

## OBEY GOD-DEFY TYRANTS #26

### I. Introduction

Before I get into tonight's message, I want to revisit our teaching from last time:

#### **"Spineless: The Decline of Christian Courage"**

##### **Part 2**

##### **'Decline'**

**Something regarded as good becoming smaller or less; a decrease**

It's bad news when we hear that a person is suffering from 'declining health'. But it's even worse news when a formerly Christian culture suffers from 'declining courage'?

The brilliant Russian writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who defected from the evil empire of Soviet oppression, warned the Christianized western world that a decline of courage could close the door on freedom and open the door for communistic control...

##### **Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "A World Split Apart" (1978)**

**"A decline in courage...from ancient times...has been considered the beginning of the end. The western world has lost its civil courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, and in each political party.**

The great English Anglican Bishop J.C. Ryle bemoaned how the loss of courage in the culture of his day had crept over into the Christian community...

##### **J.C. Ryle**

**We live in an age of unprecedented compromise. Courage has been eclipsed by cowardice. Conviction has been hijacked by capitulation.**

##### **J.C. Ryle**

**This produces what I must call a ‘jellyfish Christianity’ in the land: that is, a spineless Christianity without bone, or muscle, or power.**

Ryle went on to write about jellyfish pastors preaching jellyfish sermons which produced jellyfish worshippers; a spineless Christianity that could not confront a culture moving away from God. History teaches us that...

### **Theme**

**The rise of evil cannot occur in a culture apart from a decline of courage in the Christian community.**

When evil arises the church has 2 choices; cowardice or courage.

We can be spineless cowards, conforming ourselves to the culture;  
or we can be courageous Christians who have acquired...

## **I. The Courage of Non-Conformity**

### **A. Text: One of the Most Neglected of the New Testament Commandments**

#### **Romans 12:2**

**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind... (NKJV)**

**Do not be conformed to this age (HCSB)**

**Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. (NLT)**

1. Christians are commanded to be transformed by the renewing of our minds; but one thing stands in our way...

#### **Matthew Henry**

**The great enemy to this renewing of the mind, which we must avoid, is conformity to this world. *All the disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus must be nonconformists to this world.***

2. The Apostle Paul implies that the world around us has power to mold us into its own image.

a. 'This world' does not refer to the physical planet earth; it has to do with the systems and ways of this world and their powerful pull to conform us to it.

**Albert Barnes**

**The word rendered "conformed" means to put on the form, fashion, or appearance of another. It may refer to anything pertaining to the habit, manner, dress, or style of living of others.**

**The Biblical Illustrator**

**The word "conformed" means to take our form from the things around us, which becomes the mold into which our mind is cast. That mold will vary in each new age, in each new locality because it is the very nature of the world to be continually changing.**

3. Christian non-conformity must adjust in each generation according to the evil ways the world system is operating in its own day.

**Albert Barnes**

**The word 'world' here properly denotes an age, an era, or a generation of people.**

4. The expression of evil in the world changes from generation to generation; but one thing doesn't change...

**The Biblical Illustrator**

**The 'world' is a spirit that is everywhere around us. And much of our modern civilization is a process of conformation to this world.**

5. Any honest evaluation of our country's current spiritual condition would have to admit that we are in trouble. But who's to blame?

**Theme**

**The real problem of our day is not what the world is doing, but how many professing Christians are allowing themselves to be conformed to it.**

6. What we need today is what I am calling, 'the courage of non-conformity'. It takes courage to be a non-conformist; to stand apart from the crowd and dare to be different. The question today is...

### **Why Are Most People Cowards?**

a. Here's a 3 minute clip from an AcademyofIdeas.com video:

**'Why Are Most People Cowards?: Obedience and the Rise of Totalitarianism'**

#### **Video**

<https://academyofideas.com/2022/01/why-are-most-people-cowards-obedience-and-the-rise-of-authoritarianism/>

**Begin: 00:14**

**End: 2:58 '...is automaton conformity'**

b. The video's most profound point to ponder is Rollo May's comment:

#### **Rollo May**

**The opposite of courage in our society is not cowardice, it is conformity.**

7. Conformity is the cowardice that is killing our country...and I believe it has 3 causes...

#### **Theme**

**The 3 causes for the cowardice of conforming to this world are:**

**(1) A cowardly compulsion to do as other people do; (follow the crowd)**

**(2) A cowardly fear of giving offence**

**(3) A cowardly inability to stand alone**

## **II. The 3 Causes Of The Cowardice of Conformity**

### **A. First: The Cowardly Compulsion to Follow the Crowd**

1. There is a powerful, invisible pressure in this world that compels us to do what other people are doing; we tend to follow the crowd; we are inclined to imitate the masses. But Jesus told us the crowd is on its way to hell.

### **Matthew 7:13-14**

**"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."**

a. False teachers offer a broad gate and broad way; it draws big crowds but it leads to destruction.

b. Cowardly Christians are chameleons who can blend right in with the world; a world that is ever at war with true Christianity...

### **General Douglas MacArthur**

**The world is in a constant conspiracy against the brave. It's an age-old struggle—the roar of the crowd on one side and the voice of your conscience on the other.**

c. Testimony: One of the greatest danger to our young people is called...

### **"Peer Pressure"**

**A feeling that one must do the same things as other people of one's age and social group in order to be liked or respected.**

d. But as Jesus taught us, the problem with peer pressure is that the group is usually going the wrong way.

2. Even back in the Old Testament, God gave Israel a clear commandment about the danger of going along with the ungodly...

### **Exodus 23:2**

**You shall not follow a crowd (multitude) to do evil...**

### **Matthew Henry**

**We must not follow a multitude to do evil. If sinners entice us, we must not consent to them, but witness against them. Nay, even in things which are not in themselves sinful, we must not conform to the custom and way of the world, nor accept the world's dictates as our chief rule, nor to aim at the world's favors as our highest end.**

a. The tendency to conform with the crowd comes naturally to us because we are creatures made of 'clay'. (Job 10:9; Isaiah 64:8) We tend to take on the form of what's around us.

### **The Biblical Illustrator**

**Imitation is one of the characteristics of the human species. The same passion that impels us to seek society also impels us to take part with our companions in their interests and inclinations.**

### **The Biblical Illustrator**

**Insensibly and without thought we fall into their customs and their manners; we adopt their sentiments, their passions, and even their faults, and follow the same course as if we were actuated by the same spirit.**

b. A Christian's conformity to the culture of this world takes place insensibly, (we are not even aware of it), and gradually, until the way of the world around us becomes our way. We are always influenced by who we hang with!

### **1 Corinthians 15:33**

**Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits. (NKJV)**

**Bad company corrupts good morals. (HCSB)**

**Bad company corrupts good character.(NLT)**

c. Today, many think that evil is acceptable if enough people are doing it or if enough people are saying it; we begin to think, 'this many people can't be wrong; maybe there's something wrong with me!'

d. How many Christians followed the crowd in celebrating the Gay Pride parade?

3. Human nature wants acceptance and approval; we want to be liked; but a people-pleasing spirit actually enslaves us to the people we're trying to please.

### **Richard Taylor, "Restoring Pride"**

**Most people cannot, even for a moment, disentangle themselves from the restraints imposed by those around them, nor can they disregard their approval.**

**Richard Taylor**

**From the moment they begin to understand their parent's smiles and frowns they have needed the moment to moment approval of everyone, even strangers. These people measure their entire worth by what others think of them.**

4. Balance: Of course we should care about our good reputation and good name; but we cannot be *controlled* by what other people think about us!

**The Biblical Illustrator**

**There are people who are so dependent upon the good opinion of others, that to gain it they will forfeit their own respect by doing things which otherwise they would have left undone.**

**The Biblical Illustrator**

**They have convictions of their own, but they allow themselves to be laughed or frowned out of them; they have opinions of their own, but they modify and explain them away. Many a man may date his destruction from the day he began to be afraid of losing the good opinion of bad men!**

a. How many Christians compromise their conscience by going along with the crowd to avoid any conflict?

b. How many Pastors have watered down their preaching in pursuit of popularity with the people?

**James 4:4-5 NLT**

**Don't you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God.**

**...do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?**

**NASB**

5. So the first cause of cowardice is the compulsion or tendency to do as others do, to follow the crowd...

**B. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Cause of Cowardice is: The Fear of Giving Offence**

1. One of Satan's most sinister and successful strategies has been the suppression of truth and free speech in a world fearfully bound up in 'political correctness'.

### **Political Correctness**

**The avoidance of forms of expression perceived to exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against.**

***Conformity to social expectations.***

2. The world has concocted new rules of expression that require us to conform, even at the expense of the truth; anyone who offends is failing to conform to the 'social expectations' of this world.

3. The problem with political correctness is that it precludes us from telling the truth.

### **Thomas Paine**

**He who dares not offend cannot be honest.**

### **Laurence Overmire, American Poet**

**Whenever you speak the truth, someone will be offended.**

4. If Christians cowardly conform to this world for fear of giving offence, we cannot comply with Christ's clear command to preach the Gospel!

### **Matthew 10:27-28**

**Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops. *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul.* But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.**

a. The clear implication here is if we are speak and preach in public what God tells us in secret, we will have to overcome the fear of man!

### **Proverbs 29:25**

**The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.**



5. The fear of man, the fear of giving offence has ensnared much of the modern American church that has given up the Gospel in favor of...

### **"Virtue Signaling"**

**The attempt to show other people that you are a good person by expressing opinions that will be acceptable to them.**

6. A virtue signaling church is a cowardly church helping on one.

### **Thomas Sowell**

**When you want to help people, you tell them the truth. When you want to help yourself, you tell them what they want to hear.**

### **Review: The 3 Causes of Cowardly Conformity**

**1. A compulsion to follow the crowd; do what others do**

**2. The fear of giving offence**

**And finally...**

### **C. Third: The Inability to Stand Alone**

1. We've all done it; we went along with the crowd, we agreed with the group, just because we didn't want to be abandoned and left alone.

2. Conformity with this world keeps you part of the crowd; the courage to nonconform can be lonely...as it was with the Lord Jesus.

### **Isaiah 63:3**

**I have trodden the winepress alone and from the peoples no one was with Me.**

3. We can give personal testimony of how lonely it can be to refuse to conform.

### **Leonard Ravenhill**

**The Christian life is a lonely life, but it's a glorious life. Nobody stood by Jesus; maybe nobody will stand by you.**

a. Abraham was left alone; Jacob; Moses; David; even the great Apostle Paul, in his last letters, learned the lesson of loneliness for his refusal to conform to this world...

**2 Timothy 1:15**

**This you know, that *all those in Asia have turned away from me*, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes**

**2 Timothy 4:9-11**

**Be diligent to come to me quickly; for *Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world*, and has departed for Thessalonica — Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia. *Only Luke is with me.***

**2 Timothy 4:14-16**

**Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words. *At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me.* May it not be charged against them.**

4. This may be the toughest test courage in a Christian: to refuse conformity with this world when you're in the minority; or even alone; or when you think you may be crazy...

**C.S. Lewis**

**When the whole world is running toward a cliff, he who is running in the opposite direction will appear to have lost his mind.**

**III. Close: Review**

The Christian is commanded to be not conformed to this world...

**Romans 12:2**

**Be not conformed to this world...**

**Theme**

**The real problem of our day is not what the world is doing, but how many professing Christians are allowing themselves to be conformed to it.**

**Rollo May**

**The opposite of courage in our society is not cowardice, it is conformity.**

**Closing Prayer**

**Title**