

## Articles and Sermons :: Stand By Your Guns by Steve Gallagher

**Stand By Your Guns by Steve Gallagher - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2012/6/1 11:20**

As Christians, we should always do our utmost to “pursue peace with all men.” If we have been filled with the love of God for others, there will be something about us that tends to diffuse conflict.

However, as much as we desire to get along with people, we will occasionally make decisions that others don’t agree with. In a day when we are surrounded by weak-kneed, moral cowards—who stand for nothing in life and shudder at the thought someone might think ill of them—it is imperative that we Christians stand for what we believe in; and once we have taken that stance, to be committed to “stand by our guns.”

That military adage was first coined a couple of centuries ago. I suspect if that man could have somehow time-travelled into the 21st Century, he probably would have quickly discerned our glaring lack of conviction about life and done his utmost to high-tail it back to the 1700’s. If he was a believer, he might have noticed that even many Christians of our day lack the intestinal fortitude to stand up for Truth.

Not long ago I ran across an inspiring AP story written a few years ago about Arnold Schwarzenegger during his tenure as governor of California. I realize he is no poster child of Christianity, but in this particular instance, I found his behavior to be highly commendable.

The story also means something special to me because it revolves around Tookie Williams, one of the founding fathers of the notorious Crips street gang. I was a deputy sheriff in Los Angeles in the early 80’s when these criminals were reaching their height of power. But I digress...

In December 2005, just before his scheduled execution for several murders he had committed, Tookie’s attorneys petitioned Governor Schwarzenegger for a reprieve. Schwarzenegger reviewed the case and denied his bid for clemency. Here’s where the story gets interesting. Some years before, the municipal council of Graz—the Austrian city where Schwarzenegger was born—had renamed the local sports stadium after him. However, when these peace-at-any-price politicians found out that he had denied clemency to Williams, they let it be known that they were considering removing his name from the stadium.

Arnold’s response was as swift as it was admirable. In a letter to the mayor, he wrote: “In all likelihood, during my term as governor, I will have to make similar and equally difficult decisions. In order to spare the responsible politicians of the city of Graz further concern, I withdraw from them as of this day the right to use my name.”

Now, I don’t know how that strikes you, but reading that made me want to jump up and yell, “Bravo!”

You and I will also find ourselves having to make “similar and equally difficult decisions.” This will be especially true in the days ahead. What concerns me is that there seems to be a growing lack of principle within our culture. Years of indulgence has eroded the strong sense of right and wrong which governed America for many years. Unfortunately, the Church seems to remain close on the heels of the world: as goes the culture, so goes the Church.

Only the most temporal-minded would fail to see that this momentum is taking Christianity in a definite direction. Isn’t the great fall from the righteous standards of yesteryear a clear sign that we are witnessing the beginning stages of the great Apostasy? Where is this taking us? Right where the devil wants us: where we would rather acquiesce to the world’s value system than to stand by the convictions put forth by the Word of God.

Two things seem clear to me. First, the pressure to conform to the world will only increase in the days ahead. We recently saw the Obama administration insert language into their health care legislation (which Americans will be forced to submit to) which will require religious institutions to pay for abortions upon demand. And I suspect we are but a step away from the day when publicly calling homosexuality sinful behavior will be considered a prosecutable hate crime. These are only two examples of the direction in which the world is headed. I don’t see that changing.

Second, the further we drift from the standard of righteousness that has steered the Church in the past, the easier it will

become to conform to the godless culture around us.

Perhaps this was partly what the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote, “Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.” (Romans 12:2 Phi)

The question each of us must face for ourselves is this: Will our hearts be conformed to God’s kingdom or to the kingdom of this world? If we give the world the position in our lives to influence us, our convictions will slowly wither until they are as flimsy as a wet noodle. In other words, if we continually subject ourselves to the overwhelming voice of this world through television, the Internet and so on, we will find that when we most desperately need the inner fortitude to withstand the enemy’s indoctrination, we will simply not have it.

One day the peer pressure we feel from our society will become brute force. If we cannot take a stand for what we believe to be true today—in the privacy of our homes—what makes us think we will have the spiritual wherewithal to withstand the crushing intimidation Scripture foretells that believers will face in the last days? Or, to put it in the words of that prophet who stood alone against the evils of his day: “If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?” (Jeremiah 12:5) We should ask ourselves these pertinent questions today while we still have time to change the momentum of our lives.

Outward pressure has a way of bringing out the reality of who a person is. When various groups began pushing Arnold Schwarzenegger to bend to their will, they found out that he was—at least humanly speaking—a man of character. Christians are going to face an unprecedented level of pressure to conform to the spirit of the world in the days ahead. But I am persuaded that if we will begin to resist the enemy’s efforts now—today—in our daily lives, we will find that the Lord will give us the grace to “stand by our guns” when the pressure to conform is overwhelming.

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