

If you knew something to be the truth, how far would you go to defend it? Among your social groups talking about the issue would be no problem. Where there's agreement it's pretty easy talking truth. It's the outside groups where people come with different opinions, that's where it's tougher to defend truth. A lot depends on resistance. Then on a larger scale there are court cases, protest marches, and even wars all because of disagreement on the truth. Where would you get involved? How far would you go to stand up for the truth?

No one can know what will happen in life. You can plan and hope for the best. The truth is though at some point you're going to see hardship. You'll see suffering and experience it personally. That's the truth and I don't have to do too much convincing. Some of that suffering and hardship will come because of the truth you believe from the Bible. It might be easy to put down or ignore. Or it might be very challenging to fight through. In that moment how far would you go to stand firm for the truth?

In the second lesson our thoughts are directed not so much at the truth of suffering in this world, which is absolute. But we're moved to look beyond this world to the world to come. Paul encourages us to...

Stand firm for the truth
We wait in this world
We look for a world to come

You probably have someone you strive to be like. Either because they have a quality I wish I had, or they have success I hope to have, there are pastors I want to be like. Yours might be a parent, coworker, or even a famous person. The Apostle Paul offered himself to the Philippian Christians as someone they could be like. **“Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the patterns we gave you.”** Paul offering himself as an example of clean Christian living would be like a former convicted thief telling you not to steal. The past keeps creeping into the present. Paul's life in the past was filled with forgettable moments. Times he persecuted Christians to death or took them prisoner. It was in the past, he was different now, but he was still a sinner. Yet he put himself out there as an example to follow.

Paul wasn't claiming to be perfect. His early life was filled with sin. Even so as he wrote this letter. Paul couldn't claim to be the shining beacon of clean cut living all by himself. He could claim a clean record though. The reason was God. God sent a Savior. That gave Paul the right to hold himself up as an example. Christians in this world need examples and can be examples. Not because of something in them. Always because of Christ.

Living in the world as a Christian was hard. Paul remembered Christians who faced the struggle of life, and caved. He never named them, but maybe the Philippians knew. It may have been people who gave up the fight against sin. Over time the sins they committed and the sins of people around them wore them down. Sin became comfortable. Living with some sin became a sign of higher spirituality. Life in this world was to be enjoyed and some pleasure taken from it. The life they set up in the church was made as comfortable as possible. They took the cross of Christ and emptied it. Emptied it of its power, effectiveness, and necessity. **“Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things.”** This world, their creature comforts, and their own personal glory were so important. They actually stood against the truth of Christ's cross.

Look around you. We're in the world. It's while waiting in the world that we're attacked from outside and within. Maybe no more than when we're exposed to suffering. Suffering is considered bad; something to be avoided. In the process the truth gets compromised. Personally you might compromise with sin. Might say things like, “Can't get rid of it anyway. I'm always going to be sinful.” In your mind you start to live with sin. It becomes safe. Or you might give up on things that you knew were sinful once and still are, because you're attacked over them. Coworkers who can't believe you'd dare call homosexuality a sin. Friends who laugh at the idea that women shouldn't be pastors. Family who argues that it's crazy to not give a person with a deadly disease the right to die how and when they want. This is a world of freedom. People should be free. The only truth should be that there be no absolute truth.

This is in direct contrast with how Paul lived and how the Bible says we should live in this world. It's in direct contrast with how Christ lived when he was in the world. Jesus knew God's standards. He understood what was required of human beings and he kept it. He never was comfortable with sin, but avoided it perfectly. Jesus also understood what it would take so sinners like you and I could be saved, sinners who fall into sin and live with sin and give up standing for the truth. Though he didn't deserve it, Jesus went to the cross. That ultimate suffering was not only a sign of God's judgment on sin, but God carried it out on Jesus instead of us. Only through the cross could Christ attain glory. Only through suffering would we be forgiven.

If you've planned a trip but the dates aren't coming up for some time you might have a bit of anxiousness waiting. You know the trip is coming. You're excited and looking forward to it. You plan, talk, and get ready for it as it gets closer. But you still live in the present. The present has its work deadlines, morning commute, snow storms, and everything else about life. Life makes waiting hard. There is something better than this world waiting for us. But while we wait we live in this world. Yet it's so important to keep remembering that we look for a world to come.

We're aliens living in this world now. Not the kind that sneak across the border illegally and then have to be sent back. Not the kind that movies say visit the planet. The truth is we're aliens in that we're not from this place and we're not staying. This world is not for setting down permanent roots. Don't get too accustomed or used to the trappings of this world. Getting too attached is dangerous because we're leaving this world. **"Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."** The greatest truth we have to look forward to is not here, but in heaven. That reality, that truth, should be something for which we stand firm.

The internet is a trap. You know that right? News websites, funny videos, Facebook, much of it is good. But have you ever opened up the internet and found yourself thirty minutes later closing the window totally forgetting what you originally went looking for? Those thirty minutes or ninety or four hours were spent lost in an ever widening sea of articles, blogs, pictures, and who knows what else. That's like life in this world. It's easy to get drawn in. We might start our day with good intentions. But by morning break we've spent some time worthlessly doing nothing. At lunch we chat or catch up online. By evening we're ready to immerse ourselves in thoughtless mindless entertainment. None of these is sinful by itself. But the world offers a widening sea of temptations, which can easily pull us from Jesus. The worthless time spent at work means more working hours and potentially less time for Sunday worship. The chatting at lunch can turn to gossip. And that mindless entertainment might lead us into a whole host of sins. Some days we act as if tomorrow is guaranteed. Or we figure this world feels like home. The future is likely filled with important dates, fun experiences, advantages, and pleasures. Why leave?

Here's the truth. Christ Jesus gave us citizenship, but not here. He left his home in heaven to make heaven our home. He paid with his own life for a new life with guaranteed forgiveness for all our sins. Victory freeing us from worldly thinking. Christ orients us away from sinful wasting time, sinful talk, and worldly focused thinking. He gives us new life, a truth worth standing firm over.

And the best is yet to come. Heaven isn't just the best place your mind can dream up. It's the place you won't need to stand firm anymore. Heaven is the goal of standing firm. Your home is heaven. More so than your home here, you'll be comfortable there. No more death. No more sin. Perfect love, perfect joy, perfection in everything. To experience that will take a transformation. These earthly bodies can't exist in heaven. This earthly body has to die away and be brought back different. Christ will do that. **"We eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."** Look forward to a transformation, a resurrection, a new life with a glorious body. I don't know what age or what exactly it'll be like. But it doesn't matter. Stand firm in the truth now that Christ will come back with power. He promises everything works under his control for our eternal good. Stand firm in the truth that this body you have now subject to death, decay, and disability will be changed. The truth is because of his perfect power we will be glorified.

Be heavenly minded. Stand firm for that truth that we look forward to heaven. Readjust priorities to live for the world to come. Look heavenward and wait. Stand firm in the Lord. Strengthen your faith, share God's message. Continue to stand firm for the truth focused on Christ and his cross.