

There IS a War

1 Corinthians 16:13

I. Introduction

- A. Our goal this week is to show that we are under attack as Christians and to address how we should respond to such attacks.
- B. This evening the goal will be to establish the fact that we are indeed under attack.
- C. Many dismiss the idea that Christians suffer any more ridicule than any other citizen in this country.
- D. While it may be that everyone finds themselves criticized from time to time, you would be hard pressed to find a more consistently belittled and mocked group in modern society than Christians.
- E. We may not convince everyone that this is the case, but we must at the very least be convinced ourselves.

II. Defining Our Terms

- A. **Christianity** is defined in the dictionary as the religion based on the person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, or its beliefs and practices.
 - 1. Unfortunately, that is not enough to define the usage of that term today.
 - 2. There are plenty of examples of people who believe or practice very little of what Jesus said and yet call themselves Christians.
 - a) Here I refer to the most liberal minded sorts of people who would make Jesus out to be a militant black Marxist, a la the Reverend Jeremiah Wright.
 - b) They believe Christianity is not about teaching people to live lives that are purified and freed from the shackles of sin but of affecting social change and bringing justice to the downtrodden.
 - c) These are the people who's Christianity is perfectly acceptable and even works in tandem with the forces that would oppress a more traditional Christianity.
 - 3. There are others who preach Christ but only in the most innocuous and unoffensive way possible.
 - a) These, while not favorites of the attackers, are not likely to be as frequently targeted.
 - b) They keep their heads low and preach the same "do-gooderisms" that could be spoken by anyone of any belief (or non-belief) system.
 - c) In essence they preach a common morality.
 - 4. Then there are those who believe that the Bible is God's word and that God is THE lawgiver.
 - a) This doesn't mean that everyone who believes this interprets those laws the same, but they all believe they are laws none the less.
 - b) They believe that God has given man standards that go beyond the wisdom of man and that we must appeal to God to truly discover the final word on what is right and what is wrong.

- c) These are the primary targets who are under attack today.
 - d) These are the people I will be referring to when I use the word Christianity.
- B. **War** is defined as a state of armed conflict between different nations or states or different groups within a nation or state:
1. Of course this is hardly the nature of the war we are discussing.
 2. We are not involved in a physical war (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
 3. But there is a conflict and there are different sides to be taken and defended.
 4. We will use the word attack generally to refer to a purposeful action meant to bring harm to the cause of Christianity.

III. Who is the Enemy

- A. Our enemy is the devil (1 Pet. 5:8).
1. That avowal alone will get ridicule.
 2. You don't hear the Devil mentioned much anymore except to satirize him.
 3. "The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world that he didn't exist."
- B. Christianity is under attack on many fronts.
1. Some might look to Islamists and other oppressive regimes throughout the world and point to them as the worst enemies of Christianity.
 2. Others might point to more 1st world governments such as our own as the great enemy of Christianity.
 3. These are enemies that we will discuss later in the week, particularly the nature of the legal attacks on Christianity.
- C. It should be noted, however, that Christianity has suffered far more at the hands of brutality in other places and in the past than it does in modern America.
1. Not only have God's people suffered greatly in times past but they have thrived under such suffering (Acts 8:4).
 2. When we are persecuted for what we believe in, we must make a hard decision to continue believing.
 3. When going to worship put your freedom or even your life in danger then only people who really mean still worship God.
- D. The far more dangerous attacks (and I believe more effective) are the ones that seek not to force a change in your behavior but to work and change in your heart.
1. These attacks are the ones we will deal with this evening.
 2. These are not attacks that are not always as easily recognized.
 3. They are attacks that can best be described as propaganda.

IV. Getting the Message Out.

- A. Propaganda is "chiefly information, esp. of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view:"
1. It doesn't have to be misleading but the more outrageous the cause the more misleading the propaganda must be to get the point across.
 2. For instance, if you want to promote the idea of throwing a whole class of people into ovens to get them out of the way, you don't just come out and say that.
- B. We know that there is propaganda all around us.
1. The question is, can we point it out.

2. The best propaganda is the message that you don't see.
 3. It is in fact the most dangerous propaganda.
- C. We find ourselves in a unique period not for the messages that are presented (there are no new ideas) but for the way they are able to get those messages across.
1. In no time in history could so many people be reached so instantly as they can in our day.
 2. And the messages of the enemies of Christianity are delivered each and every day through every form of communication that is available to man.
- D. What is this message that is so insidious?
1. It is what Daniel Patrick Moynihan called "defining deviancy down"
 - a) This is the idea that what was once considered deviancy no longer is.
 - b) We might call it "lowering the standards of morality".
 - c) A good example of this can be found in the period of the judges (Jdg. 19:22-24).
 2. On the other hand, there is also the message of "defining deviancy up," a phrase coined by Charles Krauthammer.
 - a) Here is the idea that what was once considered normal behavior is now considered deviant.
 - b) Both of these messages have been preached for ages (Isa. 5:20; Matt. 27:20).

V. What Propaganda?

- A. "Pushing the Envelope"
1. What should be the most obvious form of messaging that comes from the enemies of Christianity is when they try to do things so outrageous that they know they will get a reaction.
 2. This effort is of course becoming more and more difficult as more and more has already been done (Lady Gaga's got nothing on Madonna for offensive behavior).
 3. But the goal is to incense people so much that when they back off (though not entirely) we're just relieved that this isn't as bad as that.
 4. Think wardrobe malfunction here.
 5. They do not assault every week with this kind of trash, just once in a while to remind us that what we are watching on a weekly basis is quite tame compared to what it could be.
- B. Everything you know is wrong.
1. People that you think are rebels are really the best people.
 2. People that you think are righteous are really nasty.
 3. Kids are smarter than adults.
- C. We're laughing with you...AND at you.
1. I am convinced that comedy is the greatest weapon of propaganda in our enemy's arsenal.
 2. The entertainment industry has for years made Christian morals the butt of many a joke.
 3. If you show the slightest bit of offense to such mockery of what we hold dear, they will tell you that you need to lighten up and learn to laugh at yourself.

4. This would perhaps carry some weight if they went on to laugh at what they believe to be true.
 5. You'll never see a show mocking the idea that evolution is concrete fact.
 6. You'll never see a show that scoffs at the idea that homosexual relationships are more solid than traditional two-parent households.
 7. It isn't lets all laugh at ourselves, it's let's all laugh at the Christians.
- D. In addition to being hilarious, Christianity is weird and scary.
1. It would be bad enough if Hollywood only made fun of Christians but they go well beyond that.
 2. You have Joy Behar on "The View" saying that to teach children that God created the world is a form of child abuse.
 3. You have a writer for the San Francisco Chronicle writing that a reporter covering murderous government regimes abroad comes home and finds that the "Christian right" is "akin" to the movements he's spent his life chronicling.
 4. On Law & Order it seemed to get to a point where the villain had a 75% chance of being white, male and Christian.
 - a) They would get you especially good by starting out making you think it was going to be the homosexual or the gang banger.
 - b) Then they punched you in the face by saying it was the guy who believes what you do all along.
 5. In a milder form they present the idea that Christians are harmless but delusional (see The Da Vinci Code).
- E. Christianity isn't even on the radar.
1. This is basically where they present the ideas of atheism and immorality as accepted facts without even acknowledging Christianity.
 2. There isn't even a discussion of what is right and what is wrong because those questions have already been decided and Christians were definitely wrong.

VI. What's The Defense?

- A. The best defense against propaganda is to call it what it is.
- B. If all propaganda were to be presented with open honesty it would make it virtually harmless.
 1. I remember the messages that would come on before the show that my girls would watch on Noggin: "this show teaches about friendship, sharing, and treating others with respect."
 2. Wouldn't it be nice if primetime shows would begin by saying this show will teach that deviant behavior is normal, that Christians are the problem and that any appeal to a standard of morality is childish at best and sinister at worst.
- C. In order to see the message we need to have our senses exercised (Heb. 5:14).
- D. We need to see it as propaganda so that we don't buy it as the truth.
- E. We also need to insulate ourselves to the ridicule we will receive for recognizing the war that is on.
- F. Many will call us conspiracy theorists and worse for seeing attacks on Christianity all around us.

- G. Let me go ahead and tell you that every major television show that has been produced since the 1960s has been produced by people who hate what you and I believe.
1. Sometimes it is obvious as with a show like “Family Guy” while at other times it may be less obvious as with “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” (the MTM Show creator explicitly stated that the purpose of the show was to show that a woman didn’t need a man in her life: Gloria Steinham was one of the writers of that show).
 2. Sometimes they are successful in getting that message across as with the above mentioned shows and sometimes they are not, as with the *Cosby Show* and *Family Ties*.
 3. But make no mistake, in their own words, they are out to change the way you look at the world or at least the way the world looks at you.
- H. Some will argue that they are just giving the public what they want and this is not a war with any intent.
1. Firstly, the producers and writers themselves have repeatedly stated their desire to transform society with their product.
 2. Secondly, the proof can be found when they continue to show things that lose money.
 - a) Regarding the television show *Soap*, one writer said, “I think ABC was very courageous in putting *Soap* on the air and sticking by it for four years when they lost money every single year...”
 - b) Studies have repeatedly shown that shows which appeal most to the conservative crowd are the biggest money making shows (and movies).
 - c) Yet we continue to be pummeled with the messages that go against the grain of what most (even mildly) Christian Americans believe.
 3. Add to this the fact that you have them admitting in their advertising that they are not presenting what is normal.
 - a) ABC Family channel has the slogan, “a different kind of family.”
 - b) Different from what I ask you?
 - c) Of course it is different from what is “normal” what is considered morally upright.
 - d) They have (in case you were unaware) been awarded with approval by the organization GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation).
- I. Sometimes they don’t even have mean to be presenting a message it is just what they think is real.
1. When people have a world view they don’t think campaigning for that world view is propaganda, it’s the truth.
 2. Consider *The Notebook*:
 - a) You two stories going on there.
 - b) On the one hand you have the promotion of physical lust and rebellion against the status quo.
 - c) On the other you have the promotion of true love embodied by a man caring for his wife who is in the throws of Alzheimer’s.
 - d) Then they try to tell you that the one leads to the other.

- J. But again, the key is to look for it, find it, and identify it for yourself and anyone else who will listen.
- K. If we refuse to see it, not only may we find ourselves being pulled toward something that, given a chance to think about, we would reject, but we might also unwittingly lead others astray.
- L. When you recommend something, think about what you are recommending.
- M. Don't be cowed.
 - 1. The overwhelming majority of those with the microphones don't like us.
 - 2. They try to make us think that we are in the minority.
 - 3. People who claim to be Christians and believe in God make up the overwhelming majority of the US and of the world.
 - 4. Don't let them make you think that you're by yourself.
 - 5. Recognize too that even if you were as fringe as they say you are (you're not) you'd still have God on your side and that makes you the majority.
- N. Present the truth with as much energy as they present the lies.
 - 1. Speak it in love and in wisdom (Acts 17:22-31; Eph. 4:15).
 - 2. Don't ever assume that a principle is established (2 Pet. 1:10-16).
 - 3. Don't yield the ground (Gal. 2:5).
 - 4. The beauty of our message is that we believe it is powerful and it doesn't need us to craft it in such a way that people will "buy" it (Rom. 1:16).

VII. Conclusion

- A. Do you see the war that is going on?
- B. Do you behave like someone who is engaged in battle (Eph. 6:13)?
- C. Let us be aware, and let us fight to maintain not only our own faith but to fight for the faith of those round about us.