

“Standing For The Truth”

Text - Philippians 1:27-30

Introduction: Someone has said, "If I see something that waddles like a duck, quacks like a duck, and swims like a duck, I get the idea that it is a duck." When others look at our life do they get the idea that we are Christians?

I don't think it is being too harsh to say that a Christian ought to be a Christian. If one is a Christian *positionally*, then one ought to be a Christian *practically*. If one is going to live *in Heaven* as a Christian, one should live *on Earth* as a Christian.

As a society, we have always placed a high value on telling the truth. When we were little children, our parents told us that we should always tell them the truth. They tried to instill within us the value of honesty. They told us that honesty was always the best policy. Sometimes we didn't believe them, especially when to tell the truth would get us in trouble. So we experimented with the truth. And some of us found out the hard way that telling a lie got us into more trouble. Now that we are adults, we teach our children the importance of telling the truth.

Most people have rejected the idea of *absolute* truth in favor of *situational* truth.

- Truth is *relative* to my situation.

Absolute truth has been rejected because:

- Absolute truth implies an absolute *Truth-giver*.
- Of poor examples of many so-called Christians.

There is a war on truth. It is a spiritual battle for our *minds*.

- Satan uses *people* in his war on truth.
- God uses *people* in the battle too.

Paul addresses how Christians are to live their lives in the face of opposition from the culture. Let's look at *three* principles that will help us to stand for the truth.

Live Up To Who You Are

You are a citizen of *Heaven*.

Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the *gospel* of Christ.

- “*let your conversation*” literally means “*act as a citizen*.”

Same word as Philippians 3:20 “*But our citizenship is in heaven*.”

- We are *citizens* of Heaven because we are *children* of God. John 1:14

But there is a transformation that must take place. We must spend time in:

- ✓ *Prayer*.

- ✓ Meditating on the *Word*.
- ✓ Reflecting on His *truth*.
- ✓ Being filled with the *Spirit*.

- We are *ambassadors* for Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:20.

We are ambassadors for Christ, sent on a specific mission with full power to speak on His behalf and transact the business of the gospel.

Stand Up For What You Believe

We have the *Truth* that sets people free, so we need to share it. How?

- We do it in the *power* and *unity* of the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13.

The Holy Spirit is the source of our *power*. Romans 15:5-6

- We stand up for the truth for the *sake* of the gospel. Romans 1:16

God has given us this message and commissioned us on a mission to *infiltrate* and *penetrate* every aspect of our culture.

The goal of your *occupation* is for you to infiltrate this world and share the message of Jesus Christ. It has the power to set people free.

Face Up To Your Opposition

Don't be surprised when you face *opposition*! 2 Timothy 3:12

- The same people who preach *toleration* for all points of view are the most intolerant when Christians began to state their views.

An entire culture is being *brainwashed* and Christians must stand against this opposition and speak the truth.

We must stand:

- Without *fear*.
- With *courage*. Joshua 1:9

Knowing we might have to *suffer*. (v. 29)

Christianity is not a way to escape *temporary* earthly suffering; it is the only way to escape *eternal* suffering.

- We must live up to who we are!
- We must stand up for what we believe
- We must Face up to opposition

Standing For The Truth

Philippians 1:27-30

As a society, we have always placed a high value on telling the truth. When we were little children, our parents told us that we should always tell them the truth. They tried to instill within us the value of honesty. They told us that honesty was always the best policy. Sometimes we didn't believe them, especially when to tell the truth would get us in trouble. So we experimented with the truth. And some of us found out the hard way that telling a lie got us into more trouble. Now that we are adults, we teach our children the importance of telling the truth.

Honesty is one form of truth. But is there a bigger form of truth? Is there truth on a universal scale? Is there truth that applies to all people? Is there truth that can guide our lives and give us fulfillment and purpose?

As he was examining Jesus, Pilate asked, "What is truth?" It is really the same question people are asking today. And when some try to answer that question we find there are a lot of smoke and mirrors but not much clarity and light. It makes you wonder whether people really want to know the truth.

Most people have rejected the idea of any absolute truth in favor of situational truth. In other words, truth is relative to my situation. What is true in one situation may not be true in another. A whole philosophy of thinking known as "situation ethics" has helped advance the notion that truth is relative. The best you can hope for, in this thinking, is to find a truth that works for you.

The idea that there is absolute truth has been rejected by most of our society. And there are a couple of reasons for this rejection. One reason is that the notion of absolute truth implies an absolute Truth-giver. In other words, there may be a God. The idea of a God who gives truth and expects people to live by that truth is troubling to many. But there is another reason why people have rejected absolute truth. They have rejected it because of those who have claimed to speak for God. Unfortunately, because of the poor examples of many so-called Christians, people have come to doubt that Christianity is true. When they see people saying one thing and doing another, or when they hear people speaking the truth in such an unloving way, they wonder. And you really can't blame them. The truth is, truth has a moral dimension. Our lives must reflect the truth that our lips declare.

But the fact remains that there has been and still is a war on truth. It is a war for the minds of our children. It is a war for the mind of every individual in our society. It is a war fought on many fronts, but in essence it is a spiritual battle. And while there is a spiritual enemy, he uses people to infiltrate and penetrate society.

And today he has many tools available. Just look at our society. With all of the technological advances in communications, we can literally be bombarded with information and/or propaganda. While not everyone in our society can read, our literacy rates are higher than they have ever been. There are more books, newspapers, and magazines to read than ever before. The same is true for movies and videos. There are more channels on TV than ever before. And now there is the Internet. We are living in unprecedented times as far as our ability to communicate information is concerned.

And who are the ones doing this communicating? People. People are the key. Satan uses people in his war on truth. And God uses people too. It may seem like they are winning, and if they are it is because we are not engaged in the battle. We must engage. We are not to retreat and wait for the end of the world—for God to show up and straighten this mess out. On the contrary, we are to be salt and light. We are to infiltrate and penetrate every area of society. And how do we do this? We do it by living as people who are citizens of Heaven while we are on Earth.

In our text today, Paul turns his attention to how Christians are to live their lives in the face of opposition from the culture. I want us to look at three principles of behavior that will encourage us in our endeavor to be salt and light.

Live up to who you are.

If we are going to be effective in penetrating every area of society, we must understand clearly just who we are and then live up to that.

You need to understand that **you are citizens of Heaven**. The apostle Paul exhorts the Christians at Philippi to **conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ**. The word in Greek that is translated "conduct yourselves" literally means "act as a citizen." The city of Philippi was a Roman colony and its inhabitants were proud to be Roman citizens. Paul reminds the Christians that they are citizens of a greater kingdom—the kingdom of God. He uses this same word in Philippians 3:20, where it is rightly translated **"But our citizenship is in heaven."** While we live on Earth, we must never forget our real home—Heaven. You are a citizen of Heaven and you need to act like it.

You are citizens of Heaven because **you are children of God**. In John's gospel (1:14) we read: **Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.** Every person who receives Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior becomes a child of God.

Our problem is that, all too often, we fail to understand the radical nature of this transformation. In the new birth, something happens to us that radically alters us at the core of our being. We have a new nature implanted within us. We may not feel

any different initially, but we have been invaded by the Spirit of God. A transformation has begun that will not end until we are glorified in Heaven with Christ. But we are now his children. We are now citizens of Heaven even though we live on Earth.

Our challenge is to see ourselves from this perspective. And we will never do it unless we spend the quality time with Christ that we need. Time in prayer, meditating on his Word, reflecting on his truth, drinking in his Spirit, are all necessary for our minds to be reprogrammed to see ourselves from his perspective. If you spend all of your time reading other things, watching television, viewing videos, or surfing the Internet, you will never see the reality of who you are in Christ. And you will never be who God intended for you to be in this life.

You are ambassadors for Christ. At least that's what God has called you to be. Listen to this from 2 Corinthians 5:20: ***We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*** You and I are Christ's representatives in this world. You are an ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary.

This past week I was listening to the announcement of several people to ambassadorships. They are formally called ambassador **extraordinary** and **plenipotentiary**. To be an ambassador extraordinary means that you are sent on a specific mission or empowered for a special service. To be an ambassador plenipotentiary means that you have been invested with full power to transact business. That's what we are! We are ambassadors for Christ, sent on a specific mission with full power to speak on his behalf and transact the business of the gospel.

So you need to live up to who you are. You are citizens of Heaven. You are children of God. You are ambassadors for Christ.

Stand up for the truth.

The second thing we need to do is to stand up for the truth. Paul says, in verse 27: **Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.**

As Christians, we have the truth. This is not a statement of arrogance, although some would consider it so. We simply believe that we have discovered the truth that sets people free. We didn't create it. We simply have experienced it. It is **the faith of the gospel** of which Paul speaks here. As Christians, we need to stand up for and share this truth. So, how do we do it?

Firstly, we do it **in the power and unity of the Spirit**. When Paul says that we are to **stand firm in one spirit**, he is not simply talking about a oneness of purpose, but rather the power of the Holy Spirit that puts us together in Christ. It is certainly the Spirit of God that leads us to unity. Without his power we would never come together. Paul says: ***But we were all baptized into one body through one Spirit. And we were all made to share in the one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:13)***

The Holy Spirit is the source of power for us. He gives us the ability to stand firm. And he enables us to stand together. On the day of Pentecost, he empowered that band of disciples gathered together in the upper room. He gave them boldness to speak the word of God. Peter was transformed from a coward into a lion. Before Pentecost he was afraid to admit that he even knew Christ. Now he was able to stand up before thousands of people and tell them that Christ was the only way to Heaven. What changed him? It was the power of the Holy Spirit.

We can experience that same power because we have that same Spirit. And we can experience the same unity as well. The Holy Spirit enables us to stand together as we share the truth. We are to be **contending as one man for the faith of the gospel**. We stand for the truth together. We defend the truth together. We contend for the truth together. We stand as one man. The Holy Spirit is the source of our unity and the power by which we work together. In Romans 15:5-6 we read: ***May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

And secondly, we stand up for the truth **for the sake of the gospel**. The gospel is the truth that sets people free. It is **the faith** for which we stand and for which we contend. This is our message as ambassadors for Christ. And it carries with it the power of God. Paul said, in Romans 1:16: ***I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.***

God has given us this message and commissioned us on a mission to infiltrate and penetrate every aspect of our culture. God has made some of you doctors, dentists, nurses, and other kinds of medical specialists because the medical profession needs Jesus. God has made some of you lawyers because the legal profession needs Jesus. God has made some of you engineers because other engineers need Jesus. And the list could go on. Whatever you are, in terms of your occupation, you are that for Christ. The goal of your occupation is not to make money. If that is your goal, you are extremely shortsighted. You haven't seen who you are. The goal of your occupation is for you to infiltrate this world and share the message of Jesus Christ. It has the power to set people free.

Face up to the opposition.

Finally, we must face up to the opposition. In verse 28, Paul spoke of **those who oppose you**. It is important for us to understand that we will have opposition. So the first thing we need to remind ourselves of is this— **Don't be surprised!**

Listen to what Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12: ***In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*** We should not be surprised when we encounter opposition and even persecution for the cause of Christ in our culture. Our culture is fast becoming anti-Christ and anti-Christian. The same people who preach toleration for all points of view are the most intolerant when Christians began to state their views. You see, they want to paint us with the brush of intolerance. Apparently, the only views they want to tolerate are those with which they agree. Any views that claim that there are absolute truths are extremist and full of hate and are not to be tolerated. But this is hypocrisy— plain and simple. It still amazes me that people actually defend this kind of stuff. I'm amazed at the lack of critical reasoning and logical thought that seems to exist among apparently educated people. Why can't they see this inconsistency?

They can't see it because their hearts are not right before God. And so they propagate their slanted views as the socially correct and culturally accepted views of sophisticated people. If you hold those views you are "in" and if you do not you are "out." And if we do not do something to stem this tide, it will completely cover our entire culture. An entire culture is being brainwashed and we must stand against the opposition, however fierce it may be, and speak the truth.

And we must do this without fear. **Don't be afraid!** Paul told them that he wanted them to stand for the truth **without being frightened in any way by those who oppose**. There really is nothing to fear. When we fear we are thinking in worldly terms anyway. There is really nothing that anyone can do to us of any eternal significance. They may take away all we have, but they can't separate us from the love of Jesus Christ. Our eternal destiny is secure. In that great hymn, *A Mighty Fortress*, Martin Luther penned these words: "the body they may kill; God's truth abideth still; his kingdom is forever."

We need to heed the word of the Lord to Joshua, where he said: ***Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:9).*** We can have courage because the same God that gave courage to Joshua will give courage to us.

When people see our courage in the face of opposition, they will come to understand that there is something behind that courage— there is a power that upholds us. When we refuse to back down and give up, even in the face of suffering, it will serve as a

testimony to the reality of Jesus. Paul says that it is **a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved— and that by God.**

And we may have to suffer. If you're looking for the way of no sacrifice, then forget Christianity. Look at verse 29: **For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.** Christianity is not a way to escape temporary earthly suffering; it is the only way, however, to escape eternal suffering. And the suffering we may have is insignificant compared to that. It is even insignificant compared to the suffering of those in the early church. When I think of the great martyrs of the faith, who gave their lives, being burned at the stake, or eaten alive by lions, I am ashamed at the minor things that cause me to shrink back in fear.

We must live up to who we are— we are citizens of Heaven, children of God, ambassadors for Christ. We must stand up for the truth— in the power and unity of the Spirit, for the sake of the gospel. And we must face up to the opposition— without being surprised or afraid. And we must infiltrate society and penetrate our culture with the message of truth— the good news of Christ.
