



“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6,10).

Standing for the Right

Central Truth: Stand for the right in all situations.

L180. Date: February 1995. **Text:** Mark 11:15-17; Ephesians 6:13-20.

Topic: Faith: Defense of; Righteousness: Of Believers.

“Stand up and be counted” is a common appeal. And it summarizes the emphasis of this study. The lesson text shows how Jesus stood up for what is right when the temple was being desecrated and how God enables us to stand up for the right in our daily lives. We must stand for the right in all situations.

Our generation has largely lost its moral/ethical moorings. When the Bible was no longer accepted as a standard in judicial, educational, and governmental circles, society began to drift. So what the Bible calls “*abomination*” is now justified by many as an “alternate lifestyle.” Christians must stand for the right.

Society will grow worse and worse unless there is a return to biblical principles. We cannot expect non-Christians to lead that return. The people of God must humble themselves, pray, seek God's face, and turn from every wicked way. Then God will hear from heaven, forgive our sins, and heal our land (II Chronicles 7:14).

God appeals to you to stand for the right in all situations.

Stand Against Irreverence (Mark 11:15-17)

The temple in Jerusalem was a magnificent building. It was surrounded by four courts: The Court of the Gentiles, The Court of the Women, The Court of the Men of Israel, and The Court of the Priests. Anyone coming to

the temple had to pass through each of those courts in order. Therein lay the problem that Jesus corrected in cleansing the temple.

Stand against irreverence for the house of God (verse 15). The Court of the Gentiles was originally intended to be a place for prayer, meditation, and instruction. But that was where the animals and doves were kept and offered for sale to worshipers. Can you imagine the smell, the noise of the animals, and the noise of bartering over prices? All who entered the temple had to pass through that court. What a preparation for worship! All the confusion of buying and selling made prayer and meditation all but impossible there. How different that is from the pictures of approaching the worship of God expressed in the Psalms. How irreverent it is when compared with the words of Habakkuk 2:20, *“The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.”* What does that say to you about reverence for the house of God?

Stand against irreverence for the Word of God (verse 17). God had decreed what was to be the primary function of His house. *“My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer.”* To turn it into a place of merchandise was to violate the dearly stated Word of God. When ancient Judah rejected the Word of God, He sent them into captivity (II Chronicles 36:15, 16). The Word of God takes on the sanctity of God himself. To ignore it is to ignore Him. To ignore Him is to head for severe judgment. So you must live your life according to His holy Word.

Stand against irreverence for the worship of God. Look at the oxen, sheep, and doves in the sacred precincts of God's house. Consider that only doves approved by the authorities in the temple could be offered for sacrifice. And a dove purchased in the temple would cost twenty times what it would cost out in the city. Also, the temple tax of one-half shekel (equal to almost two days' wages) had to be paid in a coin approved by the temple authorities. A fee equal to half a day's wages was charged to change money into the shekel. The family of the high priest controlled all of that and made profit from it. What irreverence for the worship of God!

But wait. Irreverence for the house of God, the Word of God, and the worship of God is common today. Neglect is irreverence. Disobedience is irreverence. Unconcern is irreverence. Beware lest you earn the Lord's displeasure by irreverence.

Stand for Bible Principles (Mark 11:17)

The Bible demands that the house of God be a place of prayer. Sacrifice is offered there. Teaching is given there. Ceremonies are performed there.

But the one essential thing is that the house of God must be a house of prayer.

Evaluate the worship services of your church. “What percent of the time is spent in prayer? Is your church building a “house of prayer” according to your custom and God's requirement?

Of course, there are many forms of prayer. “What we consider formal prayer (head bowed, eyes closed, speaking to God) is one form. But one can pray in the words of a hymn like, “I Am Thine, O Lord,” “I Need Thee Every Hour,” or scores of other songs that speak to God. One can pray in the words of Scripture, such as Psalm 53 for a prayer of confession or Psalm 18 for thanksgiving. One can pray upon hearing God's message. But worship must be saturated with prayer in order for God to be pleased.

The Bible demands that the house of God be open to all people. Jesus probably thought of Isaiah 56:7 when He referred “*all nations*” at prayer in the house of God. It is evident that He intended for no one to be excluded because of nationality. (That was in direct contradiction to the Jewish designation of a “Court of the Gentiles” past which a Gentile would go only on pain of death.) God looks upon people from a spiritual viewpoint. The social distinctions we draw are of little importance to Him. In Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free, for we are all one in Him (Galatians 3:28).

Who is welcome in your church? How would your Lord evaluate your services? Be sure you stand for Bible principles.

Stand at Personal Risk (Mark 11:18)

Jesus' stand for right got Him into trouble. The people in power plotted how they might destroy Him. That shows that you do not become popular by taking a stand for right. On the contrary, you will arouse the hatred of evil people. Luke reports that the enemies of Jesus were “*filled with madness*” toward Him (Luke 6:11). Jesus warned the disciples that they would be hated by the world because He was hated by the world (John 15:18).

Think of the current situation in society. “When you take a stand against sexual perversion (which God calls an “abomination”), you are said to be prejudiced and unloving and denying a citizen his constitutionally protected civil rights. You may be called by bad names. But you must take a stand for right whatever it may cost. God says, “Take your stand. Stand through the conflict. Be standing when the battle ends.” He will stand with you!

Stand in Dependence on God (Ephesians 6:10-13)

Stand in dependence on God's strength (verse 10). He does not leave us alone. His call is not just to be strong, but to be strong in the Lord. What a difference it makes when you can say, "*Thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me hast thou subdued under me*" (II Samuel 22:40). You renew your strength by waiting on God (Isaiah 40:31). He promises to be with you, to strengthen you, to help you, and to uphold you with His own right hand (Isaiah 41:10). What a wonderful promise!

You are not alone when you take a stand for what is right. You may feel alone, like the prophet Elijah, but you will discover that God has His seven thousand who have not bowed their knees (I Kings 19:18). Even if all others forsake you, the Lord will stand with you.

Stand in resistance to the devil (verses 11, 12). He is our enemy. Our opponent is not "*flesh and blood, but . . . principalities, . . . powers, . . . rulers of the darkness of this world, . . . spiritual wickedness in high places.*" Those spiritual forces are powerful, deceptive, and continually at work. Jesus demonstrated the way to stand against the devil: meet him with the Word of God (Matthew 4:1-11). The sword of the Spirit will defeat him.

As you stand against the devil's influence in society, be sure you stand by the principles of the Bible. Your opinions and arguments will fall before his onslaught, but the Word of God is "*quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword*" (Hebrews 4:12). Keep it in your heart and your mind as you take your stand against the devil.

Stand in dependence on God's provision (verse 13). God provides all you need to stand for right. You can and must put on the "*whole armour*" which He provides, every piece of it. When you wear all the weapons in God's armor, you are invincible in the spiritual warfare! Look at the parts of the spiritual armor. All you need for defense and offense is there. Many Christians do not take a stand because they fear to stand alone. But what more is needed than the presence of God and the armor of God? Ephesians 6:13 teaches that God's provision is so sufficient that you take your stand, stand through the battle, and when the battle is over you are still standing. So stand!

Stand in Full Armor (Ephesians 6:14-11)

The belt was a broad strip of leather that went around the waist and held all the armor in place. It also strengthened the body in hand-to-hand combat and supported the sword and scabbard. The breastplate, which was

two pieces of metal joined with hinges, covered the chest and back. It reached from throat to thigh and protected the vital organs, such as the heart, lungs, and stomach. The shoes were of heavy soles with hobnails (like the cleats on athletic shoes today), fixed to the feet with straps to give stability in battle. The shield was a small door (about 2 1/2 feet by 4 feet) carried on one arm to protect from missiles thrown. The helmet was a leather cap strengthened by metal with a crest of horsehair or feathers on top to protect the head. The sword was about twenty-nine inches long, three to five inches wide, with a sharp point and designed for thrusting. What the armor was to a soldier, truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation and the Word of God are to us today. Thus is the Christian soldier to dress.

But there is one part of Christian armor which the Roman soldier did not wear. It is the weapon of prayer. The Christian soldier's lifestyle should include *“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”* (verse 18). This part of the armor is to be worn continually — *“praying always.”* It is to be comprehensive — *“prayer and supplication.”* It is to be universally inclusive — *“all saints.”* It is to be specific, asking God for ability to speak and boldness to do it (verses 19, 20). This part of the weapon is essential.

One of our great Christian hymns begins, “Stand up, stand up for Jesus,/Ye soldiers of the cross.” That call needs to be heard today. In a decaying culture, let us respond to the appeal, “Who is on the LORD'S side?” (Exodus 32:26). We are in the midst of the war, but we must personally join in the battle. Take a stand for right, and stand there whatever happens.

Questions for Discussion

1. How can you stand against irreverence of the house of God?
2. How can you stand against irreverence of the Word of God?
3. How can you stand against irreverence of the worship of God?
4. How can you stand for Bible principles applied to our society?
5. What personal risks might be involved in your taking a stand?
6. How can you experience the strength of God as you stand?
7. In what areas can you resist the devil in our society?
8. How can you put on the armor that God has provided for you?
9. How can you fight the spiritual battle through prayer?
10. What difference will this study make in your life this week?

