

EPHESIANS 6:11, 13, 14

YOUR MISSION – STAND

“Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

“Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore.”¹

Christians are at war. This is not a war against a physical foe or fought with physical weapons. We neither seek to kill nor injure any person; neither do we endeavour to destroy any structures erected by man. We are fighting a spiritual war, and the enemy against whom we struggle are angelic beings fallen from their previous position as servants of the Living God. God does not call His people to conquer new territory; rather, we occupy ground from which the enemy has fled before the Risen Master. The mission we have received calls for us to hold that ground which has been entrusted to our care.

APPOINTED TO STAND — “Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

“Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore.”

Four times in these few brief sentences we are commanded to stand. The thrust of the apostolic plea is for Christians to remain firm in the face of sustained assault. Paul uses two separate words that function as synonymous concepts in the text before us. First, the Apostle urges Christians to don the armour of God in order “to stand against the schemes of the devil.” He uses the same word at the end of verse 13 and again in verse 14 when he commands believers to stand, having prepared themselves for the conflict. In verse 13, Paul uses a different word when he speaks of withstanding in the evil day. However, in this instance, the word is derived from the former word. Thus, the Apostle makes a very powerful plea—nay, issues a most powerful command—for Christians to stand firm in the face of spiritual assault.

Since we are commanded to stand, we should ask where we are to stand and against what are we to take a stand; the questions are intimately related to one another. Obviously, we are not standing on some physical ground, as though the western world is to be defended, or some particular nation or continent is to resist an invasion by pagan religions. The ground for which we have received responsibility is the spiritual ground that is bathed in light. Let me explain by challenging you to think of some seemingly unrelated biblical instruction that is in reality vital.

Throughout the Word of God are references to the darkness of the world and the light in which the people of God dwell. You will recall that Jesus presented Himself to all mankind as “the light of the world” [JOHN 8:12; 9:5]. Citing Isaiah, Matthew wrote of Jesus’ birth,

“The people dwelling in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned.”

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[MATTHEW 4:16]²

The words are reminiscent of Zechariah's prophecy at the birth of John the Baptist.

“You, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

[LUKE 1:76-79]³

Concerning the coming of the Master, John wrote, “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it” [JOHN 1:5].

Since the fall of our first parents, mankind is said to dwell in darkness. Think of just a few of the contrasts that are found in the Gospel between the light the Master provides to those who follow Him and the darkness to which mankind has become accustomed. For example, “This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil” [JOHN 3:19]. John is assuredly provocative in his assertion that mankind loves darkness rather than light. People are uncomfortable in the light; they cannot stand the light because it exposes the chains than bind them.

Shortly after He had entered into Jerusalem to the loud acclaim of many of the people, Jesus taught the crowds concerning His work. Let's listen in as the Master instructs those who listened. “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light” [JOHN 12:35, 36]. The Master made it quite plain that one was either walking with Him in light, or they were walking in darkness. There was no half-light of dawn—only darkness or light.

Though many—even many of the religious leaders—believed Jesus, they had grown so accustomed to the faux light that this darkened world affords, that they would not openly confess Him, fearing the loss of accolades they received in the synagogue. Therefore, the Saviour cried out, “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me” [JOHN 12:44-50]. Again, the Master emphasises that those who fail to receive Him are in darkness and will remain in darkness, regardless of any personal efforts at betterment. Again, one is either in the light, or she is yet in darkness. There is no twilight or dusk—only darkness or light.

² Citing ISAIAH 42:7

³ See also Simeon's prophecy, LUKE 2:29-32

Let's establish a truth that will make some professing Christians terribly uncomfortable. Those who are unsaved, those who are lost, those who have never placed faith in the Risen Master, are in darkness. This says nothing of their ability to think, or their ability to reason, or even their worth as a person—it is a spiritual statement that addresses their ability to understand the will of God, or even to appropriate that wisdom when challenged to do so.

We who are believers in the Living Christ should not be proud, imagining that we are in some way superior to those who are still outside the precincts of grace. Christians have been delivered from “the domain of darkness,” having been “transferred ... to the Kingdom of God's Beloved Son” [COLOSSIANS 1:13]. We soon forget what it was to be in darkness, because we now walk in the light. Unfortunately, we often compromise the light we have received in a perverted effort to make outsiders like us, all the while trying to live both in the dark and in the light.

Indeed, at one time each of us was “darkness,” but now we are “in the light in the Lord” [see EPHESIANS 5:8]. It is not merely that we were *in* darkness, but according to the Word of God, we *were* darkness. We were incapable of differentiating between darkness and light. We had preferences, but held no convictions. We formulated our moral and ethical positions on the basis of our personal desire rather than grounding them on the authoritative Word of the Living God.

Recounting his salvation, the Apostle told how the Lord appeared to him and said, “I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” [ACTS 26:16-18].

The Word of God is quite clear that “the god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” [2 CORINTHIANS 4:4]. There is a very real contrast between the believer and those who are held in thralldom by the evil one. John defines this contrast when he writes, “We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” [1 JOHN 5:19].

Jesus spoke often of the darkness of this world. Presenting Himself as the light that dispels darkness, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” [JOHN 8:12]. On another occasion, Jesus cautioned, “No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light” [LUKE 11:33-36].

Increasingly, we witness in this day a transition from what has unquestionably been a biblical-based morality (the prevalence of light) in western society to something that is unrecognisable as biblically moral (the ascendancy of darkness). Increasingly, the view that biblical morality or biblical ethics is wrong, gains traction in society. Today, we witness God's people castigated as bigots because they do not agree that unnatural sex or sex for the sake of sex, is moral. In fact, those who speak against such acts are said to be immoral. One homosexual activist has recently advocated that “homophobia should be identified as a sickness, with families court-ordered into treatment programs.”⁴ Likewise, advocates of the murder of the unborn present their arguments favouring abortion as a higher morality than preserving life.

⁴ Sarah Schulman, summarised by Scott McLemee, “New Civil Rights Movement,” Inside Higher Ed, October 16, 2009, <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/mclemee/mclemee262#>, accessed 16 October, 2009

That such attitudes are gaining ascendancy should come as no surprise to the Christian. The Apostle to the Gentiles foresaw precisely such events when he wrote, “In the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power” [2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5].

The thoughtful individual will readily see that those dwelling in darkness, turning their backs to the light that is available, will endeavour to justify their attitudes and their actions. Since they cannot argue that their actions are either moral or ethical according to the standard that has prevailed for centuries in the West, they will be compelled to create a new morality and draft a new ethic to justify their actions. This new morality and ethic are the old morality and the old ethic that has prevailed wherever God is not known. Thus, advocates of the new morality are compelled to attempt to destroy the old morality, as witnessed in contemporary society.

A thought-provoking article may be found on the Kairos Journal web site. The article, which I read in this past week, stimulated me to think about the darkness in which the world lies. The argument presented—with which I heartily concur—points out that lost people do not think themselves immoral. In fact, they would argue that their positions on various issues of morality are moral. The author begins the article with a quote from Simone Weil: “Evil when we are in its power is not felt as evil but as a necessity, or even a duty.” It is easy to let that thought pass by, but when we pause to weigh its implications, they are frightening indeed.

The author of the Kairos article writes: “These reactions should not surprise the thoughtful Christian. The very beginning of human sin demonstrates that at its heart to be a sinner is to reject the truth and be enslaved to a lie. To be a sinner is, in various ways, to ‘call evil good and good evil.’ Wisdom’s saying that ‘all who hate me love death,’ underscores this theme and demonstrates the link between this reversed moral compass and idolatry. To withdraw one’s affections from the Creator is to betroth oneself to evil and to turn the back upon that which one should know, by the light of nature and common grace, really to be true. The result, to use Paul’s words, is going through life with a ‘seared conscience.’ It is not that abortion lobbyists or gay-rights activists are loveless and godless. On the contrary, they love much and believe much. But they love and worship wrong things, even terrible things.”⁵

Those who oppose godliness—choosing to surrender to their own desires, choosing to live for the moment rather than living in light of eternity, choosing to seek what makes them feel good rather than doing what is honourable—imagine that they are pleasing God through their actions. These individuals frequently argue that they are “just as good as anyone else.” Of course, no one is arguing that they are “bad” people or “good” people, because frankly, we cannot judge anyone; judging the motives of another person is an impossible task. Frankly, we are unable to judge our own motives, as the Apostle attests. “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God” [1 CORINTHIANS 4:3-5].

⁵ “The Blinding Power of Evil—or—Evil as a ‘Duty,’” Kairos Journal, <http://www.kairosjournal.org/Document.aspx?QuadrantID=4&CategoryID=6&TopicID=23&DocumentID=6469&L=1>, accessed 15 October, 2009

The great tragedy is that those who live in darkness know that they live in darkness and know that they displease God. However, because they displease God, they seek the approval of others for their actions. This is the intent of the apostolic statement concerning society in full degeneracy. “Although they know full well God’s just sentence—that those who practise such things deserve to die—they not only do them, but even applaud others who practise them” [ROMANS 1:32].⁶ **THE MESSAGE** brings out the force of Paul’s statement when it translates the verse, “It’s not as if they don’t know better. They know perfectly well they’re spitting in God’s face. And they don’t care—worse, they hand out prizes to those who do the worst things best!”⁷

Understand, then, that when God commands His people to stand firm, He is calling us to resist succumbing to wickedness—we dare not even agree with the suggestion of evil. The Master is calling us to recognise the darkness and to ensure that we remain in the light. Those who live in darkness have been taken captive by the devil—they are blinded by the evil one. Understand that those who are enslaved to the darkness have convinced themselves, perhaps even in the recesses of their souls, that they are acting morally and ethically—even though they resist the Holy Spirit and oppose righteousness. Their bizarre and twisted view of life is undoubtedly at odds with the Word of God. Thus, they cannot help themselves when they oppose God’s will in the stand the righteous make for godliness and righteousness. Let me iterate: the inhabitants of this darkened world are trapped in the darkness, and they desperately need the light each Christian sheds through living holy and righteous lives.

Christians are not to enter into darkness. We have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness. This truth is repeated throughout the New Testament. We are taught that God “has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” [COLOSSIANS 1:13]. The Apostle instructs Christians, “You are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness” [1 THESSALONIANS 5:5]. Peter testifies of believers, “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” [1 PETER 2:9]. So, whereas we were once living in darkness, we have been delivered into the light. Hence, *it is in the light that we are to stand*.

None of us can claim exemption from the charge that we once lived in the domain of darkness. We know the teaching of the Word in the Letter to Ephesian Christians. “You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” [EPHESIANS 2:1-7].

Nevertheless, even children of the Living God can slip away and into darkness again. Otherwise, why should the Apostle plead with the Roman Christians to “cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light” [ROMANS 13:12]? If there is no danger of reverting to old ways, why should the Apostle warn, “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” [EPHESIANS 5:11]?

⁶ **The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Bible** (Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN 2003)

⁷ E. H. Peterson, **The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language** (NavPress, Colorado Spring, CO 2002)

We need to heed the admonition of the aged Apostle John, who encourages believers, “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” [1 JOHN 1:5-10].

We are appointed to stand in the light. Find the light, and you will know where to stand. Find the will of the Master, and stand there. You will know His will when you study His Word. Find what pleases the Master, and stand there. You will know what pleases Him when we spend time in His presence. Christians are called to stand firm in righteousness, not giving way to evil. We are called to stand firm in the Word of God, seeking the will of God and doing what He has revealed to us. We are called to stand boldly against even the appearance of agreeing with evil. Yet, we must make this stand with gentleness, showing mercy toward those living in darkness while fearing for their safety and fearing lest we contaminate our lives. In standing firm, refusing to surrender to evil, we will rescue some of our fellow men from the flames. Assuredly, through standing firm against spiritual darkness we will honour and glorify the Name of the Living God because we will reveal His grace and goodness. As the Apostle has urged believers, “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” [1 CORINTHIANS 7:1].

EQUIPPED TO STAND — “Take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.” In his Letter to Roman Christians, Paul urged them to “put on the armour of light” [ROMANS 13:12]. In the earlier Letter to Thessalonian Christians, he cautioned, “Since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation” [1 THESSALONIANS 5:8]. Now the Apostle urges us to don the panoply given by the Lord our God. That armour includes the “belt of truth,” “the breastplate of righteousness,” shoes identified as “the readiness given by the gospel of peace,” “the shield of faith,” “the helmet of salvation” and “the sword of the Spirit.”

Often, western militaries are sent into combat with inadequate or inferior equipment. Both Canadian and American forces have been hampered during the various conflicts in which they have engaged, because the equipment provided proved inadequate for the conditions, or because there was insufficient equipment for the tasks assigned. Christians need not worry that our equipment will prove inadequate for the assigned task. We are not appointed to stand in our own dress or in our own strength. In fact, the equipment which we have received is sufficient for every contingency to ensure that we will be victorious. We need not worry that we may be bested when the enemy attempts to overwhelm our defences. We have the promise of the Master that “the gates of hell shall not prevail” against us [see MATTHEW 16:18].

When a Christian fails in the face of spiritual assault, it will not be because of equipment failure; it is because the believer failed to utilise the equipment provided. Often, if not usually, the Christian has conceded the battle because he or she has compromised for the sake of “unity.” We dare not fraternise with the forces of darkness. There can be no concession made to evil. We must not imagine that we can do wrong in order for good to come from that wrong. A saying that was current in the southern United States during my years ministering there summarises this matter concisely: “It is never right to do wrong in order to do right.”

I want to spend some time considering the equipment we have been issued, and, God willing, we shall do so in a future message. However, for the moment, it is important to note that the armour is all related to what we might call basic Christian disciplines—confidence in the Word (belt of truth), godliness (breastplate of righteousness), willingness to testify of Christ (shoes equated with the readiness), faith (shield of faith) and salvation (helmet of salvation). Evidence might suggest that contemporary Christians are ill equipped for spiritual warfare, if failure in conflict is any indication. However, I would argue that it is a defective gospel that is preached as though it were true that is at fault.

We preachers are responsible to provide strong meat so that believers may be strengthened. We have received a charge to “preach the Word.” However, today preachers are pressed to entertain or to soothe believers who have permitted themselves to become “entangled in civilian affairs” [see 2 TIMOTHY 2:4]. Indeed, the time of which the Apostle warned is full upon us, I fear. Paul cautioned that, “the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listen to the truth and wander off into myths” [2 TIMOTHY 4:3, 4].

STANDING TOGETHER — “Stand therefore.” There is a final point that I must make before drawing the message to a conclusion. We do not stand alone. We are appointed to stand together. At the signing of the American Declaration of Independence, Benjamin Franklin said, “*We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately.*” Though the context in which Franklin spoke was a looming and sustained physical conflict, the sentiment is in keeping with the spiritual conflict we face.

The stand we take is never a solitary stand. In fact, if you imagine yourself capable of standing alone, you are certain to fail, as the Apostle warns. “Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” [1 CORINTHIANS 10:12]. Throughout these closing instructions, Paul writes in the plural number. The admonition to stand is very similar to that given to Corinthian Christians: “Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong” [1 CORINTHIANS 16:13]. Though individual believers are responsible to stand firm in the face of the enemy’s assault, as a congregation we never stand alone. Always and ever we are labouring together for the cause of Christ. I marvel at the attitude of contemporary Christians who imagine they can stand alone against the foe. They refuse to unite with a congregation, ridiculing such calls as an antiquated relic of a bygone era. They believe that they can take what is needed and yet be strong in the Lord. It has never happened in the past, and it flies in the face of reality; it will not work now.

Contemporary Christians tend to become so focused on a vast, unseen entity that they call “the church” that they neglect the congregations that God established for their benefit and welfare. Congregations are established to provide an outlet for service and to permit believers to strengthen one another. Recall the Apostle’s instruction that the measure of validity and effectiveness of the gifts God has given is whether those gifts are used to build up others, encourage others and console others [1 CORINTHIANS 14:3]. The exercise of spiritual gifts in a context other than the assembly of the Lord ensures the loss of effectiveness.

To be certain, the child of God knows that the Master is always with him or her. Whenever we read that Great Commission, we must not neglect the final promise Jesus gave: “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” [MATTHEW 28:20b]. The promise is but an iteration of the promise the Living God made to Joshua, “I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you” [JOSHUA 1:5]. This promise is iterated in the Letter to Hebrew Christians, where it is applied to all who are followers of the Saviour [see HEBREWS 1:5, 6].

Think of the repeated emphasis throughout the Word, declaring the presence of the Master with His people. At the birth of Jesus our Lord, Matthew recalled the ancient prophecy, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us) [MATTHEW 1:18]. That promise which he cited echoes another divine promise given to Israel through the great Lawgiver. Moses wrote, “The LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not leave you” [DEUTERONOMY 4:31].

Facing persecution, the Christian may be confident that he is not alone. Undoubtedly, the child of God is comforted by the knowledge that God watches over him. The Apostle could say, as can every believer, that though persecuted, we are “not forsaken” [see 2 CORINTHIANS 4:9]. Christ is with His people during times of persecution.

We are certain that *when we must make hard decisions as a congregation*, Christ is with us for He has promised, “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” [MATTHEW 18:20]. Christ is with His people during times of difficult decisions.

When we point others to righteousness, we know that He is with us. Paul may have “felt” lonely when he began evangelising in Corinth, but the Lord appeared, saying, “I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people” [ACTS 18:10]. Christ is with His people while they are turning others to righteousness.

Serving the Saviour, we will know His presence. Christ has promised us, “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also” [JOHN 12:26a]. Christ is with His people when they serve Him and His cause.

When we have fought the last battle, when the war is at last concluded, we know that we will not be deserted, even then. As He prayed for His people, Jesus asked the Father, “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world” [JOHN 17:24]. This was but an iteration of the promise previously given to all who follow Him, “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” [JOHN 14:3]. Christ is with His people when death comes and throughout eternity.

Christ the Lord is with us, and we shall be gathered to Him [see 2 THESSALONIANS 2:1]. Indeed, “we will always be with the Lord [1 THESSALONIANS 4:17b]. However, it is a decided comfort to know that He is now with us. It is highly significant that when the Risen Saviour appears to John on Patmos, He is standing in the midst of the lampstands, holding seven stars [REVELATION 1:13, 16]. The lampstands are identified as the churches and the stars are the messengers (the pastors) of the churches [REVELATION 1:20]. Christ is standing with His churches, and He holds His pastors in His hands.

When the enemy attacks—and the enemy will attack—Christians must stand together. Peter is not using hyperbole when he warns, “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” [1 PETER 5:8]. Roaring, the devil seeks to frighten the child of God into fleeing. For when the frightened sheep flees, she is easily assaulted. She must leave the safety of the fold, the safety that comes from her fellow saints comforting and encouraging and building her up. Focused on the roar of the enemy, she no longer hears the comforting voice of the Master saying, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Are you a Christian? Stand firm together with your fellow believers. Is your life planted in a sound congregation of the Lord’s choosing? Stand firm in that place where He has assigned you. Are you working together with others in the light to the glory of the Saviour? Stand firm. The alternative is too horrible to contemplate; we must not flee before the enemy and into the darkness. Rather, we must stand firm in the light, knowing that this is the will of God.

Perhaps you have heard the message and the Spirit of God has shown you that you are in darkness. You need not remain in that condition, but God calls you into His glorious light. Do the chains that now bind you cause you anguish and shame? He will strike the chains from your wrist, cleanse you of all unrighteousness and clothe you in garments of purest white. This is the promise of God. The Word of God calls each person to life in God's Beloved Son. The Word declares, "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation." That passage concludes with the simple promise that "*everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*" [ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13].⁸

This is the promise of God, and this is the invitation of His people. Believe that Jesus died because of your sin; believe that He has been raised to life to make you righteous. Call on the Name of the Master, asking Him to receive you. Be a Christian. Stand with His people. Amen.

⁸ NET Bible (Biblical Studies Press, 2006)