

Mini Sermon Series – “STAND”
“NOT EVEN AN INCH”
Pastor Dale Campfield - October 17th, 2010

Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

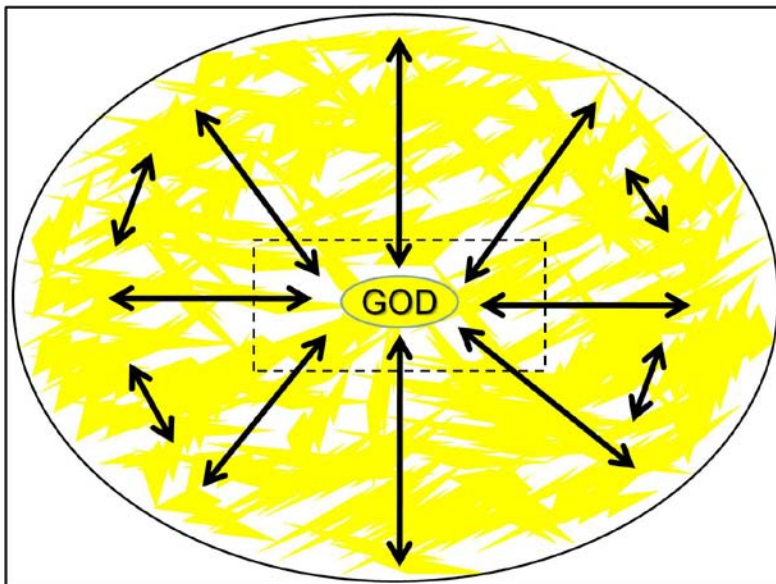
We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Intro:

We are in a battle. The enemy does not like the fact they we are experiencing God in a New Dimension...and we are! We’re seeing God move like we’ve never seen Him move before. Souls are being saved! People are being healed! Deliverance is taking place in people’s lives, restoration of marriages, new ministries being launched, etc. The devil doesn’t like it.

Today we will begin a short sermon series that I have entitled "STAND". This will be a three week series. We have been taling the last six weeks about Stepping Up. Stepping up to fulfill the call of God upon our lives. That call of God consists of two things: The Great Commandment, loving each other and God. The second being The Great Commission, going into all the world making disciples of all people.

Our vision at Eastgate Community Church for making disciples looks like this...



God has put each of you on a Divine Path. The people on your path are the candidates given to you as potential disciples. Along the journey of your path, the enemy, the devil will do everything he can to stop you. Thus, we must know how to stand.

Sermon Title: The title of this message today is "NOT EVEN an INCH!"

You've heard the phrase, "give em' an inch, they'll take a mile." that is exactly what the devil does. If you give him one single inch, he will work his way in and take a mile. We cannot and will not give the enemy an inch.

Take note of the apostle's admonition to us in this passage. It is given to us in but one word, but a word which is repeated four different times throughout this entire passage. It is the word stand. Notice how it comes in here:

Ephesians 6:11, 6:13-14a

Everything aims at this, that we might be able to stand.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. “Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore.”

Christians are at war. This is not a war against a physical foe or fought with physical weapons. We neither seek to kill nor injure any person; neither do we endeavor to destroy any structures erected by man. We are fighting a spiritual war, and the enemy against whom we struggle are angelic beings fallen from their previous position as servants of the Living God. God does not call His people to conquer new territory for in reality, it all belongs to God in the first place; rather, we occupy ground from which the enemy has fled before the Risen Master. The mission we have received calls for us to hold that ground which has been entrusted to our care.

APPOINTED TO STAND — “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore.”

Four times in these few brief sentences we are commanded to stand. The thrust of the apostolic plea is for Christians to remain firm in the face of sustained assault. Paul uses two separate words that function as synonymous concepts in the text before us. First, the Apostle urges Christians to don the armor of God in order “to stand against the schemes of the devil.” He uses the same word at the end of verse 13 and again in verse 14 when he commands believers to stand, having prepared themselves for the conflict. In verse 13, Paul uses a different word when he speaks of withstanding in the evil day. However, in this instance, the word is derived from the former word. Thus, the Apostle makes a very powerful plea—nay, issues a most powerful command—for Christians to stand firm in the face of spiritual assault.

We are appointed to stand in the light. Find the light, and you will know where to stand. Find the will of the Master, and stand there. You will know His will when you study His Word. Find what pleases the Master, and stand there. You will know what pleases Him when we spend time in His presence. Christians are called to stand firm in righteousness, not giving way to evil. We are called to stand firm in the Word of God, seeking the will of God and doing what He has revealed to us. We are called to stand boldly against even the appearance of agreeing with evil. Yet, we must make this stand with gentleness, showing mercy toward those living in darkness while fearing for their safety and fearing lest we contaminate our lives. In standing firm, refusing to surrender to evil, we will rescue some of our fellow men from the flames. Assuredly, through

standing firm against spiritual darkness we will honour and glorify the Name of the Living God because we will reveal His grace and goodness. As the Apostle has urged believers, “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” [1 CORINTHIANS 7:1].

EQUIPPED TO STAND — “Take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.” In his Letter to Roman Christians Paul urged them to “put on the armour of light” [ROMANS 13:12]. In the earlier Letter to Thessalonian Christians, he cautioned, “Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation” [1 THESSALONIANS 5:8]. Now the Apostle urges us to don the panoply given by the Lord our God. That armour includes the “belt of truth,” “the breastplate of righteousness,” shoes identified as “the readiness given by the gospel of peace,” “the shield of faith,” “the helmet of salvation” and “the sword of the Spirit.”

Often, militaries are sent into combat with inadequate or inferior equipment. Some have been hampered during the various conflicts in which they have engaged, because the equipment provided proved inadequate for the conditions, or because there was insufficient equipment for the tasks assigned. Christians need not worry that our equipment will prove inadequate for the assigned task. We are not appointed to stand in our own dress or in our own strength. In fact, the equipment which we have received is sufficient for every contingency to ensure that we will be victorious. We need not worry that we may be bested when the enemy attempts to overwhelm our defenses. We have the promise of the Master that “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against us [see MATTHEW 16:18].

When a Christian fails in the face of spiritual assault, it will not be because of equipment failure; it is because the believer failed to utilize the equipment provided. Often, if not usually, the Christian has conceded the battle because he or she has compromised for the sake of “unity.” We dare not fraternize with the forces of darkness. There can be no concession made to evil. We must not imagine that we can do wrong in order for good to come from that wrong. A saying that was current in the southern United States summarizes this matter concisely: “It is never right to do wrong in order to do right.”

I want to spend some time considering the equipment we have been issued. However, for the moment, it is important to note that the armor is all related to what we might call basic Christian disciplines—confidence in the Word (belt of truth), godliness (breastplate of righteousness), willingness to testify of Christ (shoes equated with the readiness), faith (shield of faith) and salvation (helmet of salvation).

STANDING TOGETHER — “Stand therefore.” We do not stand alone. We are appointed to stand together. At the signing of the American Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin said, “We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.” Though the context in which Franklin spoke was a looming and sustained physical conflict, the sentiment is in keeping with the spiritual conflict we face.

The stand we take is never a solitary stand. In fact, if you imagine yourself capable of standing alone, you are certain to fail, as the Apostle warns. “Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” [1 CORINTHIANS 10:12]. Throughout these closing instructions, Paul writes

in the plural number. The admonition to stand is very similar to that given to Corinthian Christians: “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” [1 CORINTHIANS 16:13]. Though individual believers are responsible to stand firm in the face of the enemy’s assault, as a congregation we never stand alone. Always and ever we are laboring together for the cause of Christ. I marvel at the attitude of contemporary Christians who imagine they can stand alone against the foe. They refuse to unite with a congregation, ridiculing such calls as an antiquated relic of a bygone era. They believe that they can take what is needed and yet be strong in the Lord. It has never happened in the past, and it flies in the face of reality; it will not work now. It doesn’t matter if you live in Seattle, Dallas or right here in Cincinnati, it will not work.

Contemporary Christians tend to become so focused on a vast, unseen entity that they call “the church” that they neglect the congregations that God established for their benefit and welfare. Congregations are established to provide an outlet for service and to permit believers to strengthen one another. That’s why I encourage people to be an active part of their congregations. If you go to Eastgate Community Church, great, be faithful. If you go to the Nazarene Church, great, be faithful. I don’t care where you go, just be faithful! Recall the Apostle’s instruction that the measure of validity and effectiveness of the gifts God has given is whether those gifts are used to build up others, encourage others and console others [1 CORINTHIANS 14:3]. The exercise of spiritual gifts in a context other than the assembly of the Lord ensures the loss of effectiveness.

To be certain, the child of God knows that the Master is always with him or her. Whenever we read that Great Commission, and we do that a lot around here, we must not neglect the final promise Jesus gave: “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” [MATTHEW 28:20b]. The promise is but an iteration of the promise the Living God made to Joshua, “I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you” [JOSHUA 1:5]. This promise is iterated in the Letter to Hebrew Christians, where it is applied to all who are followers of the Saviour [see HEBREWS 1:5, 6].

Facing persecution, the Christian may be confident that he is not alone. Undoubtedly, the child of God is comforted by the knowledge that God watches over him. The Apostle could say, as can every believer, that though persecuted, we are “not forsaken” [see 2 CORINTHIANS 4:9]. Christ is with His people during times of persecution.

We are certain that when we must make hard decisions as a congregation, Christ is with us for He has promised, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” [MATTHEW 18:20]. Christ is with His people during times of difficult decisions.

When we point others to righteousness, we know that He is with us. Paul may have “felt” lonely when he began evangelizing in Corinth, but the Lord appeared, saying, “I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people” [ACTS 18:10]. Christ is with His people while they are turning others to righteousness.

Serving the Savior, we will know His presence. Christ has promised us, “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also” [JOHN 12:26a]. Christ is with His people when they serve Him and His cause.

When we have fought the last battle, when the war is at last concluded, we know that we will not be deserted, even then. As He prayed for His people, Jesus asked the Father, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world” [JOHN 17:24]. This was but an iteration of the promise previously given to all who follow Him, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” [JOHN 14:3]. Christ is with His people when death comes and throughout eternity.

Christ the Lord is with us, and we shall be gathered to Him [see 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1]. Indeed, “we will always be with the Lord [1 THESSALONIANS 4:17b]. However, it is a decided comfort to know that He is now with us. It is highly significant that when the Risen Saviour appears to John on Patmos, He is standing in the midst of the lampstands, holding seven stars [REVELATION 1:13, 16]. The lampstands are identified as the churches and the stars are the messengers (the pastors) of the churches [REVELATION 1:20]. Christ is standing with His churches, and He holds His pastors in His hands.

When the enemy attacks—and the enemy will attack—Christians must stand together. Peter is not using hyperbole when he warns, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” [1 PETER 5:8]. Roaring, the devil seeks to frighten the child of God into fleeing. For when the frightened sheep flees, she is easily assaulted. She must leave the safety of the fold, the safety that comes from her fellow saints comforting and encouraging and building her up. Focused on the roar of the enemy, she no longer hears the comforting voice of the Master saying, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.

So.... let’s make this practical.

Allow me to ask you 4 questions this morning...

Question #1: What Does it Mean to Stand?

Answer: To refuse to move from the ground of faith we have taken – not even an inch!

Illus: Football Defensive Stand

Well, imagine a football team defending its goal line. The defense lines up on the scrimmage line and simply stands, refusing to be moved. This is called a goal-line stand. As well, when the offensive team has a fourth and inches to make first down, and the defense takes a stand and holds them. The next play, they must the ball over to the offense on downs.

This is exactly what this word pictures to us. We are to refuse to move from the ground of faith we have taken, refuse to yield ground, stand. Now why does the apostle put it this way? Why does he not say fight? Having done all, fight! Put on the whole armor of God and advance, charge. Why does he not use some military term that speaks of moving out? We must take these words seriously, for, after all, these are not play words used lightly as children would in playing games. These are serious commands given in a very serious fight. The apostle uses the word stand because it is the only proper word to use. It is the only word which described the final attitude we must have to insure absolute victory.

1 Cor 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Question # 2: When Do You Stand?

1 – You take a stand...before the battle.

You stand before the battle begins. The attitude that you take before the battle, is the same attitude you will take with you into the battle.

On Thursday morning, March 8th, 2007 Gloria Coleman went into surgery for what they said was a mass in her body that needed to be removed. They went in, and were able to get most of it out, however there was a small area that they were unable to take out due to the fact it was too close to a vital organ. So, they have made plans for her to have radiation treatments for what remains.

I visited with her before and after the surgery. She went into it with a positive faith and belief for Divine Health. Coming out, she was disappointed they didn't get it all out...but her faith and positive attitude was still there.

She told me...

QUOTE:

“Take your stance before the battle takes place. Then, all of your decisions after the battle has begun will be based upon that stance.” Gloria Coleman

If you take a stance of fear, then all of your decisions after the battle has begun will be based upon fear. If it's faith...then it's faith; if joy...then joy, etc.

2 – You take a stand...during the battle.

You're standing, keeping your focus and direction upon Christ. You don't look to the left or the right. You don't look towards the circumstances of your life. You take a stand and focus on Christ. You remember the battle plans that God has given to you and walk them out. The key – obedience. When you walk in obedience, you will be blessed!

3 – You take a stand...after the battle.

A stance of praise and worship. Thanking God for what He's brought you through. He deserves all of the praise. He is to be lifted up, not you, not your battle plans, His battle plans. When God is lifted up, then all men are drawn unto Him. The goal here is to draw people to Christ as you go through your battle. The battle...it's not about you!

Question # 3: Why Should You Stand?

1 – You may lose your battle.

Of course, we all know that we win the war! It is in God's Word. We win. But what about the individual battles we fight along the path of our lives? It's these battles that are at stake.

2 - Those around you may lose their battle.

Question # 4: What/Who are you standing for today?

I would like to have you stand with me this morning, and whatever it is that you are standing for, say this prayer with me.

"In Jesus name, I declare the praises of The Most Holy God.
The creator of all things. The master and savior of my life.
I speak with the authority given to me by God.
I declare His Kingdom and Authority over every aspect of my life.
I declare His Holy Word over every aspect of my life.

Right now. In Jesus Name. I take a stand against the forces of evil in my life.
Right now. In Jesus Name. I take a stand against the forces of evil that surround my family.
Right now. In Jesus Name. I take a stand against the forces of evil that surround my friends.
Right now. In Jesus Name. I take a stand against the forces of evil that _____.

I will not budge. I will not give in. I will not compromise.
I stand for truth on behalf of _____.
I stand for peace on behalf of _____.
I stand for righteousness on behalf of _____.

Right now. In Jesus Name. I take a stand.
I will not back down. I will see this battle through to the end.
I am victorious. This situation I'm praying about is victorious.
It's not too much to ask! It's not beyond your strength.

Right now. In Jesus Name. I take a stand.
And when I've done all to stand. I'll keep on standing! I'll keep on standing!
I'll keep on standing! Because I'm standing on the Rock of Jesus Christ!

I'm Standing, I'm Watching, I'm Waiting! And I know I'll see victory coming soon! AMEN!"