

[Story] A veteran named Robert walks into the bar and grabs a drink. The man to his right, John, begins a conversation with him, and they find out that they were both veterans from Vietnam. Robert says, “I was only a helicopter mechanic, but I have seen all the horrors of that war.” John says, “Oh, I still have nightmares of all the people that I’ve killed. It’s horrible!” Robert says, “I totally understand you. I’ve killed 15 men.” John says, “Wait, but you said you were only a helicopter mechanic.” Robert says, “Well, I’ve never said that I was a good one.”

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Today, we recognize and give thanks for the service and sacrifice of the men and women who have served in the armed forces. We honor their commitment to duty and willingness to sacrifice of themselves. They were willing to fight or stand up for our country. Thank you, all veterans, for your service and sacrifice. Thank you.

While recognizing our veterans’ service and sacrifice, we have a question before us—“What do I stand for?” This question can have several answers depending on our background or how we were raised up or what we were taught while we were growing up.

What do you stand for? I’m sure if we wrote down 5 answers and took a poll, a lot of us may have one or two similar or like-minded answers. As I was observing the presidential election this year and its voting counting last week, I was wondering, “Who stands for America?” Surely, Democrats stand for Joe Biden and Republicans for Donald Trump. Unfortunately, I am not so sure who stands for America as I was observing how people were treating others who don’t have the same view or opinion on the issues like they have. It’s awful! No basic mannerism whatsoever! Hostility is everywhere. It sounds like, and seems like, all people stand up for themselves and their ego. Aren’t we all, Americans, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all? I am wondering. I am grieving. And, I am also praying for our nation nowadays. I would like to invite all of you who are worshipping with us to pray for our nation. Our nation needs our prayers.

Let’s talk about physical standing now. There used to be a tradition for men to stand up when women enter or leave the room. However, nowadays standing just because of a woman’s presence will come off as weird to most people. It’s more

appropriate to stand when being introduced. Many of us stand to cheer our favorite football team such as Denver Broncos, Seattle Seahawks, or Las Vegas Raiders when they make a big play. At concerts, the bands sometimes get standing ovations. During the national anthem, we would also stand at attention to honor and respect our country. I think all of us stand for something in our lives. There are many reasons that cause us to stand.

How about as a church, what do we stand for? As a church I am sure some would say we stand for Christianity or Jesus as we sang the opening hymn today. Then, what does it mean by standing up for Jesus for you?

Biblically, standing up for Jesus means we exhibit the characteristics of “kin-dom” citizen as described by our Lord Jesus in the first 9 verses of Matthew 5! Standing up for Jesus means we stand out in this world because of the characteristics we exhibit. The world will notice us, but not always favorably.

I believe this is exactly what Jesus is saying in Matthew 5:10, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Those blessed ones are the ones who stand up for Jesus by exhibiting the characteristics of “kin-dom” citizen described in verses 3 through 9 of Matthew 5—poor, mourning, meek, hungry, and thirsting for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart and peacemakers.

2 Timothy 3:12 says, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” The word persecution emphasizes the concept of pursuit or to systematically pursue a program to oppress, persecute, and harass.

It says that we will be pursued by the world as we stand up for Christ Jesus. We need to be careful to understand what Jesus is saying here. Blessed are those who are persecuted for “righteousness sake.” Christians are persecuted for “righteousness sake” or as Luke describes it is for Jesus’ sake.

Jesus offered “the kin-dom of heaven” only to those who are persecuted because of righteousness (5:10) and because of Jesus (5:11). “Kin-dom” honor is a blessing on those who have actively stood up for Jesus and have been persecuted for it.

Verse 11 of Matthew 5 personalizes the message of Matthew 5:10 by changing the word “those” to “you!” Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Jesus.

It is no longer “those” but “you.” You will be persecuted; You will be on the receiving end of all kinds of evil spoken against you falsely on the account of your relationship with Jesus. It now becomes personal!

You will be pursued. The world will systematically pursue a program to oppress and persecute and harass you if you exhibit the qualities described in verses 3 through 9, particularly the showing mercy, exhibiting righteousness (pure heart) and engaged in peacemaking or actively proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, being engaged, being salt, and being light.

The root word for persecute means to “divide or separate.” The righteous person is divided, separated from this world. Being different from the worldly people because of Jesus whom we stand for causes us to suffer.

First Peter 2:9 says, we are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, God’s own purchased, and special people. We’re different from the world. We start at a different source, follow a different course, and end at a different destination. We’re the children of light; they’re the children of darkness. We live by the Spirit; they live in sin. We live by faith; they live by sight. We understand them; they do not understand us.

If this does not describe you, you may stop listening now. You’re not going to be persecuted. Matthew 5:13-14 says we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt irritates when it’s rubbed into a wound. Light reveals and exposes. So the world says, “Get that salt out of here! Turn off that light!”

If you are being persecuted, make sure it is for being righteous, not for being odd. You’re to be different, not to be odd. When you’re different, they will pursue you, watching you like a hawk, trying to find some flaw, some difference in you. And when they find it, it’ll make them feel better as they condemn you.

We see this in public life every day. Just let a public figure stick his neck above the crowd to espouse a biblical virtue, and the attack is instant. They will lie about you. The most righteous person who ever lived, Jesus Christ, was crucified on the testimony of false witnesses. But, it is not the end. The victorious glory will be ours at the end like Jesus exemplified it for us with His resurrection. Glory is ours at the end. This truth will march on. So, let us stand up for Jesus today! Amen.