

**Sermon Notes: Courage to Stand Alone**  
**David Renwick**  
National Presbyterian Church, Washington DC  
October 14, 2018

**A. What to Do about “Difficult Bible Passages”**

1. The “lens” through which we view the Old Testament is Jesus
  - a. Jesus clearly believes in our moral accountability and God’s judgment (see Matthew 25)
  - b. But he also believes that
    - i. “taking ultimate justice into our hands” will do more harm than good (Matthew 13: 24-30)
    - ii. that the main weapon we wield to overcome evil is to be love (Matthew 543-45: Romans 12:21).
    - iii. the “promised land” we are now to seek is the “kingdom of God”
2. Even with the “lens” of Jesus moral complexity still remains for Christians
  - a. Presbyterians do not see the Bible as teaching pacifism
    - i. Neither Jesus nor John the Baptist call soldiers to abandon their arms  
*(Luke 3:14; 7:1-10; Acts 10)*
    - ii. The government has the right to bear arms and has an obligation to use force if necessary to maintain justice (*Romans 13:1*)
  - b. Christians who wear “two ethical hats” – e.g., serving both God and country –will at times be caught in ethical dilemmas between love and violence (*see especially theologian Reinhold Niebuhr*)
  - c. This will be true especially when evil is brutal, irrational and unbridled  
*(as per Nazis, ISIS – and the time of Moses)*

**B. The Power of God to  
Stop Murmuring *and*  
Stand with Courage against the Crowd**

Numbers 14:6-8

Joshua and Caleb, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes <sup>7</sup> and said to all the congregation of the Israelites,  
*“The land that we went through as spies is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only, do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land.”*

### **Says God to Moses**

“Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today<sup>14</sup>The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.” (Exodus 14:13, 14)

### **Says God to Joshua**

Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.” (Deuteronomy 31:6)

### **Says the Psalmist to God in prayer**

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?  
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?  
When I am afraid, I put my trust in you . . . what can flesh do to me? (Psalm 27:1-4)

### **Says God through Isaiah**

Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God;  
I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)  
God gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless.  
Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength (Isaiah 40:29, 31)

### **Says God through the Apostle Paul**

You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. (Romans 8:15)  
I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)  
God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7)

### **Says God through Jesus (Luke 12:32)**

Fear not, little flock: it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom (the ultimate promised land).

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