

# How to Take Your Stand

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Preacher: John Smed

[ 0 : 00 ] Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the best plate of righteousness in place, with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all God's people. Pray also for me that when I speak, words may be given to me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel for which I'm an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should. And Father, give us ears to hear what the spirit says to the church. Give us hearts to receive and believe.

And help us not be like those who build their house on sand or walk away from the mirror, but help us to put this into practice by your spirit. In Jesus' name, amen. Please be seated.

[ 1 : 43 ] Isaiah talks about the world at his day, and he said, the world staggers, reeling to and fro like a drunken man. I think that could describe our world today.

Everything beneath, around and above is shifting, disconnected and chaotic. You may not understand why, but you feel it. Where do we get a place to plant our feet?

Jesus is that place. The Lord has established his throne in the heavens. His kingdom rules over all. This passage I just read describes reality. Not the Christian reality, but reality itself. The Christian life is immersed in divine certainties and opposed by demonic personalities.

Therefore, the Christian life can only be lived supernaturally. It can only be lived in the presence and power of God. Paul starts with that in no uncertain terms.

[ 2 : 57 ] Finally, finally. I've been teaching you everything, but I want you to know, finally, this is it. Be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might.

What is he saying? Do not try to live your life naturally. Most of our problems in our individual lives, in our churches, in our denominations, is when we try to live the Christian life in our natural capacities.

Let me say it again. Most of the problems of our life individually as a church, as a denomination, is when we try to live the Christian life in our natural capacities.

Father, we stand before you, and we want to take a stand.

We confess we've often avoided taking a stand. We've fallen when we've tried to stand.

[ 4 : 09 ] We've grown weary and disheartened. Empower us again through this word and by your spirit to take the stand you want us to take in Jesus' name.

So we're going to look today at the big picture. We're going to look at what it means to take a stand, who we stand against, and take your stand in prayer. So, the big picture.

Christian cosmology, it's actually cosmology itself. You might not get it on National Geographic Channel, which tells us something. Christianity is not a narrow view.

It shows the big picture. There are human powers, angelic powers, and demonic powers. Here's what Jonathan Edwards said. There are three worlds.

One is this, which is an intermediate world. A world in which good and evil are so mixed together as to be a sure sign that this world will not continue forever. Another is heaven, a world of love without any hatred.

[ 5 : 13 ] The other is hell, a world of hatred where there is no love, which is the world to which all of you who are in a Christless state properly belong.

This last world is where God manifests his displeasure and wrath just as in heaven he manifests his love. There's three powers in the Christian cosmology, three worlds.

They are separate. Heaven and hell are separate. Jesus said there's a chasm between that cannot be passed. But in the middle, it's interpenetrating. As in the First World War, England, primarily, and Germany were at war.

But they fought the battle mainly in France, didn't they? We're France. We're in between these two worlds. One's seeking to raise us up, one's seeking to draw us down. There are not only three worlds, there are three fronts where the battle rages most fiercely.

There's the front without, there's the front among, and there's the front within. The warfare without, the opposition of the world.

[ 6 : 27 ] Why does God say friendship with the world is enmity with God? God. He's not talking about society. He's not talking about the planet. He's talking about all that as a verse to God.

All that seeks to, be it, eliminate God from public consciousness, all that is at enmity with God. That's the inner, fallen nature of the entire human species.

We share it individually, but the whole world is allied, in the sense that the Bible talks about the world. The world's primary purpose is to ally itself against God and his people.

There's an ever-deepening and overwhelming tide of temptation, lust, and luxury. That's the front we all understand. The internet has helped ramp that up to apocalyptic and tsunami proportion. That's the world. But there is also an increasing anti-God and even anti-Christ strain in today's narrative. It was fogged up when I was a younger man, but secularism has shown its true face.

[ 7 : 42 ] Secularism is actually synonymous with atheism. We don't buy the secular worldview because it exists to eliminate God from public consciousness.

Madeline Delbrel said, how did we become atheists in France? We did not oppose God. We just stopped talking about Him. We eliminated Him from the public sphere. Anti-conversion laws around the world are one of the most effective ways of repressing the Christian message.

You can keep that faith. You can talk about it. You can have your sermons. You can go to church on Sunday. No problem. Just keep it out of your business. Keep it out of your medical profession. Keep it out of your day-to-day painting or whatever you do.

If we're to keep it out of there, you'll be fine. We cannot comply to public demands that we be silent about Christ in the name of obeying a law.

I'm sorry. This is a big one. You want to come this afternoon at 5 to 6? We'll talk it over. But basically, these public demands that we cannot speak about God in the public sphere in any vocation or any field is something we have to defy if we hope for Christianity to have any influence in our culture.

[ 8 : 59 ] You know, we're all learning what it means to be marginalized. We're all learning what it means to not belong. We're all learning that our voice doesn't matter.

And I'm sorry, I'm from Canada, but I don't care if it's left or right. The door has been closed effectively to a clear ownership of God as the sovereign Lord and Jesus Christ as the only Redeemer of mankind.

Believer in Jesus, take your stand against the world. Say with Paul, God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of Christ by which I am crucified to the world and the world to me.

So that's the battle on the outside. Then there's a battle among us. I won't spend too much time on this. Take my time. Okay. No, Kevin said 90 minutes.

That's it. There's false prophets and teachers worming their way in among us. Denying God's judgment is one of the most popular ways.

[ 10 : 11 ] This is a God of love. He's not a God of judgment. Questioning God's word. Did he really say that? Is that his verdict on that subject? Is that his verdict? Insinuating doubt in the body of Christ.

It's everywhere. And so we have false prophets among us and false teachers. But on the other hand, we have a new permissiveness. A lack of church discipline in any kind.

You live and let live has become a motto in the church of Christ. I won't bust your chops. You don't bust mine. It's called nepotism.

Not admonish one another. Bear with one another. Get to know each other well enough that when you tell somebody they're not supposed to do something, they won't hate you for it. Christian fellowship is not enough to spend 90 minutes together once a month.

We don't get the glue and the cohesion. I consider myself a friend of Carl and Karen, of Kevin and Sandy, of Randy and Joan.

[ 11 : 21 ] I know quite a bit about this church because I've been kept in tabs with it through people that I love and care for. But I hope and I know that these people can speak to me and help me with my life.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend. That comes from deepening, deepening fellowship. Praying together. So there's permissiveness, weak teaching, loose living, and then there's the Sanhedrin. Oh yeah. Yeah, they didn't die at the end of the first century. Culture of scrutiny. Culture of suspicion. Actually believing that the purpose God put us in this world is to defend Reformed Orthodoxy.

Uh-oh. Uh-oh. It wasn't go make disciples of all nations. It was make sure that we cross our T's and dot our I's and do not stray and if you do, watch out, they're coming after you.

The Sanhedrin is still alive and well and he's found himself perhaps, this is controversial, I would say increasingly rooted in our own denomination.

[ 12 : 31 ] So we have to watch out for that. Does that step out of line there? Thank you. The good thing about being a guest preacher is I don't know whose toes I'm stepping on. Then there's this one and let's take it a little closer to home.

Among us. Seen and unseen agents of discontent. dissent. Division.

Gossip. There are among us people who actually have the temerity and boldness and lack of the fear of God that they'll actually talk about somebody behind their back and they'll slander them behind their back.

brothers and sisters, I remember Jack Miller saying to us, if we prayed as much as we gossip, we'd save the world in a year.

I hope you're not a gossip and if you are, I hope you'll repent. Do what is edifying, what builds up. If you have something good to say, don't say anything. If you have a problem with someone, go to them face to face.

[ 13 : 46 ] I can't tell you how often I've been slandered behind my back and I find out later. It happens. Then there's the conflict within.

Of course, we've been kind of talking about with this last subject. The flesh. The fear-filled, sin-filled, doubt-filled, anxiety-filled, unbelieving-filled, power within us that still remains.

I've been a Christian 50 years, friends, and either I'm, I've made nothing but a mistake, but I still have that power in me. It's still fighting against me. The flesh desires what's contrary to the spirit and the spirit what is contrary to the flesh.

They are in conflict with each other to keep you from doing the things that you want. This is the biggest battle of all. And whatever battle you're fighting, if you're not fighting that fight, you're not in the fight. Amen. The flesh and the spirit.

That's where spiritual warfare happens. Now I've talked about things that you could say, well those are just ordinary societal things. I'm sorry. That's how Satan works. Now every once in a year somebody's going to say they're possessed by a devil and we've got to figure out how to cast it out.

[ 15 : 02 ] That's okay. I go to India, I go to Uganda, it happens, it's real. But I'm talking about everyday spiritual warfare for you and for me. The enemies from without, the enemies among, the enemies within.

Do you feel it? Do you feel the influence in all of these fears that there's something beneath that's working these problems, accelerating our doubts and seeking to attack us in an unseen way?

Andrew of Crete in the 5th century put it this way and I want to ask you what Andrew asked the generation of his time. Christian, do you feel them?

how they work within? Striving, tempting, luring, goading into sin? Christian, never tremble, never be downcast, gird thee for the battle, watch and pray and fast.

I want you to take a moment here to pray with me. I want you to think about what I've said. I want you to, if you have something to be thankful for, give God thanks.

[ 16 : 22 ] If you have something to say, I haven't been as courageous as I should. I haven't discerned the enemy. I haven't opposed the world.

Let's just take a moment each of us to do our own discussion with God. Father, open our eyes to your glory, to your power, to discern the seen and unseen evil against us, among us, and within us.

Give us wisdom and give us, above all, courage to stand against the war without, the world without, the wolves among, and the war within.

In Jesus' name we pray. So let's talk for a minute what it means to take a stand. Take a stand against the devil's schemes.

Put on the full armor of God and stand your ground. And after you've done everything to stand, stand firm. And I want to look at those three terms.

[ 17 : 52 ] Take your stand, stand your ground, and stand firm. Take your stand. Plant your flag. I wear this, I never used to wear a cross.

But I wear it. Why? Because I'm a public Christian. You're going to find out. You know me for three minutes, you're going to find out. Not because I'm going to be bold or rude or silly or something like that.

I just say, you wear your tattoo to tell your story. Everybody's wearing their story. Now I'm wearing mine. Now I don't say you have to wear a cross, but wear your faith in your words.

And you might say, well, I don't want to be humiliated. I don't want to be embarrassed. I don't want to be rejected. I don't want to be rejected. Get humiliated, embarrassed, and rejected three or four times and you'll get over it.

I mean it. Just get over it. Step out. Make a fool of yourself. Be a fool for Jesus. You might not do it right.

[ 18 : 55 ] You might even do it wrong a few times. That's okay. Get in the habit of taking your stand. Whoever confesses me before men, I will confess before the Father. Whoever is ashamed of me before men, I will be ashamed of the Father.

Let's get clear with God that we're not ashamed of him. Stand your ground. Let Christ's conquest be the ground you stand on.

He said the Son of Man came to destroy the works of the devil. He's still in destroying the devil mode.

You can go to him for guidance when you don't know what to do. He wants to tell you. I'm serious. You have a pondering issue.

I said, Lord, this is a red light. Do you want to turn it green? This is an orange light. Do you want to turn it red? I really don't know. At any given juncture of life, you're in these periods of uncertainty.

[ 20 : 00 ] Go to your captain and ask for his marching orders. Go to him for courage, for battle. Go to him for comfort when you're hurt and wounded.

Go to him for forgiveness when you fail. Go to him most of all, perhaps, when you're successful because the devil's right at hand. I was talking to a non-Christian fellow the other day.

I shared the gospel with him for four hours one afternoon with him and his wife. And he said to me, and he's a very wealthy, successful man, he said, anybody thinks they are the author of their own success, the devil is right beside them.

That's what non-Christian said. So watch out with your successes. Watch out, pastor. You're a good pastor. We have to be careful. We've got the pulpit and there's a great deal of danger in this pulpit. All right. Stand firm. When you fall, stand up. When you're weary, pray to stand firm because when he says stand firm, he's talking about your faith.

[ 21 : 10 ] I have learned something by being a father and I think you understand this. First of all, one of the most important things in life is I want you to believe what I'm saying. When I talk to my children, I want them to believe what I'm saying and I want them to know I love them.

nothing more important to me as a father. I want my children to know I love them and what God is saying to you, I want you to stand firm. I want you to believe I'm telling you the truth. I wouldn't lie to you and I know you don't feel like it.

I know you hate yourself sometimes and you're kicking yourself all the time. You think you're useless and you've done everything wrong. Believe me. I love you. Believe me. How many times has he tried to assure us a thousand times in the scripture?

Why? Because we're so slow to believe it, aren't we? It's not the bad news that we don't believe. We're totally in with that. It's the good news we have trouble believing. Isn't it? Isn't it the good news you have trouble believing?

The doubt, the insecurity, the fear. Broken relationships, betrayed, rejected by loved ones, be sure Satan is going to use those to attack your faith.

[ 22 : 26 ] He's right at hand. He's going to try to discourage you. He's going to try to accuse you. He's going to try to prove that you are the agent of all your troubles. You're suffering chronic pain, lengthy illness, depression, anxiety.

It's crippling you. Satan is going to use those things to attack your faith. You're covered with dark thoughts.

You can't shake them off. That's the enemy because there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And what happens when you stand firm? I love this passage. It came to me the other day out of the blue, straight from God, and I needed it.

Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial. Having stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

Stand firm. Don't lose heart. Believe what he says to you. Okay. Who we take our stand against.

[ 23 : 33 ] See, Paul here talks about a multi-level army with a pentagon. It's not just isolated demons flying around doing their dirty work.

It says here five times. He points out there's a commander-in-chief, there's rulers, there's authorities, there's subordinates, there's powers of this dark world, there's spiritual forces.

Take your stand against the devil's schemes. Against the rulers. Against the authorities. Against the powers of this dark world. Against the spiritual forces of evil. Brothers and sisters, the Christian life is not only war, but it's always war.

The Christian life is not only war, but it's always war. John Stott put it this way, we could all wish to spend our lives in undisturbed tranquility amongst our loved ones at home and in fellowship of God's people.

But the way of the escapist has been effectively blocked. Christians have to face the prospect of conflict with God's enemy and theirs. This is a stirring call to battle. Do you not hear the bugle and the trumpet?

[ 24 : 45 ] We are being roused. The whole tone is martial. It is manly. It is strong. Let's look briefly at the devil's schemes and the powers of this dark world.

Satan is crafty. Don't kid yourself. He is the best strategist perhaps in the world, certainly among humanity.

His craft and power are great and armed with cruel hate. On earth is not his equal. He is always plotting. He is always worming his way in, which is why it's so important when you get through trials, when your church starts to divide, when you see all this difficulty, look for the powers beneath the powers that be.

discern what's going on. Fight these fights in prayer. Don't fight them with words of gossip or dissent or trying to solve everything. If you look at the book of Acts, when the proverbial hit the proverbial, they went to prayer.

The Sanhedrin beat them, told them to stop preaching the name of the church. He says, they lifted their voices together to God and they called on him. You see, what's happening in our world, in the broader world, we face an orchestrated and strategic alliance of evil plotting behind the scenes with the intent of destroying the church, denying the truth, eliminating the knowledge of God and seeking to erase the image of God in mankind.

[ 26 : 24 ] That's our real enemy. It's not the extreme left. It's not the extreme right. That's the real enemy. Our battle is not against flesh and blood. A church this size gathers to pray for one day before an election.

I have it on good authority that's worth more than 100,000 votes. A church this size gets together to pray for one day before an election or at a critical time in the history of this nation is worth more than 100,000 votes at the polling box.

God's people know how to fight this fight. We fight it on our knees and leaders know how to fight. Leaders lead from the knees. I hope you're not a leader that doesn't lead from the knees because if you don't lead from the knees, my friend, you're a bureaucrat.

We don't need more bureaucrats. We need men and women of prayer to lead us into the future.

Amen. Amen. All right. So, we stand against the powers of this dark world.

Those who yield to God will know the help of angels. Those who yield to the enemy will know the help of demons. What have Satan and his allies accomplished in our world today? The enemy's not at the gates anymore.

[ 27 : 44 ] The enemy has entered and taken the seats of power. In every field, government, judiciary, education, medicine, media, legal, marketplace, all forms of communication, social news, market entertainment, the nations rage and the people's plot in vain.

The kings of the earth set themselves together and the rulers take counsel together, uniting, saying, let us cast their bonds asunder. It is not a coincidence that things are changing so fast. It's not a coincidence that there's such a unified voice about them.

This is not orchestrated by Big Pharma or by some communications media mogul. This is orchestrated elsewhere. There are powers beneath the powers that be.

Should we be afraid? He is called faithful and true.

With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like a blazing fire. On his head are many crowns. When you're in trouble, when you're in the heat of battle, when the fiery darts are coming, when you feel that in your life, don't look back.

[ 28 : 58 ] He's not in a cradle anymore. Don't look down. He's not in the grave anymore. Look up. No, no, no. Look higher. No, no. Look to the highest place.

He raised him from the dead and seated him as right hand far above all rule, authority, of power, and dominion, and above every name. Here's what's happened in the world since 1950 by this captain and this king.

In 1950, there were less than 10 million believers in China. They now know there's more than 100 million. In 1950, in Africa, there was 1 million believers. There's now more than 600 million believers in Africa.

In India, 65,000 people a day, they estimate, are becoming Christian. In a little community outside the city of Vancouver where the churches are struggling, can't get new converts, can't get out, a little group of 40 high school students started meeting.

No church, no clergy, no denominations, nothing, to pray, to hear the word, and to worship. A year and a half later, those 40 people are now 1,400 people meeting every Sunday night 52 weeks a year.

[ 30 : 17 ] Something is happening. Aslan is on the move. Don't be afraid. Remember, Satan has fallen twice.

His pretend kingdom is in tatters that soon will collapse. In heaven, before this world was made, Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but he was not strong enough and they lost their place.

In heaven, the great dragon was hurled down. The ancient serpent called the devil or Satan who leads the whole world astray, he was hurled to the earth and his angels with him. Then when Jesus died at the cross, he disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame.

That conquest, and I'm going to end it here, I'll talk about prayer tonight. I'm ending here because I think we've covered enough territory and if you're interested in more, come tonight at five, we'll have a little bit of a sermon discussion at the same time as praying.

I hope you will come because Jesus' conquest over Satan is ours. Jesus' conquest over Satan is yours.

[ 31 : 24 ] What did Jesus say? He said, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven and then he says, I give you authority over evil spirits. Right? Same verse. Check it out.

I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven and then he says, I give you authority over evil spirits. I saw Satan fall like lightning.

I want you to just take a few moments, just turn to the person beside you, you're on your own. We're going to end with this. Worship him. Proclaim his glory. Renounce your fears and unbelief.

Ask for his authority and power and say, Jesus, help me to stand. Let's just take a moment here to pray. Turn to your neighbor and pray out loud if you like.

This is a, this is a, not a quiet church, is it? Stop. Thank you.

[ 32 : 57 ] Thank you.

Lord Jesus, we worship you. We proclaim your glory. We announce and live in the conquest over sin, death, and the devil, and your victory.

We renounce our fears and our unbelief. And we pray for your authority and power to stand. And pray, Lord, that you'd help us to live life in this supernatural way.

Not against flesh and blood. Not by flesh and blood. But in the strength of the Lord and his almighty power. Amen.