

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, September 23, 2015 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

TAKING A STAND “You Are Opposed”

Ephesians 6:10-18, 1 Corinthians 15:58, John 17:15-19, Romans 12:1-2, Joshua 24:13-18

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.” –John 17:15-16

JUST FOR REVIEW - Remember when we started with this study we set some goals for ourselves as we seek to take a stand in a world that definitely outnumbers us and usually opposes us... a world that is often antagonistic to the ways of Christ. It's hard to stand alone and respond with redemptive grace rather than react with defensiveness and perhaps protectionism.

Three Goals to Keep in Mind in Taking a Stand:

1. That we seek to *be balanced*... avoiding fanaticism.
2. That we aim to *be positive*... avoiding that which is needlessly negative.
3. That we *be victorious*... avoiding defeat.

Again, for review, for the purposes of our study we defined “taking a stand” as “going against the flow.”

Definition: “Taking a stand is going against the flow”

What happens when we go against the flow?

3 Things Going Against the Flow Potentially Does:

1. **It upsets the current** – By this we mean that the current doesn't like it, and the world doesn't like it when we go against its natural flow either. It is much easier to go with the flow, to coast along with everyone else and conform. The world is extremely upset when, out of God's great love for us, He calls us to a higher standard or one that contradicts what the world does.
2. **It creates hazards** – When an obstacle interrupts the current and flow of a river, it creates rough and choppy water... sometimes rapids and whitewater that can be extremely dangerous. Sometime the hazards created by an obstacle interrupting the current or flow can actually be something that those following the current can get caught up on and cause drowning. Going against the flow creates hazards for both those going with the flow and those going against it. This means that when Christians go against the natural flow of the

world's ways and way of thinking it can sometime cause a violent reaction. It may cause ridicule, rejection, persecution... sometimes severe persecution, and maybe even martyrdom.

3. **It provides growth** – Swimming upstream, against the flow is actually a great strength training exercise. It builds muscle tone, and strength and stamina (i.e. the wave pool). In the same way for a believer, going against the flow can actually create a great opportunity for spiritual growth and the building of one's faith. Certainly, going against the flow would entail really knowing what you believe and why you believe it, studying deeply in God's Word and establishing your convictions firmly on His Word.

GROUP WORK – Read the following passages and answer the questions below for each passage.

(1) **Matthew 26:45-56**

(2) **Mark 14:53-65**

(3) **Mark 15:1-5**

(4) **Luke 23:18-25**

(5) **John 19:17-24**

Questions for thought:

1. **Was Jesus opposed?**

2. **Who would you say opposed Jesus?**

3. **Why do you think they opposed Jesus?**

4. **How does this relate to our being opposed?**

Christians are opposed: (it's Biblical)

(1) **We are opposed by Satan – 1 Peter 5:8-9**

(2) **We are opposed by the world – John 16:33, John 15:18-19**

(3) **We are opposed by man – Matthew 10:17-22**

(4) **We are opposed by our own heart – Jeremiahs 17:9, Mark 7:20-23**

Perhaps the thought of taking a stand and then having to standing alone is a bit frightening to you. When we take a stand and end up standing alone it is important to remember that standing alone is not living alone... having little or no contact with the world about us. God is not asking us to be isolated, but insulated while surrounded by a world marching to a different drumbeat. Taking a stand is survival strategy. There is a war going on. It was declared in the Garden of Eden and has continued to grow in its intensity. Our enemy has not laid down his battle weapons – he clutches them more tightly now than ever before. Satan's battle is carried on by a variety of allies, usually unseen. Those opposing forces are hard at it day-in and day-out... in homes, on campuses, at the office, and in the churches. Wherever we are, the battle is active. If you are not aware of it, chances are you're being defeated by it or fighting on the wrong side. The battlefield is on the earth, but the heart of the battle is in the mind. Thus, that is where the strategy for winning must be developed. In the mind battles are either won or lost, hence Paul's words in Romans 12:2, *"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of you mind..."*

I. CRUCIAL QUESTIONS REGARDING OUR ENEMY/ENEMIES AND THOSE WHO OPPOSE US

Who do Christians perceive as their opposing enemy/enemies today and how does that affect their ability to really be "Christian" and make a difference? What effect does their perception have on their Christian responsibility to the world in which we live? These are important questions to consider as we talk about taking a stand and really making a difference and eternal impact on the world around us... one that we often feels opposes us.

On the chart below, place a check beside those that you believe Christians today often perceive as the enemy/enemies.

✓	<i>Perceived Enemy</i>	✓	<i>Perceived Enemy</i>
	Government (President, Congress, Supreme Court, etc.)		Islamic Extremist (ISIS, Al Qaida, Terrorists)
	Republican party (reps./conservatives)		Illegal Aliens (illegal immigrants)
	Democratic party (dems./liberals)		News Media (Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, etc.)
	The GLBT Community (Gay Rights Activists)		Organized Crime
	Planned Parenthood (Abortionist)		Pornography Industry
	Muslims		Alcohol Industry
	Hate Groups (KKK, White Supremist, Black Panthers, etc.)		Poverty/Hunger
	Illegal Drug Industry		Racial/Gender Inequality (discrimination)
	Gang Violence		Cults (Scientology, New Age, Mormonism, etc.)
	Wallstreet (economic inequality, big business, CEO's, etc.)		Communist Countries (Russia, China, etc.)

Now answer the following questions:

- yes** **no** 1. As you look back over the list above and those that have been checked, do you personally believe that these should be considered the enemy/enemies of Christians?
- yes** **no** 2. As you look back over the list above, do you see any group(s) identified that consider Christians to be their enemy?
- yes** **no** 3. As you look back over the list above, do you see any group(s) identified that Christians have traditionally had a built up bias against?
- yes** **no** 4. As you look back over the list above, do you see any group(s) identified there that Christians are not to be seeking to reach with the gospel?
- yes** **no** 5. As look back over the list above, do you identify any group(s) that the Bible lets us off the hook about, that we don't have to love?

In your words what does your answer to the above say about our enemy/enemies?

The battle we face is between the beliefs and life-style of the world system and those of Jesus Christ. The Christian is a transplanted alien who – at the time of rebirth – took on a new address... heaven. As aliens we must understand some basics of this world that are antagonistic to us.

3 crucial questions regarding the world:

- Who is behind them? (1 John 5:19)** – John tells us in 1 John 5:19, “*We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*” In other words, the opposition – when traced back to its ultimate origin – leads right into

the lap of the wicked one, Satan himself. When we imbibe his system, we take up the marks of that system as well.

So, who is the real enemy? _____

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; ¹⁸ praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” – Ephesians 6:10-18

What is Ephesians 6:10-18 Telling us About Our Opposing Enemy/Enemies?

- (1) **We can only stand against our opposing enemy/enemies in the Lord (v.10)** – Which means that ultimately we must recognize that, as believers, we are never really standing alone though it may feel like it at times. If we are standing alone we will fail. We must stand strong in the Lord and the power of “His” might.
- (2) **We must be familiar with and use the resources that God has provided if we hope to stand against our opposing enemy/enemies (v.11)** – Not only does God make us “stand alone” against our opposing enemy/enemies, but He also provides us with those things that we need to prevail. For a believer not to appropriate those things in his life is to set himself or herself up for defeat.
- (3) **The world that we often consider the enemy/enemies is not the real enemy, but rather a part of the enemy/enemies schemes (“wiles”) to defeat us (vv.11-12)** – “Wiles” in verse 11 is the Greek word for “schemes,” carrying the idea of cleverness, crafty methods, cunning, and deception. Satan’s schemes are propagated through the evil world system over which he rules, and are carried out by his demon hosts. “Wiles” is all-inclusive, encompassing every sin, immoral practice, false theology, false religion, and worldly enticement. “Wrestle” is a term used of hand-to-hand combat. Wrestling features trickery and deception, like Satan and his hosts when they attack. Coping with deception temptation requires truth and righteousness. “Principalities, power, rulers of the darkness of this age, spiritual hosts of wickedness” are 4 designations describing the different strata and rankings of those demons and the evil supernatural empire in which they operate. Satan’s forces of darkness are highly structured for the most destructive purposes. “Spiritual host of wickedness” is possibly refers to the most depraved abominations, including such things as extreme sexual perversion, occultism, and Satan worship. And “heavenly places” – this refers to the entire realm of spiritual beings (there is a spiritual realm going on all around us all the time)

- (4) **Our real opposing enemy is the devil, not flesh and blood or those in the world (vv.11-12)** – Verse 11 identifies clearly who our enemy is... “the devil.” He is the one we are admonished to see as our enemy.
- (5) **We must take our stand against our enemy (vv.10-15)** – We are told to “stand” numerous times in this passage and again we are even told how to stand and what resources to use. He hasn’t left us alone to stand. We are opposed by the enemy, but we can stand strong in the Lord and the power of His might.

2. **What are its objectives?** – Lets recall them from our previous study. These objectives have become idols at whose feed modern man worship.

4 worldly objectives:

- (1) **Fortune** – It’s emphasis on prosperity.
- (2) **Fame** – It’s emphasis on personality and popularity.
- (3) **Power** – It’s emphasis on authority and control.
- (4) **Pleasure** – It’s emphasis on sensuality (all acts feasting our entire range of senses).

3. **How are these implemented?** – The system’s strategy is out in the open where it can be seen by all. Its appeals are to excesses and are both direct and familiar. Each fosters the worship of a particular god.

4 gods of this world:

- (1) “Get rich!”... the god of **materialism**
- (2) “Be popular” ... the god of **egotism**
- (3) “Take control”... the god of **intellect and wit**
- (4) “Have beauty”... the god of **physical attraction**

II. PRACTICAL SITUATION FACING BELIEVERS (1 John 2:15-17)

These brief statements describe the battle in great measure.

4 statements that describe the battle:

- 1. We live in a world of **opposing standards** -
- 2. We face a world that has an **aggressive strategy** -
- 3. We either **adopt** it or **reject** it -
- 4. If we reject it, we must be **equally aggressive** -

III. ALTERNATE STRATEGY FOR THE BELIEVER (Joshua 24:14-15)

Joshua became for us a safe model to adopt. He was a man of wise power and authority living in an alien world. The same activities must govern us that governed him and those surrounding him. The strategy is this:

Strategy for standing alone when opposed:

- 1. **Recognize that the Lord God is supreme (v.14a)** - Key phrase: **“Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth...”** (KJV) He alone is the One we are to serve. Four words shape this responsibility:

4 key words:

- (1) **“Fear”** – This means to hold God in reverence. The enemy is cynicism (doubt, scorn, contempt, pessimism, negativity, suspicion, skepticism)
 - (2) **“Serve”** – It suggests activity and involvement. The enemy is passivity (apathy, unresponsiveness, inaction, inactiveness, nonparticipation)
 - (3) **“Sincerity”** – This equates with honesty and integrity. The enemy is hypocrisy (insincerity, pretense, duplicity, two-facedness, falseness, double-standards)
 - (4) **“Truth”** – The term implies sticking with God’s Word. The enemy is ignorance (unawareness, inexperience, illiteracy, unfamiliarity, obliviousness, witlessness)
2. **Reject all opposing philosophies and disciplines (v.14b)** – Key phrase: *“And put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.”* (KJV) These philosophies don’t always wash themselves in paganism... they may be “mildly” secular, yet equally devastating. Philosophies mature into well-entrenched habits which demand radical action to arrest. We must stop them before they take shape. In order to safeguard ourselves we must constantly ask the tough questions:
- 4 tough safeguard questions to ask yourself:**
- (1) **“Am I doing this only for the right purposes?”**
 - (2) **“Why do I keep spending my time here...doing this?”**
 - (3) **“Does this activity support or weaken my faith?”**
 - (4) **“Does this friend help or hinder my walk?”**
3. **Realize that many others will not agree with you (v.15a)** - Key phrase: (Joshua speaking to unsympathetic folk) *“And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve.”* Observe that Joshua was not crusading for his plan. He was, however, taking issue with his surrounding critics. He didn’t even attack those who did not carry out his strategy in their own homes and lives.
4. **Repeat and review your standards often (v.15b)** - Key phrase: *“But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* Joshua was a vigorous and courageous spokesman who refused to be intimidated by standards (or lack of them) held by the opposition. Joshua set the place in his family for standing alone. Perhaps for his family members, standing alone came more naturally because of their father’s example.

IV. WARNINGS FOR THE HEART

When standing alone in the presence of opposition, keep in mind three things:

3 things to keep in mind for standing alone when opposed:

1. **It won’t be easy... or sudden** – Don’t kid yourself in to thinking that you can handle it... that it’s not that hard... that you are above falling and falling hard. Remember, *“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18)*
2. **The number one problem will be consistency** – If we are not consistent in our walk as believers we set ourselves up for attack from the opposition. A believers must consistently prepare himself to stand strong through a devoted prayer life, careful study and exposure to the word of God, the encouraging fellowship and support of others believers, and of course a consistent and committed daily walk with Jesus Christ.

- 3. If you don't start now, you probably never will** – Christians cannot be procrastinators when it comes to their life as a believer. We can't put off daily living it! Christians can't go on vacation in their faith. It just won't work. The Christian life is a daily walk... a daily struggle... a daily commitment... a daily battle. If you don't go ahead and get engaged in the fight you most likely never will, and you'll never grow past the beginning point of your faith and you will surely live in defeat.