

Stand fast / Stand firm

(στήκετε = 'steekaite')

To stand fast, to stand firm, to persevere, to persist, to keep one's standing.

Philippians 4:1, "My beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved." After so powerfully expressing his affection for the church at Philippi, Paul asks the congregation to "**stand firm**". This Greek word may also be used to describe them either *as soldiers who are to stand at their post irrespective of the pressure to abandon it*, or alternatively, *as athletes who must adhere without deviation to the course marked out by God*. However, the underlying consideration for "**standing fast in the Lord**" is one of harmony and unity with one another. As was usual with Paul's letters, the exhortations given here are given also to the entire Christian community. If ever any individuals are singled out for special instruction, it is always with the understanding that they are part of the church and that the church will be behind them primarily to support, encourage, guide and be responsible (and accountable) for their well-being. We cannot '*stand firm in the Lord*' on our own, we do it with the support of those around us.

In the preceding two verses (Philippians 3:20-21), Paul reminds us of our true citizenship which he says is *in heaven*. Therefore, says Paul, let's live as heavenly citizens and not as earthly ones. And to live as heavenly citizens is to live according to the standards and values of heaven. If we are living as citizens of heaven we will be eagerly waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ who, says Paul, *will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body*. Now this is a very different attitude to the one that says "This is all there is, so let's make the best of it". It is not just the intermediate state that we are to look forward to but the resurrected state in which we will live with the Lord on a brand new earth and with a brand new heaven surrounding us. And in case we have any doubts as to the possibility of this happening Paul reminds us in verse 21 that *He is able to subdue all things to Himself* including our bodies and the entire universe.

So what is Paul's conclusion to these wonderful incentives he's described? That we **stand fast in the Lord**, not to be led astray by those who would hijack our faith with an earthly gospel, but clinging to our heavenly citizenship. Being heavenly-minded is a sure way of *standing fast* in the Lord! As mentioned, we cannot *stand firm* in the Lord without the support of others; likewise, we cannot *stand firm* in the Lord without the support of heaven. In order to stand at our posts, remain on course, and complete our assignments, we need both.

Sound mind / Wise discretion

(σωφρονισμόϋ = 'sohfronnismou')

A well behaved mind, an admonishing or calling to soundness of mind, to moderation and self-control, self-control, moderation.

2 Timothy 1:7. "For God has not given us a spirit of timidity and fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." This *sound mind* or *wise discretion* in the Greek is literally 'a well behaved mind' (*safe-thinking*) and denotes 'excellent judgment, disciplined thought patterns, self-control and the ability to make right decisions under pressure'. Therefore, when we remember our past victories, and have an attitude of thanksgiving towards God in the midst of adverse conditions, this state reflects a **sound mind** - *one that is exercising good judgment, is disciplined, and has the ability to make the right decisions under pressure*.

This is a very important verse. We are not to have any fears except to fear the Lord. He has given us the Holy Spirit, who is Spirit of power, love and a sound mind. A "sound mind" is one that is clear, focused on God and truth, not confused or muddled, and not distracted. We get clarity from the Holy Spirit. If we live in fear, or entertain any type of fear, that is evidence that we are not trusting God. We must lay our fears at His feet and leave them there. Doing this will fill us with the power of God and we will become more like Him.

This is a promise, and if we stand on it and lay our fears down, we discover the power of Christ in our lives and we are filled with love and have a “sound mind,” or a mind that functions well – a well-behaved mind that has the ability to make right decisions under pressure.

Sufficient / Sufficiency

(ικανότης = 'hikanotis')

To be or make sufficient, render fit, to make able, to be more than adequate, to equip one with adequate power to perform.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." Note, the word that the apostle Paul repeats three times is the word “sufficient” and therefore, we can assume it is an important word (and that we should fully understand its significance - in this particular setting). The Greek word can also be translated "*to render fit, or to make able.*" So let's see the same scripture with these words inserted... "**Not that we are ourselves 'rendered fit' to think anything as being from ourselves, but our 'ability' is from God, who also made us 'fit and able' as ministers of the new covenant.**"

Now remember, the Lord our God is not only *all-sufficient* in and of Himself, but He is also able to make us all-sufficient in all things. 2 Corinthians 9:8-11 proclaims, "**And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.**" Furthermore, the Lord our God will make us able and affective ministers of life, and not of death. So who is sufficient for these things? We ourselves certainly are not sufficient in and of ourselves. And we must learn this truth, purposefully set our minds and hearts upon this truth, and live according to this truth. But the Lord our God is *all-sufficient*! And we are to find all our sufficiency in Him. And when we do find all our sufficiency in the Lord, then He, in His *all-sufficient* grace, will make us able and *all-sufficient* ministers in all things. Let us then learn not to lean upon our own sufficiency. Let us rather learn to set all our focus and faith upon our Lord Jesus Christ.