

“Homosexuality, Marriage & the Christian”

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Scriptural Foundation: Romans 1:18-31, ESV

In this study, as I come to you, I am going to break my pattern in terms of the way I typically preach. I am very committed to expositional preaching, that is to take a passage and work through that particular passage for the study. Typically, I go from one book at a time so we can see the context of each. I am absolutely committed that is the best way for us, as a church family, to receive God's Word, understand it, and grow in it together.

However, in this study, I am going to speak on a topic that is very much of a hot-button in our culture. I have had many people ask me all different kinds of questions regarding this topic and I sense there continues to be great confusion within the Christian church, not necessarily by the culture at large, regarding this subject of homosexuality, marriage, and the Christian. We will be skipping around the Bible quite a bit and this is very much a topical study, theologically oriented, as opposed to expositionally oriented. It is not a pattern I intend to continue, but it is one I believe so important because of the significance of the issue to the believer and to our culture.

God's Wrath on Unrighteousness

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.

Frank Bruni, an influential and avowed homosexual columnist for the New York Times, writes, “Somewhere along the way, standing up for gay marriage went from ‘nervy’ to ‘trendy’. The complete embrace by the whole nation of same-sex marriage is only a matter of time.” He posits this about the Supreme Court decision regarding same-sex marriage will be considered this summer, “The trajectory is undeniable. The trend line is clear and the choice before the justices is whether to be hand maidens of history or whether to sit it out. In an astonishingly brief period of time, this country has experienced a seismic shift in opinion, a profound social and political revolution, when it comes to gay and lesbian people.” I believe he is right about that. He continues, “One does not have to be very well read or culturally informed to feel the trend line advancing, transforming the immorality of homosexuality into a cause for celebration. Every week, it seems like, headlines are made regarding the advance of the agenda of the activist behind homosexuality.”

For instance, this past week, we saw headlines regarding the Boy Scouts, a Department of Justice memo, and the Cannes Film Festival rewarding the top prize to a story regarding a fifteen-year old girl in a homosexual relationship with an older woman. Even the secular world was astounded by the explicitness of this film, yet it won top prize.

The pressure to swim with the current of homosexual celebration gains strength everyday and we feel it, do we not? Why do I preach a message about homosexuality? Do I wish to vent frustration at a world defying God? No, I do not speak from above and outside of this world of sin, but I speak as one who is part of it, who is in it. I am a sinner and I am in daily need of grace. Do I speak to put homosexuals in their place because no one else will? No, I speak as one who has fallen at the foot of the cross needing God to rescue me from my sin. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

So, why do I speak about this subject? There are two primarily reasons. First, many are enslaved by the sin of homosexuality and many, many more are becoming confused and tempted. These ones whom God loves are being told it is “good and right” for them to embrace sin and to pursue it with joy. This modern siren-song lures the ship of many souls to utter ruin. Though I realize my voice may not be heard by very many against the cacophony of the messages this world presents, I believe God’s Gospel is powerful when it is told with clarity and in grace. I believe some will hear it and some will receive it and some will be rescued by it.

The second reason why I preach a message on homosexuality is because many Christians are confused about this sin and they are asking the question, “How should we respond to this sin and the pressure to embrace it as a moral good?” The need for clear, biblical thinking by the church could not be more relevant to our day, and I know what I say will offend many. This is unavoidable. It is not the intention but it is unavoidable. I do not say what I say today in anger or hatred, but in love and with the full conviction that God's Word is simply true and it is good for everyone who believes in God.

I decided to approach the subject by considering six specific questions which surround homosexuality in modern American. I know I will not be able to answer any of these questions with the completeness that is necessary. You will need to do that with much more thinking, but I hope to lay a groundwork. I know there are many other questions which are, also, incredibly important I will not address at all in this study, but I hope this study begins a renewed zeal to search Scriptures on all matters of life. God's Word is the only Word of Truth upon we, as Christians, build our lives.

The first question we want to consider is: **What foundational truths shape our view of the world in general?** I acknowledge we will not be able to agree in much about anything if we do not agree upon the fundamentals of faith. If we disagree about homosexuality, the place to start is not at this particular sin as a reference point, not in particular acts of men being with men and women being with women, but the place to start the discussion is at the place of the essentials regarding life.

If we disagree about the nature of God, the problems confronting man, the authority of the Bible, God’s righteous judgment, the Lordship of Jesus, and His atoning work upon the cross we really do not have much ground to agree upon much of anything. Those things are the real issues for if we change those things the others often take care of themselves.

If we are driving down the highway and we have a flat tire, it is important to change that tire, but if the engine has seized then the tire is something that needs to be looked at after the engine. We will look at the engine, the fundamentals, and these truths which God gives to us to root us in Himself.

Denominations which have affirmed homosexuality, such as the Presbyterian Church USA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Episcopal Church, the Disciples of Christ, and several others, do not go astray, first, by affirming homosexuality. These went astray as they moved away from fundamental doctrines of the New Testament church, doctrines regarding the atonement of Jesus, eternal punishment, the virgin birth, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and the necessity of explicit faith. Affirmation of homosexuality is the logical progression for those who tear up the roots of the fundamentals of the faith and that is where we want to begin. That is where we want to begin.

What are these fundamental truths? This is not an exhaustive list, but let me share with you a few fundamentals with which to root our lives and root our heart so our mind might have a solid framework from which to think about every matter of life.

First, God alone is God. He is personal and Spirit. He is the One and Only True God. He has no rival. He is Triune, that is to say, He exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This God exists in Himself and of Himself. He is not dependant upon anyone or anything outside of Himself. He is eternal. There never was a time when He was not and there will never be a time when He is not. Everything that exists is created by Him and for Him. God's actions are determined solely by the pleasure of His will and He rules His creation with absolute, sovereign power.

Abraham Kuyper¹ is right to proclaim, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign of all, does not cry out, 'Mine! That is mine!'"

God is immutable. He does not change. He is jealous for His own glory. He is infinite in righteousness and power and goodness and love. He is the gentle breeze. He is the consuming fire. He is the Righteous Judge. He is the Good Shepherd. He is the transcendent ruler. He is the sweetest friend. He is holy, holy, holy. He is the first and the very best of beings. To know Him is the greatest joy that could possibly be experienced by any person. To anger Him is the greatest terror. Consider what 1 Chronicles 29 says,

¹⁰ ...And David said... ¹¹ Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹² Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name."

That is the first fundamental and it causes us to submit, to put ourselves under and not over Him.

Second, the Bible alone is God's Perfect Word. With regard to authority and truth the Bible has no rival. God Himself wrote this Book by moving the thoughts of holy men to the inspiration of His Holy Spirit. All the Bible affirms is true because God is true. All the Bible affirms is good because God is good. He wrote this Book so we could know Him and know His will. God holds us accountable to listen to His voice and receive His Word as our guide for all of our life.

The Bible is without error in its original autographs. It is our only source of authority upon which we base our thoughts, opinions, values, and behaviors. God's Word is more important to our life than physical food. God's Word never changes over time, but it endures as Truth forever and ever. In the Bible, God clearly communicates to man so we can understand what is pleasing to Him and what is not pleasing to Him. All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for training, and for righteousness so the man of God might be thoroughly equipped for every good work.²

In the third fundamental, man is created in God's image to worship and enjoy God. Every person's life is sacred and is the special domain of God. No person has a right to take his or her own life because their life is God's. We do not have the right to take the life of another because that life is made in the image of God. No person can do whatever he or she wants to do with their own life for their life is not theirs. It is a gift from God and they receive it as a stewardship from Him. Our time, our energy, our resources are not ours, but they are God's. God holds us accountable for what we have done with the life He has given.

Each person is created as a responsible, spiritual being and God has stamped each one of us with His image so our purpose in life is to reflect Him and to enjoy Him and to worship Him. In Romans 11, the Apostle Paul tells us,

³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

¹ Abraham Kuijper (29 October 1837 – 8 November 1920), generally known as Abraham Kuyper, was a Dutch politician, journalist, statesman and theologian.

² 2 Timothy 3:16

The fourth fundamental is: Sin ruins all of us. The mess of this world is caused by sin. All unhappiness, strife, disease, and pain is caused by sin. If sin did not exist this world would not be broken and we would live in unending joy, but sin is real for every person born into this world and sin is each person's biggest problem. It is my biggest problem and it is your biggest problem. It is not the sin of others, it is the sin of our own heart. We are corrupted by the fall and we are born without spiritual life. We are born in hostility to a Holy God.

Sin is, first, a disease and an effect of the fall. It is, also, an act of rebellion against God who fashioned us to know Him and to love Him. We sin in our thoughts, words, and actions when we neglect or disobey His kind and good Law. Sin's reference point is always God. When we sin we sin against Him. God never leaves the guilty unpunished. God judges our sin with an infinite wrath in this life and in the life to come. If sin remains upon us, death will reign over us. Romans 5 tells us,

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...

Sin ruins all of us.

The fifth fundamental is: Jesus is the only One who can rescue us from the destruction and condemnation of sin. God, in love, sent His Son to receive punishment for our sin in His own body so we might be free from God's just sentence, the sentence of death and the sentence of eternal condemnation so we might be free. Jesus satisfied God's justice and wrath in Himself. There is no other Savior, no other way to Heaven, no other Mediator between God and man, no one else who can offer us forgiveness, and no one else who can offer us hope for eternal life. Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the Savior. We are rescued from sin's present and eternal ruin through Jesus' life, death, and His resurrection. Scripture declares, in 1 Timothy 2,

⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.

In the sixth fundamental, God calls each person to repent of all sin and to trust wholly in His Son for the forgiveness of sin and to have eternal life. God offers mercy and grace to those who bow themselves to Jesus as Savior and as Lord. It is impossible to know God apart from our submission to Jesus and our faith in Jesus. John 3 tells us,

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already...

and the wrath of God remains and abides upon him. Acts 17 tells us,

³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed...

It is not just sin, in general, we must repent of, but it is sin in specific. God calls each person to come to Him in faith and to bow their knee.

These are so very important foundational truths upon which we must agree or we will not be able to agree upon very much regarding life, ethics, morality, and truth.

What specifically, though, does the Bible teach about homosexuality? Again, the protest might arise, why should we focus upon Bible verses that talk about homosexuality? The answer is not so we can use the Bible to thump people over the head. We study the Bible so we can discern the will of God and enjoy the person of God. We must not trust our heart regarding any issue. Our heart is deceitful above all else and is desperately wicked.

The Bible teaches us our heart will fool us into thinking that which is true is not true and that which is not true is true. God has given us His Word to help the heart prone to being deceived, to keep from being saved, to give us light to our path and to provide a lamp which will guide us throughout our life. That is why we open the Bible. The Bible is not given as a tool to use to hurt others, but it is a tool to shine light into darkness and to give help. The Bible teaches us, very clearly, homosexuality is a soul-destroying sin.

Homosexuality is not the only soul-destroying sin and I must emphasize that, but God is very clear, homosexuality is a soul-destroying sin. Some modern teachers argue the Bible does not teach homosexuality is a sin at all. It is important to examine scripture together to find out what God says. I am indebted to a man by the name of Ralph Drollinger³, as I share some of his thoughts on these nine key passages.

The first key passage is in Genesis 19. This is an important passage regarding Sodom and Gomorrah. Most of us know the story of these two cities and the city Lot and his family chose to live near. God sent messengers to Lot, and the key word in this passage is the word “know”,

⁴ But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house. ⁵ And they called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.” ⁶ Lot went out to the men at the entrance, shut the door after him, ⁷ and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. ⁸ Behold, I have two daughters who have not known any man. Let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please. Only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.”

Of course, God intervenes and He ends up destroying Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from Heaven. Some argue the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is the sin of inhospitality. They say the word “know” is very ambiguous in the Hebrew and is very broad in its meaning. It is a word that is broad in its meaning and that is the reason why, in Bible study, context helps us to understand the meaning of words.

The context is very clear this has to do with men in the city wanting to have a sexual relationship with the men who have visited Lot. Genesis 4:17 uses the same word know to describe Cain “knew his wife and she conceived and bore Enoch.”

Secondly, the context tells us in order to appease the men, without giving the men these visitors, Lot did something rather incredible and truly confusing. This makes us aware as to why Lot is called “righteous” in the New Testament, yet how even a righteous man can become part of culture and confused by culture. Lot is confused by culture and he says, “I have an idea. Here are two virgin daughters. Why don’t you know them and lay with them.” It would make no sense for him to offer that if they were not pursuing a sexual relationship.

Third, the response of God informs us as to the nature of the sin present in Sodom and Gomorrah. In Genesis 18, we read,

²⁰ Then the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave...

He deals harshly, not because of inhospitality, but because of something more.

Finally, this passage has been so clear throughout history of Bible interpretation, the English word “sodomy” is borne from it. This has never been confusing until modern days and there has been no ambiguity. In Ezekiel 16, we read,

⁴⁹ 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. ⁵⁰ They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it.

Verse 49 is often used as a text by homosexual activists to assert the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is referencing inhospitality. If that is where the Bible stops, we may say, “It does lean toward that being the focus,” but then we read Verse 50. The word “abomination” means a detestable act, and in Leviticus 18, this word is tied particularly with homosexual behavior,

²² You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

³ Ralph Drollinger, President and Founder, Capitol Ministries, Washington, District Of Columbia

Often times it is said Jesus never says anything about the sin of homosexuality. That is not entirely true; He does, first, by referencing sexual morality broadly, not having to describe each and every potential act of sexual immorality included in those phrases. He often talks about the sin of sexual immorality. In Matthew 10, I believe He references this rather directly by talking about Sodom and Gomorrah, and we read,

¹⁴ And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.

Jesus affirms the appropriateness of the judgment of God upon these two cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, for the sin of homosexuality. In Romans 1 is a key text which speaks more plainly about both kinds of same-sex sin. The majority of the Bible speaks about male-to-male sexuality, but Romans includes female-to-female and it is the clearest passage we have, which is not to say we have other clear passages. As we consider this passage, it is important for us to understand it is a passage talking about the rightness of God's wrath and how it is being revealed; how do we know God is angry with sin?

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.

In this passage we know God is angry with sin because God continues to give people over to sin. In other words, His work of judgment is when He stops restraining people from the passions in them once they give themselves over to a different kind of strange worship. He is telling us, "This is contrary to the way I created this world, male and female, so together in marriage they might reflect My glory with a perfection and wonder that is a family."

In this text, again, homosexuality is not the only soul-destroying sin described, but it is one of them. We ought not take pride that is not one of the sins that particularly tempts our own heart. Everyone is tempted in various ways by various kinds of sin, but what Romans 1 does is to bring all of the objections to the righteousness of God and the wrath of God that is being poured out against all sin so we would humble ourselves before Him and receive His grace because we cannot save ourselves. It is not that God has been unclear nor because He has made His truth regarding sin and the judgment that follows ambiguous and that the people are not getting it.

Liberal scholars twist the words of this passage to change its meaning, but we all can read, can we not? We cannot get away from the force of the words and the sentences. Concerning this passage, one religion professor from Case Western University writes, "Paul does not understand genetics and sexual orientation the way we understand it now." You see, you have to throw away Scripture. That is why it all gets back to the fundamentals. If you believe them, what follows is very clear. If you do not believe them, such as this religion professor, then, of course, there will be big problems because now we are just making stuff up according to our own heart.

Man desires to worship God according to his desires and ideas and that is what is happening. In response, God's wrath is revealed. God withdraws His restraints and allows man to do what his evil heart desires. One specific kind of lust God mentions is described in Verses 26 and 27. Again, when we read those verses, it says, "God gave them up to dishonorable passions for their women exchanged natural relations for those contrary to nature 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.” Homosexuality is not the cause of God’s judgment, it is God’s judgment.

Some say, when we look at America, “God is going to have to judge America because of what is happening and where we are going in regard to this sin and others.” The biblical response is, “No, that is not true. God is judging America.” That is the issue. God is judging us. That is the reason why, when we see what we see, we need to be humble and say, “God, send a revival, first, in my heart. You are judging my nation and my community and I need to get my soul right with You.”

1 Corinthians 6 tells us,

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ...

Here is what the church is: it is a group of people who were enslaved to sin, who were liberated by the grace of God. That is what the church is and let us never forget that. Such were some of you.

In every church, as the Gospel is being powerfully proclaimed in it, there will be these folks. That, again, is why we are not haters of the people who commit these sins. That is who we were and apart from God’s grace that is who we would still be. In 1 Timothy 1, we read,

⁸ Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality...

In other words, why does God give to us the Law? It is so, while we are in our sin, we recognize we are sinning and we need God’s grace and mercy. We are under the wrath and right judgment and condemnation of God. That is why the Law is given.

The Greek lexicon is very clear, even in extra-biblical literature, this word used in 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Corinthians 1 is used regarding a male who practices homosexuality. It is such a clear, Greek word for this. In 2 Peter 2, he is talking about the judgment of God as a result of apostasy, leaving the faith, and we read,

⁴ For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment... ⁶ if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷ and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked... ⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

This is a New Testament commentary on the Old Testament story and it helps us to understand what the Old Testament story is all about. Jude 7 does the same,

⁷ 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.

In other words, the New Testament writers say, “Do not just roll your eyes at the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and say, ‘That was a long, long time ago.’ God had that happen and He recorded it in His Eternal Word so today, in the 21st Century, we would be warned.” God is gracious that way.

Can a person be a homosexual and be Christian? Let me define some terms before I answer that. A biblical Christian is one who is given new life by God's Spirit on the basis of Jesus' work on the cross. A Christian is not one who goes to church, who reads the Bible, and who affirms Jesus in some way. A Christian is one who is once dead in their trespasses and sins and who is made alive by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

A homosexual is one who embraces the sin of homosexual acts without repentance in his or her heart. Homosexuality becomes part of his or her core identity and affirmed practice.

If these definitions are accepted, the clear answer from Scripture to this question, "Can a homosexual be a Christian," is, "No!" I affirm it is very possible for a Christian to engage in the sin of homosexuality just as it is possible for a Christian to succumb to the temptations of other soul-destroying sins. It is not the presence of the sin that makes a difference. It is the attitude one places toward the sin.

When the Holy Spirit indwells a person, the Holy Spirit brings repentance to the heart of the one who has been made alive when he or she sins. That is why 1 John 3 says,

⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.

To make clear, it is not the presence of the sin, and it is certainly not the presence of the attraction toward the sin, that would cause a person to be set outside this category of "Christian", a born-again, life-infused believer, but it is the presence of a sin in which there is no more fight, as one who says, "Yes, that is who I am. That is what I am going to be about. That is what I am going to do." For such a one, the Bible is amazingly clear, whether it is that sin or any other sin one holds onto in that way, such a one has no evidence of spiritual life. I affirm a Christian may have same-sex attraction, but a person who has truly given themselves over to the practice of homosexuality, from Scripture, is not born again.

Why not allow homosexuals to marry as a civil right in a secular society? The argument is made, "If you do not like gay marriage, do not get one! My gay marriage does not change anything about your straight marriage. Actually, we are not altering the definition of marriage, we are expanding it. These are civil rights," so the argument goes.

Friends, we must alter God's created reality in order to adjust our understanding of marriage. The power to alter God's reality is not in our hands. As creatures we do not create the laws of nature, whether they relate to physics or whether they relate to morality. They are laws; they are God's laws and He established them. To resist the law of nature is madness and a sure path to immeasurable pain and suffering.

We cannot alter the definition of marriage any more than we can alter the Law of Gravity, because it is God's domain. We may reject the Law of Gravity and some do when they are high on drugs and they jump off of buildings, believing it is not true. But, in all of their believing it is not true, it will not affect the, and it will not influence does not change the fact it destroys them.

Let us not believe painful consequences will not come from our attempt to change God's definition. Horrible consequences are already being experienced because of this change in our culture. And, it is not just this change. This change is really only a step in many other changes which have already happened in our culture. In some sense, we can say this is not where we need to begin in reference to the change in the definition of marriage.

It began with the sexual revolution in the 1960's, opening the door to saying, "You do not have to be married in order to have sexual relations with another person. It is all based on love. Marriage is just a piece of paper." It is with the expansion of the divorce laws as well. All of that crumbled God's definition of marriage. It took away permanence and it took away purity from God's definition of marriage and society has suffered horribly over that.

Go to a school yard and look at the children and what has happened. We, in our wisdom, decided God's definition of marriage is not one we need to acknowledge.

Colin Hanson writes, "Long before same-sex marriage, no-fault divorce, and birth control drastically shaped attitudes about marriage by eroding social stigma against unmarried parenting, cohabitation, and sex outside of marriage. Gay

marriage may be a big step, but it only the next step in the staircase that does not end here. With each new step we cannot change the definition of marriage for some but not for others. No-fault divorce, as can see from history, did not force anyone to get divorced, but it removed permanence from the definition of marriage and it pressured everyone, including churches, to rethink their views on biblical teaching.”

Is this a civil rights issue? No, it is a moral issue. Homosexual activists have successfully made us to think homosexual marriage is similar to racism and, in particular, inter-racial marriage of the past. The big difference is, in Scripture, God affirms inter-racial marriage and He does not affirm homosexual marriage. Civil rights are given by our Creator and they do not originate from the power of government. We cannot create any right for ourselves. Civil rights originate from God.

If we, as a society, reject God, we are rejecting the source of all of our rights. What man gives, man will surely take away when it becomes convenient to do so.

What counsel would you give to those struggling with homosexuality? First, God loves you, God loves you, God loves you. I do not doubt every week I preach before some people who struggle from same-sex attraction, from the struggle of same-sex sin. I do not doubt that, but I want you to know, God loves you.

Second, Jesus’ church loves you. I know the teaching of the church may offend you and some may be very upset even now, but it is spoken out of a love for you and not out of hatred. We love you and we want to be a safe place for you to share your life with us.

If you call and ask to talk with me about your sins or your temptations, you need not fear a frowning face. By the way, as a part of this counsel, it is important for you to talk with someone who will give you godly counsel. It is truly important not to keep that inside yourself. Talk with someone.

The challenge to the church is to know hate does not belong among God’s people. I know we are criticized of hatred simply for embracing God’s and His Word, but with that said, I must challenge us, I do sometimes see hatred in the hearts of God’s people toward homosexuality and that is a sin and it robs God of His glory and of His church. Let us repent of that.

In my third bit of counsel, your hope in this life and in this life to come rests in being liberated from all of your sin. Yes, indeed, you were born enslaved to sin. That is true of every one of us, but Jesus Christ came to set the captive free. He is able to rescue you. Repent and believe for the forgiveness of your sin and for new life in Christ. Do not believe your orientation is immutable, like race. There is likely a strong voice that says, “This is not something I am choosing to do, but it is something I am.” There is only a half-truth in that, as it is with most of Satan’s lies.

Indeed, again, you are born enslaved to sin. If this particular sin is one of those you are drawn to, I do not have a problem in thinking that happened from birth, but that is not who God calls you to be. Your identity in Christ is righteousness and wholeness and truth and God is inviting you out of it, to liberate you. You need not live in guilt and shame. The answer to guilt and shame is not pride in sin, but it is the exaltation in your Savior.

This is the last counsel of reality. Finally, you can expect your life in this world to be a constant battle against the sins that tempt you. I believe this is true for every person. There are different sins for different people, but it is the same battle. The good news is, God is with you in the battle and we want to walk with you, as Christ’s church, together fighting this battle for God’s sake.

How should we live in a culture that gives hearty approval to the sin of homosexuality? First, hate the sin and love the sinner. Let us never view ourselves as above or outside the problem of sin, but let us view ourselves as being a part of it. We truly must love those who are caught up in this sin. This means we sincerely care about them as persons and we are not trying to drive them away from us because they make us uncomfortable, but we are friendly and kind toward them and we move in love toward them. We share the Gospel with them because the greatest, loving word we can give is the Gospel.

Second, we know the kind of love the world demands from the church is not the kind of love the faithful church can offer. They may say, “If you love, here is what you would do.” We say, “No, that is not what the Bible says. If I love you it means I must speak truth, truth in love, truth in grace, truth in humility, but truth in your life.”

If you go to your doctor and the tests reveal you have a terminal illness and the doctor thinks to himself, “I do not want this person to be uncomfortable in my presence. That would not be loving to create this discomfort, so I will not tell them the results of the tests.” Would you say, “good doctor” or “bad doctor”? (“Bad Doctor!”) That is exactly right, bad doctor, because a good doctor tells the truth even if the truth is hard because the truth will liberate. The truth brings healing and help.

We must not fear the reprisals that will come from being a faithful ambassador of God’s Gospel. We need to expect greater and greater hostility from a culture running toward spiritual lawlessness. We must not be afraid. Jesus told us we will suffer for His namesake⁴ and we have had a long history in this country of not having to suffer and I praise God for that. I wish that would continue for decades and decades, but as I look upon the cultural horizon I say that is not the kind of country Christians will have anymore.

Particularly for you young people, the assault upon you from the time when you are little children in school, from kindergarten on up, will be great, but I want you to know greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. Be of good cheer for Jesus Christ has overcome the world and the end is really, really good. The process is hard, but grow in faith through it.

I encourage you to make an impact, as a good citizen of our nation. Our freedoms are our stewardship from God. I urge you to be active in improving your community and country toward righteousness. There is work and be involved in the political matters of the day.

Finally, I would say, pray and labor for revival in your own life and in the life of your church.

Let me close by reading part of Irwin Lutzer’s message in a book titled, The Truth About Same-Sex Marriage.⁵ It is so important that we humble ourselves and say, “Lord, I want you to wake me up. As a result of what is happening in the world around me I want to see that what is happening in the world around me is happening in my own soul. I have grown cold. I have grown distant. I need to be on fire for the Lord and zealous for him.” Irwin Lutzer writes, “The average evangelical thinks God will always be on our side in the battle against same-sex marriage. However, in the Old Testament God said these startling words to His chosen people, in Isaiah 63, ‘But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit; therefore he turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them.’ In other words, there are times when God no longer takes up the cause of His people. When we refuse to repent of our own sins, God might refuse to come to our aid and let us be defeated and that is why we must turn to Him as families, as churches, as individuals. Without repentance for our own sins we cannot expect to win cultural wars. I believe very deeply that only God can save us now.”

That is not a cry of desperation, but that is a cry of faith. Is it not good that God, indeed can save us, but we must move our hearts towards personal revival and together, as a church, to be revived. Are you ready, beloved?

Let me close with a word of hope to those who may be struggling or who have sinned. Again, I offer myself freely to you and I offer to be a kind and loving pastor to you. If you have been struggling with this, is this not enough time you have hidden it and kept it from talking with anyone? That darkness only feeds it. That is where sin grows, in the darkness of one’s own private, hidden heart. I encourage you, there is liberty so let us talk. Go to the Lord. He is the Savior and He can rescue you and I would love to help you along that journey.

⁴ Matthew 10:22

⁵ “The Truth About Same-Sex Marriage: 6 Things You Must Know About What’s Really At Stake,” Irwin W. Lutzer, 2010, Moody Publishers