

STAND FOR JESUS! (4)

Ephesians 6: 13,14a – Pastor Richard P. Carlson
Youth Snow Retreat – Uinta Youth Camp, Meeks Cabin 2011

Have you ever felt like flying has failed, because you crashed and burned, trying to live for God? Have you ever run for the Lord a while and just got tired and quit? Have you ever tried walking for Jesus and just turned around and walked away from Him? There's a fellow in Scripture that comes strongly to my mind this Sunday morning. He has a strange name, Shammah, the son of Agee, from the city of Harar. Let me read to you about him in II Samuel 23: 11, 12 from the New Living Bible. Listen. "One time the Philistines gathered at Lehi and attacked the Israelites in a field full of lentils—(in essence, that's a pea patch). The Israelite army fled, but Shammah took his stand in the middle of the field and held his ground and beat back the Philistines. So the Lord brought a great victory." When everyone else started running, Shammah just stood there and beat back an army of the enemy. How many of you think Shammah was stronger than the whole Philistine army? He wasn't, but God honors his children when we take a stand for Him. This pea patch wasn't much, but it represented a lot of meals for the Israelites. Shammah seemed to think. "This is our pea patch. God gave it to us to bless us. It may not be much, these lentils, but it is ours. You can't rip it off that easy. I won't surrender it to you." Shammah was determined to hold on to what God had given to him.

Young people, you all have great blessings God has given to you, greater than any pea patch or lentil field. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, Jesus has given you some rich blessings that are rightfully yours and you need to defend them. Your blessings were won by Jesus when He died for us all at Calvary and shed His precious blood for us to redeem us from our sins. If we don't defend our blessings, John 10: 10 tells us that "the thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy, but Jesus says, "I am come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly." Psalm 78 is called a Maskil of Asaph. Verse 8 tells about "a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God. Verses 9 and 10 go on to talk about some of the army of Israel, some Ephraimites. We read, "The sons of Ephraim were archers equipped with bows, Yet, they turned back in the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of the God, and refused to walk in His law." Have any of us seen the enemy coming and we turned back in panic, like Peter, and denied Jesus and said, "I don't know

who Jesus is!”—Have we? Have we given up, quit standing, and run off because we felt we were outnumbered?

It's not easy being in a pea patch that God gave you, nor is it easy to be given a heritage of faith as I have been, and seen it being taken away. Standing for what you believe is costly, very costly. Today on this Sunday morning as we conclude our Snow Retreat 2011, I want to speak to us all about a plan to help us stand for Jesus in 2011. How can we become spiritual Shammah's guarding God's blessings, His lentil field He has given us, in our lives? What will it take to do this hardest of all exercises—not just to fly, or run, or walk, but having taken a stand, to keep standing, as Paul says in our text? I want to explain this morning to us all three parts to a biblical plan to stand and keep standing for God. What are they?

STANDING FOR JESUS MEANS MAKING A FINAL AND FOREVER DECISION. (I.) Back in II Samuel 23: 9, 10, I read of another warrior of David's mighty men, just like Shammah. His name was Eleazar, the son of Dodo. He was, like Shammah, one of David's strongest warriors along with Josheb-basshebeth, a Tahchemonite. They called him Adino, the Eznite. He killed 800 Philistines one day by himself. But back to Eleazar. What did he do? Well, the record says, He “defied the Philistines who were gathered together to do battle and all the men of Israel had withdrawn. He arose and struck the Philistines until his hand was weary and clung to the sword, and the Lord brought about a great victory that day.”

Many professing believers stand with one foot in the Lord and one in the world. They are straddle-poles. They are like the soldier in the Civil War that wanted to be neutral. So he went into battle wearing a Union soldier jacket and Confederate soldier fatigues. Both sides started shooting at him because he wouldn't take a clear stand. He was like the church in Laodicea that Jesus says was neither cold nor hot, so He planned to vomit the church out of His mouth. (Revelation 3: 16) When we ride the fence, it grieves the Lord. He never sat on the fence. He gave His life on the cross for us.

Joshua, the successor of Moses, called to the Israelites in his day, in Joshua 24: 14, 15, saying, “Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the

gods of the Amorites in whose land are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Make a decisive stand for Jesus, final and forever. Make a lifetime commitment. From this day on, I will live by this decision that I surrender everything I have and am to the Lord. I read a message by a woman preacher this week in which the lady, Pastor Diana Gray took a stand. Some people frown on a lady preacher, but listen to her testimony. She is a Deborah for Jesus. I applaud her testimony for the Lord. She says, “I’m a woman of strong faith because I made the decision to follow the Lord with everything I have. I made a solid choice with strength, will and courage, but most importantly, I surrendered my pride. Upon my knees I humbled myself before the Lord in obedience and surrendered all. If pride is holding you back, get rid of it. You don’t need pride to walk in spiritual faith. It will hold you back. You need humbled faith and the courage to stand!” What a testimony! Secondly, what is the plan?

STANDING FOR JESUS MEANS DENYING YOURSELF DAILY.

(II.) Do you remember learning to swim or learning to ride a bike? You wouldn’t give up until you had it down. Do we work that hard learning to deny ourselves? Denying ourselves means we need to know how to make wise choices in light of the times we are living in. These are the last days before Jesus returns. Listen to Jesus’ words to the crowds that gathered to hear him in Luke 12: 54-57. “When you see clouds beginning to form in the west, you say, “Here comes a shower.” And you are right. When the south wind blows, you say, “Today will be a scorcher.” And it is. You fools! You know how to interpret the weather signs of the earth and sky, but you don’t know how to interpret the present times.” Why can’t you decide for yourselves what is right?” What Jesus is saying is that we get good at predicting the weather and other things the world can do, but we can’t seem to “deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Jesus.” (Matthew 16: 24) In other words, why can’t we, after deciding to follow Jesus, stick to it? Denying ourselves is not about how legalistically right we are or how free we think we are to do whatever we want. To deny ourselves just means putting Jesus first day after day after day. We can’t stay lukewarm long. We will either quickly get cold, or we have to deny ourselves and get on fire for Jesus. Being a Christian means we discipline ourselves, we deny ourselves, and we submit our final and forever decision to Jesus so He can empower us to live strong for Him. If you are in love with the world, you aren’t denying yourself, you are pampering yourself, and you are grieving the Holy Spirit of God who lives inside of you. Thirdly, and lastly, the final plan is:

**STANDING FOR JESUS MEANS GROWING IN STRENGTH
WHERE WE STAND, UNTIL WE LIVE BY OUR FINAL AND
FOREVER DECISION.** (III.)

That's the picture in our text today in Ephesians 6: 13, 14a. Listen to the strength from Jesus which builds in this text. "Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm, Stand firm therefore." Paul talks about this stand in II Corinthians 10: 3-5 saying, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses, We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." Growing in strength is not conforming to the world, "hybridizing" to our culture. Do you know why Christianity is growing overseas and not growing in America? Let me tell you a true story. In parts of South America and Russia and the Middle East, Christians are standing and the unconverted want to be like them. I have seen it often. Many are dying for their faith, but more Christians are being converted as Jesus is bringing revival. Those believers overseas are drawing the lost to Jesus. In America, in many situations, believers are conforming more and more to the world until folk cannot tell the difference in the church and the world. Let me tell you a frightening story of what can happen to us, even as it happened to a species of native cutthroat trout.

There used to be a vast lake 20 miles wide and 50 miles long that existed on the border between Oregon and Nevada. It has gone bone dry over the years. Yet in some higher elevations, creeks and streams still run that used to feed this lake know as Lake Alvord. These little streams still run cold from seasonal snowmelt, springs, and occasional rains. Fish that used to live in Lake Alvord retreated up these little streams and creeks. One of these unique fish is known as the native Alvord cutthroat trout. Scientist Carl H. Hubbs officially recorded these trout in the 1930's, discovering them in a little stream that used to feed Lake Alvord. Fish and Game stocked these streams with rainbow trout, but Carl Hubbs found some of the fish that had not yet hybridized with the rainbow trout. Soon it was announced that the native Alvord cutthroat trout were all hybridized and extinct. Amazingly, fifty years later, another group of scientists studied this area. They found a stream where a mudslide had blocked the rainbow from swimming upstream to spawn and hybridize with the native Alvord cutthroat trout. Some of these pure native cutthroat trout were caught. They took pictures of some of them which were over 20 inches. The stream was only a tiny stream, just a few

feet wide. This little stream had pooled, and did not spill out and leave a trail for the rainbow to make it upstream, past the mudslide. These scientists tried their hardest to save this endangered small population of native Alvord cutthroats, but they failed. Somehow some rainbow trout made it upstream, past the mudslide. Now all the last of the native Alvord cutthroat trout are hybridized, victims of conforming to the rainbow trout. There are no known native Alvord cutthroat trout today. They are forever gone, hybridized to the rainbows that took over their streams. I brought a picture of one that Joseph Tomelleri took. Here they are in color. Aren't they beautiful?

Paul wrote in Romans 12: 1, 2, "I urge you therefore, brethren by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship, And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of the Lord is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Young people, I call us to take a stand for purity, sexually—to be virgins until we are married. I call us to be free of booze and drugs. I call us to stay off marijuana and meth and crack. I call us to give up our conforming to the world by dealing with guilt by cutting ourselves, starving ourselves with anorexia, and stuffing ourselves and purging ourselves with bulimia. I call us to be different for God, listening to Godly music that isn't vulgar and full of the f words, the s words, the a words, the h words, and the mf words. I call us to obey our parents and break the famine of obedience in America. I call us to ask to be involved in the church and take our place in serving the Lord Jesus. I call us to consider going to Christian colleges, and if we go to a secular university, to be faithful in groups like Campus Crusade for Christ and Intervarsity and Navigators. I call us to vow never to live together before marriage, never to play with same sex practices. I call us to be in church when the doors are open. I call us to read our Bibles daily, to pray, to stay away from all pornography, fantasizing with romance movies and novels. I call us to live above the mudslide, above the snake line. I call us to witness for Jesus week by week. I call us to put on the whole armor of God daily. I call us to let no one despise our youth and our fervor for God. I call us to lead the way to a revival in America. I call us to live in the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling us. It takes about 28 days to break most habits and about 28 days to make a new habit. I call us to new Godly habits for the Lord. I call us to stand for Jesus, and having done all to stand, to stand firm. I love you all. Amen.