
GENDER, SEXUALITY, AND THE GOSPEL

DISTORTED AFFECTIONS

A message delivered by Pastor Marc Minter on September 11, 2016

First Baptist Church of Diana, TX

PERSONAL NOTE

This message is the second installment in our challenging 6-week series called “Gender, Sexuality, and the Gospel.” As I did last Sunday, I request your full and concentrated attention. Today, just as that day, I intend to make a case that will take some time to develop. I also ask that you thoughtfully explore the substance of my presentation. We are all under the authority of Scripture, and I want to be faithful to Christ more than I want to save face or build my own reputation. Please know that my ear, and not just my mouth, is open to you.

Furthermore, I want to remind you that I do love you tremendously. My love for Christ and for you, my church family, is beyond what I can express.

May God be glorified here today, and may Christ be elevated in our thoughts to His deserved place as gracious King.

INTRODUCTION

Owen Strachan and Gavin Peacock (in their 2016 bombshell book, *The Grand Design*) remarked, “**Just when evangelicals thought they had scrubbed their faith of any serious tie to gender, and thus have distanced themselves from the more embarrassing parts of biblical sexual ethics, the culture decided to launch a gender revolution.**”¹

These men, chiding American Christianity, note the impulse many of us have to avoid conflict with the world. *Egalitarianism* (the notion that boys and girls are identical and interchangeable) has found a welcoming home in American Christianity. Additionally, the sexual ethics of American society (including the expectation of pre-marital sex and optional monogamy) have been fully adopted by the Christian sub-culture in America. By and large, we are very much like the non-Christian world in regards to sexual ethics and practice... Not in our words, or course, but in our deeds. This is a frustrating tragedy, but it is true.

¹ Strachan, 131.

However, those who do not submit to the Lordship of Christ are never satisfied with only a *little* rebellion. To our annoyance (and humiliation), American culture has stepped even further away from the biblical sexual ethic, and now they are demanding that the Christian Church do the same. Make no mistake... This is a *revolution*.

Strachan and Peacock were writing about the gender confusion that exists in American culture when they referenced the “revolution,” but this “*gender* revolution” is part of a larger “*sexual* revolution.”

Dr. Al Mohler warns all Christians in America when he says, “**We are living in the midst of a massive revolution in morality, and sexual morality is at the center of this revolution...** the question of same-sex relationships and sexuality is at the very center of the debate... and our answer to this question will both determine [and] reveal what we understand **about everything the Bible reveals and everything the church teaches — even the gospel itself.**”

This sexual revolution is inspired by the assumption that sexual desires should not be restricted in any way. “*I was born this way!*” or “*This is who I am!*” is the cry of many revolutionaries today. To attempt any restriction of human desire is seen as intolerant bigotry. Sexual autonomy has taken the moral high ground, and any regulation on sexual desire is now perceived as morally shameful.

So, what shall we do?

Should we revise our words and actions to fit the cultural mandate?

Should we submit to societal pressure, and join the “right side of history?”

The current storm, which beats against the Church of Jesus Christ, is something we simply cannot ignore. **Let us not forget:** this storm, like every worldly tempest, seeks the destruction of all people everywhere – not just Christians. And yet, Christians have the great privilege of sailing through such waters aboard a ship that cannot be capsized. Christ’s Church shall prevail because she is steadied and anchored by the Word of God.

Amidst this storm, Christians have the marvelous opportunity to speak and live in light of truth. We may invite people, being thrashed about by the waves, to come aboard and enjoy the benefits of having Christ as captain.

Many of our friends, family, co-workers, classmates, and neighbors are drowning in confusion and impulse. May God help us to understand what the Bible says about human desires, and may God empower and embolden us to live accordingly.

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 7:14-23 (ESV)

14 And he [Jesus] called the people to him again and said to them,

“Hear me, all of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but **the things that come out of a person are what defile him.**”

17 And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable.

18 And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.)

20 And he said, “**What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 *For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.***”

MESSAGE OUTLINE

(1) DEFINING SEXUAL ORIENTATION

(2) DOES THE BIBLE REALLY KNOW US BETTER THAN WE DO?

(3) REORIENTING DISTORTED AFFECTIONS

MESSAGE

(1) DEFINING SEXUAL ORIENTATION

To begin any discussion of sexual orientation, and its many related subjects, it will help us to define our terms right up front. Successful communication is only possible if we are willing not only to listen to someone, but also to understand the meaning of the words they are using.

As Christians, we should be extremely interested in such things, since our entire belief structure originates and is sustained by a collection of “God-breathed” words (2 Tim. 3:16).

So, let us consider the meaning of the words “*sexual orientation*.”

The American Psychological Association (APA) defines sexual orientation as “**an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors and membership in a community of others who share those attractions.**”²

That certainly is a mouthful, and we will try to unpack it a bit further in a moment, but it is ok if we are feeling a bit anxious at this point. *Sexual orientation* is a fairly new concept in human history, and it is perfectly normal for many of us to feel uncertain and quite ignorant about it.

Even a prominent revisionist author acknowledges the newness of this whole discussion.³ Matthew Vines writes, “**Prior to 1869, terms meaning ‘homosexual’ and ‘homosexuality’ didn’t exist in any language, and they weren’t translated into English until 1892.**”⁴ Of course, we might also note that the concept of “sexual orientation,” as now defined by the APA, did not exist until only **very** recently. Vines observes, “**in recent generations, our understanding of what homosexuality *is* has radically changed.**”⁵

He goes on to say, “**For the overwhelming majority of human history, homosexuality was not seen as a *different sexual orientation* that distinguished a minority of people from the heterosexual majority.**”⁶

Therefore, we are sailing through new water, and we should proceed with caution and care.

Now let us consider the technical definition of “sexual orientation” a little more thoroughly.

² "Answers to Your Questions For a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality." [Http://www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org). Accessed September 09, 2016. <http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.aspx>.

³ A *Revisionist* is one who seeks to revise the traditional biblical doctrines of sexuality and marriage, particularly as related to homosexuality and same-sex “marriage.”

⁴ Vines, 40.

⁵ Vines, 31.

⁶ Vines, 31.

The APA says (to refresh our memory) that sexual orientation is an “**enduring pattern**,” a “**sense of identity**,” and a **communal bond** with others who share similar “attractions.”

I do not have the time to argue this point today, but I believe that a strong case can be made against the notion of defining a person’s “identity” in any pattern of his or her “attractions,” no matter how “enduring” they may be. **Any possibility of change in a foundation makes building on it just plain foolish.** We do not find our identity in being a Cowboys fan, or a cheesecake connoisseur, or in driving a pick-up truck (no matter what Alan Jackson says about a *pick-up man*).

All joking aside, sexual attractions are no settled matter in any individual. With all of the study given to this area of human development and thought, there is still very much that we *do not know*. **In fact, one thing we really know for sure is that sexuality is very complicated and actually unstable.**

Dr. Jeffrey Satinover (a psychoanalyst and psychiatrist with more than 2 decades of experience) notes, “[Like] all complex behavioral and mental states, **homosexuality is multifactorial** (that is, it is affected by multiple factors). It is neither **exclusively biological** nor **exclusively psychological**, but results from an as-yet-difficult-to-quantitate mixture of genetic factors, influences [during pregnancy], postnatal environment, and a complex series of **repeatedly reinforced choices** occurring at critical phases in development... [One] of the chief characteristics of the gay lifestyle is its [changing and developing] of styles and types of sexuality.”⁷

Therefore, we are foolish to construct something so central to personhood (namely personal “identity”) upon anything that is liable to shift in the slightest degree. So, I would strongly argue against finding one’s identity in any sexual preference or expression.

However, the “enduring pattern” is the core of I want to address today, as it defines sexual orientation.

The “enduring pattern” is a major thrust of the revisionist argument against biblical sexuality. It is also one of the most common talking points you and I are likely to hear from people we know who affirm or embrace homosexual behavior.

⁷ Satinover, 77.

Matthew Vines makes this point clear when he writes, “the **new information** we have about **sexual orientation actually requires us to reinterpret Scripture...**”⁸ Denny Burk quotes another revisionist (Luke Timothy Johnson) as saying, “We appeal explicitly to the weight of **our own experience** and the **experience** thousands of others have witnessed to, which tells us that **to claim our own sexual orientation is in fact to accept the way in which God has created us...**” Johnson continued, “**We explicitly reject... the premises of the scriptural statements condemning homosexuality** – namely, that it is a *vice freely chosen, a symptom of human corruption, and disobedience to God’s created order.*”⁹

Listen carefully: the revisionists and those who affirm homosexual behavior as anything less than sinful are strongly arguing that the existence of a homosexual *orientation* requires the moral rightness of homosexual behavior. They testify to their experience of a homosexual orientation, and they demand that this experience be endorsed with the moral approval of homosexual behavior.

You are very likely to hear the argument formed like this: “*If I did not consciously choose these desires, then this is the way God made me; and, if this is the way God made me, then it cannot be morally wrong.*”

Or, one might say it this way: “*I am gay; I did not choose to be gay... God would not require me to be something I am not, and who are you to tell me to not be who I am.*”

Let us feel the weight of the predicament for a second...

If, as I argued last week, the Bible is crystal clear on its condemnation of homosexual behavior; then what do we say to our friends and family who feel that they are being put in an impossible situation? If someone feels as though their *natural desires* are in clear violation of the commands of Scripture, then must they *deny themselves* in order to *follow Christ*?

Let the wise listener notice my language here... Indeed, self-denial is necessary to follow Christ, but we will get to that later.

⁸ Vines, 42.

⁹ Burk, 195.

At this point some Christians may want to dismiss the *orientation claim altogether*. Many have thoughtlessly argued that homosexuality is a choice, and one who practices homosexuality ought to simply choose differently. I say this is a “thoughtless” argument because it does not take into account the testimony of numerous same-sex attracted individuals. I am not saying that it is never a choice, but I am saying that, in my view, it is careless to deny the sincere testimony of many same-sex attracted individuals without substantial cause.

The same-sex attracted person says, *“I did not choose to want this, but I do!”*

The Christian says, *“Yes, you did choose this! You need to stop!”*

As you might imagine (and maybe you have even experienced it), this sort of conversation is unproductive to say the least.

In my own estimation, however, this has been the frequent response of the Christian Church in America; and it is a shame.

If we merely want superficial relationships, where we keep each other at arm’s length, then we will not be required to think more deeply about anything. We do not have to listen to each other; we do not have to ask more probing questions; and we will not have to consider the various possible applications of the Gospel for each situation.

BUT, if we want the kind of relationships we are created to enjoy; if we want the deep and meaningful bond of Gospel-community; if we want to display the barrier-breaking, soul-invigorating, and life-transforming power of God’s Spirit, then we must strive for more than shallow conversation.

With that in mind, let us really hear the testimony of many same-sex attracted people.

Some do say that they have not made any known conscious decision towards same-sex desires.

What do we do with that?

Do you think it is possible that someone could be “born gay?”

If someone was “born gay,” then does that dismantle the biblical sexual ethic?

Doesn’t the Bible have anything to say about it?

Indeed, the Bible does have something to say about these things. And I believe that the Bible knows us better than we do.

(2) DOES THE BIBLE REALLY KNOW US BETTER THAN WE DO?

In our primary passage (Mark 7:14-23), Jesus is teaching about how the Old Testament dietary laws are made obsolete by His coming and inaugurating the New Covenant. This is not irrelevant to our discussion (especially considering the Levitical law and the passages we addressed last Sunday), but there is something else in Mark chapter 7 that we need to understand.

Jesus said, “*21 from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person*” (Mk. 7:21-23).

Let me first note: Jesus speaks specifically about sexual sin in Mark 7.

If ever you’ve heard someone say that Jesus did not address homosexuality, then you may simply refer them to Mark chapter 7. Jesus condemns all sexual sin as “evil.” The Greek word translated “**sexual immorality**” refers generally to all kinds of sexual activity outside of biblical marriage.¹⁰ And the Greek word translated “**sensuality**” refers to a general focus of excessive thought and activity regarding sexuality.¹¹

So, Jesus is saying that both sexual thoughts and sexual activities that are improperly focused or emphasized are evil. That means that extra-marital and deviant sexual behaviors (both homosexual and heterosexual) are clearly condemned by Jesus.

¹⁰ 4518 πορνεία (*porneia*), ας (*as*), ἡ (*hē*): n.fem.; ≡ DBLHebr 2388, 2393, 2394, 9373; Str 4202; TDNT 6.579—LN 88.271 **fornication**, sexual immorality, sexual sin of a general kind, that includes many different behaviors (Mt 5:32; 15:19; 19:9; Mk 7:21; Jn 8:41; Ac 15:20; 1Co 6:18; 7:2; 2Co 12:21; Gal 5:19; Eph 5:3; 1Th 4:3). From: Swanson, James. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997.

¹¹ “License.” mostly in the physical sphere: Polyb., XXXVI, 15, 4: περὶ τὰς σωματι κας ἐπιθυμίας; cf. LXX Wis. 14:26; 3 Macc. 2:26; but figuratively also of the soul: Demosth., 21, 1 (with ὕβρις); Philodem. Lib., 42, 12 (anton. κολακεία). In the NT only the older and sensual sense of “voluptuousness” or “debauchery” is relevant (Mk. 7:22). Man necessarily falls victim to this when cut off from God. It characterizes Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Pt. 2:7) and the pagan world generally (Eph. 4:19), also heresy and apostasy (Jd. 4; 2 Pt. 2:2, 18). From: Kittel, Gerhard, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964.

Saying “*Jesus never mentioned homosexuality*” is like accusing a banker of never talking about money because nobody ever heard her say the word “dime.” It just doesn’t make any sense when one gives any real attention to what Jesus actually said.

That said, let me now dig a bit more into our passage.

We should ask at least a few questions of what Jesus said here, as it relates to our discussion today. **First**, what does Jesus mean by “the **heart** of man?” **Second**, what does He mean that these evil things “**come** from the heart” or from “within?” **Third**, what does He mean that these things “**defile a person**?”

First: the “*heart*” of man. Jesus is using a figure of speech with which most of us are probably familiar. The human heart is a vital organ, pumping blood throughout the body; but that’s not what Jesus is talking about here. Jesus is using the word “heart” to refer to the ***will*** or ***volitional core*** of a person. In this sense, the “heart” is the seat of our desires – the place from whence our actions come.

Second: Our actions “***come from***” the heart. The idea here is that a person actually does as he or she wants. Our thoughts, words, and deeds are not without influence. We are motivated by desire – always. The human will (or heart) is the conceptual “place” from which our desires impact everything else about us. As Jesus makes clear in our passage, the things a person thinks, says, and does are not imposed upon him or her; these things arise from within.

Third: The word “***defile***” is a thoroughly biblical expression. We would be unwise to simply think in modern terms of “clean” and “dirty” when we read about something being “defiled” in the Bible. In fact, this takes us back to the Levitical law or *holiness code*.

You may recall that last Sunday I talked about Leviticus being all about “holiness.” Well, the language of Leviticus is “holy” and “unholy,” but even more frequent it is “clean” and “unclean.” “***Clean***” equals good, holy, and pure. “***Unclean***” equals bad, unholy, and defiled.

Of course, terms like “clean” and “dirty” are not entirely unhelpful as we try to understand this concept; but these do not fully express the more expansive notion of what it means to be “***defiled***.”

To be “defiled” is to be tainted, ruined, profane, and unwelcome in God’s presence. In actuality, this term has nothing to do with physical cleanness; it is directly referring to a thing’s relation to God.

Therefore, Jesus is here explaining a key point in understanding human relationship to God. Talking to a devoted group of religious people, who were very interested in being “clean” or “undefiled” or “holy” before God, Jesus said that a person’s thoughts, words, and deeds are not the biggest problem. That is not to say, “*these evil thoughts, words, and deeds don’t matter.*” Rather, it is to say, “*these are symptoms of the deeper problem, which is an evil heart.*”

Jesus basically said, “*because your heart is evil, your desires are evil, therefore you experience evil thoughts, words, and deeds*” (Mk. 7:21-23).

Many-a-Christian has felt this lightning bolt of biblical truth, and it has changed everything for them. Listen carefully, and you may also be amazed by the shock.

The idea of human corruption is not a fun thing to consider, but it explains so much about us; and in this way, it is quite refreshing. Like a bleak diagnosis, we do not like what we are hearing, but we may be glad to know what we are up against, so that we can know how to fight as we move forward.

Human corruption has a direct impact on the notion of sexual orientation, because (according to Jesus) it is possible for someone to have same-sex attraction without ever remembering a conscious decision towards such a thing. Furthermore, we may learn about the origins of all sorts of distorted affections. People with same-sex attractions are not the only ones to feel unconscious and natural desires towards sin and evil.

Every time you are prideful, does it only happen after you have weighed your options and decided to travel the arrogant road?

When you are envious of others, can you always point to a moment when you chose to indulge in such thoughts?

How about when you are angry? In my experience, rational thought and appropriate decision-making are tossed out the window when anger walks in.

If we are introspective, even for just a moment, we may come to understand that the Bible speaks accurately of all humans here. The Bible does know us well, and its assessment is immediately applicable.

Sin (evil thoughts, defiling speech, and wicked actions) bubbles up from within us, and cognitive decisions are often not part of the experience at all.

Strachan and Peacock put it this way, “Our hearts course with the darkness... and we [seldom] consciously choose ahead of time to indulge in sin... At times, of course, we do [deliberately] set out to commit unrighteousness. But oftentimes, sin erupts from our heart, unbidden and undetected until the moment of detonation.” “This,” they say, “is true of ten thousand different perversities we carry within us. We explode at a friend because of [jealousy]... They have what we want, and so we cut them down to size. We gorge ourselves on sexual images, taking what is not ours while feeling it is owed to us. We ignore our loved ones, focusing on our own pursuits... In more ways than we could count, we give vent to our sins, in many cases from desires that surge in our bloodstreams without warning. Sin is not a little knife that we take out on occasion to do a little damage. Sin is a raging fire, consuming whole forests by a spark, that [will consume us] if not battled and mastered by the Spirit [of God].”¹²

This ought to give us all a sobering reminder of the reality that we are more corrupted by sin than we often like to admit. As regularly comes up in discussions about sin, the Gospel, and Christian living, we want to be very aware of our tendency to think in terms of **behavior modification**. Additionally, the behavior we are most likely to notice as sinful (and therefore in need of modification) is that behavior which differs from our own.

We may not say it out loud, but we may likely feel that the world would be a better place if “those people” would just be like me – even if that means that they still sin in the ways I do. However, this is not the Gospel, and this is not the road of Christian living – known as sanctification.

The Bible clearly says that sinful expressions are a symptom of sinful corruption in the human heart, but this is in direct contradiction to what the revisionists say.

¹² Strachan, 135.

Johnson claims that the experience of a same-sex sexual orientation demands that we reject clear biblical teaching. Vines says that our modern understanding of the same-sex sexual orientation requires a rejection of Scripture's teaching on homosexuality.

Neither of these are options for biblical Christians, but we cannot simply dismiss the experience of many people who are same-sex attracted.

Denny Burk expresses my own thoughts when he says, "Revisionists and progressives often [present] us with a false choice concerning the church's ministry to homosexuals. Christians can either walk the path of homophobia in hatred, or they can surrender ancient beliefs to accommodate the normalization of homosexual practice. But this is an unnecessary dilemma. There is another way."¹³

The "other way" I want to suggest this morning is the way of Gospel ministry and sanctifying relationships.

(3) REORIENTING DISTORTED AFFECTIONS

We may rightly understand that same-sex sexual desire is a *distorted affection*. ***Distorted***, in the sense that it is in rebellion to God's created design (for His glory and our joy); and ***affection***, in the sense that it is compelling and pleasing (even though it ought not be). We may also recognize that every person in this room has ***distorted affections***.

You and I both want things that are opposed to God's good design for us. We all have desires towards things that harm us. Don't forget that Jesus said "slander," "envy," "pride," and "sexual" sins of all kinds are what come from our distorted desires of the heart (Mk. 7:21-23).

What hope and good word does the Gospel give to us: we who have distorted affections (heterosexual, homosexual, or *any other sinful desire*)?

First, the Gospel confronts us with the truth about our evil desires, and all that proceeds from them.

¹³ Burk, 205.

The Gospel condemns all people, and provides a depressing analysis about the very core of who we are. Just listen to a few verses on the matter:

The prophet Jeremiah says, “**The heart is deceitful above all things, and [devastatingly ill]**” (Jer. 17:9).

James says, we are “**tempted**” and “**lured**” and “**enticed**” by our “**own desire**.” And our “**desire**” “**gives birth to sin**,” which results in “**death**” (James 1:14–15).

Paul says, apart from the grace of Christ, we “**live in the passions of our flesh**,” and “**carry out the desires**” of our “**body**” and our “**mind**” (Eph. 2:3).

So, the Gospel confronts us as sinners.

Second, the Gospel offers grace and a foreign righteousness to condemned sinners.

Christ invades our wretched estate, but He does not then say to the enslaved sinner, “*Get up! Loose those chains, and lower the burden of your sin, so that you may walk freely and do rightly.*” No! He enters our cell of condemnation and removes the fetters we wear. He places them upon His own arms and effortlessly bears the load, which once weighed so heavily upon us. Having freed us from our burden, Christ then gives us His own uniform of righteousness and calls us members of His family.

The Bible says it like this:

“**But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus**” (Eph. 2:4–7).

So, the Gospel makes sinners righteous, because of Christ, and by God’s gracious grace.

Third, and this is the part that many Christians struggle to understand, the Gospel transforms our lives from the inside out.

Christ accepts sinners just as they are, but He does not let them stay that way. Once we are free from the sin that once enslaved us, we are free indeed (Jn. 8:36), but we will find that the desires we have are not nearly as pure as we really want them to be. However, God has given us His Spirit in order to reorient our distorted affections; and He has promised to do it.

In Romans chapter 7, we hear the cry of a man who both loves Christ and desires sin. Is there any Christian who can relate?! I know I can. My mind is nearly driven mad at times by the noise of my own conviction. My intentions are impure even when my actions are good, and temptation to evil is (as Paul says) always “close at hand” (Rom. 7:21).

But is this the end of it? Is there no reprieve from the onslaught of evil desires, still bubbling up from within? Are Christians doomed to a life of sinful slavery, just as everyone else, only distinct from the world in our hope for future holiness?

NO! Sanctification is both a past and present work in the life of a believer.

The author of Hebrews says that both are true: those who love and trust Christ ***have been sanctified*** (Heb. 10:10); and those who love and trust Christ are ***being sanctified*** (Heb. 10:14).

The Gospel does not pretend that we have not sinned, and it does not pretend that we don't still want to. But the Gospel does make us pure before God (sanctified – past tense), and it calls us to join God's Spirit at work within us to progressively cleanse us from the sinful desires that still remain (sanctified – ongoing work).

One author wrote, “The gospel does not exempt us from digging through our messy temptations. It's summons us to confront them, and to do so over the course of months, years, and a lifetime.”¹⁴

And yet, here is where I believe Christians have failed each other and failed those outside of the Church as well. We have pretended that being “saved” means that we are now “all good.” We have expected others to keep their messy temptations hidden, and we have kept others away from ours.

This is most easily demonstrated in several ways, but I will point out two big ones here.

First, our hollow goodness is made visible in the fact that our prayer requests almost never include our actual struggles.

Very rarely have I heard someone say, “Marc, will you pray for me? I know that I shouldn't be spending so much money on frivolous things, but I can't seem to

¹⁴ Strachan, 130.

help myself. I think I am finding comfort and value in *stuff* instead of in *Christ*.”
Or, “Marc, will you pray for my family? We have really been letting anger and self-interest rule us lately, and I know that God wants us to walk in freedom from that stuff.”

These things (and many others) are our real struggles, but you just want to ask for prayer for your great-aunt’s cousin’s friend’s big toe, because you don’t want anyone to know that you actually struggle. This ought not be, and we should stop pretending.

Another way to demonstrate the foolish “I’m all good” mentality among many churchgoers today, is not so light-hearted. The fact of the matter is, we can only hide our messy temptations for so long. Eventually, they spill out, and others see the stains. If we were actually honest with each other, confronting our messy temptations together, then spills would not mean the end of Christian fellowship. But this is not the way it goes in many churches today.

You all can probably think of at least one person who messed up, who got offended or offended someone else, who royally blew it in some big way, and then simply disappeared. Maybe even some of you here left another church because you spilled and wanted to get away from the people who saw it, the people who know you, or even the people who tried to help you confront your messy temptations.

Superficial “churchianity” is never more disgusting, frustrating, and hurtful than when we run away from true repentance in order to keep pretending “I’m all good.”

There are probably many reasons for the “I’m all good” mentality, but I wonder if a major factor isn’t the simple fact that we still love our sin too much. I think it is quite clear that this drives the revisionist to want to rewrite Scripture itself. Love for sin (in this case, homosexual behavior) motivates many to demand approval and inclusion, claiming “I’m all good!”

But I believe that this is also what drives many of us to stay silent, keep up our guard, and maybe even run away when our messy temptations become known. We say, “I’m all good” because we love our sin.

We have forgotten what sin is... We have forgotten what it does.

Speaking of personal and indwelling sin, one author wrote, “we want to hunt it down, put a hood over its head, and kill it. We hate sin. It is our enemy. We know that if we do not go on the offensive against it, it will surely go on the offensive against us.”¹⁵

This vivid imagery does seem to capture the posture that we ought to have, but I wonder if that is the posture you have today.

Many broken and hurting people believe the Church is full of hypocrites because they see a bunch of wretched people pretending “I’m all good.”

My prayer is that all sinners (homosexual and heterosexual ones) will stop pretending.

May God help us all to recognize and admit to our distorted affections.

May God grant us His grace that we may embrace the freedom found in the Gospel.

And may God cultivate sanctifying relationships among us at FBC Diana.

MY PRAYERS

- May God forgive us for pretending and for loving our sin.
- May God graciously give us eyes to see the Gospel for what it is.
- May God cultivate sanctifying relationships in our church family.

¹⁵ Strachan, 139.

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