Diversity of applying the passage**

**Head**

* Reject those who say you must be circumcised to come to Christ (3:2)
  + Those who add anything to faith
* Know that it is we who are the circumcision, we serve God by his Spirit (3:3)
* Christ’s glory surpasses everything (3:8)
* Righteousness comes through faith in Christ (3:8)
* Christ took hold of you (3:12)
  + For a particular purpose (3:12)
* Those who live as enemies of the cross of Christ are destined for destruction (3:18-19)
* Our citizenship is in heaven (3:20)
* Christ will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body (3:21)

**Heart**

* Rejoicing in the Lord (3:1, 4:4)
* Put no confidence in the flesh (3:4)
  + Whatever were once gains are loss for the sake of Christ (3:7)
* Know the *surpassing* worth of knowing Christ Jesus (3:7)
* Desire to know Christ (3:10)
  + Power of his resurrection, participation in his sufferings (3:10)
* Eagerly await a saviour from heaven (3:20)

**Hands**

* Press on (3:12, 3:14)
  + Forget what is behind and strain towards what is ahead (3:13)
* Follow Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus’ examples (3:17)
  + And the example of all who follow them (3:17)
* Stand firm in the Lord (4:1)
* If you are in an argument with a brother or sister, be of the same mind in the Lord (4:2)
* Help other brothers and sisters to be reconciled (4:3)

**Working it Deeper**

**Specific situations**

Standing firm in these situations:

* Arguments within the church
  + Where does the argument come from? Confidence in the flesh?
    - If it’s not be a core issue (e.g. with Euodia & Syntyche) then how does the head knowledge (beliefs) affect the heart attitudes (attitudes) as we are in the situation, or as we council those in the arguments (whole church is called to help the women)
* Things which we put our confidence in, instead of Christ (new year, good time to reflect)
  + Prestige in the eyes of others (e.g. not sharing struggles with sin, not sharing the gospel)
  + Desire to be ‘right’ (picking arguments with the intention of putting others down, demonstrating what we learnt at TEAM)
  + Our children (representing what good parents we are, what control we have)

**What hinders?**

* Disagreements in the church
* Not rejoicing in the Lord
* Taking our eyes off the greatness of Christ
  + Other things arise and take that place
    - These things may not be bad in and of themselves
* Getting caught up in what we put our confidence in before
  + Good to reflect, but Paul says to “forget what is behind, and pushing on to what is a head”

**What helps?**

* Coming back to the greatness of the Lord Jesus
  + For arguments: being of one mind in the Lord
  + Identifying what we put our confidence in
* Bringing in the help of others in the church
  + Paul is massively affectionate for the people in Philippi
  + Paul commissions the entire church to be involved with reconciling the women
* Remembering the fruit of others
  + Paul draws the people’s attention to the contending the women have done alongside Paul (names Clement as a witness to it)