

Conviction or Convenience?

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[0:00] 1 Corinthians 16, verse 13.

Watch ye stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. My theme is conviction or convenience! Conviction or convenience.

Will you stand with biblical conviction or will you cave in to convenience? And what does the word conviction mean? It means a strong belief, a confidence that something is true.

Conviction, it's more than opinion or preference. You hold an opinion but a conviction holds you. A preference can be a very strong belief to which someone can be very devoted.

Now they tested it in the US Supreme Court. They say that a preference is different from a conviction. A preference is something you'll change under the circumstances such as peer pressure or family pressure, lawsuits, jail or threat of death.

[1:12] Or threat of death. That's a preference. A conviction is on the other hand a belief that you will not change. Why? Because you believe that God requires it of you.

It's something you purpose in your heart. Conviction. Conviction. A conviction on the inside will always show on the outside in the lifestyle. A conviction is something that if you violate it is sin. Will you stand for conviction or choose convenience? Our text says, watching stand fast in the faith. These are days when we must be watchful.

To be on the alert. They're days where conviction is lacking. There's a lack of commitment to the word of God. Convenience seems the way to go.

Follow the crowd. Bound to bail. Fall prey to sin and spiritual death. There's a desperate need to watch to be watchful. We need watchmen.

[2:11] We need people who will be watching. Looking for biblical truth that will impact our lives, our actions, our thoughts. And where do we find that? In the word of God.

This is our authority, our source of doctrine, of courage, of faith. Watching. We're instructed to watch. To stand fast in the faith.

Not to water down our conviction, but to be rock solid with our conviction. Not only when it is convenient, when it's comfortable. Not going the way of the culture, but standing strong with conviction.

So what is more important for you? Conviction or convenience? Watch ye. Watch ye. We need people of conviction.

There was a story a long time back of a senator nominated to be the US Secretary of Defense. And accusations arose about him. He was a drunkard and a womaniser.

[3:07] Another senator defended him and said, if they chased every man or woman out of this town who'd shaken up with somebody else or gotten drunk, there'd be no government.

Now, no wonder we're in such trouble when we've got leaders such as that. Is there anybody left who has convictions? A recruitment officer was interviewing a candidate for a job and asked the man, do you lie, cheat, steal, or come in late?

And the applicant thought, maybe this was one of the job requirements. He said, no, but I can learn. No convictions. These are days of no convictions. Biblically shaped convictions are lacking today. Who does the world reward? Who gets the Emmys and the Grammys and the Oscars? The latest sinful sewage from Hollywood. As the world slides deeper and deeper into immorality, friends, as true Christians, we must stand apart from the world.

Not be friends of it, but apart from it. I was watching a film, and it was a film with a mission context and had a godly storyline, someone getting saved, but I was shocked by the coarseness of the language and the unnecessary unholy mixture in that film.

[4:24] It seems like it's got to sour everything that comes out on the screen. Watch it. These are days to watch. And friends, the truth brings division.

In fact, it must. It must. And we must recognise where we're at in these last days, where compromise is all around, where the sacrifice of truth seems so common, where it's such that the message has to be made so palatable and inoffensive, lest we displease someone.

But what of displeasing the Lord? What of that? We need a grounding in good, strong biblical values. Someone put it that a foundation of a person's life are his beliefs.

And these beliefs shape his values and values drive actions. Belief determines behaviour. And that's why we're in such a mess in the world where it's all pragmatism and relativism and do as you please.

The word says, Keep thy heart. Proverbs 4.23 With all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. Spurgeon one day was commenting how 98% of the people that he had met, including criminals that he visited in prisons, said that they believed the Bible.

[5:49] They believed it. But they were yet to make a personal life-changing commitment. And he stated for them, Belief was not an active verb. It was not an active verb.

They hadn't translated it into their lives. Watch it. We need to watch. Secondly, stand fast. Stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men. Stand fast in the faith.

Quit you like men. In other words, act like men. We've heard how real men should act. We should be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. And that means all that tough exterior that we put on needs to really give way, doesn't it?

For the Lord to have his way. Can you say this? No matter what test we face, we will not be moved. We will be men. We will stand fast. We will not go the way of least resistance.

We will not take the easy way out. We have made up our mind. Stand fast in the faith. Will you be that person of conviction with the courage to act on those convictions in faith?

[6:49] To live by faith as the heroes of the word. Heroes of the faith. Men and women. They were friends of God. Willing to face death. And all kinds of suffering because of their convictions.

Stand fast in the faith. Act like men. Men like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They would not bow down to the idol. Everybody else did. It was the popular thing to do.

But they stood firm for that one true God. They addressed the king. Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. And he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. They stood fast in the faith.

They were willing to face that fiery furnace heated seven times more than normal. And afterwards there was not even the smell of smoke. Not a hair on their heads was touched. They would not bow, budge, bend or even burn.

[7:52] They stood fast. They knew what was right. Stand fast in the faith. Stand fast like Joseph. When he stood before Potiphar's wife and temptation was there, there wasn't anyone to see what sin could have occurred.

But he said, how can I? How can I sin against God? Genesis 39 verse 9. Stand fast in the faith. Stand fast like Abraham. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.

He was fully persuaded that God was able. Romans 4 verse 20 onwards. Stand fast in the faith. Stand fast like Moses. Hebrews 11, 25.

Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God then, to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Stand fast in the faith. Stand fast in the faith like Daniel did.

His convictions did not falter. Even in the midst of pagan Babylon, his conviction was steadfast. When it was illegal to pray other than to the king, what did Daniel do?

[8:57] Verse 10 of 6. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem. He knelt down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime.

As was his custom. He kept doing it. Daniel's faith was a way of life. He stood fast in the faith. His conviction was strong and clear. He did not deviate. And what then?

Daniel was thrown into the den of lions and emerged without a scratch. Why? Daniel believed in his God. Daniel 6, 23. Stand fast in the faith.

Stand fast in the faith like the early people of the church. In Acts 4. Peter and John were arrested and threatened. Verse 13 of Acts 4. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and they perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

Our source is the word of God. Our courage is from the word. Acts 4, 19. 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.

[10:14] For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard. The conviction drove them to be committed to the word. We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard.

They prayed with conviction. Acts 4, 29. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word.

And the place was shaken as they were filled with the Holy Ghost. They spoke the word of God with boldness. And verse 33. With great power they gave witness. Great grace was upon them.

Stand fast in the faith. Stand fast in the faith like Paul. Another example. He would not bend. Faced with all manner of conviction. Of beatings, of persecution, of imprisonment.

He would not compromise his conviction. And you know, when you stand fast in the faith, God will honour that faith. It says in 1 Samuel 2, verse 13, Those who honour me, I will honour.

[11:18] The faith of Bible heroes, it's a challenge to us, isn't it? It's a lesson for us. For every one of us here today. It's a lesson for you. That you can take home in your kit bag and live this week ahead.

They're an example for us that we should take heart and learn from them. We do have that conviction. That conviction. There was an actor one day talking to a preacher.

And the preacher asked the actor, How come you've got so many crowds coming night after night with this fiction that you present? Wherever you go, the crowds come.

Yet I'm preaching the essential and I'm changing truth. And I'm not getting any crowd at all. The actor answered, It's quite simple. I present my fiction as though it were truth.

You present your truth as though it were fiction. Now here he was challenging the preacher that he wasn't really standing fast in the faith. Declaring the Bible as truth. Friends, this is the truth.

[12:17] It's fundamental. It's vital. It's essential, eternal information that we need to hear. We don't want to miss that. Stand fast in the faith. As a church we want to be strongly standing for the word of God.

Quick you like men. In other words, act like men. Someone said, God, give us men. Men that these times demand. Men whom the lust of office does not kill.

Men who have honour and will not lie. Men who will spurn flatteries and sin. Men who stand strong and live above the fog. Men who stand for the right though the heavens fall.

That's what we need today. God, give us men. We need men. We need men and women of Bible conviction. Quick you like men. Be a man. Watch ye stand fast in the faith.

Quick you like men. Be strong. We need men and women with strong biblical convictions. That we will stand strong for what is right and true. And then belief will become behaviour.

[13:17] Doctrine will become duty. Faith will affect function. And truth will be seen in godly testimony. The conviction will drive us to live holy and true.

To be unbending. Only bending before God. Walking with him. Godly character will happen as we see that biblical conviction that leads to repentance.

A long time ago there was a British philosopher who rejected Christianity called David Hume. And he met a friend one day in London and asked him where he was going.

And the friend said that he was off to hear George Winfield preach. And this cynical philosopher said, But surely you don't believe what Winfield preachers do you? No, I don't.

But he does. He does. He wanted to hear a man with conviction. He wanted to hear the word preached with conviction. With authority. With a love for the scriptures.

[14:22] That's what the man wanted. Even though he didn't really believe it. What of our church today? What of this church today? Can we be a church, a gathering of God's people who have solid and strong biblical convictions?

We're not afraid to sound forth sound doctrine. To have a church where people can grow in faithfulness, in holiness, in integrity and in character.

That's what we want to be friends. A church who will be strong in biblical convictions. And the health of our church will depend on having forthright preaching.

With deep biblical and theological conviction. A preaching of the word of God. That's what we need. You know, in contrast today there's what some have likely called the light church.

The light church is purely tongue in cheek. It's called the light church. Everything you always wanted in a church and less. Guaranteed 20 minute sermons. Only happy hymns and choruses.

[15:23] No messages on subjects that hit you close to home. No calls for commitment. And we'll put in reclining pews with pillow pads and headrests. Now we've got some nice comfy cushions for some of you to sit on.

But we don't want you to get too comfortable. That we will be a light church where it's all about what's comfortable and pleasant. We need answers today. People looking for answers. In the days when we should be watching and alert to the coming of our Lord.

Ready. He's looking for a church with faith. With a proclamation that's steadfast and wholehearted. With spiritual truth that's practically applied. And I wouldn't do you any favours today if my preaching was always going to be some kind of feel good message.

Your toes will get stepped on. And you may be roused to action. I trust. I pray. That we will. As God's people be that church.

And so friends to recap. Watching. These are the last days. The last hour. It's the last time. The battle lines are being drawn. We must. There must be no middle ground in these days.

[16:33] We must not retreat but advance. Watch you. It's a costly business. It's an eternal transaction. Eternal souls are at stake.

Stand fast in the faith. Quit you like men. Act like the men. The women. The real people of scripture. Real people. What's them all? We read of them with all their character faults and lacks of abilities. Yet God had his hand upon such as them. Will we be men and women of biblical convictions who will not budge? Who will not be bought? Be strong.

Be strong. These are days when sadly there's a lot of spiritual weakness. Of biblical illiteracy. A sad lack of conviction. How can we be strong?

How can we be strengthened as a church? Study the word. Study the word. Be founded upon it.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Have those convictions that will make you strong.

[17:33] And be strengthened in the word. Everyone has convictions. But are they biblical convictions? We must use the word as it were a filter. A filter that everything that enters our minds can be brought captive to the standard of scripture.

Our convictions derive from and based on the commitment to the Bible. We see a church culture around about where it's all experience centred and pragmatic.

Whatever it takes. But the scripture is being sidelined to opinions, experiences and people's feelings. What happens then?

We get off track. I can get off track. We can get off track. We need biblical conviction. And friends, I just want to urge every one of us to take the scriptures, learn them, spend time with them.

The word must be our absolute authority for the whole of our lives, for our faith and practice. And a wrong understanding of scripture leads to wrong behaviour. So friends, ask yourself these questions.

[18:42] Take stock. How much time? Answer these questions in your own head. As I rattle off a few things today. How much time? How much time do you spend doing the following?

Watching TV. Playing golf. I know there's some golf adits here today. We'll pray for you later. Time engaging in a hobby.

Time you spend on your computer. Time you spend reading books. Time you spend taking work home. And lastly, time you spend reading your Bible.

Take note of that last one. We all can consider. Biblical convictions would prompt us to take time with God's word. Not neglect it.

That's how we develop biblical convictions. That's how come we can ensure our convictions line up with the Bible as we read the Bible and heed its message.

[19:49] Ungodliness is always linked to unsound doctrine. Or a rejection of the truth. Behaviour follows belief. If it's all about the spooky-wooky experiential, we can all get sidetracked.

It's got to be the word. It's got to be the word. Someone described what they called the law of spiritual deterioration. The law of spiritual deterioration. And they say this.

They say, when there's a pollution of the word, by a mingling of their ideas or a failure to develop biblical convictions, based on sound study, that pollution of the word, it leads to polluted thinking. The polluted thinking leads to polluted living. A loss of sound biblical leadership. Of man of biblical convictions. And then there's a breakdown of the home, a breakdown of society.

The law of spiritual deterioration. How do we stop that happening? Don't get away from the word. Stick with the word. Stand fast in the faith.

[20:51] Have those biblical convictions. Let your rock solid ground it, plant it in the word. Growing ever stronger. Pray for those biblical convictions. Pray for the courage to act on those convictions.

Watching. Stand fast in the faith. Quinture. Or act like men. Be strong. Don't choose the path of convenience, but instead the pathway of conviction.

The pathway of conviction. Friends, I trust the word will be that source, that index, that rule of faith and doctrine.

Of faith and practice. That what we do is grounded with a biblical conviction. Not in some passing fancy or fad, or the latest gimmick, or guru that comes along.

But the word. The word, brothers and sisters. That's what we need. And I trust we can be a church with biblical convictions. Rock solid. Standing firm on the word. Amen.

[22 : 04]