

Contending For the Faith: An evening with Dr Peter Jensen

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Preacher: Peter Jensen

[0 : 00] Thank you very much, William. Thank you for your warm welcome and I'm very, very glad indeed, honoured in fact to be here. I've heard about this church building for many years and the people who inhabit it and what a delight it is to see it at last, although I think slightly changed from an earlier phase and how beautifully, how beautifully altered indeed.

It is indeed a great delight to be here. I've just come from London where I've been attending meetings of a body called GAFCON, Global Anglican Future Conference and its offshoot, the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans.

And I've been meeting with seven of the great African leaders. I mean, I was secretary to this group of seven great African leaders from the Anglican world, extraordinary men, as they struggle or contend for the faith.

And at this meeting last week, they decided that they could recognise the 100,000 Anglicans in North America who have decided they can no longer fellowship with the Episcopal Church in America or the Anglican Church in Canada and have formed themselves into a new province.

They don't wish to break away from the Anglican Church. They don't wish to be something other than Anglican. And so it's very important indeed that these seven primates, representing about maybe 50% of the church-going Anglicans in the world, as opposed to the nominal Anglicans, have said unambiguously, we recognise these people as authentic, genuine Anglicans and we are going to be in communion with them.

[1 : 45] Now this was all decided here in this country just this week and I've been attending those meetings. That's what I'm here for. And that feeds in indeed to the subject of tonight's address and I'm hoping that there will be plenty of questions and lively conversation afterwards.

Of course, this meeting is about a very serious subject that will affect us all. And I turn to the book of Jude, the little book of Jude, which is so apt for our times.

And just opening it up here. Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ, may mercy, peace and love be multiplied to you.

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith. Hence the title of tonight's address.

Contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people who pervert the grace of God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.

[3 : 03] Well, here's a biblical command to contend. Now, I've often noticed, said it many times and people agree with me, people don't go to church to have fights.

That's not one of the aims you have in going to church, at least not generally. And that's right, isn't it? For after all, if there is anything in our world which ought to be a sort of a place of peace, harmony, love and joy, it ought to be church.

And in a world in which we struggle so much, in which work occupies more and more of our time, in which the whole pace of life is so fast, to be able to come to church and to sit there, and sometimes, depending on the church, not here, but to gently, gently move into a sleep, is a very wonderful thing.

I'm sure it wouldn't happen here, but I'm saying that that's how some people view it. And the last thing they would have in mind is to come to church and have a fight. Furthermore, most people think of church as being their church, the congregation they attend, the fellowship that they belong to.

Most of us don't normally keep thinking about the denomination we belong to. So this church is a church of the Church of Scotland, that's true. But when people think about church, they think about this church or the church you belong to.

[4 : 26] And most of us don't pay a great deal of attention. Things might be different in Scotland, I'm just thinking of the rest of the entire world. Most people don't take a great deal of attention to the superstructure, to the denomination, and all that sort of thing.

We're vaguely aware that there must be officers somewhere, and officers who inhabit the offices. We must be aware that someone must look after the funds. We're vaguely aware that there must be a college which trains people, and so forth and so on.

But we're not particularly interested in the domination. Well, when I say that, I mean most people are. There are some who are like train spotters, or plane spotters, or whatever, who have a special interest in church politics and what goes on in church, and they could tell you to the last detail what occurred in the General Assembly in 1956, without even looking up the books.

They're just interested, they have that sort of hobby. But most of us are not like that. And we're aware that at a denominational level, often denominations struggle, and that there are fights and great disputes and so forth.

We may follow at a distance. But we don't wish ourselves to be involved, because we don't go to church to fight. Now that's right. But I want to say to you tonight, it's wrong as well.

[5 : 44] For after all, one of the key biblical images is of warfare. Ephesians chapter 6, for example, put on the whole armour of God. Very well known to everyone here, I'm sure.

Or 1 Timothy 6 verse 12, fight the good fight of faith. Onward Christian soldiers, indeed. If we think about what it is that Christians are to be militant, we are of course to be militant against the world, the flesh and the devil.

These are our adversaries. And if you think of the Christian life as being a life of peace and harmony and joy, how little do you know yourself, and how little do you know the world in which we live, and how little do you know your spiritual adversary?

For the Christian life is a life of struggle and warfare from beginning to end against our adversaries, the world, the flesh and the devil.

So there is a militancy to the Christian life. It's not the only picture of the Christian life. You also have the sheep following the shepherd. But it is a picture of the Christian life in the scriptures. Furthermore, and this is apparent here in this little book of Jude, Jude, there is the reality of false teaching.

[7 : 01] From the very beginning of the Christian era, it's not as though the early church was perfect and all was well. No, from the very, very beginning of the Christian church as we know it, and if you feed it back into Israel and the church in Israel, the same thing applies, there has been false teaching, both inside and outside.

And so the church, the Christian people, have had to contend against heresies like Gnosticism, Manichaeism, and all the other isms that actually were outside the church, but which could have bowled the church over.

And when we speak of contending against the world, if you think of the word world as being culture, the culture in which we are set, then you'll see that part of our contention, part of our militancy is against the culture in which we live, and always has been.

So there is a struggle against the world in that sense. But there is also false teaching within the church. This is regrettable.

It is a tragedy. We would wish it were not so. But you know, and I know, particularly for example as heirs of the Reformation, that the Christian movement has from its very beginning, had within it, not only the great flowers of the faith, but also the weeds of the faith.

[8 : 27] Those weeds are the false teaching and the false teachers. And furthermore, as the Apostle tells us here, certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people.

He's speaking of people within the Christian fellowship who pervert the grace of God, he says, into sensuality, a particular heretical teaching.

Now please notice that in the New Testament we are all responsible when it comes to false teaching. It's not as though, you see, our leaders are alone responsible for repelling the false teaching.

The good health of the church is the responsibility of all of us who belong to the church. And it's no good saying, well, they are responsible for protecting us against this or they are responsible for getting rid of the false teachers.

Yes, our leaders do have a key responsibility, but it's a responsibility they share with us. And it's no good you saying to yourself, well, there is false teaching in that church, but I'll keep coming along.

[9 : 36] After all, it's a designated minister of our denomination and the children seem to enjoy the Sunday school. It is not right for you to put yourself. It is ungodly for you to put yourself.

And it is even more ungodly for you to put your family under false teaching. And the spiritual danger of doing so is, I think, absolutely manifest.

I'm saying, in short, that it's wrong to say to yourself, we don't go to church to fight, I'm not going to contend. I'm saying that from the very essence of the Christian life has within it contention, contending against the evil enemies of the Christian faith.

And furthermore, in regard to this business of the denomination and our lack of interest in the denomination, or most of our lack of interest in the denomination, that too is a mistake. For this church, it is true to say that this church and the local churches which are represented here are the true church.

It is true to say that as two or three gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he is in the midst of them. And whether it's on a Wednesday night in a hillside in China or whether it's in a full-scale church building like this one, that's church.

[10 : 55] Church is the manifestation or the meeting of God's people, the local church. But the local churches down through history have found it best to network with other local churches, to exist in a network for their mutual benefit.

And I would say that mutual network is what we call a denomination. We often call it a church, like the Anglican Church, but really I think that's a misnomer.

It's really the Anglican denomination. That demystifies it, doesn't it? You don't find the Anglican denomination in the Bible and you won't find it in heaven. But it is really a service organisation, a network, which sustains the life of the local churches.

Now what I've just said to you is probably deeply offensive to Presbyterians and I apologise. Doubtless your ecclesiology is a lot better than the one I've just said and you will spend tomorrow correcting it from your pulpit.

Please do. Or my only defence is that Anglicans would be absolutely horrified also. And I'm not saying what most Anglicans say. I'm not going to defend what I just said.

[12 : 08] I note that not all of us believe it and I note that if you're a little bit cautious about it, that's fine, talk about it. But to my mind, the real church is the local church and the denominational structures are the way in which the local churches network together for their good.

Now, when you go into... Do you have McDonald's in this country? How come? Well, Wimpy's was the other one, wasn't it? That was worse than McDonald's. I agree, yes.

When you go into Maccas, one of the things is the toilets are clean. Aren't they? Generally. Clean toilets. I always go and have a look. Yes, clean toilets. Very good. When they're dirty, the whole Maccas chain, the reputation, suffers.

You see, when you're in a network, if your local church gets it all wrong, then the network reputation suffers. Or, if you're in a network and the network, the denomination, gets it wrong, then every local church suffers.

You can't say, oh, that's them in head office. No, we're connected up. We're all part of the same network. And so, we need to be jealously interested in the good reputation of and the spiritual health of not only our local church, but also the denomination to which we belong.

[13 : 38] And nor, let me submit to you, is this merely the case for ministers or hobbyists who have an interest in denominational life. But really, it is an obligation for us all who go to church that the good health of your denomination, the good spiritual health of your denomination, is your responsibility.

For after all, we're growing up Christians and we ought to recognise the importance of God's name in all this. We are responsible. I'm, at the moment, talking about this word contend.

And what I'm suggesting to you is that many of us feel that we don't go to church to contend at all. And I'm saying to you, no, no, no, no, this is only a very partial view. But in actual fact, when the Apostle tells us here to contend, when he tells us here to contend, I'm wondering if Jude was an Apostle.

What's the Apostle? Well, if you don't know, I'm not going to. Okay, that's good. There's no expert here. Anyhow, believe it as it may. Now, when Jude tells us to contend, now look, that was a silly thing for me to do.

I can see people sitting there thinking and thinking about whether Jude was an Apostle or not. Let's just stick to the subject of contending for a minute. Okay? Switch. Back here.

[15 : 03] Good. When we are told to contend, it is a Christian obligation. Of course, we must contend in the right way. Because, many Christians will not contend, that's true, but some of us will contend for the wrong things, that's true, and of course some of us are contentious.

And if you are a contentious person, and I believe there's someone very close to you, possibly sitting next to you now, who will tell you whether you are a contentious person or not, the word contend here does not necessarily apply to you.

It may be that you had better practice love, peace, and harmony rather than contend. But most of us are not contentious, and we do need to hear this word contend.

Now, what is it that we are to contend for? That was the first part of a four-part address. Okay? In case you're wondering if we're going anywhere, that was the first part.

Second part, what is it that we need to contend for? Well, once again, look at what Jude says here. I find it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

[16 : 24] Contrary to what many people think, Christianity is doctrinal. The word doctrine, of course, comes from the word teaching, and Christianity is a teaching faith. There is a shape to Christianity.

There is actually teaching involved in Christianity. Not everything that passes under the word Christian is Christian. There is a yes and a no in Christianity.

There is a boundary and there is a shape to the Christian faith. It is a faith. Christianity involves faith as relationship, without doubt.

It is not as though Christianity is merely doctrinal. Indeed, Christianity calls upon us to have faith, to have trust in God.

It is relational. But it also irreducibly involves revelation. It is both relational and revelational.

[17 : 28] And there is no such thing as Christian faith, which is not both. It is not as though you can have a revelational faith and an abstract intellectual belief and call that Christianity.

But nor is it the case that you can have a wonderful experience of faith which is directed towards emptiness and call that Christianity. True faith depends upon the revelation of God himself, of course, pre-eminently through the Lord Jesus Christ.

We trust in him as he reveals himself to us. And God reveals himself to us or to quote the words of one great classic author whose 500th birthday we celebrate this year, Christ comes to us clad in his own promises.

We apprehend Christ as we meet him in his word, in his promises to us. We trust his promises.

We trust his promises and therefore that is faith in him. Christian faith is both relational and revelational. Now this revelation on which our relationship with God depends, this revelation has certain qualities about it.

[18 : 46] it's verbal for a start. If Christ comes to us clad in his own promises you never yet heard a promise that was non-verbal, made up of words. There's no silent promises.

The revelation is verbal and it comes to us in fact in God's written word, what we call the scriptures, the holy scriptures or the Bible. This revelation of God is final and that's exactly what Jude says here.

it was the faith notice, the faith, the content of the Christian faith, the revelation that was once for all delivered to the saints. There is a normative quality to the scriptural revelation which can never be surpassed or added to.

One of the great faults for those Christians who depend so much on experience is that they are forever thinking that you can somehow add fresh revelation to the revelation of God in Christ revealed to us in scripture.

But we have here the faith once for all delivered to the saints. And praise God for that. One of the marvellous things about that of course is that it's public. Many of the people who feel that they're forever being led by the spirit to do this and led by the spirit to do that and get fresh revelations here and fresh revelations there, it's all very personal, individual.

[20 : 09] It's actually worldly. It fits exactly into our culture. What I like about the Bible is what God tells you, he tells me. And you, and you.

It's the same message. I can read it, you can read it. He doesn't whisper in me and tell me 15 different other things. His revelation to us is a public revelation and I like it like that.

It's a once for all public revelation of himself in Christ coming to us in the words of the scriptures. It is authoritative. The head of the church, I sometimes get described as the head of the church in our part of the world and not only is it a nonsense, all I am is a diocesan bureaucrat.

The word archbishop hides the fact. They always give you big titles if they want you to do an awful job, have you noticed that? They feed your ego with big titles. Archbishop sounds wonderful but I'm simply a denominational official, I'm a bureaucrat.

I hope a bit more than that but that's what they pay me for. Sometimes they call me the head of the church. It's not only foolish, it's blasphemous.

[21 : 28] There is only one head of the church and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the head, that is to say the ruler of the church and he rules the church through his word.

That is how he rules the church and if you want to know what he's saying to the church, thank God it's public. All of us can find out. We don't just rely upon the preacher, we can check what the preacher is saying in the word itself.

It's a public revelation of God in Christ through which he rules the church. It is authoritative. The other thing to say about this revelation of God is that it's always contested.

Do you remember someone once said, did God say? It's somewhere in the book of quotations, somewhere or other I came across. Did God say?

From the very beginning the human race has that in its ear. And not just in its ear, because your heart is also asking that same question. When it comes to the things of God, your favoured mood is the interrogative mood.

[22 : 40] You're always quarrelling with him. The flesh tells you always that God does not have the right to rule your life, that you should rule your life, perhaps alongside God, but at least in a way which makes sure your views are known and your will expressed.

That contest is a perpetual contest in your life. Not surprisingly, it's a contest also in the church. Jesus Christ is the head of the church, but the church is made up of sinful people.

And frequently churches go wrong because they will not submit to the expressed will of Jesus Christ in the scriptures. the contest that occurs within your life you bring to church with you.

The contest that occurs in your life occurs also in the life of the pastor, the preacher. Pastor and people are both in the midst of a contest in which the flesh, the world and the devil are constantly saying to them, God's not right, God's wrong.

Why don't you just talk about this part of the revelation? Why don't you play down that part of the revelation? It's more popular to do it. And so there is a battle which goes on for the soul of the church between the word of God and the world, the flesh and the devil that we are mired in.

[24 : 16] Not as much as worldly people of course. Now the Jude goes on here to tell us, if you have a look at God's love, the evil desire, the evil desire, the evil desire, which is of itself, has of itself the nature of sin.

You understand that, don't you? When the Bible talks about sin, it really means that it includes your evil desires.

See, we think we can control sin, we think it's only sin when we actually, literally agree and do it. But the Bible tells us, no, you're beaten even before you begin. Your own evil desire is evil in itself and sinful.

And some of course abuse the grace of God, give way to this evil desire in the name of the gospel. And he says, I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that the Jesus who saved the people out of the land of Egypt afterwards destroyed those who did not believe.

And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority but left their proper dwelling is kept in eternal chains in gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

[25 : 54] Well, my first point is that we are called upon as Christians to contend. My second point is that we have to contend for the faith, once for all delivered to the saints, and that this contention for the faith is something that occurs constantly both within ourselves and within our churches and therefore necessarily within our denominations.

But that if you care for the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be in that contention, for you will not wish to see his people go down the path of false behaviour and false teaching.

Of course, these two things are so intimately related. Now, thirdly, I wish to draw out some of the observations about this for today.

Content, what I'm calling contending today. Certain things are occurring in the Church of Scotland, of which you're familiar, I am sure. They have to do with human sexuality.

In case you don't realise this, I'm sure you do, the Church of Scotland, in contending about these matters to do with human sexuality, is of course only part of a worldwide dispute that is going on in the churches.

[27 : 13] I'd venture to say that virtually none of the Christian churches around the world remains unaffected by the disputes which also have troubled and are troubling and will even more trouble the Church of Scotland.

This, in particular, is part of a worldwide Western phenomenon in the churches. It has hit the West earlier than it has hit the Global South, for example.

Although, like a great atomic explosion, that which has occurred here will leave its imprint radioactive dust right through the world and all the churches will, in the end, be affected by it.

The Church always exists in the world. That world is what we call culture. And the world in which we exist, here in the West, is a world which has experienced acute secularisation.

The acute secularisation of the world in which we live has put enormous emphasis on human freedom and individual freedom. It has a number of features, of course, but that, I think, is essential to it.

[28 : 22] Individual freedom and also equality of all people. Secularism also constantly suppresses Christian speech.

Even unwittingly, it launches attack after attack on Christian language because it wishes to strip Christianity out of the cultures of the West.

One early evidence of that was when we were no longer to say Christian name. Do you remember that? We used to call it Christian name. Do you think they removed the word Christian just as an accident?

No. It was done in the name of human equality. It's always done in the name of human equality, but it's done in order to make it clear that this is not a Christian civilisation.

You're not allowed to say BC any longer. You have to say BCE. You're not allowed to say the Old Testament any longer. You have to say the Jewish scriptures.

[29 : 30] You're not allowed to call it Christmas any longer. You have to call it the festival season. Now, in Scotland, you never had Christmas and I'm shocked to hear that it's coming in here at all. Would that you had stood against it.

I'm just joking. But it's called the festival season. And so one could go on and on. Have you noticed these things? What is going on is the attempt to take the Christian language out of the Western culture, the Western culture being the fruit of Christianity.

secularism has as its indispensable method the censorship of Christians so that now we are not allowed to say certain things in public and particularly to do with Christian morality.

I have known two or three cases in the United Kingdom where Christians have been interviewed by the police because of alleged references to homosexuality.

This is astonishing. But it is the approach of secularism that wants to censor Christian teaching. That's the world in which we're living.

[30 : 50] Now, of course, as part of that too, the secularist view of the world censors the scriptures. One of the little slogans that has been very popular in recent times is, the reader is the author.

Have you heard that? The reader is the author. In other words, when you read any literature, it's your interpretation which is the authoritative thing about the literature you're reading.

The reader is the author. Now, this may just sound like a sort of funny thing you read about in English syllabuses. Don't worry, it's come down through and into the way in which your children are taught.

The reader is the author. I am in charge of what I read. And if you think of author, authority, it is not an accident that the biblical revelation, which is a book, is out there in a society which says, oh no, the reader is the author.

I am the authority over the Bible. The reader is the author. Now, that's the cultural world in which we live.

[32 : 04] What does the Christian church make of such a world? What is truly frightening, and again, you have observed this I'm sure, is the way in which the Christian churches have so often gone along with the secular agenda.

So that Christian spokesmen, when they get up to speak, don't talk about God, Jesus, and the Bible. They talk about politics. The world loves it.

Every time a Christian spokesman gets up and speaks about the cost of living, or the global crisis, or whatever it is, the world applauds. As long as you're not talking about God, Jesus, and the Bible.

As long as you're not being Christian. I was talking to one of our reporter back home once, and she said to me at the end of the interview, what else would you like to say, Archbishop? I said, I would like to say also that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.

And she laughed. She said, you can't say that. And in those little words, she was evidencing the view of the media that you must not speak Christianly.

[33 : 17] And the capitulation of our... No, it may not have occurred here. I shouldn't say this has all occurred in Scotland. I'm telling you what's occurred in Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, England, France, and everywhere else.

Maybe not here. You may be in a better position here. But, everywhere else, we see the cultural captivity of the church to the world.

Our abject surrender. So that we do what the world wants us to do. And as a result, we have a truncated gospel.

It's interesting. I heard someone on the telly recently who is a very, very well known liberal. And he got to talk about Jesus. It was really nice.

And he was saying, you know, I stand for Jesus. And he gave us this great spiel about Jesus. And I thought, I must have misunderstood this man. I thought he was a very liberal and he wouldn't talk about Jesus like that. But, of course, that's a nonsense.

[34 : 15] That shows my ignorance. Of course he talked about Jesus like that. The word he didn't talk about was repentance. The gospel that that man has is a gospel of Jesus includes everybody.

You will never hear the word repentance. It's a truncated gospel. A gospel moulded to suit the world in which we live.

And I hope you see the connection between that and the freedom of the individual which the world loves. Don't interfere with the way I want to live. Don't ask me for repentance.

Talk to me about Jesus. Make me feel good. Affirm me. But don't confront me with the story of Jesus Christ, with the repentance that comes from that. Now, inevitably, human sexuality has become the greatest point of contest.

Marriage. What has individualism done to marriage? Well, it's practically destroyed it. At least in my country.

[35 : 25] Gender roles. Again, the Christian content stripped out. Gender roles completely changed. Sex without boundaries.

So that even our young people in our churches are astonished to discover that the Bible says anything about fornication. They've never heard of that word before except on a television program. They didn't know that there were boundaries within which sexual activity should take place and out of which it shouldn't take place.

And of course, famously, homosexuality. Let me say in speaking of homosexuality, I'm aware that we're speaking of a difficult and personal subject.

And a number of you here are bound to have been affected personally in this whole area. Either yourself having attractions to the opposite, to the same sex or being in a family in which this has become apparent.

And if I do speak about it tonight, I've got to speak very quickly about it, please be assured I do not do so in some sort of flip, easy way. These are matters that need to be dealt with tenderly and carefully and pastorally.

[36 : 37] So please, if I can say that, and if I in any way offend anyone through my speech, I do apologise. These are deep matters that affect so many people.

But speak about them, we must. Now it's interesting, as I come to the word, I've written down the word homosexuality there, I hesitated before I said it to you. I am nervous to talk about it.

Why is that? Is it that the culture in which we live has so assaulted Christians that we are now frightened?

In a land which was famous once for free speech, I am now nervous even to discuss the matter at a biblical and moral level. Do you see what the culture has done?

You will know, if you are at all living in the 20 and 21st century, that the message has been conveyed powerfully through films, books, articles in the newspaper and so forth and so on, that individual rights linked to human sexuality must be allowed to have their say.

[37 : 54] And that anyone who even raises an objection on moral and biblical grounds to homosexual behaviour, for example, is instantly labelled a homophobe.

Which is odd because homophobia was originally the fear of being homosexual. But those days are long past. This has silenced all questions.

A leading gay activist in my city said to me, we have captured all the institutions.

One after another they have fallen. The army, the fire brigade, the teaching profession, the police force, the hospitals.

They have all fallen to us. Except the church. Well that's not exactly true, is it? For there is a great contest going on now in this area, in the churches.

[38 : 58] Now if we ask ourselves, who rules the church? We come to the answer, Jesus Christ. If we ask ourselves, by what method does he rule the church? The answer is through the Bible. And I suppose most, if not all of us here, would say, yes, yes, we're biblical people.

We believe the Bible. We will follow the Bible through thick and thin. The Bible is our authority. We want to hear preachers who preach the Bible. That's what we say. This contest about human sexuality, which is of course more than homosexuality, this contest about human sexuality is going to test your commitment and the commitment of your church, whether it's a great and famous evangelical church or not, to the authority of scripture.

Because the voice of the culture and the voice of the culture now inside the church is so powerful that it will shake the foundations of faith.

And if you are going to stand, then you're going to have to be determined and you're going to have to contest.

I ask, is the modern view of human sexuality biblical? Can it be squared off with the Bible? I have no time to answer that question tonight in a detailed way, only to say to you, from having done a very careful study of this, thinking again about the whole subject, no way.

[40 : 23] The Bible is absolutely clear on the subject of human sexuality. There have been many attempts to change its voice, remembering that the reader is the author.

But on any reading of the Bible that takes its authority seriously and submits to the Bible, it condemns the practice of human sexuality beyond the bounds of marriage, whether it's in incest, bestiality, homosexuality.

It condemns the practice outside. I'm simply going to assert that tonight. Jim Packer has said that when the church speaks otherwise and says that, well, there are certain practices like monogamous homosexual relations, that it is sanctifying sin.

It certainly creates great confusion. It harms those people who have been living chastely as single people, whose plight in a society like ours we ought to grieve over.

We ought to support our single brothers and sisters who live for Christ in a chaste way. It makes it so difficult for them to be chaste.

[41 : 47] And the emphasis on finding one's identity through sex, of course, endangers human maturity. For we do not find our identity through sex, we find it in God.

People say, is this a gospel issue? Is it one of those issues where there will be different opinions in the church? There are a number of issues about which we choose to differ within a denomination or even within an individual church.

Is it one of those? And legitimately so. Is it one of those? And I say to you that in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, where this matter is dealt with, it tells us that the persistent practice, note the words, the persistent practice of greed and homosexuality is a matter that takes you out of the kingdom of God.

Those are grave words. They would apply also to the persistent practice of fornication with the opposite sex. If you persist in that behaviour, you are out of the kingdom of God.

It is, in other words, a salvation issue. It is not one you can say, well, I'm happy for them to have their opinion, I will have my opinion. It doesn't work like that.

[43 : 12] Well, some final remarks, which I've entitled Scotland and the World because I couldn't think of any other title. I'm saying to you, dear brothers and sisters, and thank you for your attendance here tonight, I think the numbers in attendance signal the importance with which this issue is being taken by you.

I'm saying that you will need to contend here if you will not be able to simply treat it as yet another difference of opinion.

I'm saying to you, if you do contend here, you must be prepared to suffer. The culture, the culture, at least in its opinion makers, I don't know about underneath, but the culture in its opinion makers is dead against you and you will suffer if you choose to take it on in the church.

I'm saying that you will need to contend here for the sake of the churches which live under the authority of scripture, or do we? That's the issue.

for your country, and for your mission, and for your nation. I don't believe that God has set these rules up for our harm, but for our good, and by following them that we will find the good.

[44 : 33] However, I also note that you will be supported internationally. For the contest which you have here is only a branch of the contest that is occurring in Canada, the United States of America, New Zealand, South Africa, Australia, all around the world, particularly in the churches of the Old West, this is occurring.

And as I mentioned to you at the beginning, a hundred thousand American Anglicans have set themselves up. They say that we haven't left the church, they haven't divided the church, but they are those who stand where they always stood.

Out of a total population of something like seven hundred thousand church-going Anglicans, a hundred thousand have taken that stand. I'm not saying that this is going to happen here, I'm just pointing out that this contest is going on for the soul of the Christian churches right through the Western world.

And when it happens here, you're not alone. You're not alone because as well as those others who are engaged in the same contest, there are the great churches of the Global South.

in Nigeria alone there are 20 million Anglican Christians. 20 million Anglican Christians in Uganda, 8 million. Sorry, I know the details about the Anglicans. Forgive me, I realise that the prezis will probably be five times as many and much better, but nonetheless, there are 8 million Anglicans, I think I'm right in saying, in Uganda.

[46 : 03] The Christians of Uganda, the Christian faith in Uganda began with the martyrs. Did you know that? Young men who were martyred for their refusal to have homosexual relationships with the king.

How do you think they feel about the West? I'll tell you what they say and the prezis in Africa will say the same thing. You gave us the Bible, you told us to read the Bible, you told us to obey the Bible, now you're saying to us, oh, by the way, bits of the Bible are not relevant any longer.

That's what they've said to me. And how could one answer that question? You will, however, be supported internationally.

Your struggles will be prayed for. We are praying for you in Australia. And you will be supported internationally as you, by your stand in these matters, will set a witness to the rest of the world internationally.

May God's people in Scotland lead the way. The gospel has come forth from this country in most marvellous ways. You have a proud and good history.

[47 : 25] May the next chapter also be proud and good because of the stand you make. There is a great contest going on, however, in Africa and throughout Asia as well.

It's not as though they're over there doing the right thing and we're over here doing the wrong thing. The contest which we're experiencing, they're experiencing also. And of course, there is a great contest between them and secularism and Islam.

We live in interesting times. Well, finally, play your part. Follow the Bible.

Truly follow the Bible. Don't just say you do. Strengthen your fellowship. When you hear of troubles in other parts of this country, make sure that the people who are standing for Christ there know they have your support.

Speak up. Let them know that they have your support. Engage your denomination. Do not let the denomination be run by people who have an interest in politics.

[48 : 37] You have a responsibility for your denomination to make sure that in the General Assembly and the councils of the Church, the biblical and gospel voice is heard.

You cannot complain if things happen at that level which affect you if you have never taken any interest in what goes on. Commit yourselves to the gospel.

Yes, we have to fight against the breakdown of morality but of course this is a gospel issue and the greatest answer to the needs of Scotland today is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And then one last thing. This really is the last thing. Unleash the power of the laity.

This may be a new thought but there is nothing more formidable in all this world than a Protestant woman who knows her business and is prepared to confront denominational officials.

[49 : 46] That scares me I can tell you and I'm an archbishop. Brothers and sisters don't let your ministers bear the brunt of this struggle. If you leave it to the ministers they will not be able to do it.

They need the laity of this church to make it clear that you are taking responsibility as godly Christian men and women to obey the Bible and to support your ministers in the struggle which they will be involved in.

if you lay people will not do it then your ministers can't do it. Unleash the power of the laity. Shall we pray?

Gracious God and loving Heavenly Father we thank you for Jude and his great words to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints. We thank you that you've brought us to this hour and we pray our Heavenly Father that you would give us the grace to stand.

Notwithstanding all the assaults of the evil one notwithstanding the power of this world and this culture we pray our Heavenly Father that just as in days of old your people were proved in the fires of suffering so we too may be prepared to be proved in whatever fires may come upon us.

[51 : 04] We pray our Heavenly Father that by so living and so testifying to Christ we may exalt the name of the Lord Jesus and that once more this great nation of Scotland may resound with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to the glory of God and to the good of the whole world.

We pray this for Jesus' sake. Amen. Peter why don't you come up here and there's an opportunity for questions to Peter.

Peter I'll let you field your questions you're well capable of telling people when to shut up and when to speak up. Do make use of the opportunity we'll go and I'll call Holt when the time seems right.

That's very good thank you very much indeed. Tomorrow the 19th I think of April is the 50th anniversary of my being born again and I'm so thankful to God for that great day when I was saved under the preaching of an Arminian Dr. Billy Graham in the Sydney showground on the subject of Noah and the ark.

So I praise God for that great day for me and for many others. Sir at the back. thank you for what you said tonight I agree with everything you said but maybe this church is an example as a building but my fear is those looking in from the outside like windows looking in on us and my fear is faiths like Islam etc will look upon us if we do go down the road of acceptance and tolerance of it can you have your comments on other faiths on this regard please.

[52 : 50] Thank you. Yes Islam is a particular example that I know best. The ready acceptance and embrace of homosexuality in the West has proved infinitely embarrassing and difficult for those living in Africa and Asia and particularly those living side by side with Islam and it has actually I understand caused conversions from Christianity to Islam because Islam is at least apparently clear and straight on this matter and even though our African Anglican forgive me for using Anglican illustrations all the time I'm sorry that's what I know about even though our African Anglican brothers say no no we're against what the Americans are doing the Muslims say no you're part of the same church you see it's the McDonald's thing if your toilet's dirty well then you affect all the other McDonald's as well if you follow me it's reputational and this has caused immense trouble for Christian people right wherever they are confronting Islam so Islam's standard at this point is higher than the Christian standard and people know it yes sir down the front here when you were talking about people only being able to say

BCE instead of BC and not being able to say the Old Testament and only being able to say Winterfest do you think these things are more to do with equality of the world religions or do you think it's more to do with secularism or both thank you I'm sure it has to do with secularism I don't think my experience of Muslims and Hindus we have a vast variety as you do I'm sure of different religions in Sydney these days and whenever we have this nonsense about oh we're not going to have Christmas this year because it's Christmas the local Muslims and the Hindus say come on of course you are why wouldn't you it's your feast they are not the ones troubled by this in their name secularists and the teaching profession is particularly secular will speak and say oh it's not right because they have a view of individual rights human equality which is the prism through which they see everything and therefore no no you mustn't ever allow

Christianity to have this privileged position so I'm sure it is the secularist push not the push of other religions which has created this difficulty now there may be exceptions but that's the main thing someone else there's a question back there yes sir there's a microphone coming sir surely the problem is sir that very few of the churches recognise that the scripture is the sole authority for guidance until the churches and I mean the churches worldwide accept the supreme authority of scripture and live by it then we'll maybe get some answers well certainly you're right in saying sir that since the enlightenment in particular the progress of liberal protestantism has afflicted most of the churches now and certainly has served to diminish the authoritative place of scripture and you can see it in theological education where people no longer worry about learning

Greek and Hebrew because why would you? you're not going to preach in the scriptures and you can see it in a dozen other ways I have to say that liberal protestantism it seems to me is an offshoot however of evangelicalism I'm an evangelical that is to say very few people are attracted into Christianity via liberal protestantism why would you be a liberal protestant?

You may as well be a secularist but many people start as evangelicals and slip into liberal protestantism now I don't think they're the majority I think liberalism is smaller than we think it is but it's very influential because characteristically evangelicals and in my church Anglo-Catholics and others like that are very pastorally minded they're looking after the church they're very interested in preaching and pastoring people whereas the mood of liberal protestantism is into looking after society and being interested in political matters and looking after denominational matters so you will find liberal protestantism rife amongst the denominational officials of my church I know nothing about Scotland except I love it I went to Scots College and once wore a black watch kilt well northern once we used to wear it if you can imagine that knobbly knees and all but it is typical for

[57 : 38] I don't know about the church of Scotland this is not my business but I'm saying it's typical for liberal protestants to find their way denominational officials and into theological colleges but the main bulk of the church is carried by evangelicals and those who at least in theory say that the scriptures are authoritative it's very interesting now the only other exception I'd say to that is the rise of Pentecostalism see if you split the house of authority into four I'm sorry I don't have a blackboard here split it into four there's those who appeal to the authority of reason those who appeal to the authority of the church those who appeal to the authority of the Bible those who appeal to the authority of experience and on the whole Pentecostalism appeals to the authority of experience it's actually a form of liberalism but that's another matter it appeals to the authority of experience now I'm not saying all Pentecostals appeal to the authority of experience above the Bible but that's the tendency of that mood so the

The dangers for Bible-based evangelicalism these days are particularly liberal Protestantism, though that's not numerous in my opinion, but Pentecostalism, which is numerous, and which again I think is largely parasitic on evangelicalism.

As I say, in my part of the world, many of the people who go to those churches are ex-evangelicals. Sorry for this. You started me off. Someone else. The minister.

We've got someone coming over here. Is that okay? And then the microphone will come to you, sir. I'm just back from two years actually living in Sydney, so I can relate to some more of the...

In Sydney? Yeah, yeah. Why did you come back? I'm not sure yet. So having seen some more of the more visual examples, for example, Mardi Gras, my question is, what then is the fallout?

[59 : 41] If there's contention, there's obviously a losing kind of group of people. So what then is the fallout of there being losers in the argument, and how do you propose we engage with that, who will come through our lives?

Have you seen anything in place that relates to how we then go forward after kind of engaging and having a contention? Do you know, you are speaking English, but I'm not hearing it.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm not having a go at you. I'm just... I had a little difficulty with that question. You said you've been in Sydney, where the homosexual lifestyle is very explicit.

That's the point. And your question is, I think... You mentioned the word losers, but I wasn't sure whether that was referring to the churches or to the homosexual community or the gay community. I think...

You know what the weird... Okay. I will answer what I think is the question, which is always the nice thing to do. Don't ask the real question. Answer the one you think it is. Okay.

[60 : 46] And I don't know that one can answer it. It seems... We've always got to take a short view and a long view. The short view is what we must do now, but we are always doing what we must do now because of the long view. So that, for example, in the contest that exists in my part of the world between Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism, the Pentecostals have made great gains, but I have a long view.

I have a 50-year view. And I think that Evangelical Christianity will carry the Gospel in a way that Pentecostal Christianity won't be able to. That's my view. I think that's how it will work. So I'm not panicked by this.

I just keep pressing on with what we're doing. The same thing in this subject. It seems to me... Well, it's difficult. It may well be that the decline of Western civilisation is simply the judgement of God upon us and that that judgement has been declared on us and is never going to change.

God is going to deal with us. That may be what is occurring. Romans chapter 1 suggests that as a possibility. And the Islamisation of Europe, which is a real possibility, may well be, just as in the ancient world, Islam won Africa, which was Christian.

So this may be what is occurring now. Now, I hope not and I pray not. I am praying that what we're seeing at the moment is with the success of secularisation, well, sort of success, because secularisation is a negative thing.

[62 : 13] I think what it does is it opens up the civilisation to false gods, but that's another matter. I think with the success of secularisation, what we're going to see is the possibility for the Gospel again.

If God is merciful upon the West, if God is merciful upon the West, then we may even now be in the last stages of a cycle of going downhill into promiscuity and permissiveness from which people will recoil.

and it may be that the global financial crisis is one of God's megaphones to call the West back to Christ.

I don't know. Now, I have no idea if that's what we were talking about, but never mind. Thank you, and I do beg your pardon. I didn't quite follow. Yes, there was someone else over there. Yes, sir.

Have you got the microphone? It's coming, it's coming. We'll just get the microphone so everyone can hear what you're saying. You were speaking about, you know, Protestants a wee while ago, you know, about the liberalism of Protestants, but I've got a problem with this Protestant business, you know.

[63 : 22] You know, I think it's been given too much significance, you know. I think we should show love, you know, credit and respect for the Reformers. But it's a bride of Christy church. All the truths are God's.

They belong to him. The Protestant Reformers were working on behalf of God. You know, I was brought up as a Protestant, by the way, until I was 15. You know, but it's been made into a religion, a Protestant religion. They've given it too much significance.

And religion's poison, you know. And, you know, it's poisoned evangelism, this word Protestants, you know. A lot of Catholics don't want to become Protestant Christians, for example, you know. I'm not just saying this for the church.

I'm saying it for the whole world, you know. Because I don't think this word Protestant should be given significance as given. You know, the church is God's, you know, it's no Protestants. Thank you. Yes, I think I follow you.

Yes, it's very important to say that. This year is the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin. That's a very important thing. And Calvin was one of the greatest, I would say, the greatest exponent of the Bible that the church has ever been given.

[64 : 21] And I think I have Calvin at the top of my list. However, the worship of John Calvin is one of the blights of modern Calvinism. And to worship at his shrine is to make a fundamental mistake.

And one that he would abominate, if I can put it like that. So it is very important indeed to put the Protestant Reformation and the Reformers in the right place. Namely, as part of that from which we learn, perhaps one of the greatest things from which we learn, and I would say so, but never to so tie ourselves to the Protestant Reformation or anything else for that matter, apart from the Scriptures, as to find ourselves entering into the castle of Calvinism and living in the castle of Calvinism instead of living in the castle of Christ, if I can put it like that.

And I fear that some of our Calvinists do that. So... Could I just go back to the previous question, the one of the Mardi Gras in Sydney?

Have you found, or what have you found to be the most effective ways of making a Christian response to a huge gay parade? Is it to ignore it?

Is it to condemn it? Have counter-demonstrations or how have you found effective ways of dealing with that? Thank you.

[65 : 45] We have not. I don't think we've found effective ways. Originally, there were sort of protests and then sometimes counter-demonstrations.

None of them worked. The media has baptised the Mardi Gras. It is one of the great events on the Sydney calendar. And there would be very little one could do except stand aside and let it roll on through.

I think... But I don't think we've found an answer to that. And I don't think we have found an answer to ministering to the gay community very effectively. But we need to. The only thing I will say is that there are many people who are homosexual, who hate that sort of thing.

And many, of course, in our churches who need to be supported and strengthened in our churches. And we do have, as others have here too, I'm sure, an organisation which people...

And I hope you do have one here in Glasgow. An organisation which exists to help people who find themselves with same-sex attractions to deal with that in their lives. And we've certainly got that.

[66 : 53] But we don't make a big fuss about it because it needs to do its work privately. Yeah. But sir, I wish I knew. Frankly, the minister of the church wanted to say something.

This will be good. I bet it... I bet it has three points. I've got two points. Oh, I'm good. Three sub-points.

The problem is that the denominations are run by people who are liberals who get into all these positions of power and you said that the problem is that evangelicals are pastoral people who want to be preaching and teaching and building the church.

I'm presuming you're not wanting evangelicals to abandon preaching and teaching and building the church to become quangocrats and doing that. So, who do we get doing that?

And the second thing is can you elaborate a bit more in your appeal for the laity to be involved and what that actually means? What are you expecting the first Protestant women here tonight to do?

[67 : 58] Well, it's very interesting to me that so far not one of the sisters has asked a question. Now, that suggests to me either... No, what it suggests to me is that the ladies here know all the answers and just sort of forward out of their minds.

I think that's the way I'll put it. Yes, you see, I'm a denominational official. We have to pay our taxes. Sorry, let me go back a little. I have made vast generalisations tonight.

I hope you realise that. I am sure that in your system here you have evangelicals working in... Not all people are liberal Protestants who run churches. I'm not speaking about your church. I know nothing about it.

So, please, if I have exaggerated and offended people, please bear in mind that I live a long way away. Okay, so bear that in mind. But I'm speaking in general terms though, generally speaking around the world you will find church administration is more of interest to liberal Protestants than it is to evangelical Protestants.

That's just a fact of life. Now, what to do about this? I think sometimes we need to pay our taxes and there are some of us who have to give ourselves to denominational affairs and we need to encourage some of us to do that.

[69 : 17] If we don't do it, if we don't attend to the denomination, the denomination will attend to us and it will squeeze us and make life awkward for us. It may not even intend to do so.

But it won't have the same gospel imperatives that the local church and the local church ministers do. So, some of us have to give ourselves and some of us have to give up to 10% or more of our time to denominational affairs if you don't want the local churches to be squeezed in the wrong direction.

Now, partly, that is the business of the laity. Lay Christians, many of whom are highly skilled in their own professions, can take an interest in denominational affairs rather than the ministers who are often quite hopeless in worldly affairs.

Ever seen me trying to count figures, for example? That's hopeless. So, relieve the ministers of this burden. Work with the ministers theologically, but step forward, be elected to positions, join committees, make sure that the work of the denomination is done spiritually and theologically, not just...

So, let me give an illustration. There's a denomination known to me in my part of the world where it's in decline and their answer to decline, the denominational official's answer to decline is sell the churches.

[70 : 42] So, all they're doing is selling church buildings. Oh, no more people going to church here, sell the building. That's all they do. So, they will, by this rate, somewhere in 100 years' time they will have sold it all when they're all dead.

It will be one of the biggest transfers of wealth in the history of our country, I would say, when all the buildings built over those years are now sold. They don't have any idea of church planting, of renewing the church, of having more ministers.

How can we have more ministers? We couldn't pay for them. Well, that's bureaucratic thinking. We need spiritual thinking in the upper levels. You have to pay your taxes and lay people have to help.

Yeah, in my view. Someone else? Sir? Oh, sorry, I beg your pardon, someone over here. How excellent. I'm terrified.

Go on. I guess I'm hoping for some encouragement in terms of what you can say to us about the church or Scotland position in particular with regard to what's coming to this general assembly over the homosexual issue.

[71 : 59] And my fear really is that over many years we as evangelicals have not taken the stand that we ought to have so that now we have many issues, people coming into the ministry who are complete liberals.

We don't take a stand against that. We refuse any sort of discipline and therefore in a sense we're rightly accused now of being homophobic because the liberals see us standing up on something that is just one issue and we ought to have taken a stand years ago.

So can you encourage us in some sense keeping going even with this issue? No, not really. I think your analysis is absolutely right.

One of the things that we did was we gave up. We used to have strict rules on the ordination of people who had been married and divorced. We gave that up. Now the liberals say to us, well why did you not fight that?

Now you're fighting the homosexual issue, you are a homophobe. You didn't mind breaking biblical standards over here but you don't mind but you insist on it. So that's true.

[73 : 14] Now let me encourage you dear sister. The game is never lost. God is in charge. It is very important. The game is by no means over. Three years ago if I remember correctly for we were praying then, this issue came before the church as a whole and the issue went round to the different presbyteries and I think the presbyteries as a whole voted against this liberalised organisation.

Am I right? I hope I'm using the right language and so forth and so on. The church of Scotland as a whole at presbytery level when tested said no. Now it's coming before you again and time is not too late.

I believe that is still true of the heart of the church but you've got to find ways of unleashing that heart and making it perfectly clear that that's the heart of the church so that the political process does not succeed against the wishes of the majority of the people.

Now let me say the Diocese of Sydney which I have the honour to be the Archbishop temporarily I can't have to remind myself the Diocese of Sydney has been steadfastly evangelical for 70 years steadfastly and famously evangelical for 80 years.

How is that the case? Because most things run entropy, they run down in Christian work. Red Cross was a Christian organisation, look at it now and so forth and so on. One of the reasons, God has blessed us, but one of the reasons and one of the ways in which God has blessed us is that he has given us politicians.

[74 : 51] The Diocese of Sydney is the beneficiary of evangelical ecclesiastical politicians who are prepared to take the time to know all the rules and to attend all the meetings.

We use what's called how to vote tickets. Does anyone know about how to vote tickets here? This is a secret, please do not tell anyone outside this room. If you are voting for a big body like our diocese and synod, how do people know who to vote for?

How do you know that this is the person who will stick to biblical standards and this is the person who may not stick to biblical standards? Because you don't know the people. We have to elect dozens and dozens of committees and organisations each year.

We have 30 or 40 schools. We want those schools to have councils which are evangelical Christian. Otherwise we'll lose the headships of the schools, then we'll lose the schools.

We own hospitals. We've got to maintain the Christian standard. Well, how do we do that when you have a voting body of 700 people and you don't know all the people?

[75 : 57] Well, we have an organisation, a political organisation called the Anglican Church League which is the Evangelical Political Party. And the Anglican Church League before every synod puts out a how-to-vote ticket.

In other words, a list of names of those standing and it says vote for these people because we know them and we believe that they will stand for biblical truth. And so when I fill in my voting card at the synod, I don't just fill it in, I pull out my how-to-vote ticket and I vote down the ticket.

And if sufficient of us vote down the ticket, we win every time. Is that sort of shocking? Well, how do you think the Liberals win every time?

What do you think they do? Is it ungodly? No. Everyone knows we're doing it. No one has to vote the ticket. It's secret ballot.

You're not forced to show people how you voted. It's not ungodly. It's just godly common sense. But it arises because people are determined to keep their denomination evangelical.

[77 : 08] And we've done it for 80 years with God's blessing. Now, if you're not prepared to do that sort of work, well, then I'm sorry, you'll have a denomination. I don't know what you've got. Not my business to talk about the Church of Scotland.

But if you don't do that sort of work as evangelical, well, you don't deserve to have an evangelical denomination. Because you're not trying hard enough. Sister, I don't know if that's encouraging, but I'm saying we've kept it for 80 years.

I believe you can do it. But you've got to pay your taxes. You've got to do it properly. Is this getting more and more nightmarish in your opinion, this meeting? Do you have an specific issue of why now on this issue?

You said, you know, you said because it's a salvation issue. And it's different. I mean, that is a helpful thing. Why is this the hill to die on? Yes, why is this the hill to die on?

Well, we can be accused of a bit of hypocrisy because we haven't chosen other matters, let me say. I personally, sorry, I'm speaking bluntly because I'm flying out of town tomorrow.

[78 : 19] We have never accepted the ordination of women in our diocese. And I believe, although that is not a salvation issue in the same way, I believe the two things are connected myself. And I think if you're not prepared to oppose that, then to oppose this is going to be much harder.

That's my view. It doesn't mean you should not oppose it. And I honour those women who have been ordained. I understand we differ in our opinion. And it's not the same thing, but there are connections.

Now, why is this the hill to die on? You see, you'll always be tempted to say, well, actually this is only an opinion which we can disagree among. And if they were talking about denying the divinity of Christ, then I would stand up and oppose them, or something like that.

But you see, the contest is never on the ground of your choosing. Why would it be? The devil never chooses the ground which you want him to choose, where it's easy. He's a much more cunning chap than that.

He chooses the ground that suits him, where it's really, really hard for you. This one couldn't be harder. The whole of our culture has gone that way. Half the church seems to have gone that way.

[79 : 29] Well, it's not half, but a lot of the church seems to have gone that way. This is really, really hard. Furthermore, it's about sex. Half of us don't ever want to talk about it, and the other half don't even think about it.

It's a really tough issue. Okay? Now, however, you've got to remember, the Bible is perfectly clear on this issue. If there's another, you know, this is a very, very clear issue.

Secondly, sex is so important to the well-being of human beings. This is not just about the authority of the Bible, even. It's about who we are as persons.

It's a huge, important, and salvation issue. If you're not prepared to enter the contest on this one, you will never enter the contest, not even when they stand up and say that Jesus is not God.

By that stage, you will have become so wimpish that you won't even fight that one. I believe this is the issue which you must take on.

[80 : 34] If you wish to remain a Christian church. There are other questions. The time is... Five minutes. I'm only paid to be here for another five minutes.

Okay. Good. I can, wherever the... Well, I take it this is a contending for the faith.

The emphasis is within the church. from Jude and from 1 Corinthians 5, etc. Are you asking us to contend for some of these issues outside the church?

Thank you. The two things, of course, are strongly linked. Why is the church troubled by the question of human sexuality? Because the culture is. And indeed, we have to bear witness for Christ in both the arena of the church and also in the arena of the culture.

We have to make our case, and we have to do it by hard thinking. This bears on the issue, sir, that you raised. We have to make our case that actually, that the practice of human sexuality as it is commonly experienced in the world around us is profoundly damaging to human beings.

[81 : 52] things. Now, that requires a great deal of thought and a great deal of capacity to speak into that situation. Our society, I believe, that what God tells us in the Bible is for our good.

I believe that all around us, in the society in which we're living, the abuse of the sexual gift is creating terrible troubles. And we are failing our community if we do not stand for what the Bible says and explain what the Bible says.

Not just say, oh, the Bible's against this, but explain why it is that God wishes us to live in certain ways. So, yes, sir, it is a matter in the church, but first of all, it's a matter in the culture, and the two things can't be disentangled.

Someone else. I'll just allow the microphone men to choose. Thank you very much for your encouragement. I'm a politician, but I'm a coward as well.

I stopped the gay flag being flown above our council headquarters, but I did it very quietly. And I just wondered if you could comment on politicians having got in their heart, or whether they should be more upfront and vocal about Christ in their lives.

[83 : 07] Do you mean you are a literal politician, or a politician by heart? No, no, I'm a councillor. Oh, I see, a councillor. Yeah. Dear brother, first of all, our brother has told us that he's a councillor.

I hope that we do what the Bible says, which is we support in prayer our municipal, our local, national, and other leaders in this community.

You cannot do your job alone. If the church will not support you in the doing of it, they can't be blamed if you can't do it very well. So first of all, we've got to pray for our brother and everyone else.

I'm so glad, by the way, I think the Queen, whom we've prayed for for so long, has done a wonderful job, hasn't she? And she, because people have prayed for her, I believe.

Anyhow, we've got to pray for the future as well. My idea of the future would be another 20 years, please, ma'am. If I may put it like that. So that's the first thing.

[84 : 07] Secondly, the first duty of the councillor is to look after the community. And you must be the best councillor you can, municipal or city councillor, that you can be, which means looking after matters like buildings, drains and so forth, the best of your capacity.

That's your first duty. Thirdly, however, there will be moments when I believe it is right to speak for Christ and in which, with modesty and courtesy, you must put aside the fear that we all have and speak as naturally as possible of the faith which motivates you and the consequences of that faith.

I believe that when people hear ordinary Christians naturally speaking about Jesus in all sorts of situations, they too will be liberated.

And we can once again be in a community where the gospel is known. You're in a particularly vulnerable situation. That's a tough one. But there will be moments when you need to speak and just let it be known that you're a Christian and that you have a Christian and your approach to a particular matter comes out of your Christian faith.

And I believe God will bless you in the doing of it. I think Willie feels that we've had enough. I want to thank you, Peter, very much indeed for your talk, but especially also for answering such a wide variety of questions.

[85 : 36] And I'm sure everybody would want to express their appreciation. thank you for your time. Thank you. Thank you. You ended there by encouraging us to pray for our counsellors and leaders.

It would be good, wouldn't it, if we went away tonight with a renewed commitment to pray, not just for those leaders, but for all within our churches, within our denominations, for those who will be, for example, at the Church of Scotland General Assembly, but also similar bodies of other denominations represented here, that God would give strength and courage and wisdom as we debate these things and as the future is played out in decisions that are being made.

It's a great thing to be reminded of above all. As I'm just looking at the back there, I'm seeing some of Peter's books on display in our book room.

And if you want to have a look at those on the way out, please do. I can just see facing me, I think, his excellent book, The Revelation of God, which is all about the nature of the relational God who reveals himself to us, a book that I find immensely helpful.

So do have a look at those on the way out. And if you'd like to look at other books, you'd be very welcome.