

“Stand Firm to the End”

(Matthew 10:16-23 – Reformation – November 2, 2025)

Matthew 10:16-23 – ¹⁶“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. ¹⁷But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. ¹⁸You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. ²¹Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ²²And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”

Dear fellow-Redeemed in Christ Jesus:

Imagine standing in a courtroom on trial for your faith. If you do not renounce your faith and disown Christ, you could be beaten or put to death. Such violence does come upon our brothers and sisters in Christ in parts of the world, if they confess their faith where the message of the Gospel is seen as a threat to the established government and religion. In the face of persecution, many Christians are standing firm for their faith.

On this Reformation festival, we recall that Martin Luther stood on trial for his faith. He stood before the highest political and religious authorities of his day – the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and the pope and his representatives in the church. Luther was on trial for challenging corruption in the visible church. He challenged the way the Pope made his words equal to God’s Word. He challenged the false teaching that salvation depended on good works, instead of faith alone in the finished work of Christ. He challenged the church’s practice of charging people money to get out of punishment for sins in a false place called Purgatory. Luther was on trial for the pure Gospel of salvation by God’s grace alone through faith in Christ alone.

A century earlier in a similar trial, John Hus had challenged falsehood in the church and was burned at the stake. Now the court demanded that Luther retract his teachings. But he answered, “Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me! Amen.” His conscience was bound to God’s Word alone and not to the world’s highest authorities. He was prepared to stand firm to the end.

No matter what trial may come to test our faith, Jesus' words encourage us to **“Stand Firm to the End”**: **1) Knowing that we stand on God's Word, 2) Knowing that we stand in God's grace, and 3) Knowing that the Lord stands with us.**

1) Knowing that we stand on God's Word

First, we stand firm by knowing that we stand on God's Word. We are ambassadors of the King of heaven. We are sent to speak His Word by His authority. He has put us here, at this time in history, to witness the truth of His Gospel with people around us. Jesus says: *“Behold, I send you out”* (vs. 16); and we go in His grace and blessing.

But as He warns, He sends us *“as sheep in the midst of wolves”* (vs. 16). If we speak up for His truth instead of going along with modern trends, we can expect trouble. Jesus said: *“Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake”* (vs. 17-18). He even used these shocking terms: *“Brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake”* (vs. 21-22).

We would not expect a court in our nation to sentence us to beating or death for our faith. But we live in a society that is more and more intolerant of the Word of God on which we take our stand. The world demands that we be open-minded and accepting toward lifestyles the Bible calls sinful and religious teachings that are false. We often find ourselves alone if we testify to God's Word of repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name. Likely, the courtroom in which our faith stands on trial is at work, at school, in the media – wherever people take offense at our Christian faith and mock us as foolish for the sake of the Gospel. Maybe the courtroom is even in our own home, if family members reject our faith and hold it against us, as Jesus predicted.

He says: *“Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves”* (vs. 16). As Jesus' messengers, we are to be harmless and peaceful as far as it concerns us. We are to speak His truth in love, praying that even enemies may repent and know His forgiveness. If people continue to reject our witness, they really reject Him who sent us (Luke 10:16). There are times when being wise will mean moving on. As Jesus said: *“When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes”* (vs. 23). There will always be many in other places who need to hear Jesus' Gospel until He returns.

But there are times when we must remain where we are, standing firm and defending the true faith – as Luther did when He stood on trial for the pure Gospel before the highest political and religious courts. In such times, Jesus promises to help us respond: *“Do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that*

hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you” (vs. 19-20). God does not ask us to speak from our own wisdom, to try to impress or convince people in a worldly way. He calls us simply to share His Word of Scripture faithfully. As we do, the Holy Spirit accompanies His Word, guaranteeing that it will accomplish the purpose for which He sent it (Isaiah 55:11).

So in the hour of trial, like Luther we can say: “Here I stand.” We can stand firm to the end, knowing we stand on the authority of God’s Word over all other authority. We thank God that through Luther’s faithful witness, the pure Gospel has been preserved unto us; and we pray that through our Gospel witness, others will come to stand firm on His saving truth too.

2) Knowing that we stand in God’s grace

Second, when trials come into our lives to test our faith, we will stand firm only by knowing that we stand in God’s grace.

On our own, we could not stand firm in trial before God; for as sinners, we stand guilty. As God’s Law exposes our sinful thoughts toward others, such as hate, lust, envy – our conscience accuses us. When we see our selfishness when we should have helped others, and how we have even let down loved ones at times – our conscience accuses us. When we think of times when we have feared men more than God and kept our faith silent – our conscience accuses us. Even before people, we become timid and ashamed when we know we are guilty. But how could we stand in judgment before God, when His Word declares that for even one sin, we deserve eternal death and hell?

We can stand firm only when we know we stand in God’s grace, through faith in His Son as our Savior. God’s Gospel reveals that Jesus took our place and stood on trial before the highest court of heaven. He stood before His Father as the only one who was pure and holy in every thought, word, and deed; the only one who loved perfectly; the only one who always gave a faithful witness to the truth of God, even when it hurt. Yet as Jesus stood in our place, He was judged the guilty sinner instead of us. On the cross, He suffered for all our sinful thoughts, words, and deeds; for every way we have failed to love others; for every way we have failed to give faithful witness to His Word. Since Jesus satisfied divine justice, God justifies us. Through the blood of His Son, He forgives all our sins and frees us from all condemnation. He counts the righteous life of Jesus to us, as if we have been pure and holy in every thought, word, and deed; and have loved everyone perfectly; and have always given faithful witness to His truth.

Through God’s gift of faith in Jesus, we stand in His grace. Therefore: *“Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of*

God, who also makes intercession for us” (Romans 8:33-34). It does not matter if the world’s highest authorities put us on trial for our faith. It does not matter if Satan accuses us before God. Christ pleads our case at the right hand of His Father, based on His perfect life and sacrifice for us. For Jesus’ sake, God declares us forgiven and righteous in His sight. *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31)

So in the hour of trial, like Luther, we can give a firm response: “Here I stand.” We can stand firm to the end, knowing that we stand in God’s grace.

3) Knowing that the Lord stands with us

Finally, we will stand firm knowing that our Lord stands with us in every trial.

In Daniel 6, Daniel stood firm when his faith was on trial because the Lord stood with him. Daniel refused to pray to the heathen king. He acted against the highest law of the land, and continued to pray only to the true, living God. When he was thrown in the lion’s den, God’s angel shut the mouths of the lions through that dark night of trial; and the Lord who stood with Daniel caused him to come out unharmed.

God is with us in our dark times of trial too. Maybe our trials have to do with threats for sharing our faith, difficult relationships, nagging illness, or some distressing issue. We are tempted to doubt that God hears our prayers and will help us. He has not promised to spare believers from all sickness, pain, or death. But He has promised to be near, to protect our souls and strengthen our faith, that we may stand firm to the end.

In our trials, Jesus says the Spirit of our heavenly Father helps us respond in faith. The Spirit reminds us of God’s grace in our baptism, that we are washed of all sin and united with Christ in eternal life. The Spirit reminds us of God’s grace in the Lord’s Supper, as we receive Jesus’ body and blood for our forgiveness. The Spirit reminds us of God’s grace in His Word, to comfort our hearts and strengthen our faith. In our weakness, the Spirit helps us to pray. And God, who hears us for Jesus’ sake, promises that nothing in life or death can separate us from His eternal love in Christ. At last, He will deliver us from every evil when He brings us safely to His heavenly home.

In view of all His promises, when our faith is put on trial, we can give a firm response. Like Luther, we can say: “Here I stand.” Our confidence is in knowing that we stand on God’s Word, over all other authority; knowing that we stand in God’s grace, through faith in Christ; and knowing that the God who is for us stands with us. It is He who makes us stand firm to the end!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.