

**“Standing Firm”**  
1 Peter 5:12-14  
Sunday, July 21, 2007 – Crossway

**I. *STAND FIRM* (v. 12c)**

**A. Stability and the Scriptures**

Firmness is Peter’s theme at the end of his letter

**v. 9** “Resist the devil, firm in your faith . . .”

**v. 12** “Stand firm.”

→ spiritual strength and stability - maturity

- military metaphor – **Eph 6:13ff** – outfitted in all the armour of the gospel – fortified against every foe

→ contra spiritual instability, weakness and immaturity

**v. 12b** “*I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.*”

Anchor your lives into everything I’ve written!

Sink deep roots down into the truth I’ve declared to you!

**B. Stability and our Circumstances**

Stability is not dependant upon favourable circumstances.

Stability comes as we learn to look above and beyond our present – here-and-now – circumstances to see the person and purpose of God working in and through every situation.

Peter has been holding up an alternate vision of reality before our eyes and calling us to live our lives in light of it.

Examples:

a) Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” -- **2 Cor 12:8-10**

*Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

b) The apostles were beaten by the Jewish council – **Acts 5**

**Acts 5:41** *“Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour for the name.”*

The favour of God through faith in Jesus Christ is the defining circumstance of our lives!

→ Spiritual sight = Spiritual strength – ballast in our hearts!

What vision of life are you drawing upon for your strength and stability?

### **C. What does this stability look like?**

Listening to people walk through difficult and heart-breaking situations

→ The rebar of faith in Christ – is heard in how people describe what’s going on in their lives in light of God’s grace and activity

→ The spiritual ballast of the heavenly vision – is evident when there is a deep stability of hope that does not charge God but learns to trust Him through the tears

## **II. STAND FIRM TOGETHER**

These final verses are crowded! Standing room only!

- focus – on others
- attitude – affectionate & thankful
- purpose – for the others’ good

→ The search for identity in isolation leads to deep instability

We are able to stand firm only in so far as we are able to stand together!

→ to be united to Christ through faith is to find ourselves joined together with others. Union with Christ brings us into communion with others.

→ being members together of Christ's body in and through the local church is no small – or easy – thing!

We can often have a vision of what the church should be that is more oriented around my comfort, convenience and control.

What is your vision of the church?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“Innumerable times a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream. The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and then try to realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves. . . .

Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an individual and to a community the better for both. A community which cannot bear and cannot survive such a crisis, which insists upon keeping its illusion when it should be shattered, permanently loses in that moment the promise of Christian community. Every human wish dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive. . . .

The very hour of disillusionment with my brother becomes incomparably salutary, because it so thoroughly teaches me that neither of us can ever live by our own words and deeds, but only by the Word and Deed which really binds us together – the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. When the

morning mists of dreams vanish, then dawns the bright day of Christian fellowship.”

In order to stand firm, we must pursue genuine fellowship that breaks through whatever is comfortable and convenient and casual.

Only as we are disillusioned with a painted façade of Christian community will we begin to enter into the true grace of God together.

### **III. STAND FIRM TOGETHER *IN THE TRUE GRACE OF GOD***

When we start to recognize that we are ultimately bound together only through the Word and Deed of Another, we begin to drink deeply of the true grace of God. We find ourselves standing firm in a hope and a help that strengthens us even as it exposes our weakness and inability.

The true grace of God in Christ opens up a vast new world of relational possibilities.

Recognizing the truth about my own sin and guilt before God allows me to let go of my own righteousness before others. When I am truly confident in the righteousness God has freely given me through faith in Jesus, I am released from the impossibility of winning everyone’s approval and avoiding everyone’s criticism.

Instability creeps into our lives when we live on the periphery of the Christian community.

How do we pursue this sort of togetherness?

We begin with the “true grace of God” - the gospel

Christ stood firm – alone - so that we could stand firm in the true grace of God together. Jesus’ cry of forsakenness on the cross was His firm and final stand against sin and Satan and death. He stood alone and triumphed over every adversary so that we could experience spiritual stability in any and every situation.

**Spiritual stability comes through the consistent application of the gospel to all our relationships within the church.**

#### **IV. APPLICATION**

Moving beyond what is comfortable, casual or convenient

Invite

- welcoming strangers
- showing hospitality
- asking for others' input into our lives
  - sharing concerns
  - sharing observations