

STANDING ALONE

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I'm going to title the message this morning "Standing Alone." I've already tried this message out in a preachers' meeting Thursday morning. I don't know how well it worked there, but we'll just see how it works today; Amen? I'm going to read three verses from 2 Timothy chapter 4, and I want you to hang onto this chapter throughout the message even when we turn away because we're going to keep coming back here.

This is the apostle Paul writing to Timothy. Both of these men are preachers, but I want to say that the text here applies to more than preachers. It applies to each and every one of us here today. And as we consider the passage here, this is Paul's last letter. He is facing death. We know that because of verse 6, and he's facing death for the cause of Christ. He's in prison; he's in Rome; he's before Nero. This is probably his first hearing. He's going to be sentenced, and we know the story there. But notice what he says in these few verses. He said in verses 16 through 18:

"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. ¹⁷Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. ¹⁸And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Father, we thank You this morning again for a beautiful week that You've given us. We thank You for the privilege of being able to go about our business this week and do our work and the things that You've called us to do. Now we thank You this morning, Lord, for the good Word of God. We thank You this morning for the privilege to be able to assemble together in Your house with Your people and worship in a corporate setting. We ask, Lord, that Your anointing and blessing again this morning to be upon the reading of Thy Word, for it's in Jesus Christ's name we pray, Amen.

And you may be seated. Now, as Paul writes this letter to Timothy, both of these men are preachers, one more aged and the other a younger preacher, and Paul is showing Timothy some important things that he needs to do. As a matter of fact, in verses 1 through 5, the apostle Paul encourages Timothy to preach the truth. He tells him in verses 1 through 5 to preach the Word, fulfill his ministry, and to be faithful — very clear and plain words that Paul gave to this young preacher. In verses 6 through 8 Paul speaks of his ministry and his death. He says in verse 6, *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."* Paul knows what is ahead of him. In verses 14 and 15 of this chapter, the apostle Paul speaks of the opposition that he's

had by some, and then in verses 16 through 18 — and this is going to be our text for our message this morning — he speaks of his upcoming hearing, and he's telling Timothy in his last letter what he's facing and what Timothy, as a preacher, must carry on and must continue to do in his ministry.

Now, I've got three points I want to give you this morning. First of all, we're going to talk about the virtue of standing alone — and by "virtue," I mean integrity, holiness, uprightness, moral goodness. We're talking about the virtue, the ability, the integrity to be able to stand alone. We must understand that most of the time the crowd is wrong. You can see that in the Scripture; you can see that in history. The second thing we're going to look at this morning is the cost of standing alone, and, number three, we're going to consider the reward of standing alone.

Now, again, this is Paul's last letter facing death, and I want to read in verse 18, but let me first read from a handout that I have copies of on the back table for you to take after the service. I'm going to read just one or two paragraphs from this article. It says:

"It is human to stand with the crowd; it is divine to stand alone. It is man-like to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is God-like to follow a principle and to stem the tide. It is natural to compromise conscience and follow social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty."

And then this writer mentions the apostle Paul as he stands before the civil court in 2 Timothy chapter 4. He goes on to say:

"Noah built and voyaged alone. His neighbors laughed at his strangeness and perished in style. Abraham wandered and worshiped alone; Daniel dined and prayed alone; Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone; Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone; Jesus loved and died alone."

Now, I want to read one other section out of this article before we get back to the Scripture, and this kind of sums up something that I've been watching for many years:

"We might praise biblical characters, and at the same time talk against those who are trying to live like the biblical characters lived. We will praise somebody back in the 15th and 16th century — and we should — that stands for the truth" — I have a testimony here to give you about that — "and then when somebody in our society tries to live on the level that those lived in the 15 and 1600s, then we have a tendency to want to criticize them."

Listen to this quote:

"The redeemed children of Israel in the wilderness praised Abraham and persecuted Moses. The people of God in the days of the kings praised Moses and persecuted the prophet. The court of Caiaphas, the high priest, praised the prophets and persecuted Jesus,

and the church of the popes praised the Savior and persecuted the saints. And multitudes now, both in the church and in the world, applaud the courage and fortitude of the patriarchs, the prophets and apostles and martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness or foolishness the same faithfulness in the standing for the truth today. How we love to garnish the tombs of those that are past, and then when somebody tries to live according to the principles, we have that tendency to want to talk against them, belittle them, and persecute them.”

We see the virtue of many saints throughout the centuries — Noah, Abraham, Joseph, David. I started making a list this week of those who I could find in the Bible who really stood alone. We could talk about Job, Daniel, Stephen, the psalmist, the three Hebrew children, Elijah, Rahab, Able, Enoch. I mean, you could make a large list of men and women in the Old Testament and the New Testament who stood alone when the crowd was going in a different direction, and there have been many in church history that we've talked about.

A week or so ago I mentioned to you a man by the name of Balthasar Hubmaier. He was executed March 10th, 1528, in Vienna, and I read you this story and gave you his words at his execution. And even when his hair and beard began to burn, he cried, "Jesus, soon," and soon he was dead. Now, this man was a very intelligent man, a very educated man. He came out of Catholicism into Protestantism and then took on the beliefs of the Baptists during that time. This man's motto was "Divine truth is immortal," and he was put on the stretcher, put on the racks and stretched by one of his best friends. Who needs enemies with friends like that! And he recanted of his beliefs, and then after that, he recanted of his recant. He lived to be only 48 years of age. He was martyred, but he had some struggles. He had to come through the issue of infant baptism and some other issues. He hadn't even been saved all that many years, but he wrote twenty-six books and tracts in that short period of time. But when he was carried out to be executed, at his execution, his wife exhorted to fortitude. In other words, his wife is standing there exhorting him to stand for the Lord Jesus Christ, and three days later, she was drowned. They drowned many of the Baptists to make a mockery of their baptism by immersion.

The virtue of standing alone

Now, we're going to talk about, first of all, the virtue of standing alone, and you can rest assured that not only as a preacher but as a Christian, if you're going to truly follow the principles of the Word of God, you're going to stand alone in society, you're going to stand alone in your families and with your relatives, you're going to stand alone maybe even where you work, and I want to preach this message this morning to encourage you so that when people shy away and don't want to have anything to do with you and those kinds of things, I want you to understand that this happened to Jesus, this happened to Paul, this happened to Daniel, this happened to Noah and many others that we find in the Word of God. You've heard the old saying, "Silence is golden." Well, sometimes it's just yellow. Back home we call it "yeller."

As we come to this passage, I want you to see Paul's virtue; I want you to see the apostle Paul's integrity, and I want you to see the confidence in the Lord that Paul had and the love for the Lord Jesus that he had. Now, verse 6 has already told us that Paul is ready to be offered as a sacrifice and that he knew that his time of departure was at hand. He's talking about leaving this world through martyrdom. In verse 18 Paul said, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work..." Let me stop right there. Now, what is the apostle Paul saying? He just told us in verse 6, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." He already knows what is ahead of him, but now we read in verse 18 that he says, "the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work." Notice he did not say that the Lord will deliver me from every evil worker, because evil workers brought Paul into court. He stood before an evil worker, Nero, who had persecuted many believers.

So in verse 18, we see Paul's integrity, his virtue, and he says that "the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work." What is the apostle Paul saying in this passage? Well, he's not referring to death itself. He knows he's going to die. He's not referring to being saved from the persecutors. I mean, he's being persecuted. He's in prison; he was expecting execution. So what is he saying? I believe that when he says in this verse that "the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work," he's saying that God will keep him pure. I believe he's saying that God will keep him holy. I believe he's saying that God will keep his faith steady. I believe he's saying to you and me that he did not want to shrink from facing death for Christ's sake; he did not want to compromise; he did not want to go into apostasy; he did not want to revert back and apostatize and blaspheme the name of the Lord. So I believe Paul is saying that God would keep him from compromising and fearing during this trial and the execution that he would be going through.

Now, when I say "the virtue of standing alone," I'm talking about integrity, holiness, uprightness, and I'm saying that Paul's life matched his doctrine. How many do we know in our society today that their life is totally contrary to the doctrine that they say they believe? In Philippians chapter 3, we read some things about the apostle Paul that are quite fascinating. In verses 9 through 12, Paul said, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: ¹⁰That I may know him" — Here's Paul's heart — "and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; ¹¹If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. ¹²Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." In other words, Paul is just saying in these verses, "I love the Lord." He's saying in verse 10, "I want to know the power of His resurrection. I want to know the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death." He's just saying, "My heart is for God. I want everything God has for me. I want to be faithful to God." That's Paul's heart. And as we turn back to 2 Timothy, I believe that this is the apostle Paul's prayer. In verse 18, again, he said, "And the

Lord" — Notice — "shall deliver me from every evil work." He's saying, "The Lord will keep me pure because I'm committed unto Him; the Lord will keep me from denying Him because I have trusted Him and this is for the cause of Christ."

Now, as I mentioned a moment ago, we find that Jesus loved and died alone, and 1 Peter 2:21 tells us that He became our example and we're to suffer for Him. In Noah's day, as I read from the quote a moment ago, Noah built and voyaged alone. In Genesis chapter 6, verses 5 through 8, and also in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 7, we read that Noah did stand alone. It is estimated that there were several million living in the days of Noah. I don't know whether that's true or not, but it's been estimated that there were several million and Noah stood alone and led his family to the building of that ark. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 7, says basically that by building the ark and the saving of his family, Noah condemned the world; he condemned the world by his actions because he stood alone.

The Bible speaks of Noah being perfect and righteous in his generation. I'm telling you, when we go back and read some of these stories in the Bible, we need to realize that for 120 years this man preached and worked on that ark — and when you talk about building a big ship in your backyard with no water around, you can imagine the laughter and the mocking and the scorn that he took during that time. Noah stood alone. The Lord Jesus stood alone. He hung on the cross with others forsaking Him. He stood alone. We find that Abraham wandered around. The Bible says in Hebrews 11, verse 8, that Abraham went out not knowing where he was going. He wandered and worshiped alone. He left everything that he had going to the Promised Land.

Daniel was another one. He dined and prayed alone. In Daniel chapter 1, verse 8, we find that Daniel refused to eat the dainties at the banquets of the king. And not only that, in Daniel 6, verse 10, when they passed a law against praying to any god other than the Babylonian gods, we find that Daniel continued to do what he had always done, and we find that he stood alone during this time — and please understand that Daniel was of the top three in the kingdom.

Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone, 1 Kings 8, verse 24, and Romans 11, verse 3, tells us that Elijah prayed to God and said, "Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life." Now, there were 7,000 that had not bowed the knee to Baal, but Elijah felt all alone because he's having to face the enemy by himself. The children of Israel had a mixed worship between Baal worship and God. They had kind of blended them together, just like churches are doing today across America. Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone. You know, sometimes we get to thinking we're all alone, but many of God's people have always spent a lot of time alone. And according to 2 Samuel 12:14, we'll either glorify God in our lives or we'll give the enemies the opportunity to blaspheme. If we don't live according to the way we say we believe, we give the enemy the opportunity to blaspheme the Word of God through our sin and our rebellion.

The cost of standing alone

Now, the second thing I want you to notice here in Timothy is the cost of standing alone, that is, swimming against the tide — the peer pressure, the culture pressure. The crowd is usually wrong, and there is a high cost that has to be paid when standing alone. As we come back to verse 16, this is probably the first hearing to establish a charge against the apostle. This would be like a preliminary hearing which opened for his final trial which led to his execution. And maybe this is his first public examination standing before Nero, the tribunal at Rome, and Paul is to give his defense and so forth.

Paul said, *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me..."* Now, Paul had a lot of friends. I mean, just read chapter 4, verse 21. He had friends in different areas. Paul had a lot of friends in Rome. All you've got to do is read Romans chapter 16. Paul gives a list of some wonderful people who are in the church there. But he's saying here, *"At my first"* — probably his first public hearing at the Roman tribunal. He's saying basically that no one stood with him, that is, to bear testimony for him or stood as support for him. It was as if he was standing there all alone. You say, "Why?" Well, very possibly Nero put fear in people's hearts. You know, one time the city was set on fire, and they blamed the Christians, and it was Nero who had believers coated with pitch and set afire so that they would light up the garden parties. So you can imagine the man of God standing there and he's going to court, and nobody came to his defense. Nobody came and said, "Let me give a testimony for the sake of the apostle Paul. Let us come and testify of his character. Let us come and testify of the fact that he's not guilty of the charges that you brought against him"; in other words, "Give us the chance to testify that that didn't happen with the apostle Paul." So it was probably out of fear.

Now, here's something very interesting. Paul said in verse 16, *"I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."* Paul never got bitter over this, and he had their interest in mind even before his execution. He realized the weakness of our faith. And I know of two others who said the same thing. In Luke 23:34, as the Lord Jesus cried from the cross, He said the same thing. He said, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;"* and then in Acts chapter 7, verse 60, as Stephen is being stoned and becoming a martyr in the New Testament, he basically said the same thing. So at his first hearing in court, nobody stood with Paul, and he said, *"I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."* He didn't have any bitterness.

But I want you to think about if that were you standing all alone in court. I know a man back home who went to court about 12 years ago, and because of things that people said, friends forsook him, family forsook him. He's been in prison now for 12 years, and knowing that he was innocent, those who could have come and testified for this man's defense didn't want to get involved. That's the kind of society that we live in today — just don't want to get involved because it may affect me, my job, or my family. And I've known of many others. There was a man last year,

a preacher in this county, who got into some trouble with the IRS, and some things happened through his church and some people got angry with him. Over half of his congregation left during this time. He actually got arrested. And I called him up and told him, "When you go to court, I don't need to know whether you're guilty or innocent; if you need me, I'll be there." He started crying on the phone. I said, "I'll stand with you whatever." I know the man. And there were others who began pointing their fingers and said this and said that and whatever, and I found out this week what it was really all about, and he was not guilty of the things that folks had said. But many backed off. They took their hands off of it, just kind of took their hands off, didn't want to get involved, didn't want to be associated with him at that time. About seven or eight years ago we saw this happen to a political leader in Montgomery in a Federal court, and I've seen it happen many other times.

Now, turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 4, to begin with. I'm just telling you that whether you be a preacher, whether you be a husband, whether you be a housewife, or whether you be a young person who loves the Lord or whether you be a grandmother or whether you be a fisherman or whatever you're doing, I want you to understand that if you are going to stand for the Lord, you're going to stand alone. I'm going to show you in a few moments who stands with you, but if you're going to stand for the Lord, there's going to be many times that you're going to stand alone; you're going to feel all alone as if all have forsaken you.

This wasn't the first time that Paul was alone. In Acts chapter 9, verses 6 through 9, when Paul got saved, he was blinded for about three days and he was alone. In Galatians chapter 1 in verse 17 we find that the apostle Paul was alone. He spent some time in Arabia. He was all alone with the Lord. And not only that, he also says in 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 15, "[This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me...](#)" Paul knew what it was like to be alone. And he wasn't alone for no reason. It was for the cause of Jesus Christ. He would not compromise the truth. Paul stood for the truth; he preached the truth; he lived the truth, so he spent a lot of time alone.

Now, I'm going to be reading in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, and then we're going to go to 2 Corinthians and look at a couple of verses there. You need to realize that when you get more serious with God, people have a tendency to take their hands off of you — How many of you believe that? — maybe family, maybe friends, maybe neighbors, maybe even church members. But I'm telling you that the more serious you get, the more that people will kind of back away and get just a little bit of distance from you. As a matter of fact, that's what Job actually said in Job chapter 19. To forsake friends in the days of calamity is not uncommon. Read Proverbs 14:20 and 19:4. There are professional friends; did you know that? There are those who will love you and be with you and love to be in your company as long as you've got money and influence. Job made this statement in Job 19:13: "[He hath put my brethren far from me](#)" — Now, we know Job was a righteous man, and he said — "[and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.](#)" Now, listen

carefully as I read, ¹⁴"My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. ¹⁵They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. ¹⁶I called my servant, and he gave *me* no answer; I intreated him with my mouth. ¹⁷My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's *sake* of mine own body" (Proverbs 19:14-17). In other words, Job is saying everybody has forsaken me — my wife, my friends, my family, my servants, my maids, my kinsfolk. He's saying all have forsaken me.

I'm just saying to you that there are times when we'll be standing alone when we stand truly for the Lord Jesus Christ. Here in our own church we've dealt with issues of discipline; we've dealt with issues of divorce, the communion, music, public schools, birth control, standards, the issue of sports, the issue of evangelism being done the wrong way, and we have watched how people react to those things. I have sat in business meetings with five deacons in the meeting and not have one of them speak up for me. And then in one meeting, about a week later one came and said, "I'm with you, brother." I said, "That would have been a big help about a week ago" — because he could have changed the whole course of things.

I know a little bit about this. I may not know near what the apostle Paul knew, but I know just a little bit about it, even in this church — and thank God for you for standing for truth, but if you remember, when we started dealing with the issue of communion about five years ago in this church, I started this alone and started trying to convince some of you that this is good and this is right. But I started that campaign all alone and said, "We've got to do something about this. We've got to fix this." And I'm glad you got on board. But when I started, it wasn't looking good, and I'm thinking, "Is anybody going to look at this and study this and pray over this and do a little fasting and whatever?" And you know what happened and the end results of it.

Over the years — and especially in the last three or four years — preachers have called me with a little sarcasm, and things would come out of their mouths toward either my doctrine or our practice or the way we do church or those kinds of things. One called last year and just basically said, "You're wrong for your direction," and I actually told him, "Well, I don't want to be wrong." I said, "I don't want to be out of God's will. I want to be right. I want to be in God's will." And I said, "Would you drive over here or let me drive over to your church and would you sit down with me with a King James Bible and show me where I'm wrong and get me straightened out? I don't want to be in apostasy." Well, he hung up the phone. I've asked many in that way. I've said, "Will you help me? Will you help me get right with God and get right with my doctrine?" And, you know, there's not one to this day who's sat down and done that, but they want to criticize me.

I know what it's like to walk a little bit alone. I know what it's like with friends and how people just kind of take their hands off of you. You can get sick sometimes and people will back away from you. They're afraid they're going to catch something. I mean, you feel like you're a leper or something. You know, you call up somebody and say, "Hey, I want some fellowship, man."

I mean, I'm simply saying to you that the more serious you get with God, you're going to find that people are going to start backing away. It's just a fact. So we have to make decisions. You've got to make decisions in your family. Some of you have had to make decisions in your family.

Now, let me give you the other verses. Just write these verses down. I'm going to read from 1 Corinthians 4, but I challenge you to read 2 Corinthians 4, verses 8 through 12. Look at the things that the apostle Paul went through and even opposition from the people of God sometimes. Look at the things he went through — shipwreck, beaten, stoned, everything else just for Christ's sake. He paid the cost. And I challenge you to also read 2 Corinthians 11, verses 23 through 33.

Paul told the church at Galatia in Galatians 4:16, *"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?"* Paul lost his health; he lost his finances; he lost many friends; he ultimately lost his life. He lost the popularity that all the preachers are trying to get today. He was ostracized by his own nation. It was the leaders in his nation who delivered him over to the Romans where he ended up in court. He lost other preacher friends. I'm saying to you that Paul lost every earthly thing possible, from health to finances to friends to whatever. Even his own nation didn't want him to live inside the boundaries. He lost everything. I mean, just read about his life. Read through the book of Acts. Read through Paul's epistles and just look at the things that he went through for Christ — and we're so ashamed of the Lord today. We're afraid that somebody is going to say something about us or whatever if we are standing for the Lord Jesus Christ and not compromising.

Jesus said in Luke 14:28 that you better count the cost. You know, we have a tendency to tell people, "Oh, you need to get saved, and everything is going to be wonderful. Your marriage is going to be better. You're going to have a lot of money. You're going to be able to take vacations, and your life is just going to be so wonderful. You'll have perfect health and you'll be driving a Mercedes and Cadillacs and swimming pools in the backyard." We need to tell them the truth. When you sign up for the Kingdom of God and the church that Jesus started, according to Matthew 16, we need to tell them, "Hey, sister, hey brother, count the cost." Now, this straight and narrow path is a good path. It's straight; it's narrow; it's perfect; it's leading to the Kingdom of God, but we need to tell folks that the broad way is headed the other way, and the crowd is going that way. We need to let folks know when they get saved, "Now, when you sign up, I want you to understand that there are some things that are going to happen to you."

Now, in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 we read the reason that the apostle was going through the things he went through. He said in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 1, *"Let a man so account of us" — "us" is the apostles of chapter 3, verse 22, like Paul and Apollos and Cephas — "us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."* I preached to you Wednesday night a little bit about the mysteries of God in Ephesians chapter 1, verses 9, 10, and 11. It has to do with

the doctrines of Christ, the truths of Christ. And Paul said in verse 2, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found"— successful? Now, that's another translation, I'm sure, but he said — "that a man be found" — What? — "faithful," not successful. We'll be successful in God's eyes.

Now, let me just point out a few things. I'm going to read from verses 9 through 14 in 1 Corinthians chapter 4. Notice some of the things that are mentioned here. This is describing Paul's life. He said in verse 9, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death" — in other words, always in danger of dying — "for we are made a spectacle" — We get our word "theater" from that — "for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." None of us want to be made fun of, do we? We don't want people laughing at us. Nobody wants to be made a spectacle. Nobody wants to be put on center stage and laughed at and mocked and scorned — none of us. I mean, human nature says, "I don't want any of that." But Paul was beyond human nature, and he said, "This is our life. We're a spectacle. We're put on stage. We're laughed at by the world and by angels and by men." And he said in verses 10 through 13, "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. ¹¹Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; ¹²And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: ¹³Being defamed" — that is, to speak harsh against — "we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." Offscouring means like dirt or dishwater. He's saying, "This is what people think of us." Can you see the TV preachers saying this? I'll bet they've never read this. If they have, they cut it out of their Bible. Paul said in verse 14, "I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you." See, some in the Corinthian church had even denied Paul's apostleship.

So what are we saying? We're saying that there is a cost to pay. Now, I hope you take this message the right way. I want to encourage you in the fact that when you sign up for God's Kingdom to live for Him and so forth, there is going to be opposition and there's going to be persecution, but I want you to understand that as we serve the Lord, there are others who have gone before us. The Lord Himself has gone before us. This is the way the Christian life is — unless you want to be popular and want to be liked by everyone. Now, we all want to be liked. We all want to be popular, but God says that's not the way it's going to be in My Kingdom. So we've got to make a decision.

Now, I'm going to read just a few verses from Ephesians 5, and I want to focus in on some words here about jesting and foolish talking. I've actually had people say to me, "Well, you don't know how to have fun." Well, I went back to the Bible after I was told that some years back, and I said, "Where's 'fun' in the Bible?" Have you ever thought about that? Where's the word "fun" in the Bible? "You just don't know how to have fun." You know, if you're talking about joking and

sarcasm and foolishness being fun, no, I don't want to know how to do that. As a matter of fact, I have joy, I have delight, and I have peace. Now, if you have joy and delight and peace, we can get along; we can get together like we did here last Sunday night and just have a nice little fellowship and enjoy each other's company with no criticism, no off-color jokes, no sarcasm, no foolish talking, no jesting. We can just have a good time in the Lord; Amen? Don't you get sick of this stuff? Now, I'm not saying you can't talk about fishing and hunting, but the more serious that you get and the more you want to talk about the Lord and holiness and the fruit of the Spirit, I'm simply saying to you that people start backing away. You're not invited to their socials. You're not invited to their parties. They don't feel comfortable around you.

Have you ever thought about that? If you have joy and delight and peace in your heart, why would somebody who says he loves the Lord be uncomfortable around you and not want to be in your presence and not want you in their circles and their socials and those kinds of things? I've been told so many times, "You need to lighten up." Well, I don't want to get any lighter. I enjoy life. I enjoy having a good time, but I want to tell you something. Have you ever heard somebody say some joke and say, "Oh, I was just joking?" Have you ever had people do that? Do you know what I believe? I believe what they told you the first time is really in their heart. I believe they told you the truth the first time, and then they tried to lighten it up so you wouldn't get mad at them. God speaks against this. I asked a brother last Sunday night standing out in the parking lot, "How many people do you know right now who want to talk about holiness and want to talk about the fruit of the Spirit?" and he said, "I can name just a few." It's true. Now, you think about this. How many really want to get together and talk about those things and not a bunch of garbage and foolishness?

Notice what the Lord said. He said in Ephesians chapter 5 in verse 3, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints." All right. How many are saints here this morning? Say "Amen" if you're a saint. Ladies you can say it too. Are you saints? Okay. Now, notice he says that as we become saints, here are some things we've got to get rid of. He said in verse 4, "Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking" — All you hear in the world and in most churches today is foolish talking — "nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks." Do you know what jesting is? Jestings is laughter at the expense of decency. You get together with the brethren to have fellowship with one another and there's criticism and always cutting down and joking and things like that, and there's no edification in it whatsoever. And this doesn't mean we can't enjoy ourselves. Again, the little fellowship we had here the other night, you know, it's good; it's enjoyable; it's peaceful; it's edifying; it's uplifting. But there is no edification in joking and criticism and cutting and sarcasm and all these things.

You ask, "Why is he preaching on this? Has he seen some of that this week?" No, I haven't seen any of that. Even in the preachers' meeting, there was seriousness as we talked about the Lord. I'm just saying to you that when you get serious about God and you want to talk about God,

you want to talk about holiness and the fruit of the Spirit and things like that, you're going to find that there are many carnal people who don't want to talk about those things and don't want you in their presence, and they're going to say, "Well, he's just a little too religious. He's going to spoil our party." Family has been afraid to invite me to anything because they're afraid I'll say something about the Lord at their reunions and parties and things like that. And you know what? They better be afraid, because I'm going to say something. So they have the right assumption to begin with — Amen? — because I am going to talk about my Savior. I'll talk just a little bit about cars and hunting and fishing — you know, just a little bit of that — but it's got to come back to the Book, man. It's got to come back to our Lord and our Savior and what He's done for us and what He's accomplished for us. It's got to come back to that; Amen?

Now, as we consider this subject, I want to challenge you to read Hebrews chapter 11, verses 35 through the end of the chapter, probably around verse 40 or so, the great heroes of faith. You've heard me mention this several times each year. Some of the bravest people that I've ever known on the face of this earth are those who have given their lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I don't have some kind of martyr mentality — I don't have that — but I'm simply saying that we should live with the attitude that we would be willing to be a martyr for Christ. I've had people say, "Well, preacher, do you think we'll ever have to die for the Lord?" I've told many, "No. You won't live for Him now, so you won't have to die for Him later." I've told many that. Boy, they get mad, get upset. Late last year I told a man out in Grand Bay, "No, you don't have to worry about dying for the Lord." He was thinking about the future and all that. I said, "You won't even live for Him now." I said, "You'll be okay." He's never visited back here since then.

Read what God has to say about those who would not compromise for anything. They lived in animal skins, caves and dens. They were sawn asunder, persecuted. The apostle Paul fit into that category. The crowd is usually wrong. I'll say that for the third time. Read Hebrews chapter 13, verses 12 through 14, where the Lord says to go outside the camp and bear the reproach of Christ. The Lord couldn't even die in His own city, Jerusalem. He died outside that city. And basically what Hebrews chapter 13 is saying when it says to bear His reproach is to be identified with Christ. Do you remember Simon of Cyrene who was picked out from the crowd to help carry the cross of Christ before the public? Well, that's what the Lord wants us to do for Him today. We're to bear the cross and go outside, leaving the camp of the world and apostate religion and stand alone. In other words, Hebrews 13, verses 12, 13, and 14, is a call to separation. We have our altar and we're to go outside the camp, follow the Lord outside the camp. In order for God to meet with Moses in the Old Testament, Moses had to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp because there was so much filthiness inside the camp of Israel.

So we must go outside the camp. We must bear the reproach. And I'm saying to you that compromise should never even be in our vocabulary as a Christian. Proverbs 23, verse 23, says, "Buy the truth, and sell it not..." I know something about that verse. We know that the truth is

absolute, and we know that the truth costs something; Amen? We know that it costs something because you have to buy the truth. Salvation is free, but anything else you get is going to cost you something. You're going to have to pay for it.

I'm simply saying that the truth is costly. It must be purchased and it can be sold, and it's sold through compromise. It's better to obey than to sacrifice. If we compromise in one area, it will be a lot easier to compromise in another area. I've been there and I've done that. You compromise this one little, bitty thing, and the next time something comes up, it's easier to compromise with something a little bit bigger and then something a little bit bigger, and before you know it, you're completely compromised. We always lose something every time we compromise. Let me restate that. Every time we compromise, we lose something and we usually never get it back. Now, you think about that. When we compromise, we lose something and we never seem to ever get that back.

The reward for standing alone

My third and last point this morning is the reward for standing alone. Now, notice with me as we come to 2 Timothy chapter 4, and this time I want to come back to verse 17. What is the reward? I'm going to mention a few things. First of all, obviously, the presence of the Lord, deliverance, the Kingdom of God, preservation — those are rewards. But Paul said here in verse 17, ["Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me..."](#) Now, just think about that for a moment. In other words, the reward for standing alone is the presence of God, and there's nothing that can even come close to being equal to the presence of God.

Do you remember the three Hebrew children in Daniel 3, verses 24 and 25? They're put in the fiery furnace, and the king looks in there. He put three in there. He knows he put only three in there, but he saw a fourth in there that is called the Son of God. Do you remember that? God's presence was in the fiery furnace heated up, and when they came out, they didn't even have the smell of smoke on them. You can go into a convenience store and get the smell of smoke on you, but they didn't even have the smell of smoke on them. The Lord's presence was with them. And the apostle Paul is saying, "I'm alone. Nobody stood with me. Nobody came to testify. Nobody came to give a word in my defense," but Paul said the Lord was there — and he kind of thought that was enough.

You've heard me tell this story. I don't believe in debates, but I did do a debate one time. In Selma, Alabama, at the Picket Auditorium on August 1st and 2nd I debated with another denomination, and I guess I allowed myself to be provoked into doing it. I was knocking on doors by myself, and I had little cassette tapes with a short 15-minute message on them. When I moved down here, we used to put them in phone booths, and a man who used to work at the Welcome Center in Mississippi, Alabama, kept them out there. We copied thousands, and I gave everybody in Selma one of those. I've thought about doing that again. But I gave everybody a gospel tract.

I knocked on doors every week and gave everybody a little cassette tape. We didn't have CDs at that time. And then a man who ran a route in Selma every week put them in phone booths. We fixed them where you couldn't tape over them. There's a way to do that unless a person knows how to reverse it.

Well, I got a phone call from a preacher from another denomination, and he said to me, "I don't appreciate you leaving this at this house." And I said, "I don't know your church members. We're just trying to reach the lost. We're not trying to get other people's sheep." They believe in baptismal regeneration, so you know what kind of church it was. So, anyway, he said, "I'd like to debate you." I said, "I'm not interested in debates." I said, "You take care of your business and I'll take care of mine. I'll leave that family alone." This was 20-something years ago. So he called again and called again, and for nearly six months he paid \$75 every week to put a huge article in the paper. It took up about a third or half page, and it was either titled the name of my church or it was titled "Robert Reed." And every week somebody would bring me the paper, and I'd read it, and I'd pitch it aside. I cut some of the articles out and stuck them in my desk drawer in the office.

So finally one day somebody handed me a paper, and I read it, and, boy, you talk about slanderous. I picked up the phone and said, "You name the place and time." So at the Pickard Auditorium on August the first and second, we went three hours each night with moderators and filmed it. I believe the first night was on baptismal regeneration, and the next night was whether or not a person is born in sin. So, anyway, I was scared. The preacher went off to debate school. They actually fired him after this debate, but he went off to debate school for two weeks. And I didn't know what to do, so I told my wife, "Well, I better spend at least one day in the woods or somewhere." So I got in my car and left. I went to Montgomery and got a motel room and spent that night in prayer and fasting before the debate. My moderator came up from Mobile. He still lives here in Mobile. He had about 15 preachers in his denomination there. My wife and I and my moderator and his wife walked in, and I'm scared, man. I've got butterflies in my stomach. I had never debated. I didn't know how to do a debate. I don't really even believe it's right. What am I doing here? You know, all these things are going through my mind, and I'm scared. I spent the night crying to God, praying and fasting.

So we walked into this huge auditorium, and we were there alone. Later about four or five hundred people came for the debate. Our whole church came — about a hundred people — and then his church and then some other people. I guess they just wanted to see what was going to happen, see the slaughter. So, anyway, I walked in; I'm scared; I'm thinking in my mind, "I don't know if I can do this," and I walked through the door. We turned and walked down this long aisle toward the big stage up there, and my moderator and I walked upon the stage. I turned toward the podium, and God came over me and gave me such a peace and a presence. I don't think I'd ever experienced that before. And I turned around to my moderator and said, "Don't worry. The battle has already been won."

We started that debate — three hours with breaks in between. The preacher's wife stuck her tongue out at me, the people jeered at me. I told the preacher's wife from the pulpit to put her tongue back in her mouth, and they didn't really like that. So to make a long story short, on the second night, the other preacher quit before it was over. I met him at the door, and he shook my hand and said, "I've got to rethink some things," and a preacher from Mississippi shook my hand and said, "I've got to go back and restudy my doctrine." But that night I experienced the presence of God in such a way that I can hardly even explain it to you, and without God's presence, I couldn't have gone through the debate — and God didn't give me a sense of His presence until I walked on that stage. He didn't give it to me the night before. He didn't give it to me a week before when I was worried about this. He gave it to me when I stepped on the stage, and I knew then that it was over. I said, "It's over. We've won" — and you know what I mean when I say, "We've won."

Well, in verse 17 Paul said, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear..." and this was accomplished because Paul was in Rome, and Rome was the capital of the Gentile world. Everything went out from Rome. So throughout all the empire, according to Romans 15:9, all heard preaching through the apostle Paul, and here he is standing before the courts. So the world did get to hear the gospel through this man's preaching and through this event. And in the latter part of the verse, Paul said, "and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." You ask, "Who in the world is the lion?" Well, the lion is either Satan or Nero or both because they're both bloody tyrants. And Paul did talk about men as beasts. In 1 Corinthians 15:32 he said, "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus," and here, again, in Romans 15:9 he said, "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Did Paul die? Yes. So that's not what he's talking about. Do you remember what I said earlier? I believe that this is not a declaration that he would escape death, but he's saying that he would be delivered from the temptation and the fear of denying the Lord; in other words, he's saying, "I will not submit. I will not fear." He's saying, "I will stand because Christ's presence is with me" — because he knew he was going to be executed.

Let me tell you what Paul did. Paul got his eyes off of the lion and put them on the Lamb. Now, whether the lion is Nero or whether it's the entire empire or whether it's Satan or whatever it is, Paul got his eyes off of the lion and kept his eyes on the Lamb, and he's saying the Lord delivered me. Notice that's not all. He said in verse 18 of 2 Timothy chapter 4, "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work..." He's saying the Lord is going to preserve me and keep me from denying Him. And he goes on to say, "and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom..." Notice his closing remarks. He speaks of the way of hope. Hope produces this kind of glory. He said, "to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." If you take care of your life, God will take care of your death. If Christians will serve God faithfully, then they will be used of God even in their death, whether it be a martyr's death or if you just lay on your deathbed and die with your family and

friends around. Whatever it is, if we are faithful to God, then God will use us not only as He's used us in this life, but He'll use us in our death as well.

Now, one last verse. I want to come back to verse 6 as we come to a close. You remember the verse we preached from last week, 1 Corinthians 15:58, "[always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.](#)" This ties in with this passage this morning. Isaiah 8, verses 13 and 14, says, "[Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.](#)"¹⁴ [And he shall be for a sanctuary...](#)" If God is our fear and our dread, He shall be for a sanctuary; in other words, He's going to be a place of safety, a place where He will preserve us, and Paul said He's preserved me unto His heavenly kingdom, and then he just closes and cries out, "[to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.](#)"

Second John 8 warns us about not losing our rewards. John talks about a full reward. Have you read that? He talks about a full reward, that we not come short of a full reward, that we not compromise. And I say this again to encourage you as a church because I know things affect you the same way they do me — the ridicule and all the things that go along with trying to serve the Lord, being faithful, trying to keep a New Testament church in order and in line and within the boundaries of God's Word. I realize that it affects you just like it does me. I needed this message, so I studied on it. I figured the preachers needed it Thursday morning, so I preached on it, and I figured that you needed it this morning because it was originally prepared for you to begin with, and I figured that you would need this because this has been a help to me this week alone.

Now, let's close in verses 6, 7, and 8 of 2 Timothy chapter 4. I believe we read these verses last week as we were looking at the subject of abounding in the work of the Lord. Now, let's read these slowly and look at this. This is Paul again, his last letter, standing before the courts, standing before Nero, standing alone — of course, with the presence of God, but no one taking up his defense, no one coming and standing beside him just for some support while he's going through these things, and he said in verse 6, "[For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.](#)" Paul did this, by the way, for Christ's sake and he did it for you and me so that the gospel would go out to all. He said in verse 7, "[I have fought a good fight...](#)" Do you agree this morning that we're in a fight? Do you agree with that? It's a fight. And, by the way, the fight never ends. It never ends. It's like being in a canoe or a boat with a paddle in a river going downstream. You've got to constantly keep paddling. What happens if you quit paddling? You start drifting. You can start paddling again, but you're still not where you used to be, and you can quit paddling for so long that you drift off somewhere that you may never get back from. You can't quit paddling, and we cannot quit fighting. We are in a spiritual battle, a spiritual warfare.

And Paul said also, "[I have finished my course.](#)" How many have we seen over the years get on the starting line and say, "Here I am. I've gotten saved and I'm taking off." That is not the

issue. The issue is that finish line. You see, a baby can crawl across the starting line. You can take one of these babies back here and they can get across that starting line. The key is coming across the finish line, and Paul said, "I have finished *my course*." Every one of us, whether you're a housewife or a husband — whatever — we have a course that we're running. We're in a race.

And then Paul says, "I have kept the faith." He's talking about the body of truth, not just Jesus died for my sins. "The faith" is referring to everything that's included in what we believe here in the Bible. And then he says these very encouraging words in verse 8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." So Paul has fought a good fight; he's kept the faith; he's finished the course, and then in verses 17 and 18 he's saying the Lord is going to preserve me unto His Heavenly Kingdom. He's saying the Lord delivered me out of the mouth of the lion, the Lord has delivered me from every evil work. He's saying the Lord is keeping me from compromising.

And then Paul said in the middle of verse 8, "and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." This is a promise. How many believe John 3:16 is a promise? Why is it that most Christians don't believe that 2 Timothy 4:8 is a promise? This is just as much a promise from the same Book as John chapter 3 and verse 16. God has promised you and me a crown of righteousness if we run the race, fight the good fight of faith, and finish our course. If we do what God has said and we keep the faith, He's promised this to us. Just think of all the thousands of trophies that were given away this year in sports or in all the competitions in music and spelling and the big trophy in the Super Bowl that they kiss and hug and fly back home on the plane with and put it on a shelf. It'll just collect dust one of these days. There is no earthly crown or earthly reward or popularity that can compare to a crown of righteousness, and God is saying that we have a crown of righteousness laid up for us if we love His appearing.

Let's come and close in prayer.

Lord, we thank You for this day and we thank You for the blessings You've given to us. We thank You, Lord, for Your Word. We thank You for the Psalms, the songs of Zion. Lord, help us in our minds to some way comprehend the things that You gave the apostle Paul to write to us. Lord, it's so easy to lose sight of this. Lord, it's so easy for me as a preacher to lose sight of this. And, Lord, I pray that You'll help us to realize the fact that we will stand alone if we stand for You, and, Lord, help us to realize the reward of standing for You. We thank You, Lord, for loving us. We thank You for saving us, for it's in Jesus Christ's name we pray, Amen.
