

I choose to stand

March 31, 2021

Scripture: Matthew 26:24-35

Summary: We must choose to stand for the Lord in a non-Christian world, and in a world where many churches are walking away from the absolute truth of the word.

I choose to stand

Matthew 26:24-35; 69-75

The call must go forth from churches to boldly proclaim and live our faith in the lord JesusChrist.

Today we are called as Joshua did, to stand for the faith.

Joshua 24:15: But if serving the lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the lord.”

James MacDonald writes:

“The final choice that seals our future and keeps us going forward into all the blessings that these incredible choices can bring is the choice to stand.

I’m not going back, I’m not caving in, and I’m not going to regress, retreat, or regret the choices I’ve made. I’m going to stand.”

The choice to stand is not always popular in today’s world.

Secular society has attacked the church in recent years, but the attack now also comes from churches who no longer stand for the fundamentals of the faith.

Today I want to challenge you to make one more critical choice for God.

I want to challenge you to stand for Christ.

Point one: Peter's example

The passage we read takes place on the last night of Jesus' life.

The last supper is over, Judas has gone on his mission to betray Christ.

The conversation that follows between Jesus and His disciples is extremely sad and heartbreaking.

Jesus told them:

Matthew 26:31: Then Jesus told them, "this very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered."

These words must have stunned the disciples. What would be so terrible, so shocking, that could make them all leave the leader they loved and followed for three years? What did he know that they didn't?

Jesus knew that the pain and torture of the cross and the events leading up to it were ahead of him.

He knew the crowd would turn against him.

He knew that all this had to happen to fulfill prophecy and establish the plan of salvation.

Jesus knew he would have to stand, and stand alone, to conclude his ministry on earth.

Jesus' words were challenged by his disciples and for just reason.

For three years Jesus had successfully met all the challenges the religious leaders directed to him.

Quite possibly they developed a feeling of superiority over the leaders.

This feeling of superiority though was because of Jesus.

He was the one who faced the challenges of the religious leaders while they stood in the background.

He was the one who faced the demanding crowds.

The disciples didn't have to stand for their faith, but instead hid behind Jesus.

It was in this feeling of superiority that Peter had his discussion with Jesus. Peter's relationship with Jesus was immature and raging.

One moment he is full of faith and walks on the water. The next he takes his eyes off Christ and sinks.

This same attitude rises here. Peter has no idea as to what is about to happen. Large angry crowds and religious leaders that would now have the upper hand are new circumstances for Peter to deal with.

Peter's impulsive reaction "I will never leave you" was natural as he probably felt that somehow Jesus would still find a way to escape.

The violence of Jesus' arrest and trial, and his crucifixion had all the disciples asking "could this happen to us?"

Fear then set in and that fear led to Peter's denials of a relationship with Christ.

What would haunt Peter more than anything else was the fact that before this, Jesus predicted that he would deny Christ three times that night.

The rooster crowed just a few hours later, and it left Peter in a state of depression and hopelessness at his refusal to stand for his Lord.

I wonder how many times we have walked in Peter's shoes.

How many times have we been asked about our relationship with Christ only to deny we had one:

- 1. In order to fit in**
- 2. Avoid ridicule**
- 3. Escape persecution**

How many times have we faced the inner disappointment of saying “no? I don’t know him.”

To stand for Christ is to stand for the world to see.

It is to voluntarily choose to live in a glass house, under the scrutiny of all.

Make no mistake, Christianity is a secret society.

Those who know us best should have no doubt as to our stand with the lord.

James MacDonald asks:

“Can you say with conviction, ‘I cannot deny my Lord?’

Whatever else I get done in this world, God help me, I will not deny him.

I will never lower the flag.

I will not back up or shut up, or hide the reality of my commitment to Jesus Christ. I will not do that. I cannot do that.”

To make a stand then is not based on: age

Sex

Intelligence

To make a stand is based on a passionate relationship and can change your world.

I want to suggest four ways that making a stand can change things.

Point two: a choice to stand has changed history

People who have made the choice to stand have changed history.

Today you and I must stand for the fundamental truths of the faith.

This church and this pastor will stand:

A) For creation as an act of the sovereign will of God.

B) For the virgin birth, sinless life and atoning death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ

C) That Jesus is the one and only son of God

D) There is only one way to have saving faith

John 14:6: Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.

Standing for our past allows us the freedom to believe all the promises Jesus made in the past. Promises of eternal life and our eternal home.

John 3:16-17:

For god so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

17 for god did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 14:1-3:

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me.

2 My father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Only when we stand for the promises of the past do we have the guarantee of God’s rewards tomorrow.

Point three: I choose to stand – by being salt and light

Jesus had a purpose when he said:

Matthew 5:13-16:

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 “you are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

16 in the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven

This passage combines two very strong forces of nature. Salt can impact any food by combining with it, and light can illumine even the darkest places. Here Jesus calls us to be both to a lost world.

Salt is an interesting and unique spice. Just a little can transform bland food and give it great taste. Salt is unique. It can’t be artificially created, nothing tastes like it, and nothing else can do what salt can do.

In this passage Jesus is calling us to be the salt of the earth. It’s an emphatic command, not a suggestion but a responsibility.

The call is for us to stand, to stand for what is right.

It is to stand for others, those who can’t stand for themselves.

It is a call to stand against the injustices of the world.

We are the salt and when we are added it should make a difference to the world.

James MacDonald states:

“We are the salt of the earth. No one else can do what God has called us to. We are to impact every single person we come in contact with.

Standing for Christ means salting the earth.”

Suppose I was boiling a pot of potatoes. To not be the salt of the earth or to let our light shine, would be like adding salt to the water, and making sure that it had no effect on the potatoes at all. It is impossible.

Jesus also told us that we are to be the light of the world.

This similarity makes us realize that we are to let our light shine to illumine the path to the kingdom and Christ.

We sing in church “this little light of mine.” And have the responsibility to shine.

Point four: I choose to stand – by a surrendered will

The thing about all the choices we have talked about tonight is that we must surrender our will to these choices.

1 Corinthians 16:13: be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.

This verse lists four aspects of a surrendered will that we must apply to our lives.

1. Be watchful: take a stand. Engage the issue. You will not always be successful, but remember, we are not called to be successful, we are called to be faithful.

2. Stand firm: be determined in your commitment. There are many ways to fall, but only one way to stand.

3. Be courageous: be consistent. People should know our answer to a question even before they ask it. To be consistent is not to answer emotionally, but according to biblical standards.

4. Be strong: do not be passive in your stand. The fact that others may not agree with us doesn't mean that we are wrong. Stand for your faith, and don't apologize for believing.

James 4:13-17:

Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.”

14 why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.

15 instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”

16 as it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.

17 if anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them

Conclusion:

What I liked about the story of peter was the ending.

Peter denied Jesus three times, but Jesus was not finished with Peter.

Jesus met Peter by the seashore after his resurrection and commissioned him to feed his sheep.

He was telling Peter to get up. Your ministry is not over.

Peter became one of the strongest disciples and a great defender of the faith.

You and I need to choose to stand for Christ today.

We need to stand: in the public areas for our faith.

With a biblical point of view on social

Issues of the day.

Against the increasing “false teaching”

Invading the media today.

We also need to stand on the private areas of our lives.

Those areas known only to us:

We need to stand for: what we put into our bodies

What we allow ourselves to see

What we allow ourselves to hear

What we allow ourselves to say

What we allow ourselves to do

One day people will gather to celebrate our life.

You have the opportunity to make that a celebration of a strong Christian, who invested their life for the glory of God. Who stood for the faith and everyone knew it.

In heaven you will have the opportunity to meet individuals who made decisions for Christ following your witness.

All this is possible when you make the choice to stand for your faith.