

Sunday, August 12, 2024 pm

STANDING FAST 1 Corinthians 16:13

Tonight, I would like to remind us of an important aspect of the Christian's life – our need to stand fast. From time to time, I mention in lessons that we are living in troubling times. It is no secret that being a Christian is a challenge at any time. But to openly profess your faith is becoming riskier. We are living in times where our faith is villainized, scrutinized (every point is challenged), trivialized, mocked and neutralized. But we cannot let that keep us from faithfully serving God. We cannot let that keep us from **taking a stand** for the truth. So in this lesson, I want to address some of what the Bible says about standing fast.

I. Stand fast

- a. Defined – the Greek word means, to hold your ground or maintain your position. Thayer uses terms like, “to persist, persevere.” Think of a strong wall that cannot be penetrated. As Christians, it describes one who does not quit.
- b. It is a frequently used phrase in scripture. Consider the following passages:
 - i. 1 Corinthians 16:13, *Watch, **stand fast in the faith**, be brave, be strong.* “The faith” of this text is not our personal faith (though that is certainly involved). It is “the faith” – everything involved in our system of belief (cf. Romans 1:16-17, 2 Timothy 4:7). Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 noted that it was in the gospel that they stood and by which they are saved IF they hold fast to the word...
 - ii. 2 Corinthians 1:24, *Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; **for by faith you stand.*** Here, Paul IS likely making reference to their personal faith and noted that it was in that faith that we stand together. As we study scripture it is clear that we need faith – a personal faith – Hebrews 11:6, cf. John 8:24. James 2:14-18 emphasizes this further noting the type of personal faith we need to have.
 - iii. Galatians 5:1, ***Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*** In Christ we enjoy many freedoms. Certainly, we now belong to Him. But our system is not like that of the LOM with its animal sacrifices, tithing, dietary laws and various other restrictions. HOWEVER, that does not mean we are free to do anything we want. But we are under a much more benevolent law. IN gratitude of this, we ought to “stand fast” within the ways that we have been blessed with.
 - iv. Philippians 1:27, *Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you **stand fast in one spirit**, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,* In this passage Paul is calling for us to be united, a point continually emphasized in scripture (John 13:34-35, 17:20-21, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:1-3, Philippians 2:1-4, etc. The Lord's local body has a real purpose in our uncertain times. And certainly, we need to be standing fast TOGETHER as we navigate the times.
 - v. Philippians 4:1, *Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, **so stand fast in the Lord**, beloved.* This is the ultimate description of what we are addressing. Hebrews 3:14 notes that we become partakers with Christ IF we **hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.**

- c. Why is this important? Because our faith and the future of the Lord's body depends on it. Consider Paul's admonition in 2 Timothy 4:2-4. 2 Timothy 1:13, **Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.**

II. How do I stand fast?

- a. By surrendering to His will. There's a saying in a country song, "You've got to stand for something, or you'll fall for anything." (Aaron Tippin, 1990). That is true in life, and it is certainly true spiritually. The message of the gospel includes complete surrender to God. Recall the prayer of Jesus in the garden – Matthew 26:39, 42. It begins with our willingness to put Him first. Galatians 2:20, Romans 12:1-2.
- b. By making God's word my standard. Having determined that we will surrender to His will, we need to KNOW what His will is.
- i. Of course, we find that within His word – 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Psalm 119:104-105.
 - ii. 2 Thessalonians 2:15, *Therefore, brethren, **stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.*** Hold on to God's word and do not compromise.
 - iii. A frequent theme found in the New Testament is warnings against false teachers and their teachings (2 Peter 3, Jude, Galatians 1:6-9, 1 John 4:1, Matthew 7:15-16, etc.).
 - iv. That is why it is imperative that we devote time to the reading and study of His word. With His truth we can stand fast – cf. Ephesians 4:11-15, cf. Acts 17:11.
- c. By letting my light shine –
- i. We know how much scripture emphasizes being a proper example – Matthew 5:13-16 describes us as both salt and light in this world. Philippians 2:15-16 notes that we live "*blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, **among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life...***"
 - ii. Knowing what we ought to be doing, we have to be willing to stand up and be counted with God and his people. Now it is easy to stand firm when we are around our friends, brethren (who love the truth) and allies, but are we willing to stand firm when it will be unpopular or risky?
 1. Like Daniel – both in chs. 1 & 6, or Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – Daniel 3.
 2. Like Peter & John facing the council – Acts 4, or the apostles (including Peter & John again) in Acts 5:22ff, facing threats.
 3. Like Jesus as He stood before the council and Pilate and refused to compromise His purpose and message.
 - iii. Like many Biblical examples, there are many circumstances in life where we have to stand firm.
 1. Elders and preachers – 2 Timothy 4:2-4, when discipline and unpleasant teachings must take place.
 2. When you are among your friends and they begin to use profanity or take the Lord's name in vain.
 3. When the government passes laws requiring you to accept and validate immoral behaviors.
 4. When you are asked to wear immodest clothing or go to popular venues where immorality will be on display (dances, social drinking, etc.). Cf James 4:4, 1 Peter 4:3-4, etc.

5. When we are asked to compromise our faith “just this once” or for our job or some event that takes place.
 6. Matthew 10:37-38 – notes that Jesus MUST be absolute first in our lives.
- d. By putting on the armor of God –
- i. When I think of the expression “stand fast” what comes to my mind first is an army that has been told to hold their place, and fight to the very end. He will not compromise, betray or retreat.
 - ii. We begin this study by noting that we are facing troubling times. You could easily say that we are war – engaged in the spiritual war for our lives and souls, both our own and others whom we may impact.
 - iii. Ephesians 6:10-18 bears this point out very clearly. After identifying our enemy (and spiritually, we still face the same enemy today – cf. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5), we are called upon to put on the “*whole armor of God*” that you may be able to **withstand** in the evil day, and having done all to **stand. Stand therefore, having girded...**” - Paul then proceeds to describe our armor – not swords, bullets, missiles, etc. – but godly qualities – truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, & the hope of salvation, along with “*the sword of the spirit which is the word of God.*”
 - iv. We need this “armor” if we are to stand firm. And we need the whole armor properly mounted. If we are donning this armor, we WILL BE in right standing God (consider the qualities we possess) and thus He is on our side. That reminds me of 1 John 4:4, “He who is in you is greater than He who is in the world.” Hebrews 13:6 (quoting Psalm 118:6) – “*The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*”

From time to time we need to remind ourselves to “stand fast”. It is so easy to relax and let down our guard. It is so easy to compromise, even if we think it is only a little bit this time. If we fail to stand fast, there is no positive outcome. What about you? Are you standing fast for Him? Think about it!