

THE WATCHWORD FOR TODAY: “STAND FAST”

NO. 1959

**A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 17, 1887,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

“For our conversation is in heaven: from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.”
Philippians 3:20-21; 4:1.

EVERY doctrine of the Word of God has its practical bearing. As each tree bears seed after its kind, so does every truth of God, bring forth practical virtues. Hence you find the apostle Paul very full of *therefores*—his *therefores* being the conclusions drawn from certain statements of divine truth. I marvel that our excellent translators should have divided the argument from the conclusion by making a new chapter where there is least reason for it.

Last Lord’s-day, I spoke with you concerning the most sure and certain resurrection of our Lord Jesus [Sermon #1958—*The First Appearance of the Risen Lord to the Eleven*]. Now there is a practical force in that truth, which constitutes part of what is meant by “the power of his resurrection.” Since the Lord has risen, and will surely come a second time, and will raise the bodies of His people at His coming, there is something to wait for, and a grand reason for steadfastness while thus waiting. We are looking for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from heaven, and that He shall “fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory.”

Therefore let us stand fast in the position which will secure us this honor. Let us keep our posts until the coming of the great Captain shall release the sentinels. The glorious resurrection will abundantly repay us for all the toil and travail we may have to undergo in the battle for the Lord. The glory to be revealed even now casts a light upon our path, and causes sunshine within our hearts. The hope of this happiness makes us even now strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

Paul was deeply anxious that those in whom he had been the means of kindling the heavenly hope might be preserved faithful until the coming of Christ. He trembled lest any of them should seem to draw back, and prove traitors to their Lord. He dreaded lest he should lose what he hoped he had gained, by their turning aside from the faith. Hence he beseeches them to “stand fast.” He expressed in the sixth verse of the first chapter his conviction that He who had begun a good work in them would perform it, but his intense love made him exhort them, saying, “Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” By such exhortations final perseverance is promoted and secured.

Paul has fought bravely, and in the case of the Philippian converts he believes that he has secured the victory, and he fears lest it should yet be lost. He reminds me of the death of that British hero, Wolfe, who on the heights of Quebec received a mortal wound. It was just at the moment when the enemy fled, and when he knew that they were running, a smile was on his face, and he cried, “Hold me up. Let not my brave soldiers see me drop. The day is ours. Oh, do keep it!” His sole anxiety was to make the victory sure. Thus warriors die, and thus Paul lived. His very soul seems to cry, “We have won the day. Oh, do keep it!”

O my beloved hearers, I believe that many of you are “in the Lord,” but I entreat you to “stand fast in the Lord.” In your case, also, the day is won, but oh, do keep it! There is the pith of all I have to say to you this morning. May God the Holy Spirit write it on your hearts! Having done all things well hitherto,

I entreat you to obey the injunction of Jude, to "keep yourselves in the love of God," and to join with me in adoring Him who alone is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before His presence with exceeding great joy. Unto Him be glory forever. Amen.

In leading out your thoughts I will keep to the following order—

First, it seems to me from the text that *the apostle perceived that these Philippian Christians were in their right place*. They were "in the Lord," and in such a position that he could safely bid them "stand fast" in it. Secondly, *he longed for them that they should keep their right place*—"Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved," and then, thirdly, *he urged the best motives for their keeping their place*. These motives are contained in the first two verses of our text, upon which we will enlarge further on.

I. Paul joyfully perceived that his BELOVED CONVERTS WERE IN THEIR RIGHT PLACE.

It is a very important thing indeed that we should begin well. The start is not everything, but it is a great deal. It has been said by the old proverb, that, "Well begun is half done," and it is certainly so in the things of God. It is vitally important to enter in at the strait gate, to start on the heavenly journey from the right point. I have no doubt that many slips and falls and apostasies among professors are due to the fact that they were not right at first. The foundation was always upon the sand, and when the house came down at last, it was no more than might have been expected.

A flaw in the foundation is pretty sure to be followed by a crack in the superstructure. Do see to it that you lay a good foundation. It is even better to have no repentance than a repentance which needs to be repented of. It is better to have no faith than a false faith. It is better to make no profession of religion than to make an untruthful one. God give us grace that we may not make a mistake in learning the alphabet of godliness, or else in all our learning we shall blunder on and increase in error.

We should learn early the difference between grace and merit, between the purpose of God and the will of man, between trust in God and confidence in the flesh. If we do not start aright, the further we go the further we shall be from our desired end, and the more thoroughly in the wrong shall we find ourselves. Yes, it is of prime importance that our new birth and our first love should be genuine beyond all question.

The only position, however, in which we can begin aright, is to be "in the Lord." This is to begin as we may safely go on. This is the essential point. It is a very good thing for Christians to be in the church, but if you are in the church before you are in the Lord you are out of place. It is a good thing to be engaged in holy work, but if you are in holy work before you are in the Lord you will have no heart for it, neither will the Lord accept it. It is not essential that you should be in this church or in that church, but it is essential that you should be "in the Lord." It is not essential that you should be in the Sunday school, nor in the Working Meeting, nor in the Tract Society, but it is essential to the last degree that you should be in the Lord. The apostle rejoiced over those that were converted at Philippi because he knew that they were in the Lord. They were where he wished them to remain, therefore he said, "Stand fast in the Lord."

What is it to be "in the Lord"? Well, brethren, *we are in the Lord vitally and evidently when we fly to the Lord Jesus by repentance and faith*, and make Him to be our refuge and hiding place. Is it so with you? Have you fled out of self? Are you trusting in the Lord alone? Have you come to Calvary, and beheld your Savior? As the doves build their nests in the rock, have you thus made your home in Jesus? There is no shelter for a guilty soul but in His wounded side. Have you come there? Are you in Him? Then keep there. You will never have a better refuge, in fact, there is no other. No other name is given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. I cannot tell you to stand fast in the Lord, unless you are there. Hence my first inquiry is—Are you in Christ? Is He your only confidence? In His life, His death, and His resurrection do you find the grounds of your hope? Is He Himself all your salvation and all your desire? If so, stand fast in Him.

Next, these people, in addition to having fled to Christ for refuge, were now *in Christ as to their daily life*. They had heard Him say, "Abide in me," and therefore they remained in the daily enjoyment of Him, in reliance upon Him, in obedience to Him, and in the earnest copying of His example. They

were Christians, that is to say, persons upon who was named the name of Christ. They were endeavoring to realize the power of His death and resurrection as a sanctifying influence, killing their sins and fostering their virtues. They were laboring to reproduce His image in themselves, that so they might bring glory to His name. Their lives were spent within the circle of their Savior's influence. Are you so, my dear friends? Then stand fast. You will never find a nobler example. You will never be saturated with a diviner spirit than that of Christ Jesus your Lord. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and so live in Him.

These Philippians had, moreover, realized that they were *in Christ by a real and vital union with Him*. They had come to feel, not like separated individualities, copying a model, but as members of a body made like to their Head. By a living, loving, lasting union they were joined to Christ as their covenant head. They could say, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord?"

Do you know what it is to feel that the life which is in you is first in Christ, and still flows from Him, even as the life of the branch is mainly in the stem? "I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." This is to be in Christ. Are you in Him in this sense? Forgive my pressing the question. If you answer me in the affirmative, I shall then entreat you to "stand fast" in Him. It is in Him, and in Him only, that spiritual life is to be sustained, even as only from Him can it be received. To be engrafted into Christ is salvation, but to abide in Christ is the full enjoyment of it. True union to Christ is eternal life. Paul, therefore, rejoiced over these Philippians, because they were joined unto the Lord in one spirit.

This expression is very short, but very full. "In Christ." Does it not mean that we are in Christ as the birds are in the air which buoys them up, and enables them to fly? Are we not in Christ as the fish are in the sea? *Our Lord has become our element*, vital, and all surrounding. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. He is in us, and we are in Him. We are filled with all the fullness of God, because in Christ does all fullness dwell, and we dwell in Him.

Christ to us is all, He is in all, and He is all in all! Jesus to us is everything in everything. Without Him we can *do* nothing, and we *are* nothing. Thus are we emphatically in Him. If you have reached this point, "stand fast" in it. If you dwell in the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most High, abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Do you sit at His table, and eat of His dainties? Then prolong the visit, and think not of removal. Say in your soul—

*"Here would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come;
No more a stranger, or a guest,
But like a child at home."*

Has Jesus brought you into His green pastures? Then lie down in them. Go no further, for you will never fare better. Stay with your Lord, however long the night, for only in Him have you hope of morning.

You see, then, that these people were where they should be—in the Lord, and this was the reason why the apostle took such delight in them. Kindly read the first verse of the fourth chapter, and see how he loves them, and joys over them. He heaps up titles of love! Some dip their morsel in vinegar, but Paul's words were saturated with honey. Here we not only have sweet words, but they mean something, his love was real and fervent. The very heart of Paul is written out large in this verse—"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

Because they were in Christ, therefore first of all they were Paul's *brethren*. This was a new relationship, not earthly, but heavenly. What did this Jew from Tarsus know about the Philippians? Many of them were Gentiles. Time was when he would have called them dogs, and despised them as the uncircumcised, but now he says, "My brethren."

That poor word has become very hackneyed. We talk of brethren without particularly much of brotherly love, but true brothers have a love for one another which is very unselfish and admirable, and so there is between real Christians a brotherhood which they will neither disown, nor dissemble, nor forget. It is said of our Lord, "For this cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren," and surely they need never be ashamed to call one another brethren.

Paul, at any rate, looks at the jailor, that jailor who had set his feet in the stocks, and he looks at the jailor's family, and at Lydia, and many others, in fact, at the whole company that he had gathered at Philippi, and he salutes them lovingly as "My brethren." Their names were written in the same family register because they were in Christ, and therefore had one Father in heaven.

Next, the apostle calls them, "my *dearly beloved*." The verse almost begins with this word, and it quite finishes with it. The repetition makes it mean, "My doubly dear ones." Such is the love which every true servant of Christ will have for those who have been begotten to the faith of Christ by his means. Oh, yes, if you are in Christ, His ministers must love you. How could there be a lack of affection in our hearts towards you, since we have been the means of bringing you to Jesus? Without hypocrisy or display we call you our "dearly beloved."

Then the apostle calls them his "*longed for*," that is, his most desired ones. He first desired to see them converted, after that he desired to see them baptized, then he desired to see them exhibiting all the graces of Christians. When he saw holiness in them he desired to visit them and commune with them. Their constant kindness created in him a strong desire to speak with them face to face. He loved them, and desired their company, because they were in Christ. So he speaks of them as those for whom he longed. His delight was in thinking of them and in hoping to visit them.

Then he adds, "My joy and crown." Paul had been the means of their salvation, and when he thought of that blessed result he never regretted all that he had suffered—his persecutions among the Gentiles seemed light indeed since these priceless souls were his reward. Though he was nothing but a poor prisoner of Christ, yet he talks in right royal style—they are his crown. They were his *stephanos*, or crown given as a reward for his life-race. This among the Greeks was usually a wreath of flowers placed around the victor's brow. Paul's crown would never fade.

He writes as he felt the amaranth around his temples—even now he looks upon the Philippians as his chaplet of honor. They were his joy and his crown. He anticipated, I do not doubt, that throughout eternity it would be a part of his heaven to see them amid their blessedness, and to know that he helped to bring them to that felicity by leading them to Christ. O beloved, it is indeed our highest joy that we have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. You who have been snatched as "brands from the burning," and are now living to the praise of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are our prize, our crown, our joy.

These converts were all this to Paul simply because they were "in Christ." They had begun well, they were where they should be, and he, therefore, rejoiced in them.

II. But secondly, it was for this reason that HE LONGED THAT THEY SHOULD KEEP THERE.

He entreated them to stand fast. "So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." The beginning of religion is not the whole of it. You must not suppose that the sum of godliness is contained within the experience of a day or two, or a week, or a few months, or even a few years. Precious are the feelings which attend conversion, but dream not that repentance, faith, and so forth, are for a season, and then all is done, and done with.

I am afraid there are some who secretly say, "Everything is now complete. I have experienced the necessary change, I have been to see the elders and the pastor, and I have been baptized, and received into the church, and now all is right forever." That is a false view of your condition. In conversion you have started in the race, but you must run to the end of the course. In your confession of Christ you have carried your tools into the vineyard, but the day's work now begins. Remember, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."

Godliness is a life-long business. The working out of the salvation which the Lord Himself works in you is not a matter of certain hours, or of a limited period of life. Salvation is unfolded throughout all

our sojourn here. We continue to repent and to believe, and even the process of our conversion continues as we are changed more and more into the image of our Lord. Final perseverance is the necessary evidence of genuine conversion.

In proportion as we rejoice over converts we feel an intense bitterness when any disappoint us, and turn out to be merely temporary camp-followers. We sigh over the seed which sprang up so speedily, but which withers so soon because it has neither root nor depth of earth. We were ready to say—"Ring the bells of heaven," but the bells of heaven did not ring because these people talked about Christ, and said they were in Christ, but it was all a delusion.

After a while, for one reason or another, they went back, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Our churches suffer most seriously from the great numbers, who drop out of their ranks and either go back to the world, or else must be pursuing a very secret and solitary path in their way to heaven, for we hear no more of them. Our joy is turned to disappointment, our crown of laurel becomes a circle of faded leaves, and we are weary at the remembrance of it. With what earnestness, therefore, would we say to you who are beginning the race, "Continue in your course. We beseech you turn not aside, neither slacken your running, till you have won the prize!"

I heard an expression yesterday which pleased me much. I spoke about the difficulty of keeping on. "Yes," answered my friend, "and it is harder still to keep on keeping on." So it is. There is the pinch. I know lots of fellows who are wonders at the start. What a rush they make! But then there is no stay in them, they soon lose breath. The difference between the spurious and the real Christian lies in this staying power. The real Christian has a life within him which can never die, an incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever, but the spurious Christian begins after a fashion, but ends almost as soon as he begins. He is esteemed a saint, but turns out a hypocrite. He makes a fair show for a while, but soon he quits the way of holiness, and makes his own damnation sure. God save you, dear friends, from anything which looks like apostasy. Hence I would with all my might press upon you these two most weighty words, "Stand fast."

I will put the exhortation thus—"Stand fast *doctrinally*." In this age all the ships in the waters are pulling up their anchors, they are drifting with the tide. They are driven about with every wind. It is your wisdom to put down more anchors. I have taken the precaution to cast four anchors out of the stern, as well as to see that the great bower anchor is in its proper place. I will not budge an inch from the old doctrine for any man. Now that the cyclone is triumphant over many a bowing wall and tottering fence, those who are built upon the one foundation must prove its value by standing fast.

We will hearken to no teaching but that of the Lord Jesus. If you see a truth to be in God's Word, grasp it by your faith, and if it be unpopular, grapple it to you as with hooks of steel. If you are despised as a fool for holding it, hold it the more. Like an oak, take deeper root, because the winds would tear you from your place. Defy reproach and ridicule, and you have already vanquished it.

Stand fast, like the British squares in the olden times. When fierce assaults were made upon them every man seemed transformed to rock. We might have wandered from the ranks a little in more peaceful times, to look after the fascinating flowers which grow on every side of our march, but now we know that the enemy surrounds us, we keep strictly to the line of march, and tolerate no roaming. The watchword of the host of God just now is—"Stand fast!" Hold to the faith once delivered to the saints. Hold fast the form of sound words, and deviate not one jot or tittle from them. Doctrinally stand fast!

Practically, also, abide firm in the right, the true, the holy. This is of the utmost importance. The barriers are broken down. They would amalgamate church and world, yes, even church and stage. It is proposed to combine God and devil in one service, Christ and Belial are to perform on one stage. Surely, now is the time when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and very dirty straw too. So they say, but I repeat to you this word, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing."

Write "holiness unto the LORD" not only on your altars, but upon the bells of the horses. Let everything be done as before the living God. Do all things unto holiness and edification. Strive together to maintain the purity of the disciples of Christ, and take up your cross, and go without the camp bearing His reproach. If you have already stood apart in your decision for the Lord, continue to do so. Stand fast. In nothing moved by the laxity of the age, in nothing affected by the current of modern opinion, say to yourself, "I will do as Christ bids me to the utmost of my ability. I will follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes." In these times of worldliness, impurity, self-indulgence, and error, it becomes the Christian to gather up his skirts and keep his feet and his garments clean from the pollution which lies all around him. We must be more Puritanic and precise than we have been. Oh, for grace to stand fast!

Mind also that you stand fast *experientially*. Pray that your inward experience may be a close adhesion to your Master. Do not go astray from His presence. Neither climb with those who dream of perfection in the flesh, nor grovel with those who doubt the possibility of present salvation. Take the Lord Jesus Christ to be your sole treasure, and let your heart be ever with Him. Stand fast in faith in His atonement, in confidence in His Divinity, in assurance of His second advent. I pine to know within my soul the power of His resurrection, and to have unbroken fellowship with Him. In communion with the Father and the Son let us stand fast. He shall fare well whose heart and soul, affections and understanding are wrapped up in Christ Jesus, and in none beside. Concerning your inward life, your secret prayer, your walk with God, here is the watchword of the day—"Stand fast."

To put it very plainly, "Stand fast *in the Lord*," *without wishing for another trust*. Do not desire to have any hope but that which is in Christ. Do not entertain the proposition that you should unite another confidence to your confidence in the Lord. Have no hankering after any other fashion of faith except the faith of a sinner in his Savior. All hope but that which is set before us in the Gospel and brought to us by the Lord Jesus is a poisoned delicacy, highly colored, but by no means to be so much as tasted by those who have been fed upon the bread of heaven. What need we more than Jesus? What way of salvation do we seek but that of grace? What security but the precious blood? Stand fast, and wish for no other rock of salvation save the Lord Jesus.

Next, stand fast *without wavering in our trust*. Permit no doubt to worry you. Know that Jesus can save you, and what is more, know that He has saved you. So commit yourself to His hands, that you are as sure of your salvation as of your existence. The blood of Jesus Christ this day cleanses us from all sin, His righteousness covers us, and His life quickens us into newness of life. Tolerate no doubt, mistrust, suspicion, or misgiving. Believe in Christ up to the hilt. As for myself, I will yield to be lost forever if Jesus does not save me. I will have no other string to my bow, no second door of hope, or way of retreat. I could risk a thousand souls on my Lord's truth and feel no risk. Stand fast, without wishing for another trust, and without wavering in the trust you have.

Moreover, stand fast *without wandering into sin*. You are tempted this way and that way, stand fast. Inward passions rise, lusts of the flesh rebel, the devil hurls his fearful suggestions, the men of your own household tempt you, stand fast. Only so will you be preserved from the torrents of iniquity. Keep close to the example and spirit of your Master, and having done all, still stand.

As I have said, stand fast without wandering, so next I must say stand fast *without wearying*. You are a little tired. Never mind, take a little rest and brush up again. "Oh," you say, "this toil is so monotonous." Do it better, and that will be a change. Your Savior endured His life and labor without this complaint, for zeal had eaten Him up.

"Alas," you cry, "I cannot see results." Never mind, wait for results, even as the husbandman waits for the precious fruits of the earth. "Oh, sir, I plod along and make no progress." Never mind, you are a poor judge of your own success. Work on, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. Practice perseverance. Remember that if you have the work of faith and the labor of love, you must complete the trio by adding the patience of hope. You cannot do without this last. "Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

I am reminded of Sir Christopher Wren, when he cleared away old St. Paul's to make room for his splendid pile. He was compelled to use battering rams upon the massive walls. The workmen kept on battering and battering. An enormous force was brought to bear upon the walls for days and nights, but it did not appear to have made the least impression upon the ancient masonry. Yet the great architect knew what he was doing. He bade them keep on incessantly, and the ram fell again and again upon the rocky wall, till at length the whole mass was disintegrating and coming apart, and then each stroke began to tell. At a blow it reeled, at another it quivered, at another it moved visibly, at another it fell over amid clouds of dust.

These last strokes did the work. Do you think so? No, it was the combination of blows, the first as truly as the last. Keep on with the battering ram. I hope to keep on until I die. And mark you, I may die and I may not see the errors of the hour totter to their fall, but I shall be perfectly content to sleep in Christ, for I have a sure expectation that this work will succeed in the end. I shall be happy to have done my share of the work, even if I personally see little apparent result. Lord, let Your work appear unto Your servants, and we will be content that Your glory should be reserved for our children. Stand fast, my brethren, in incessant labors, for the end is sure.

And then, in addition to standing fast in that respect, stand fast *without warping*. Timber, when it is rather green, is apt to go this way or that. The spiritual weather is very bad just now for green wood. It is one day damp with superstition, and another day it is parched with skepticism. Rationalism and Ritualism are both at work. I pray that you may not warp. Keep straight, keep to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for in the Master's name we bid you "Stand fast in the Lord."

Stand fast, for there is great need. Many walk of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Paul urged them to stand fast because, even in his own case, spiritual life was a struggle. Even Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained." He was pressing forward. He was straining his whole energy by the power of the Holy Ghost. He did not expect to be carried to heaven on a feather bed. He was warring and agonizing. You, beloved, must do the same. What a grand example of perseverance did Paul set to us all! Nothing enticed him from his steadfastness. "None of these things move me," said he, "neither count I my life dear unto me." He has entered into his rest, because the Lord his God helped him to stand fast, even to the end. I wish I had power to put this more earnestly, but my very soul goes forth with it. "Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

III. Thirdly, THE APOSTLE URGED THE BEST MOTIVES FOR THEIR STANDING FAST.

He says, "Stand fast *because of your citizenship*." Read the twentieth verse, "For our citizenship is in heaven." Now, if you are what you profess to be, if you are in Christ, you are citizens of the New Jerusalem. Men ought to behave themselves according to their citizenship, and not dishonor their city.

When a man was a citizen of Athens, in the olden time, he felt it incumbent upon him to be brave. Xerxes said, "These Athenians are not ruled by kings: how will they fight?" "No," said one, "but every man respects the law and each man is ready to die for his country." Xerxes soon had to know that the like obedience and respect of law ruled the Spartans, and that these, because they were of Sparta, were all brave as lions.

He sends word to Leonidas and his little troop to give up their arms. "Come and take them," was the courageous reply. The Persian king had myriads of soldiers with him, while Leonidas had only three hundred Spartans at his side, yet they kept the pass, and it cost the eastern despot many thousands of men to force a passage. The sons of Sparta died rather than desert their post. Every citizen of Sparta felt that he must stand fast. It was not for such a man as he to yield.

I like the spirit of Bayard, that "knight without fear and without reproach." He knew not what fear meant. In his last battle, his spine was broken, and he said to those around him, "Place me up against a tree, so that I may sit up and die with my face to the enemy." Yes, if our backs were broken, if we could no more bear the shield or use the sword, it would be incumbent upon us, as citizens of the New Jerusalem, to die with our faces towards the enemy. We must not yield, we dare not yield, if we are of

the city of the great King. The martyrs cry to us to stand fast, the cloud of witnesses bending from their thrones above beseech us to stand fast. Yea, all the hosts of the shining ones cry to us, "Stand fast." Stand fast for God, and the truth, and holiness, and let no man take your crown.

The next argument that Paul used was *their outlook*. "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Brethren, Jesus is coming. He is even now on the way. You have heard our tidings till you scarcely credit us, but the word is true, and it will surely be fulfilled before long. The Lord is coming indeed. He promised to come to die, and He kept His word. He now promises to come to reign, and be you sure that He will keep His tryst with His people. He is coming. Ears of faith can hear the sound of His chariot wheels. Every moment of time, every event of providence is bringing Him nearer. Blessed are those servants who shall not be sleeping when He comes, nor wandering from their posts of duty. Happy shall they be whom their Lord shall find faithfully watching, and standing fast in that great day!

To us, beloved, He is coming, not as Judge and Destroyer, but as *Savior*. We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if we do look for Him, let us "stand fast." There must be no going into sin, no forsaking the fellowship of the church, no leaving the truth, no trying to play fast and loose with godliness, no running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. Let us stand so fast in singleness of heart that, whenever Jesus comes, we shall be able to say, "Welcome, welcome, Son of God!"

Sometimes I wait through the weary years with great comfort. There was a ship some time ago outside a certain harbor. A heavy sea made the ship roll fearfully. A dense fog blotted out all buoys and lights. The captain never left the wheel. He could not tell his way into the harbor, and no pilot could get out to him for a long time. Eager passengers urged him to be courageous and make a dash for the harbor. He said, "No, it is not my duty to run so great a risk. A pilot is required here, and I will wait for one if I wait a week." The truest courage is that which can bear to be charged with cowardice. To wait is much wiser than when you cannot hear the foghorn and have no pilot yet to steam on and wreck your vessel on the rocks.

Our prudent captain waited his time, and at last he spied the pilot's boat coming to him over the boiling sea. When the pilot was at his work the captain's anxious waiting was over. The church is like that vessel, she is pitched to and fro in the storm and the dark, and the pilot has not yet come. The weather is very threatening. All around the darkness hangs like a pall. But Jesus will come, walking on the water, before long. He will bring us safe to the desired haven. Let us wait with patience. Stand fast! Stand fast! For Jesus is coming, and in Him is our sure hope.

Further, there was another motive. *There was an expectation*. "He shall change our vile body," or rather, "body of our humiliation." Only think of it, dear friends! No more headaches or heartaches, no more feebleness and fainting, no more inward tumor or consumption, but the Lord shall transfigure this body of our humiliation into the likeness of the body of His glory. Our frame is now made up of decaying substances, it is of the earth, earthy. "So to the dust return we must." This body groans, suffers, becomes diseased, and dies. Blessed be God, it shall be wonderfully changed, and then there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.

The natural appetites of this body engender sad tendencies to sin, and in this respect it is a "vile body." It shall not always be so. The great change will deliver it from all that is gross and carnal. It shall be pure as the Lord's body! Whatever the body of Christ is now, our body is to be like it. We spoke of it last Sunday, you know, when we heard Him say, "Handle me." We are to have a real, corporeal body as He had for substance and reality, and like His body, it will be full of beauty, full of health and strength. It will enjoy peculiar immunities from evil and special adaptations for good.

That is what is going to happen to me and to you, therefore let us stand fast. Let us not willfully throw away our prospects of glory and immortality. What! Relinquish resurrection? Relinquish glory? Relinquish likeness to the risen Lord? O God, save us from such a terrible piece of apostasy! Save us from such immeasurable folly! Suffer us not to turn our backs in the day of battle, since that would be to turn our backs from the crown of life that fades not away.

Lastly, the apostle urges us to stand fast because of *our resources*. Somebody may ask, “How can this body of ours be transformed and transfigured until it becomes like the body of Christ?” I cannot tell you anything about the process. It will all be accomplished in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. But I can tell you by what power it will be accomplished. The Omnipotent Lord will lay bare His arm, and exercise His might, “according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

O brethren, we may well stand fast since we have infinite power at our backs. The Lord is with us with all His energy, even with His all-conquering strength, which shall yet subdue all His foes. Do not let us imagine that any enemy can be too strong for Christ’s arm. If He is able to subdue all things unto Himself, He can certainly bear us through all opposition. One glance of His eye may wither all opposers, or better still, one word from His lips may turn them into friends.

The army of the Lord is strong in reserves. These reserves have never yet been fully called out. We, who are in the field, are only a small squadron, holding the fort, but our Lord has at His back ten thousand times ten thousand who will carry war into the enemy’s camp. When the Captain of our salvation comes to the front, He will bring His heavenly legions with Him. Our business is to watch until He appears upon the scene, for when He comes, His infinite resources will be put in marching order.

I like that speech of Wellington (who was so calm amid the roar of Waterloo), when an officer sent word, “Tell the Commander-in-Chief that he must move me, I cannot hold my position any longer, my numbers are so thinned.” “Tell him,” said the great general, “he *must* hold his place. Every Englishman today must die where he stands, or else win the victory.” The officer read the command to stand, and he did stand till the trumpet sounded victory.

And so it is now. My brethren, we must die where we are rather than yield to the enemy. If Jesus tarries we must not desert our posts. Wellington knew that the heads of the Prussian columns would soon be visible, coming in to ensure the victory, and so by faith we can perceive the legions of our Lord approaching—in serried ranks His angels fly through the opening heaven. The air is teeming with them. I hear their silver trumpets. Behold, He comes with clouds! When He comes He will abundantly recompense all who stood fast amid the rage of battle. Let us sing, “Hold the fort, for I am coming.”

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PHILIPPIANS 3

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—672, 674, 670, AND “HOLD THE FORT”

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