

Chaplains on Front Lines of Don't Ask, Don't Tell Battle

The senior chaplain came to me for counseling, struggling with how he would face the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT). I put my hand on his shoulder and looked him square in the eyes, "Chaplain, this nation needs you to stand strong for your convictions now more than ever. It is not time to retreat, but to minister as the pastor to our military that God has called you to be."

While budget battles rage in DC, radiation leaks in Japan, and the Middle East rumbles with uncertainty, the U.S. military has quietly but dutifully began following orders to train for the probable repeal of DADT, the policy which disallows military service to avowed homosexuals.

The repeal of DADT (which cannot be initiated until 60 days after the President, Defense Secretary and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs certify that lifting the ban won't hurt the military's ability to fight) remains a decisive story. But the 24-hour news cycle on this one is up. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and guardsmen are on their own. Yet this story is not over. At the center of the story are now chaplains.

Chaplains are the unheralded heroes of the military. They are, to use Army language, "force multipliers." Providing religious services is only one important task they do. Chaplains are there to counsel all military members, guide the commander about world religions, and ensure that all have the opportunity to follow their religion, even when it is different from their own.

Asking chaplains to minister biblical truth to what the Bible condemns is nothing new. Asking chaplains to keep quiet about what the Bible condemns is. So far no agency is trying to stop

chaplains from preaching the doctrines their denominations ordained them to teach, or obstructing them from counseling homosexuals (or adulterous heterosexuals, for that matter) according to their confessions. Yet will there be pressure applied tomorrow by militant homosexual activists to change that?

If challenged, evangelical chaplains I know will not capitulate. They will preach the truth in love. They will minister to homosexuals in the same way they minister to all, in the love and grace of Jesus Christ whose commands are life. However they will call sin a sin, and offer forgiveness and salvation. Let's pray that the chaplains' freedoms continue, for our freedoms rest on the moral foundations they seek to build.

Let's pray they stand strong. For if ever we needed our chaplains, it is now.