

Standing Firm

“When the going gets tough – the tough get going.”

Tonight we’re going to look at how to stand firm, to endure and to persevere. These attributes go hand-in-hand with courage.

1 Corinthians 15:58 (niv) *Therefore my dear brothers stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

2 Timothy 1:8 (niv) *So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*

..... There are pressures in serving God.

Serving God is challenging. The pressures of life are real. Serving God will have its ups and downs.

Many times these pressures can take a toll on us that can cause us to fall back from our commitment to serve and be involved. But standing firm will cause us to take on the obstacles and push through the barriers of weariness and busyness.

So often when the going gets tough we tend to back off and lose our motivation to serve and be involved. By nature we draw back when the pressure is on. But we have to find God’s bigger purpose and press on!

It takes faith to look beyond the circumstance and beyond the pressures. It takes determination and commitment to continue.

2 Timothy 2:1-4 (niv) *You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer.*

Paul here is writing from a prison cell. He’s not writing from an air-conditioned office!

Note **vs 3** - *“Endure hardship...”*

In our western society we don’t want to hear about enduring hardship! We want to hear about, *“Give me three simple steps to get the victory.” “Isn’t there an easier way?”* No! The Bible says to, *“endure hardship!”*

..... Doing God’s will - will expose us to challenges!

2 Timothy 2:8-10 (gnb) *Remember Jesus Christ, who was raised from death, who was a descendant of David, as is taught in the Good News I preach. Because I preach the Good News, I suffer and I am even chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not in chains, and so I endure everything for the sake of God’s chosen people, in order that they too may obtain the salvation that comes through Christ Jesus and brings eternal glory.*

So don't be frightened to do some hard yards! Don't be discouraged to have to push the burrow uphill! Rather; be prepared to face the challenges and probable hardship that awaits us.

2 Timothy 4:2a (niv) *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season...*

When? In season when it suits me and out of season when it doesn't suit me!

In church life today, especially in our western culture, many people are committed as long as it suits them! Providing it fits into their plans! But Paul says, "*Be prepared in season (when it suits us) and out of season!*" (when it doesn't suit us)

The real test is when we involve ourselves and we commit ourselves to the work of God when it doesn't suit us!

There have been many things that I have done in the past and even now, where I haven't felt one ounce of desire to do it. I'd rather stay in bed and have a sleep or go and play golf – to please myself for a change! But I settled in my heart and mind a long time ago that I was going to serve God with all my heart and life.

Not depending upon the circumstance or situation at the time but because I have pledged my allegiance to God and have committed myself to the work of the Lord in my heart. I said, "*God I'm available, God I'm ready.*" Either in season or out of season has never been an issue with me since I made that pledge to God.

How many of us know that when we make a promise to the Lord, how He swiftly checks upon us to see if we really meant what we promised?

"The promises we make to God on the mountain tops; He extracts from us in the valley!"

Paul said to endure hardship. To press through and to stand firm.

2 Timothy 4:3-5 (niv) *For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

Paul is saying to his son in the faith, "*Timothy, son the pressure is going to come upon you to lower what you believe and to back off and have a break. But listen to me, you stay with it, you keep your head in all situations, you endure hardship, you may not be an evangelist but do the work of an evangelist and discharge and do all the duties of your ministry*".

Be ready in season and out of season. Don't hold back. Settle it in your heart and mind.

..... Stand firm in our commitment to Jesus and His purposes for us.

Jesus is the ultimate example of being wholeheartedly committed to His Father's will.

Luke 9:51 (niv) *As the time approached for Him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*

Then there are all those who have gone before us who we read about in **Hebrews 11** (*the chapter of the Heroes of Faith*)

Hebrews 12:1 (niv) *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

There's no greater cause than the cause of Jesus Christ.
We are a part of the greatest enterprise there is.

..... **The story of David and Goliath.**

Here is David, only a teenager of 17 or 18 years of age. Looking down from the hill at this 9 ft Philistine who is cursing God and His great army. And those around David including his brothers tell him to get back to tending the sheep. *"You're a young fellow, what would you know?"*

David was prepared to take on Goliath and they were trying to put him down.
But David's reply in the Authorized Version was, **"Is there not a cause?"**

So what if it costs us a bit. For our eyes should be on God's purpose.
The ultimate goal to see those far away from God and be redirected towards God!

Let's not be known for our grumbling and complaining – **we have a cause!** I am talking about serving Jesus with all of our hearts. I am talking about absolute commitment to Him and His purposes in 2009.

..... **Stand firm to the end.**

This speaks of having the tenacity and determination to finish well, persevering to the end, having the end in mind.

Philippians 3:11-16 (msg) *I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience his resurrection power, be a partner in his suffering, and go all the way with him to death itself. If there was any way to get in on the resurrection from the dead, I wanted to do it. I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back. So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you'll see it yet! Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it.*