
GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND THE GOSPEL

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE REALLY TEACH ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

A message delivered by Pastor Marc Minter on September 4, 2016

First Baptist Church of Diana, TX

PERSONAL NOTE

Today's message is going to require quite a bit from everyone. My heart is heavy with the hurts and pains we all bring to the table when we talk about weighty things. And yet, weighty things are those most worth our time and effort. It has been challenging for me to prepare this message, and it will be no less to deliver it. I know that some of the things I'll say will be quite abrasive, but the last thing I want to do is rub salt into an open wound or (worse yet) create a new one.

This message will also be challenging for you to hear. The subject matter is emotionally charged on all sides, and (no matter what I say) I am likely to provoke at least some of you. Additionally, the thoughtful and careful approach required of us is not intellectually easy. Many pastors simply avoid the subject altogether because they fear that their congregations are not able to handle it. Believing that people are only capable of thinking on a shallow level, they refuse to invite their congregations into deeper spiritual and intellectual water.

However, I believe you are able to think carefully. I also believe it is my privilege and my obligation to challenge you toward spiritual maturity, and thinking seriously about God's Word and its implications is essential to such growth. So, at the outset of this message, I ask you for three things.

First, please listen carefully to the whole message. It is very easy to take something out of context, but that will not benefit anyone. Besides, I intend to make a case for genuine love, not superficial love, and it will take some time.

Second, please make a note of any errors, and bring those to my attention personally. While I have studied and thought very much on this subject, I admit that I am capable of making mistakes. You and I are both responsible before God to dive deeply into His Word, striving to understand and apply it well.

Third, please remember that I love you. Being your pastor is one of the great joys of my life. I treasure the opportunity God has given me to know you, to grow alongside you, to love you, and to desire your spiritual growth (at least as much my own). My love for you and for Christ compels me every day, and so it does today.

INTRODUCTION

On June 28, 1969, at 1:20am, New York city Police officers raided a nightclub in Greenwich Village, called the Stonewall Inn. The Mafia was using the bar (a popular social hangout for many homosexuals) as a front for illegal activity, and it (as well as many other gay bars) had been raided before. This time was different, however. This time the homosexual and transsexual community rallied together under the banner of victimhood, and they began to fight.

Michael Brown wrote, “by the evening of the 28th, less than 24 hours after the initial raid, several thousand people had gathered in the Village proclaiming, ‘Gay Power,’ ‘We Want Freedom Now,’ and ‘Equality for Homosexuals.’ ...a line had been crossed, and for the homosexual community, there was no turning back.”¹

That night symbolically marked the beginning of a new era in American culture. President Obama noted the importance of that night’s events in a brief speech on June 29, 2009 (one day after the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall riots). President Obama described the Stonewall riots as “protests,” “when a group of citizens -- with few options and fewer supporters -- decided they'd had enough and refused to accept a policy of wanton discrimination.”² This, of course, is one perspective of the narrative.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are voices like those shouting from Westboro “Baptist Church.” These are people who seem to never run out of vile verbal attacks and shocking poster boards.³ I will not repeat their chanted slogans here, but their condemnation of homosexuals is obnoxious and uncaring. Suffice it to say, there is absolutely no conceivable bridge between homosexual activists and hate-filled agitators like these.

Caught in the middle of all this mess, there are real people. Not slogans or caricatures, not adversaries or punch-lines. There are real people who believe that homosexual behavior is a natural outworking of their innate desires. There are real people who believe that homosexual behavior is a free choice of expression with no moral implication at all. There are also real people who believe that homosexual behavior is morally wrong in some sense, but they are not exactly sure what to do with it. There are real people who believe that homosexual behavior is a sin before God, but they have not actually thought through the far reaching implications of that judgment.

¹ Brown, Michael (2011-05-25). A Queer Thing Happened To America: And what a long, strange trip it's been (Kindle Locations 225-230). BookMasters. Kindle Edition.

² <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2009/06/obama-gay-pride-remarks-lgbt.html>

³ For confirmation of my assessment, the reader may visit the Westboro website. <http://www.godhatesfags.com> But, reader be warned. There is nothing good there.

Today, my goal is to speak plainly and honestly, truthfully and graciously about Homosexuality. Our culture has experienced a sexual revolution. Of course, homosexuality is not the first or only part of that revolution, but it is a major part of it today. Christians who think that they can simply avoid this subject are foolish. Also foolish are those Christians who try to speak about this subject without first thinking long and hard about what is biblically faithful. Therefore, we are addressing a subject that is of great concern to our culture.

We are also addressing a subject that is of great concern to those who are same-sex attracted, and those of you who have children, siblings, family members, and/or friends who are openly homosexual. This is an important discussion, and (as Al Mohler says) We cannot be silent.

I will not likely answer every question we have, and the way I have decided to address this topic may not suite everyone's preference. We will seek to observe and understand what the Bible actually teaches about homosexuality, and then we will look to the Gospel of Christ as truly Good News. Finally, we will offer some things to keep in mind as we move forward.

May God grant us grace, wisdom, and peace; and may He draw us all near to Himself today.

SCRIPTURE READING

Romans 1:18–32 (ESV)

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were

consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

MESSAGE OUTLINE

(1) SO, WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

(2) THE GOSPEL IS TRULY GOOD NEWS

(3) THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND AS WE INTERACT WITH OTHERS

MESSAGE

(1) SO, WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

It is often claimed that there are six passages in the Bible "[related] in some way to same-sex sexual behavior."

Matthew Vines, in his book "*God and the Gay Christian*," lists them as follows:

[1] Genesis 19... men in Sodom... threatened to [force themselves upon] Lot's angel visitors (see verses 4– 11).

[2&3] Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13 male same-sex [sexual behavior] was prohibited for the Israelites.

[4] Romans 1:26– 27 Paul denounced the 'unnatural' same-sex [sexual] behavior of Gentile idol worshipers.

[5] 1 Corinthians 6:9 [Paul] condemned the practices of the *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*, two Greek terms that may encompass forms of same-sex sexual behavior.

[6] 1 Timothy 1:10 the condemnation of the *arsenokoitai* is repeated...⁴

⁴ Vines, Matthew (2014-04-22). *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships* (p. 26). The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

However, I believe there is *much more* in the Bible than just these six verses that should affect a discussion on Homosexuality.

I will start with a broad observation, then narrow the focus, and then address these passages specifically.

I agree with what Kevin DeYoung points out in his book “*What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?*” (which I have suggested as a resource for you today). He says, “the first and more significant question is ‘What does the Bible teach about everything?’”⁵

The Bible is a book that tells a story... a specific story. It is not a book about broad human history, and it is not a legislative document that seeks to provide specific instructions concerning every possible situation. Of course, it is full of historical record, and it also contains some lengthy legal code. But it is, first and foremost, a book of *redemptive history*.

The Bible tells the story of God’s efforts to dwell with humanity. God created man, male and female, and God called His creation “good” (Gen. 1:31). God created humanity with purpose and design, intentionality and function. God blessed and commissioned them to “rule and to reproduce and to have a relationship with him (Gen. 1: 26– 28; cf. 3: 8).”⁶

But our first parents rebelled against God’s good authority, and the entire system became dysfunctional. When Adam sinned (disobeyed God), his fall from good-standing brought a curse upon everything. All creation became tainted and twisted by the curse of sin, so that nothing is the way it should be anymore. God’s judgment came down because humanity became unholy.

The rest of the Bible explains how “a holy God [makes] a way to dwell in the midst of an unholy people.”⁷ And God made the way in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Kevin DeYoung writes:

“For two millennia the church has focused on worshiping a Christ who saves, a Christ who forgives, a Christ who cleanses, a Christ who

⁵ DeYoung, Kevin (2015-04-16). *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (p. 10). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

⁶ DeYoung, (p. 10).

⁷ DeYoung, (p. 11).

challenges us and changes us, a Christ who convicts us and converts us, and a Christ who is coming again. If... Jesus Christ is coming again to judge the living and the dead (Acts 17: 31; Rev. 19: 11– 21); and if those who repent of their sins and believe in Christ will live forever with God in his new creation (Mark 1: 15; Acts 17: 30; Rev. 21: 7; 21: 1– 27) ... and if those who are not born again (John 3: 5) and do not believe in Christ (John 3: 18) and do not turn from their sinful practices (1 John 3: 4– 10) will face eternal punishment and the just wrath of God in hell (John 3: 36; 5: 29); and if among those in the lake of fire... are the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars (Rev. 21: 8, 27)— then determining what constitutes *sexual immorality* in God’s mind has everything to do with the storyline of [the Bible].”

DeYoung brings the real issue into focus when he says,

“Is homosexual activity a sin that must be repented of, forsaken, and forgiven, or, given the right context and commitment, can we consider same-sex sexual intimacy a blessing worth celebrating and [honoring]?”⁸

What the Bible says about homosexuality has much to do with what the Bible says about everything, and the conversation should be especially affected by what the Bible says about *marriage*.

So, let us now narrow our biblical focus a bit.

The Bible begins with a series of scenes, as if it were a theatrical play. Scene one is fantastical creation; God miraculously calls things into existence, displaying His masterpiece by divine command. Scene two narrows the focus; God intimately creates the apex of His creation, fashioning humanity in His own image. This scene’s climax is the coupling of male and female humans in the first wedding ceremony of history, and God tells us that this is the standard for marriage throughout the ages (Gen. 2:24). Right from the beginning, God defines marriage as one man and one woman in covenant relationship for a lifetime. And God frequently repeats and honors that definition throughout the Bible.

⁸ DeYoung, (p. 14-15).

Every time biblical marriage is affirmed in the Bible, any redefinition of it is negated and forbidden. When marital intimacy is celebrated, promiscuity and adultery are spurned. When any form of sexual immorality is condemned, which occurs frequently in the Bible, it is (at the very minimum) an implied condemnation of homosexual behavior.

Allow me to say this as straightforwardly as I may: The Bible speaks with a resounding and unrelenting voice on the subjects of marriage and sex. Sex is to be enjoyed by husband and wife inside of the lifelong covenant relationship of marriage (Gen. 2:24-25; Song of Sol.; 1 Cor. 6:12-20, 7:1-16).

This means that sex outside of biblical marriage is always sinful.

Consensual sex or forced, homosexual or heterosexual, protected or unprotected, multiple partners or no partners, engagement plans or no plans, sexual expression outside of the marital relationship (as defined by the Bible) is always sinful. If the Bible never said a word of condemnation about any of these, we may still understand them as sin because of what the Bible plainly and emphatically says about marriage.

At this point, I must make note of the fact that biblical marriage was under attack long before homosexual activists began to demand same-sex “marriage.” In fact, the “Christian” community in America has even been complicit with the rest of American culture in an assault on marriage for decades.

Among professing Christians, singles are often sexually active, pornography is common, unbiblical divorce is an acceptable practice, and adultery occurs with depressing frequency. Before we kindle our anger against “*those people over there*,” we should ask ourselves if we are not already doing some personal and significant damage to the honor of biblical marriage among our culture.

More could be said on this, but let us turn now to the substance of those **six passages in Scripture**.

As I mentioned earlier, these are commonly observed as having something in particular to say about homosexual behavior. We shall see, I think, that these are not at all unclear.

In Genesis 19 we read of a tragic event; an entire collection of cities is divinely destroyed. God’s judgment falls horrifically and immediately. Moses tells us that Sodom and Gomorrah and “all the land of the valley” was engulfed in a “furnace”

of flame and smoke (Gen. 19:28). But, why? What was the sin of Sodom, which demanded such judgment from God?

If we look to the storyline of Genesis 19, we read about a city of extreme sexual wickedness. Every man in the city surrounded Lot's house and demanded sexual relations with his two adult male "out-of-town" guests (v4-5). After Lot protested their wickedness (v7), and even appallingly offered his daughter to satisfy their lusts (v8), the men of Sodom decided to take what they wanted by force from the two male foreigners (v9).

Moses (the author of Genesis) clearly intends for his reader to be shocked by what he wrote, and thereby understand why God's judgment against Sodom is swift and severe. Of course, there is more than homosexual behavior in view here, but homosexual behavior is present – and it is noted (maybe even highlighted) among the shocking, immoral activity in Sodom.

Many revisionists (those who want to revise the Bible's teaching on homosexuality) point to Ezekiel 16 to argue that the major sin of Sodom was *inhospitality*. These revisionists deny that homosexual behavior had anything to do with the sinful excesses in Sodom. Ezekiel 16:49 says, "**Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy.**" Well, that settles it, doesn't it? Homosexuality is not mentioned there at all; so can't we disregard Genesis 19 with respect to the debate over homosexual behavior?

Or, might it be wise of us to consider the fact that almost every Christian (and almost every interested non-Christian) has understood Sodom's wickedness to include homosexuality? Just think about the fact that (up until very recently) "Sodomy" was the common label used for homosexual behavior, precisely because everyone associated Sodom with this particular activity.

So, before we arrogantly disregard Christianity's unanimous view for 2,000 years, let us at least read a bit more of the context in Ezekiel's prophetic writings. In fact, the very next verse (v50) adds a great deal to our perspective. God's words against Sodom (through the prophet Ezekiel) continue, "**They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it.**"

To my knowledge, the Bible only uses the word "abomination" (Hebrew: *tôēbāh*) to refer to two kinds of sin: **idolatry** and **sexual perversion**. Furthermore, the two are also very often mentioned in tandem: the one seems to inevitably follow

close behind the other. A brief look at the New Testament affirms that “sexual perversion” was as at least one of the sins of Sodom. Jude says, “Sodom and Gomorrah... indulged in **sexual immorality** and pursued **unnatural desire**” (Jude 7). In fact, Moses (the author of Genesis) uses the same word (*abomination*) to directly refer to homosexual behavior elsewhere.

And this leads us to the **two verses in Leviticus**.

Leviticus is often called the “holiness” book, because the word “holy” (in some form) appears no less than 87 times. DeYoung says Leviticus is all about a “**holy people (the priests), with holy clothes, in a holy land (Canaan), at a holy place (tabernacle), using holy utensils and holy objects, celebrating holy days, living by a holy law, that they might be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**”⁹ Well, certainly holiness is a deep concern in the book of Leviticus, and God gave numerous commands in order to outline how He defines *holiness*.

Leviticus 18:22 is one of those commands, and it says, “**You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an *abomination*.**” This command, using the consistent language of prophetic judgment, is couched in several statements about sexual behavior. Incest, adultery, and bestiality are among the things forbidden (v6-23). There is no possible interpretation of this passage that can avoid the clear and complete condemnation of same-sex sexual activity.

Leviticus 20:13 condemns homosexual behavior with nearly identical language, but this passage adds something noteworthy. Here, the “abomination” label is placed on “both” of the individuals involved in homosexual behavior. DeYoung says, this is a “**euphemistic way of condemning both the active and passive roles in homosexual behavior.**”¹⁰ Therefore, the Levitical command is not merely forbidding patriarchal abuse; it is forbidding any and all participation in same-sex sexual activity.

These three Old Testament passages do not seem ambiguous at all. In fact, many revisionists even acknowledge that these passages obviously condemn homosexual activity. But does the New Testament have a different report? Does God overturn His Old Testament sexual ethic in the New Testament?

⁹ DeYoung, (p. 40).

¹⁰ DeYoung, (p. 41).

I think you already know the answer, but let us **now turn to the Apostle Paul's writings on the subject.**

In **1 Corinthians 6:9** and **1 Timothy 1:10**, the Apostle Paul reiterates the condemnation found in Leviticus. He even coins a new word, smashing two words together from Leviticus 18 and 20, to ensure that his teaching would not be misunderstood.¹¹ In 1 Timothy 1, Paul says that homosexual behavior is “**unholy**,” “**ungodly**,” “**disobedient**,” and “**contrary to sound doctrine**.” In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul says that those “**who practice homosexuality**” will not “**inherit the kingdom of God**.”

Quite frankly, there can be no clearer statement about the moral nature of homosexual activity than the ones we find here. The New Testament not only reaffirms the very same sexual ethic of the Old Testament, it even points back to the Old Testament as the basis for it. The New Testament writers did not throw out the Old Testament at all... They regarded the Old Testament as the Word of God, to be supremely treasured and uniquely authoritative.

So far, we have looked at **five of the six passages** cited earlier, and all of these have been straightforward in their teaching on homosexual behavior. However, the passage from **Romans 1** is (in my view) the most comprehensive in its judgment against homosexual behavior. Let's turn our attention to this final passage.

We observe excellent argumentation in all of Paul's letters, and he wrote a brilliant theological treatise to the church in Rome. Paul begins by laying the foundation of human guilt, in order to explain the need for a Savior. Much of the letter describes exactly how Jesus Christ was able to perform the work necessary to save unholy humans from the just wrath of the holy God. We will concentrate our focus on Paul's introduction.

He starts with a battering ram against any claim of ignorance concerning the basic truths of God. Paul says **the fundamental problem with man is not that he *does not know* what is right, but that he *does not want to know* what is**

¹¹ DeYoung says, “Paul's term for “men who practice homosexuality” (1 Cor. 6: 9; 1 Tim. 1: 10) was derived from two words— *arsēn* (man) and *koitē* (bed)— found in Leviticus 18: 22 and 20: 13 (Septuagint). There are no instances of the word (*arsenokoitai*) prior to Paul. Even many revisionist scholars agree that Paul coined the term from Leviticus” (p. 44).

right. All people have a knowledge of the truth about God (v18-19), but we naturally “suppress” or *fight against* that truth because we are wicked (v18). This “truth suppression” activity leads humans down a path of foolishness.

All sin is foolish, irrational, and self-destructive, but we are unwilling to see it as such, so we regularly perceive sin as enticing and desirable.

Paul argues that the chief symptom of foolish, sinful thinking is idolatry (v22-23). Worshiping something other than God is a natural bent of all humans, not just those who bow or pray to actual images, and Paul says that it results in an increase of sin.

Three times, in this short passage, Paul says “**God gave them up...**” (v24, 26, and 28). Each time the notion is that God permits sinners to indulge their sinful cravings with more “freedom.” Like a fish who demands the “freedom” to venture further onto land, sinners want to enjoy sin without limitation; and God gives them up to the self-destructive path. Among other desires mentioned, homosexual passions are described as “**dishonorable,**” “**unnatural,**” and “**shameless**” (v26-27). Paul presents homosexual behavior as a paramount departure from God’s intended design for creation; and that is regardless of one’s orientation or desire.

There can be no mistake that Paul condemns homosexual behavior here. He judges it as sin without qualification. He does not allow for any revisionist interpretation that would claim that certain kinds of homosexual behaviors are not included. Rather, Paul roundly and unequivocally describes homosexual behavior as sinful rebellion against God.

Of course, Paul also condemns a host of other sins in the next few verses. Envy, murder, strife, gossip, and pride are among the list, and we should note that all sin is equally worthy of God’s judgment. However, DeYoung points out something important when he says,

“In one sense, we should not make too much of homosexual sin, given the long list of sins mentioned in verses 29– 31. And yet the fact that Paul singles out homosexual relations as **a conspicuous example of the human heart suppressing the truth and turning from God** suggests that we must not soft-pedal as no big deal what the Bible underlines as particularly egregious rebellion.”¹²

¹² DeYoung, (p. 56).

In fact, in verse 32, Paul says that the absolute worst attitude anyone can have is one that “gives approval” to what God decrees sinful. And yet there are many, even inside of American Christianity, who are demanding that we do just that.

So, we now find ourselves at a crossroads.

If we affirm homosexual behavior, then we may avoid being labeled bigots, but we would be approving of what God calls sinful.

If we label homosexual behavior a sin, then we agree with God’s own declaration, but we would likely be perceived as unloving and narrow-minded.

Before I try to offer some thoughts on how to interact with others on this matter, let me first offer some good news – some truly Good News – in the midst of all this bad...

(2) THE GOSPEL IS TRULY GOOD NEWS

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is truly Good News, precisely because it is the only message that actually meets sinners where they are. The Gospel deals honestly with sinners, and offers genuine relief from guilt and shame. As this preaching series continues, we will delve much further into this part of the discussion (on shame and guilt), but let me say two things here.

First, the Gospel of Jesus Christ begins with the fact that sinful humans are not worthy of God’s love or favor; all humans deserve only (and no less than) His eternal wrath. If you have heard me say that those who practice homosexual behavior are doomed under God’s judgment, then you have heard me rightly. BUT, homosexual behavior is not the only sin that dooms sinners.

You are doomed under God’s judgment if you have ever lied on your taxes, if you have ever spanked your child out of anger, if you have ever spent your money frivolously, if you have ever neglected to offer thanks to God for any good thing, or if you have spent a single second loving anything more than you love God.

If you think that people who are same-sex attracted are more deserving of God’s judgment than you are, then you are sadly mistaken. The sexual deviant, the slanderer, the liar, and the arrogant self-righteous sinner are all infinitely guilty before God. The reality is, and always has been, that the Gospel begins with a massive judgment against you – against all of you – against everyone, everywhere.

Second, the Gospel of Jesus Christ tells the story of how God has made the way to declare guilty sinners “just” in His sight. Of course, God does not simply forget that we are guilty, and He does not pretend that our guilt is not so bad. God knows we are exceedingly guilty, and He has sent Christ to save our wretched souls!

Sinners of all kinds may look to Christ as the perfect substitute for us. No matter what sinful burden you have piled up on your shoulders this morning, Christ offers His own righteousness in exchange for it. Let me explain: Jesus lived well, and He never sinned, but He was counted as the worst sinner ever when He endured God’s unbridled judgment upon the cross. You have not lived well, and you’ve sinned every day, but you may be counted as perfectly good and right because of what Jesus has already accomplished for you.

The Gospel, then, does not pretend that you are not sinful. It does not merely invite you towards positive confession or self-help. The Gospel meets you, rotten as you are, right where you are (heterosexual or homosexual), and offers you life and hope purely on the basis of grace.

The Gospel is a message of hope to the hopeless; not a message of help to the fairly capable. All sinners are utterly hopeless apart from Christ, and this is the starting point for all Christians.

This Good News is fantastic to anyone who will admit that they are sinful. Yet, we should know that not everyone will be willing to acknowledge their guilt.

Allow me to offer some thoughts about how Christians can gain and keep a proper perspective as we move forward from here.

(3) THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND AS WE INTERACT WITH OTHERS

First, let’s all remember that Christians have always faced the challenge we face now. In one sense, we are not traveling a new road at all. Proclaiming the Gospel to a culture that loves its sin and hates any notion of restraint is what Christians of every generation have done. Christians in America, it seems, have forgotten that the Gospel is a message that the world naturally hates.

Paul says, in 1 Cor. 1, that the “[word of the cross](#)” (the Gospel of Christ) is “[folly](#)” (foolishness, moronic) “[to those who are perishing](#)” (those who are not believers). We must not forget that the Gospel of Christ is never going to win worldly tribute

or public honor; and we may be encouraged to remember that many Christians have gone before us and stood strong in the face of opposition.

Second, let's be careful not to change the message of the Gospel into a message of behavior modification. If you are asking yourself, "How do I talk to my homosexual friend, co-worker, or family member about their sin?" then you may be thinking more about their behavior than their soul.

Are you more interested in changing the way that person acts, or are you more interested in seeing that person love and treasure Christ?

Here is a good way to measure your own heart on this matter: Is your heart broken because this person is same-sex attracted? Or is your heart broken because you believe they are apart from Christ?

The point of the Gospel is not to ignore sinful behavior; but the point is to address sin at its origin – the heart. Sinners sin because they love sin, they want sin. That's why you and I sin; we do what we know we should not because we want to. The Gospel says to the shameful sinner, "*Your sinful heart is worse than you ever imagined, but God offers love and grace anyway. So, rest in Him, trust Him, and learn to live under His good authority.*"

Christians experience freedom from sin as Christ changes the desires of their heart, not the other way around.

Third, let's be consistent Bible-believing Christians. Given what the Bible teaches about homosexual behavior, we simply cannot say it is anything other than sin. We must say that "*homosexual activity*" is "*a sin that must be repented of, forsaken, and forgiven...*" and there is no context in which we "*can consider same-sex sexual intimacy a blessing worth celebrating and [honoring].*"¹³

Therefore, we must seek to faithfully and lovingly live in light of this reality in all that we say and do. We cannot endorse certain kinds of homosexual behavior and denounce other kinds. We cannot encourage homosexual behavior, even if that costs us. Even if we are accused of insensitive bigotry, it is simply not loving to encourage anyone towards rebellion against God.

Furthermore, we must be consistent Christians when it comes to all sin. Homosexual voices have often accused Christians of singling out homosexual behavior. They will sometimes say that Christians are not concerned about other

¹³ DeYoung, (p. 14-15).

sins (like sexual promiscuity, living together outside of marriage, adultery, pornography, and a host of others). This accusation, I am ashamed to say, is a truthful one in many cases. The Christian community has long operated with an unspoken list of “acceptable sins.”

Where we have done this in the past, we should repent. The solution to such a problem is not to sweep more sin under the rug, but instead we should remove the rug and clean the floor.

In conclusion, we may affirm that the Bible’s teaching on homosexuality is clear: homosexual behavior is sinful. We may also be grateful that the Gospel is a message of grace for all sinners who run *from sin* and *towards Christ*.

We may love sinners who are same-sex attracted, and offer them the same grace we have received. We may openly and honestly admit our own struggles and bear one another’s burdens, as we pursue Christ together.

And, finally, we may be strengthened by the example of Christians who have gone before us. We may follow in their footsteps, walking as lights in the midst of a dark world.

May God help us to live consistently, faithfully, and graciously – as individuals and as a church family.

MY PRAYERS

- May God forgive us for neglecting our responsibility to know and submit to His Word.
- May God comfort us in the Gospel of Christ, and help us to see that same need for comfort in others.
- May God make us faithful witnesses for Christ until He returns or calls us home.