

Why We Must Stand for the National Anthem

African-Americans have been involved in every military conflict in American history. So, as African-Americans, we must stand to honor those who have gone before us.

Since their arrival to this country—from the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, the Spanish-American War, both World Wars, the Korean War, the Vietnam War the Gulf and Middle East Wars, and in all the conflicts which have been fought up to this current time—African-Americans have bravely and heroically fought and died, helping to defend and protect this country. Standing honors our forefathers who, in times past saw beyond the horrendous oppression which they had to endure at home, but nevertheless, were willing to fight for a country for which they had unrelenting hopes and dreams.

Their standing represents a heritage that has been passed down from one generation to another—standing in the face of physical and social oppression, standing in pursuit of promises yet unfulfilled, and standing by people with strength of character and a divine sense of destiny. So yes, our generation must continue to stand as the lasting fruit of their labors and as evidence that their sacrifices were not in vain.

We must stand as people of faith because faith calls into being that which does not exist. Faith is not wishful or presumptuous thinking. Faith is having the inward confidence of things hoped for and it holds to the conviction of things not seen. For it is our faith that pleases God, and it is God who rewards those who earnestly and diligently look to Him as their source.

It is also in faith and by faith we can stand together in a brotherhood of faith, one people under God, with one mind striving to secure the same rights and privileges which are given by God to all. Standing fast in faith demonstrates an unwavering bravery and strength, proclaiming our confidence that we shall overcome, and that truth and justice shall one day reign throughout our nation.

We must stand as followers of Jesus Christ because we are called to live like Jesus here in this world. He stood when all seemed to be against Him and most had rejected Him.

Jesus stood bravely before his accusers and tormentors before being nailed to a cross, neither compromising his beliefs nor accepting the status quo. Jesus stood when the first martyr of the church, Stephen, had been wrongly convicted and sentenced to die. As Stephen was being stoned to death, he looked up to heaven and saw Jesus *standing* at the right hand of God, a profound vision of the risen Christ who fervently identifies with Stephen and with all who are downtrodden and oppressed. Therefore, as followers of Christ, we too must stand and continue to stand as a light in darkness, dispelling injustice and proclaiming truth.

Finally, we must stand, not in a spirit of defiance and rebellion, but standing in a spirit that recognizes and honors those who came before us; standing in faith that pleases God and sees a vision for a brighter tomorrow, and standing with sincere devotion to Jesus Christ who admonishes us to keep standing until the battle is over and victory is won.

So, when NFL players—and fans—hear the national anthem being played prior to a game, they *must* stand. {eoa}

Gary Ham *has been involved in evangelism and missions since 1980. He is the executive director of the Eleventh Hour Christian Initiatives, a nonprofit organization he founded in 2010, which is committed to missions mobilization, reaching*

the lost at home and the unreached in countries abroad. He has also authored the book, It's the 11th Hour. {eoa}