

OBEY GOD-DEFY TYRANTS #25

Pride Month

Before I begin with our message tonight, I want to take one last opportunity to publicly denounce America's "Pride Month"; a so-called celebration of LGBTQ lifestyles.

We hear these initials used so much that we forget that they stand for:

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer;
sometimes they add the letters "I" for Intersex; "A" for Asexual; and a "+" which stands for "all other non-cisgender and non-straight identities."
This is what they are celebrating? This is what they are proud of?

If Christians care about these people, and we should, we must love them enough to tell them the truth, including one we all need to remember..

Proverbs 16:18

Pride goes before destruction...

Many Bible scholars believe that pride is probably the greatest sin of all:

C.S. Lewis

The essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea bites in comparison. It was through Pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice; it is the complete anti-God state of mind.

Second, we need to remember that God's word refers to the sins of homosexuality and gender confusion as 'abominations', and promises to punish those who have no shame committing them...

Jeremiah 6:15

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time I punish them, they shall be cast down," says the Lord.

Christians cannot support their agenda. But we can pray for their souls.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we find ourselves like Lot living in Sodom...whose soul was vexed daily because of the shameful immorality of the wicked people around him.

We denounce their sin but pray for their souls; that You might grant the gift of repentance to anyone ensnared in abominations and pride.

We pray for our own souls to be delivered from the sin of pride.

We also pray for mercy upon America; that you would forgive us our sins and grant all of us the gift of repentance. We pray that your Kingdom come and Your will be done, on earth as it in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen

Alright, let me move into the message for tonight.

The last 2 weeks we taught on "The Demise of Responsibility".

My title for tonight is...

"Spineless"

The Decline of Christian Courage

I. Introduction

In 1976, Alexander Solzhenitsyn defected to the U.S. from his native Russia, where he suffered under Soviet Communism and endured the tortures of a prison camp known as the Gulag Archipelago. His many books became a warning to the Western world about the deadly seeds of something he saw simmering in the free nations of the world that would open the door to tyranny...a decline of courage.

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

"A decline in courage may be the most striking feature which an outside observer notices in the West in our days...Should not one point out that from ancient times that declining courage has been considered the beginning of the end?"

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

The western world has lost its civil courage, both as a whole and separately, in each country, and in each political party.

In speaking of the 'West' or the 'western world' of course, he was referring to Christianized countries; nations formerly most affected by the Gospel.

What he warned about was that a decline of Christian courage would be the beginning of the end of freedom. The enemies of God count on the cowardice of Christians to advance their evil agenda. Remember this...

Theme

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

When the Church falls into fear, evil comes out of the closet. I was reminded of this principle again this week by re-reading some sermons written 150 years ago by the great Bishop Ryle...

J.C. Ryle

(1816-1900)

I have always been inspired by the writings of the English Anglican Bishop, J.C. Ryle. Ryle was a contemporary of the great British Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon, who admired him...

Charles Spurgeon

J.C. Ryle is an evangelical champion. One of the bravest and best of men.

Bishop Ryle's writings from 150 years ago remain relevant right now; Listen to how his comments on the decline of courage in the Christian community of his day sounds like the condition of the American church today...

J.C. Ryle (1816-1900)

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

Ryle goes on to write about what happens when courage is eclipsed by cowardice in the Christian church...

J.C. Ryle

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

J.C. Ryle

A jellyfish is a pretty and graceful object when it floats in the sea, contracting and expanding like a little, delicate, transparent umbrella.

J.C. Ryle

Yet the same jellyfish, when cast on the shore, is a mere helpless lump, without capacity for movement, self-defense, or self-preservation. Alas! The jellyfish is a picture of much of the religion of our day.

Remember, Ryle wrote these words 150 years ago; but in his book, “Spineless”, Pastor David Steele says..

David S. Steele

**“Spineless: Restoring Courage and Conviction to the People of God”
Tragically, not much has changed. The church in the 21st century can accurately be defined as ‘spineless’. Simply put, we have lost our courage. We are weak-kneed and fearful, like the lion in the Wizard of Oz.**

Lion, confronted by Dorothy for his fearful disposition:

“You’re right. I am a coward. I haven’t any courage at all. I even scare myself.”

II. Spineless: The Decline of Christian Courage

A. The Many Manifestations of Jellyfish Christianity

1. Bishop Ryle offers many manifestations of ‘Jellyfish Christianity’, beginning in the pulpit.

J.C. Ryle

Pastors ought never be spineless jellyfish. Yet we have hundreds of ‘jellyfish’ clergymen who seem not to have a single bone in the body of their preaching. They have no definite opinions; they belong to no school or party; they are so afraid of ‘extreme views’ that they have no views at all.

a. This sounds like the spineless people pleasing Pastors of our own day; afraid to offend; slaves to popular opinion.

b.

Dr. Dustin Bengte

Professor of History, Union School of Theology, Wales

Every generation of church history demonstrates that the people of God must exercise courage and conviction in order to pass on the truth to the next. In our own generation, we have seen countless men and women capitulate God's truth in exchange for cultural relevancy.

b. For lack of courage, only 1 out of 10 Christian pastors preach on politics; and many ministers cave when it comes to anything controversial. The problem is...

2. Jellyfish pastors preach jellyfish sermons.

J.C. Ryle

We have thousands of 'jellyfish' sermons preached every year, sermons without an edge, or a point, or a corner; sermons as smooth as billiard balls, awakening no sinner, and edifying no saint.

a. What does it mean to preach 'the whole counsel of God?'

b. Is there no place for theology or sound doctrine?

c. The goal seems 'just don't offend'.

So the problem is: Jellyfish pastors produce jellyfish sermons and...

3. Jellyfish sermons produce jellyfish worshippers.

J.C. Ryle

Worst of all, we have a myriad of 'jellyfish' worshippers—respectable church-going people who have no distinct views about any point of theology. They cannot discern things that differ, any more than color-blind people can distinguish colors.

a. 'Discerning Things That Differ' was an essay on the difference between justification, which is once and for all, and sanctification, which is a process.

b. Jellyfish Christians have no distinct views...

J.C. Ryle, "Holiness"

They think everybody is right and nobody is wrong, everything is true and nothing is false, all sermons are good and none are bad, every clergyman is sound and no clergyman is unsound.

c. Jellyfish Christians float around with the tide...

J.C. Ryle

They are 'tossed to and fro, like children, by every wind of doctrine; often carried away by any new excitement or sensational movement; ever ready for new things because they have no grasp on the old; and unable to render any reason for the hope that is in them.

d. Jellyfish Christians have a strong dislike for distinct doctrinal teaching because it makes them uncomfortable. They don't realize that...

J.C. Ryle

The consequences of this widespread dislike to distinct biblical doctrine are very serious. Whether we like it or not, it is an epidemic which is doing great harm, and especially among young people.

J.C. Ryle

We have legions of 'jellyfish' young men annually turned out by our universities, armed with a few scraps of cleverness and intellect to have no decided opinions about anything in religion, and to be utterly unable to make up their minds as to what is Christian truth.

B. Consequences of Cowardice

1. Cowardice kept the nation of Israel out of the Promised Land; of the 12 men Moses sent to spy out the land only 2 believed i

Numbers 13:31-32

But the men who had gone up with them said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying...

Numbers 13:32-33

"The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

a. 2 'for' and 10 'against'-and the people went with the majority; and spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness.

2. America is our Promised Land; the land God placed us in. If courage fails and cowardice prevails, we will find ourselves wandering in a wilderness created by our own cowardice.

3. Today, a spiritual 'Goliath' is already on the field, a spirit that curses God and defies the Army of the living God. What happened?

1 Samuel 17:11 (NKJV)

When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

1 Sam 17:11 (HCSB)

they lost their courage and were terrified.

- a. Notice how Saul and ALL OF ISRAEL lost their courage and were terrified.
- b. This is where we are today...

David S. Steele

"Spineless: Restoring Courage and Conviction to the People of God"
The contemporary church is in great need of courage and conviction. Very few Christ-followers possess the fiery faith of the Puritans or the bold resolve of the Reformers.

David S. Steele

Instead, we are geared to pleasing men, appealing to the lowest common denominator, and making people 'happy', no matter what the cost. We are milk-toast Christians; theological lightweights; spineless.

4. We must pray for courage!

III. Close: Review

Theme

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

We are living in an age where the whole world is living in fear; when we are needed most!

A.W. Tozer

A scared world needs a fearless church.

Let me close with David's words from Psalm 27

Charles Spurgeon

The setting of Psalm 27 indicates a time when David was pursued by enemies, (vv.2-3), shut out from the house of the Lord, (v.4), separated from father and mother, (v.10), and subjected to slander, (v.12).

And yet, in the midst of all this, David wrote...

Psalm 27:13-14

I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord; *be of good courage*, and He shall strengthen your heart.

Closing Prayer

Title

