

Christian Defense

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[0:00] Will anyone disagree with me this morning when I say that one of the most important cultural and spiritual issues of the day is that of homosexuality?

! There are massive shifts on this issue taking place in our courts, our societal norms, our definitions of what is normal, acceptable lifestyles.

And it's such that the issue is impossible to ignore. Hardly a week passes without something major in the news. Another athlete or celebrity coming out.

Another denomination of churches approving same-sex relations. And practicing homosexuals as members and ministers in their churches.

Another state's ban on homosexual marriage being overturned in the courts as unconstitutional.

More gay rights being granted to the homosexual lobby.

[1:07] Another politician or Phil Robinson opening his mouth and making politically incorrect statements and then all the flap that happens afterwards.

We can't go long, can we, today without this issue coming front and center before us. On and on it goes. In your face. You can't escape it.

And so in times like these we need the Bible. And we need to be sure that we know what the Bible says and means about homosexuality. And so today we begin a new study, not sure how long it will last, just called Homosexuality and the Bible.

What does the Bible teach on this current issue? Now this may not be a battle that we have chosen.

In fact, we may not want to fight this battle.

It may be a battle we'd rather avoid and not engage in. But it has come to us in the providence of God. We live in this time and in this place where this is the heated battle.

[2:19] That much is clear. And in order to be a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ here and now, this is a battle that we must fight.

And so today I want to consider what it will mean to be faithful to God in this issue of homosexuality. What it will be to live a life worthy of the Lord, pleasing to Him in every way, on this matter of homosexuality.

What will it include? And there are at least two major parts of the battle. And I want to begin our whole study with these two parts of the battle.

Of what it means to be a faithful soldier of Jesus in this battle. And the two points are defense and offense.

Defense and offense. Just as in any good sports team or any good military, there will be both, won't there? So this morning, and we'll see how far we get, we'll start with the defense of a faithful soldier.

[3:29] And that is simply to hold on to or to defend God's truth that is under attack. To hold on to and defend God's truth that is under attack.

Turn back to 2 Samuel chapter 23. 2 Samuel 23. David had some faithful men, some mighty men, that stood beside him and were faithful soldiers to him and to his cause.

And he had three who had so distinguished themselves in his service that they were called the three. Just as Jesus called the disciples that were with him all the time, the twelve.

Here are the three. And they're set before us here in chapter 23, verses 8 through 12. These are the names of David's mighty men.

Joseph Bashaboth, a Tachamanite, was chief of the three. He raised his spear against 800 men whom he killed in one encounter.

[4:38] Next to him was Eleazar, son of Dodai the Ahohite. As one of the three mighty men, he was with David when they taunted the Philistines gathered at Pasdemon for battle.

Then the men of Israel retreated. But he stood his ground and struck down the Philistines till his hand grew tired and froze to the sword.

The Lord brought about a great victory that day. The troops returned to Eleazar, but only to strip the dead. Next to him was Shema, son of Aji the Hararite.

When the Philistines banded together at a place where there was a field full of lentils, Israel's troops fled from them. But Shema took his stand in the middle of the field.

He defended it and struck the Philistines down. And the Lord brought about a great victory. For your participation, what distinguished these men from their fellows?

[5:52] And I'm thinking especially of the last of the three, as more is given us of the information about Eleazar and Sama. What set them apart? What was it?

They stood their ground. All right. And when did they stand their ground? When everybody else was fleeing. Okay. Say, do you remember anybody else who stood their ground when everybody else was fleeing?

Happened with a Philistine army? And one Philistine in particular? Who was it? David, the king. Should we be surprised that these men were his honored three men? They had the same spirit as David. Who when all the rest of the army of Israel was fleeing for the tents at the taunts of Goliath, David stood his ground.

David stood up and defended the honor of God in Israel. And so here are these mighty men. And they stood their ground.

[7:00] Took their stand. Can you see them there? Everybody else is running in retreat. Giving up the field of battle. But here is Eleazar. And he plants his feet.

And he refuses to move an inch. He's holding on to and defending the very ground that he's standing on. You're going to have to kill me to get these two feet. Because I'm not budging an inch. And the Lord used such a determined stand to win a great victory that day. It was the same with Shammah. It was the same with David.

Well, in the same way, there are times in the service of David's greater son, our Lord Jesus Christ, when we are called simply to stand our ground.

Not gaining new ground. Not attacking and seeking to capture new ground. But just to stand our ground.

[7:55] There's times in the battle for truth and righteousness when being faithful to Christ means taking our stand with our feet firmly planted on the truth of God's word and not moving from it.

Defending it. Defending it. And we see this in the life and ministry of the apostle Paul. He not only had an aggressive offense of taking the gospel to new territory.

But the apostle had a strong defense of the truth as it was needed whenever and wherever it was under attack.

Look at the book of Philippians. Philippians chapter 1 and verse 7.

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you since I have you in my heart. For whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

[9:11] Sometime I'm defending and confirming the gospel. Verse 16. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

There are times when to be a faithful soldier of Jesus is just to defend the truth of the gospel. And Paul knew it. And many times we find him in the book of Acts and throughout his epistles standing strong against what?

Against all the perversions of the gospel. Exposing the errors, the heresies, the false doctrines, the wrong thinking, the wrong doctrines.

And defending the truth as it is in Jesus. 1 Timothy chapter 4. 1 Timothy chapter 4. Look how Paul instructs his son in the faith, Timothy, on how he is to wage war in this battle.

1 Timothy 4. And the first six verses. He says to Timothy, and remember Timothy is a minister of the gospel and evangelist, but also had special authority and work in the church at Ephesus.

[10:35] And the Spirit clearly says that in latter times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.

Such teachings come through hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.

For everything God created is good. This is the truth. Everything God created is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God in prayer.

If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.

If you point these things out to the brothers, what things? Well, just what he said, that God has given marriage and food and all these things as good things to be used with thanksgiving, not to be forbidden as the doctrines of demons were being taught.

[11:56] And if you point these things out, you'll be a good soldier. You'll be a good minister of Christ in the truths of the faith. Now, in any battle, faithfulness on the part of soldiers requires them to stand and fight where the enemy is pressing the attack.

If the enemy is coming in like a flood in the northern front, it will not do for all the soldiers to run to the southern front and say, we're going to defend this space when a breach is being made in the northern front.

Faithfulness is proven in resisting where the fighting is hottest, and even so in our faithfulness to Christ and his truth. It is proven by standing where it is presently being attacked.

And today, the whole issue of homosexuality and God's teaching and God's truth concerning it is being violently assaulted. It's not enough to say, well, we're on the southern front.

We taught and we defended the sovereignty of God, and we defended covenant theology, and we did this and we did that. If we leave the truth of God that is presently under assault undefended, that's where our faithfulness is proven.

[13:11] So, question. Where in your day-to-day life might you be called to defend the truth of God concerning homosexuality?

It may not be in a field of lentils like Eliezer. It may not be with a television reporter sticking a mic into your mouth on television and saying, what do you believe about homosexuality?

But where might you, where have you been called to stand up and defend the truth of God's word on homosexuality? In my own family.

Okay. We better be expecting to find this issue coming closer and closer to home. Our own relatives.

Our own family. A good friend. At work. At work. In what ways at work? Knowing how to respond to an open lady.

[14:16] Again, if this is in the news big time, that's the kind of stuff that gets bandered around in the barbershops, the corner cafe, and I suppose the beautician shops.

I don't know. I've never been there. They say. It's like everybody makes a joke. So there are guidelines even on the issue written right into your workforce, telling you what you can and can't do. Any other ways that you might be called upon to defend? Makes a joke about it. Okay. You're getting ahead of us. That's the next week. But you're facing it, though.

People are joking about it. That's another instance, isn't it? When we're called upon to stand in that gap and to represent God's truth when others are poking fun and making light of it.

Okay? Good. Okay. An invitation to come to a wedding. Wow. It's a different day, isn't it?

[15:30] School's different. When I went to school. Any other ways that you're called to stand and defend the truth? Yeah.

Very good. So, in one way or another, this issue has come to us. And we can't live long. If we get out of our houses and get our heads out of the sand for any length of time at all, we can't live long without having this issue in our face.

And it's in that issue, in that time, that we are being called upon to be faithful soldiers of Jesus and to defend the truth as it is in Jesus.

Now, what makes it so hard to stand our ground on this issue of homosexuality? What makes it so difficult?

Why do we need to be encouraged to stand our ground? Why doesn't it come natural? Why do we just find this to be hard? The numbers are against us.

[16:32] We have a whole world. Hmm. So, the whole army is in retreat. And here we stand, sticking out like sore thumbs. All right? Why else?

They don't even think it's relevant. So, that makes it hard. That makes it hard. All right. We're going to see that there's a whole new breed of, quote, evangelicals that do hold to the scriptures.

And so, you will be able to use the word of God. But, with the homosexual hermeneutic, it comes out altogether different. So, we'll look at that.

But, with some, you're saying they just dismiss the Bible. So, that makes it hard. How do you talk with a homosexual and defend our position if the Bible today is becoming more and more discarded?

I believe there are ways. This is God's world, his natural world. There are laws and principles in place. Whether men will realize it from the word of God or just from reality, there are ways to bring it.

[17:38] But, it is hard, isn't it? Because people don't accept the authority of scripture. There's no small number of people who are in your face, cramming it down your throat.

They've got an agenda. They've got a way. They've had an agenda. They've had a way that they've been planning and working to get this accepted by the people of America.

And so, to have it forced upon us with such strength, it's hard not to just feel. All right. The novelty of it in that sense.

That it hasn't been something that we grew up with. That we had to defend. It wasn't on the top issues of the day when we grew up.

So, we're having to now suddenly, as it were, say, what do the scriptures say on this? Hmm. We don't want to be lumped in with that crowd, do we?

[18:39] We don't want to be homophobic and discriminating against blacks. But, they say that's what you're doing if you discriminate against a homosexual.

Well, I was told you that. Hmm. Okay. This impression that God is love. That seems to be the only theology many today know is that God is love.

And it's an empty love. That's hard. It's hard to minister in these contexts, isn't it?

Who's ready to say that peer pressure is a teenage thing? Now, this is a pressure that follows us to our dying day. To conform. Hence, do not be conformed to the world.

That's not just for teenagers. That's for us. That's for us. Renew your mind. Be renewed in your mind. Be transformed. Wanting men's favor is fine.

[19:47] The Bible holds it forth as a blessing from God. The favor of men. You know, Jesus grew in favor with men. It was a blessing from God. The righteous should be growing in the favor of men.

Wanting the favor of men is a blessing. Read the Proverbs. You'll see that. It's offered over and over as a blessing from God. But wanting it too much is a sin. Is an idol.

When we want the favor of God so much that we refuse to defend the truth, it's turning our blessings into cursings. So this is hard. We have this peer pressure.

We have the world's pressure. We have the world in retreat on this issue all around us. And so if we stand our ground, we are going to look odd. We are going to look like fools.

Do anybody else look like a fool ever in church history? Yeah. Paul says, I'm a fool for Christ's sake.

[20:44] I'm considered as the off-scouring of the world. So we need to reckon with this idea that in order to stand our ground, we're going to have to deal with the fear of man.

We're going to have to deal with that issue of the love of man's praises. Not wanting to be standing alone. And then we've got to deal with not just the smirks and the mockery and the raised eyebrows, but growing persecution.

And some of you have already referred to it. The stakes are getting higher, aren't they? Someone mentioned about the person in the wedding cake business.

And I think it was a lady, wasn't it? And she just thought she had the right to refuse who she baked cakes for and who she didn't.

But then when a homosexual couple wanted her to bake a wedding cake for them and she refused, they were offended. And I believe the lady ended up having to pay fines or something.

[21:52] It was, the stakes are getting higher. Courts are siding with the homosexual lobby. And it is going to cost us then to stand.

There is a cost involved and it's not just standing alone. It's other things as well. Stanton Jones is the associate. At least he was. I don't know if he's still, but the book that I'm reading, five-year-old book that I'm reading, he was the associate professor of the Department of Psychology at Wheaton College.

And he's a licensed clinical psychologist. And he writes, my own professional organization, the American Psychological Association, may soon consider a move to classify as unethical any

professional offering services to help homosexuals overcome their homosexuality. So he could be expelled from the APA, stripped of his license, and as good as being out of a job. And some of you have made reference to that in your workplace and what you can and cannot do. And it could end up costing you a job. California has already made it illegal for licensed professionals to counsel gay and lesbian minors under 18 to change their sexual orientation. [23 : 12] In 2012, Governor Jerry Brown signed the bill to ban therapists, psychologists, doctors, and social workers from providing so-called gay conversion therapy to patients under 18.

I believe, wasn't Ohio following suit? There are other states that are following suit with California. And they have pastors and other counselors, biblical counselors, in their sights as well. When it may be illegal, punishable to counsel a homosexual to leave his homosexuality. Hate speech legislation is already law in Canada where one cannot speak against homosexuality in the media. Focus on the family had their programs taken off the air in Canada because they were deemed hate speech, some of them.

One man put an ad in the newspaper listing the Bible passages, the ones that we're going to look at in our study. Just listing the Bible passages that oppose homosexuality. Put it in a newspaper ad. [24 : 23] Both he and the newspaper had to pay \$1,500 to three homosexuals who were offended at what they read. In British Columbia, a teacher who wrote a letter to the newspaper saying that homosexuality was not a fixed orientation was suspended.

There's affirmative action legislation seeking to force businesses and schools, hospitals, who do not have homosexual faculty, workers, to have to hire them.

Will that come around to Grace Fellowship Church? What will our world look like? Where is this ending? Tremendous shifts taking place in our society.

And then with all of that, there is in my heart a love for ease. A love for no confrontation. An avoidance of anything that smells like the cross.

Like death to self. Like cost. Like denying myself taking up my cross and following Jesus. And that makes it hard.

[25 : 38] To stand up in a world that is in wholesale retreat on this issue. And that is beginning to persecute those who do.

It's time to conform. To catch up with the rest of us, they say. So will I be faithful to Christ and speak in defense of him and his truth? Or be silent and do nothing to resist the destruction of God's truth? This is not the first time that being faithful to Christ's truth has been costly in church history. It's one of the values of church history. It busts open the little bubble that we've been living in here in America for 200 plus years.

And it gets us into the rest of the world and history. And we see, wow. People paid with their lives to believe the things that we believe and preach every week.

They were burnt at the stake just to believe the stuff that we yawn at as if, well, everybody believes that, right?

[26 : 45] If you're a Christian. Well, it's not the first time. And so our Lord knows that this is hard for us. This is one of the encouragements that we have.

That, okay, here we are, 2014, the front and center issue in front of us as Christians is the Church of Jesus Christ. It's an all-out attack upon his view of sexuality, of marriage and homosexuality.

I mean, it's a broader issue than just homosexuality, isn't it? It has to do with gender and marriage. And our Lord knows exactly where we live.

And he has grace for us in our avoidance of the cross and love of men's praises and all the rest.

And so he gives us encouragement. He seeks to motivate us to stand up and defend the truth. Turn to Matthew chapter 8. Matthew 8.

[27 : 46] Here's Jesus' encouragement for any of us in any situation, at the water cooler, in our family reunion, wherever we may be, in our workplace.

And we have the challenge on the table and we're afraid and we're ashamed to stand up and defend the truth. Well, here's Jesus' encouragement. Matthew 8.

There is no Matthew 8, 38. Maybe it's Matthew 9.

You know, I want to go on. I'll try to find the passage for next week. But it's a familiar passage. Let me read it for you. I don't have the reference, but I have the words. If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory and the holy angels.

If anyone's ashamed of me and my words in this wicked and adulterous generation, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his Father's glory.

[29:04] God's truth is an expression of his own nature. And so it's sacred and precious to him. Jesus writes a letter to the church in Thyatira.

What was going on in Thyatira? Well, they had a woman there, Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess. And by her teaching was misleading Christ's servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols.

And he says in that letter to the church, I'm going to send intense suffering to this woman and her followers. And then he has a word to the rest of them in the church.

Revelation 2, 24 and 5. Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets, I will not impose any other burden on you.

Only hold on to what you have until I come. Isn't that good? Jesus knows what's going on in your church, your neighborhood, your society, your business, your family.

[30:06] And he just says, hold on to what you have. Hold on to what you have. Take your stand. There are times in the battle when just to hold on to the truth we have, to not let it go, to defend it from those seeking to steal it from us, is faithfulness.

Jude 3, verse 3. The last verse we'll look at. Jude and verses 3 and 4.

Here we're called to earnestly contend for the faith. That is, for the things that we believe. And this book of Jude was not the one, this letter from Jude was not the one that Jude originally sat down to write.

Notice what he says in verse 3. Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share. That's where his heart was. That's what he wanted to write about.

The glorious theme of our salvation. You have it. I have it. We have it together. It's glorious. I could write this letter all about that. That's what I sat down to do. But he says, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

[31:23] And we say, why, Jude? Why did you change what you wrote? What was going on that you would not speak about the glorious salvation that we have in Christ and instead challenge us to contend for the faith?

Well, he tells us, verse 4. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They're godless men who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and they deny Jesus Christ, our only sovereign Lord.

You see, it was what was going on on the ground that caused Jude to change what he wrote about. This is where the battle is raging.

This is where the enemy is coming in like a flood. Then I'm going to set this topic here and I'm going to write you to earnestly contend for the faith because here's where it's being challenged.

Here's where the faith of the truth as it is in Jesus is presently being challenged. And so here's where you must earnestly contend for the faith.

[32:34] Earnestly fight for the faith. I felt I had to. It's a strong word of necessity. I had to urge you to contend for the faith. And that's what I'm doing to myself this morning and to you as well.

I'm saying we have to defend the faith. Because there are those who would change the grace of God into a license for immorality right within the so-called evangelical church of Jesus Christ.

They would take the grace of God. You know, grace is the buzzword today, isn't it? We like to hear about grace. But they are so preaching grace in a way that it becomes an encouragement to, a license to sin.

You see, because I'm justified and right before God and righteous in his eyes, clothed in Christ's righteousness, therefore it doesn't matter what I do with his commandments. He doesn't see my sin. All he sees is righteousness. And they are turning the grace of God into a license. The true grace of God into a license for sin.

[33:52] Beware of any teaching that would cut the Christian free from the righteous commandments of God's law. Any teaching on grace that does not make you more careful to obey God's commands is dangerous.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all, and it teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions.

What does? The grace of God teaches us to say no to all that is not like God and to worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright lives in this present generation.

So it's our duty to defend, to hold on to, to stand our ground and contend earnestly for the faith, the things once delivered to us from Christ and his apostles and the prophets.

And to do that precisely where the truth is being attacked in our day. And so in order to do that, we need to be clear what the scriptures say and what they mean.

[35:01] So it's our intention then in this study to go over every passage that mentions the sin of homosexuality and then many other passages as well that don't actually refer to it by name, but that are pertinent to this issue.

Well, our time's up. Let's be dismissed and come back with your questions, and we'll take up next week.