

Series Title: A Closer Look: The Purpose and Power of Prayer

Sermon Title: Week 4: What the World Needs Now

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### ✠ Much ado about posture

- *When I was a kid, my mother always told me to have good posture. Sit up straight! Stand up straight!*
- *We also think of posture in terms of how we are relating to life, or times of life. If a person is a 'slouch', what are we saying? Or, there are times in life when we need to 'lie down', rest, heal... not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually.*
- *What is Posture regarding our faith? What 'spiritual posture' is most closely associated with being follower of Christ? KNEELING? Paul does "kneel before the father" in Ephesians 3 prayer...*
- *The fact is, there is a posture scripture uses, throughout NT, to describe the life of the believer.*
- *Remember story of conversion of Paul?...*

**Acts 26:14-16** *We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' <sup>15</sup> "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' " "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," the Lord replied. <sup>16</sup> "Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. <sup>17</sup> I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light...*

- *I love this story because it is a glimpse of the call puts on all of our lives. When Jesus appeared to Paul, Paul's response was to fall down. To hide himself. But Jesus, almost immediately, said to Paul "STAND! Be strong! Don't be afraid! I have a purpose for you, I will be your strength to stand.*
- *Years later, as he wrote to the young church in Colossae, Paul encouraged the believers by telling them how a fellow believer, Epaphras, was praying for them- intensely and continually- that in their faith, they would STAND FIRM.*  
*TAKING CLOSER LOOK at purpose, power, of prayer, by looking at how we actually see prayer taught and practiced in the NT. Concept that when we see NT writers praying, under leadership of Holy Spirit, this is prayer that GOD WANTS TO ANSWER*
  - *Jesus praying for unity in the body of Christ*
  - *Jesus teaching us to pray for God to raise up workers*
  - *Paul praying that we would have a spirit of wisdom and revelation to KNOW GOD MORE*
  - *Paul praying that we could know the unknowable- the full extent of God's love for us*
- *TODAY, we see as simple but profound prayer from who may be the NT's most unknown prayer warrior- a man from Colossae named Epaphras.*

### ✠ A prayer to stand

**Colossians 4:12** *Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*

- *Times when we are led to kneel, humility- on our knees in brokenness and healing*
- *Friends, times when he calls us to STAND FIRM.*
- *WILL OF GOD: God's nature/presence in us, through us. His teaching from scripture. His leading in our life.*
- *MATURE: Greatest marker of Christian maturity? Not knowledge about God, but Obedience to God. Greatest marker of obedience to God? LOVE. Kindness. Patience. Courage. Generosity.*

- **FULLY ASSURED: Confident of our faith. Of our hope in Christ. Fully assured of God's presence, his goodness. That he is in control. BLESSED ASSURANCE, JESUS IS MINE. This is door into peace, rest, freedom.**
- **We may say "YES GOD, I desire this! I want to be mature, know your will, assured in my faith... but this is hard! How does this happen? PRAY FOR GOD TO GIVE DO THIS WORK IN YOUR LIFE!"**
- **LORD! In the midst of our circumstances, our struggles, our questions... MATURE US! Give us confidence and faith. Give us assurance....**
- **Friends, this is powerful prayer, and a theme of NT...**

✠ **Called to stand!**

**Galatians 5:1** *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*

- **We are new creations in Christ! We have been set free from power of sin, free from performance of LAW, from separation from God... STAND FIRM IN YOUR FREEDOM! Don't fall prey to temptation of legalism, of performance**

**1 Corinthians 15:55-58** *"Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"*<sup>56</sup> *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.*<sup>57</sup> *But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>58</sup> *Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

- **Key connection here- inherent to standing firm is fully following God in the work- service- of his Kingdom**
- **Standing firm isn't closing ourselves off from rest of world, but being full engaged in life, firm in how we live out our faith through as servants of God.**

**1 Corinthians 16:13-14** *Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong.*<sup>14</sup> *Do everything in love.*

- **Beautiful picture of the Life joined with Christ... Vigilance, courage, strength, kindness, giving fear to God, not losing hope... LOVE.**
- **God just hasn't called us to stand, he provides everything we need to stand firm.**

- **We stand by TRUST in the name of the Lord our God**

**Psalms 20:7-8** *Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.*<sup>8</sup> *They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm.*

- **What are the 'chariots and horses' that we are tempted to look to, but will inevitably fail us?**

- **We stand by faith in the GRACE of God**

**Romans 5:1-2** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*<sup>2</sup> *through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

- **We stand by putting on the ARMOR of God**

**Ephesians 6:10-18** *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.*<sup>11</sup> *Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.*<sup>12</sup> *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*<sup>13</sup> *Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*<sup>14</sup> *Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,*<sup>15</sup> *and with your feet*

fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. <sup>18</sup> **And pray** in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. **PRAY AS WE SEE SCRIPTURE TEACH US!**

– **In 1965 there was a popular song by Hal David and Burt Bacharach- recorded by Jackie DeShannon...**

✠ **What the world needs now... is Love Sweet Love....**

- **There is no question that the great need of this world is to KNOW, to surrender to, receive, the Love of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**
- **But church... as those who have received the NEW LIFE of Christ, for those who are disciples... what the WORLD NEEDS NOW is for us to STAND FIRM in all the will of God, Mature, and fully assured.**
- **Two images of standing firm.**
- **ONE- standing against a force. This is what we often think of in Christian culture... 'taking a stand' against the sin of the world. Against social issues. God can lead us to do this, yes, but too often the church has defined itself by what it is against.**
- **Another image- standing firm- a TREE. As a kid in Texas, oak trees were given to us by God for one purpose. TO CLIMB. To grab hold of, hold on to, make them our home!**
- **I think this is the more biblically powerful picture of STANDING FIRM. In our own hearts, standing firm in all the goodness of God, our trust in him, maturing, growing in the assurance of our faith.**
- **FOR THOSE AROUND US- children. Young people. Spouses. People who need love. Support. AS WE STAND FIRM, for them to hold on to us. To learn, and see, the goodness, maturity, and assurance of faith in Christ THROUGH US.**
- **We stand when we speak truth in love**
- **We stand when we choose truth over temptation.**
- **We stand when we resist lies of the enemy**
- **We stand when we rise above fear, don't lose hope**
- **We stand when we are not controlled by our emotions, but honor God with our emotions**
- **We stand when we say YES to God**
- **We stand when we serve, when we act on love for others.**
- **We stand when we train up our children**
- **When we PRAY as scripture leads us**
- **CLOSE with one of the most precious gifts Jesus gave us as a source of spiritual strength and courage- it is the celebration of what we call communion. When we purposefully pause to remember Jesus suffering and death, the LIFE AND FREEDOM it has brought us.**

**1 Peter 2:23-25** *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.<sup>24</sup> “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.”<sup>25</sup> For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*