

GOD

Stand on the Integrity of God's Word

In order for us to believe to live the more abundant life that God has made available, our believing must be in alignment and harmony with God's Word, with the written Word of God or revelation that our heavenly Father gives us. We especially need to understand that God's Word, as originally given, has great integrity so it can be trusted. The adversary is constantly trying to get us to question the integrity of God's Word, with influences and even attacks coming from the world without or even from within the Body of believers, so we must be diligent to be sure to recognize the circumstances and take a stand. The only way that we, both as individual believers and collectively as the Body, can overcome the world with its negative influences by our believing is to stand on the integrity of God's Word.

We'll consider what is meant by "integrity" and look at what God says about the integrity of His Word. We'll also consider what it means to stand and will see that we are not only to stand but to stand fast. Then we'll consider a few Biblical examples of believers who stood on the integrity of God's Word, making it available for them to believe and overcome.

A dictionary might define "integrity" as "uncompromising adherence to moral and ethical principles: soundness of moral character: honesty". God's Word has integrity: you can trust it, you can count on it, because what God said is truth. God means what He says, and He says what He means. What He says He will do, He will do; what He says will happen, will come to pass:

Numbers

23:19 God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

God cannot lie: His Word is truth (John 17:17). Also, what He has said, or what He has given, He will not take back. God will make good on what He has spoken. We see more in Isaiah chapter 55, verses 10 and 11:

Isaiah

55:10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* where I sent it.

God's Word never returns void: it is dependable; you can count on it. God's Word is always profitable:

II Timothy

3:16 All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God ("*God-breathed*"), and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for (*which is*) instruction in righteousness:

3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

God's Word is profitable: with it we can be "perfect" (the Greek word is *artios*, meaning "fully equipped"). The words "thoroughly furnished" are from one Greek word, *exartizō*, the verb form of *artios*. God's Word gives us everything we need to be able to do "all good works" as we live the Word:

- 4:1 I charge *thee* therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick (living) and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
4:2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (*teaching*).

We are to teach the doctrine of God's Word and when necessary reprove and correct others who have drifted from the integrity of the Word. Before we can do this, we must make God's Word our own. The only way we can accomplish this is to study it, including doing what research is necessary so we can be sure of what God originally said, not just what it says in the version of the Bible we may be reading or what somebody else says:

II Timothy

2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

As we diligently study God's Word so we can make it our own, we need to preserve its integrity by not allowing any private interpretation, including any preconceived notions or false doctrines, to creep in. II Peter 1:20 tells us: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation."

Once we have God's rightly divided Word, we need to stand on it. We especially need to stand on the integrity of God's Word, especially when those situations arise that might tempt us to question it.

What does it mean to "stand" on God's Word? Let's look at a great usage of the word "stand" in Ephesians, chapter 6:

Ephesians

6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness:

The word "stand" in this verse is from the Greek word *histēmi*. In most places, it simply means to stand on one's feet, but in several verses, especially in the Church Epistles, this word takes on the figurative meaning of "to take a stand". When we take a stand on something we stay put: we are unmovable and refuse to compromise. From this verse, we see that when we know the truth, God's Word, we keep it in our hearts and minds. We don't budge on it.

In I Corinthians 15:1 we read: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand." Here Paul is referring to their stand on the truth of God's Word in our administration, the truth of the Great Mystery. Romans 5:2 mentions "the grace wherein we stand".

If we back up a few verses in Ephesians chapter 6 we get a greater appreciation of what it means to “stand”. Let’s begin in verse 10:

- 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

By our freedom of will, we are to “put on”, to utilize, all that God has made available to us. We believe God’s Word, operate all nine of the manifestations of holy spirit, and trust in God because His Word has integrity. As we do this, we are able to stand against the adversary.

- 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places (from on high)*.
6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Verse 13 reiterates, establishes, that we are to make use of everything that God has made available to us, so we can “withstand in the evil day” (in the Aramaic it reads “withstand the evil one”), and having done all (“having overcome” in the text), to stand at the *bema* for rewards at the Return of Christ. Then verse 14:

- 6:14a Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...

We stand for the truth, for the integrity of God’s Word.

But we can do more than simply “stand”: we can stand fast for the truth, with “fast” emphasizing secure, fixed, immobile. As we stand fast, we don’t let anybody or anything shake us or move us from the integrity of God’s Word.

There is one Greek word that is usually translated “stand fast”, and that’s the word *stēko*. We’ll take a look at three of the six usages of this word in the Church Epistles:

I Corinthians

- 16:13 Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Believers are exhorted to “watch”, or more accurately be vigilant, from the same Greek word used in I Peter 5:8 where we read “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” Ephesians 6:11 said we are to “stand against the wiles of the devil.” In James 4:7 we are told: “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” The way to resist the devil is to stand fast on the integrity of God’s Word.

I Corinthians 16:13 tells us that we are to “stand fast in the faith”. We are vigilant: we stand fast in the family faith, in the household, for the truth of God’s Word. “Quit ye like men” more literally means “act like grown-ups” – we are not children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14): instead, as mature believers, we stand fast.

Galatians

5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

Born-again believers are forever freed from the Law: we have liberty. We need to stand fast in that liberty, keeping the integrity of God's Word in our hearts and minds and not budging on it, so we don't get tricked into falling back under the yoke of bondage.

II Thessalonians

2:15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions (*doctrine*) which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

We are to stand fast, holding onto the doctrine of God's rightly divided Word we know.

As we stand fast on the integrity of God's Word, we will not waiver: we will not be moved no matter what may come up. As Psalm 16 verse 8 says: "I have set the Lord always before me: because he *is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

Now that we know what it means to stand fast on the integrity of God's Word, let's consider a few examples of believers who did this as they confronted opposition. We'll begin with the example set by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When confronted by the devil in those temptations in the wilderness recorded in Matthew 4 and Luke 4, Jesus Christ stood firmly on the integrity of God's Word, backing the adversary down with "It is written". This is in stark contrast to what can happen when someone does not stand on the integrity of God's Word. We know what happened when Eve was approached by devil as recorded in Genesis chapter 3 verse 1 (Yea, hath God said...?), when rather than take a stand she questioned the integrity of God's Word.

Let's look at another example of Jesus Christ's stand on the integrity of God's Word, in Matthew chapter 15. We'll begin in verse 1:

Matthew

15:1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.
15:3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?

Jesus was confronted by the religious leaders of the time who were definitely not walking on the integrity of God's Word but instead put their traditions and their own doctrine at the forefront. Jesus took a stand and confronted them with God's Word. We'll continue by turning to Mark chapter 7, a parallel record, where we'll pick it up in verse 6:

Mark

7:6 He answered and said unto them, well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me.

- 7:7 Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.
 7:8 For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, *as* the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.
 7:9 And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.
 7:13 Making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered; and many such like things *do ye*.

Today, we are confronted, just like Jesus Christ was, by those who put their own “traditions”, often under the guise of a religion or even the (wrongly-divided) Word of God, in place of the integrity of God’s Word. Just like Jesus Christ, we need to take a stand. Look at Colossians chapter 2, where we’ll begin in verse 6:

Colossians

- 2:6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him (*in Christ, in fellowship*).
 2:7 Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.
 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.
 2:9 For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.
 2:10 And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

God wants us to be vigilant and watchful as we walk on His Word. There are those who would introduce their own doctrine, leading us away from the integrity of God’s Word. Only when we stand on the integrity of God’s Word are we truly complete in him.

Our being complete in Christ refers to the entire Body of Christ to which we belong (in verse 10 the word “ye” is you, plural). We know from I Corinthians chapter 12 that the one Body is comprised of many members, each of which is vital for the proper functioning of the entire Body. In verse 18 we read:

I Corinthians

- 12:18 But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

Each one of us in the Body of Christ has an important function. Each has our own long suits or contributions to make. God called each one of us to be a part of the Body, and as Romans 11:29 states, “The gifts and callings of God are without repentance”. God gave those gifts and callings: if He won’t take them away, who has a right to? Look at verse 21:

- 12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

The integrity, the soundness and completeness, of the Body, as well as the integrity of God’s Word, would be at stake if members were to be dismissed or removed. Such action

would also affect the believing of the individuals that make up the body. Verse 26 tells us: “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it...”

The Book of Acts also contains records of believers standing on the integrity of God’s Word. Peter and the other apostles were often confronted by the religious leaders of the time, who even threatened them or beat them to attempt to keep them from moving God’s Word and performing signs, miracles, and wonders. Rather than backing off, the apostles consistently stood strong on the integrity of God’s Word.

We see one example in Acts chapter 4. Peter and James had been brought before the religious leaders after healing a lame man at the temple gate and delivering a teaching which resulted in about 5000 men believing. We’ll begin in verse 18:

Acts

- 4:18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.
- 4:19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.
- 4:20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

In another example, recorded in Acts chapter 5, the apostles had been put in prison by the religious leaders, only to be released by an angel who, speaking for God, told them “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (verse 20). When the religious leaders again rounded them up, they asked them (verse 28): “Did we not straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name?” The apostles stood firm on the integrity of God’s Word to them, and responded: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” (verse 29).

Some years later, after the apostles Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch of Syria from their outreach itinerary into Asia Minor, certain people came from Jerusalem (where the Church was headquartered), professing a doctrine that was contrary to God’s Word. The integrity of the Word was at stake, this time with the threat from within. We see this record in Acts chapter 15:

Acts

- 15:1 And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.
- 15:2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissention and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

An attempt was made to put the believers, especially those that had formerly been Gentiles, under the Old Testament Law. Paul and Barnabas stood on the integrity of God’s Word, and were sent with other believers to Jerusalem for a meeting sometimes referred to as “the council of Jerusalem”. After much disputing, it was decided that the Church would take a stand on God’s Word, with James, Jesus Christ’s half-brother and the administrative head of the Church, also holding forth the Word and proposing a godly solution.

It's ironic that some years later, James himself succumbed to the demands of those who wanted to put believers under the law and was no longer taking that stand on the Word's integrity. As a result, when Paul, despite God's repeated warnings not to go, went to Jerusalem, he was almost killed and had to get protection from the Roman soldiers. Paul continued to stand on God's Word, though, and later while in Rome he wrote the greatest revelation to the Church of Grace to which we belong.

We've considered the integrity of God's Word and what it means to stand on that Word, then looked at some examples of believers who took a stand on the integrity of God's Word. As believers in the one Body today we each need to take a stand against threats to the integrity of God's Word, whether they come from without or from within. Only then will we be able to fully enjoy the more abundant life.

- Dr. Rick Batt