

HOMOSEXUALITY
The Christian Faces the Issues
Dr. George O. Wood

About 15 years ago that the gay rights movement really got underway in the United States. It was on the night of June 28, 1969 that New York police raided the Stonewall Inn, a Greenwich Village bar frequented by homosexuals. Homosexuals fought back and the rioting continued for two days. When it was all over homosexuals were no longer homosexuals. They were gay.

That term of course has been a term that basically has stuck. We talk today about the gay movement or the gay rights movement. After that event in 1969 four years later the July-August 1973 issue of *Trends* magazine released by the United Presbyterian church suggested that the church accept a variant lifestyle such as homosexuality and view it as neither unnatural, sinful or sick. *Trends* magazine perhaps put the best definition to the word “gay” from the homosexual point of view. Gay is used rather than homosexual because gay means being free from shame, guilt, misgiving or regret over being a homosexual. Thus we have a celebration of gay rights and gay rights day and gay rights pride to celebrate a lifestyle that is now no longer seen as one mixed with shame, guilt misgiving or regret.

I confess that I’m not a psychologist or a sociologist. Therefore my approach to homosexuality will not be from a psychological or sociological aspect. My message will simply deal with how the scriptures relate to the issue of homosexuality. I hope to explore with you four questions:

What does the scripture teach regarding homosexuality?

What should be the Christian’s and the church’s response to the homosexual person?

What should be the Christian’s response to political efforts to accord homosexuals recognition as a minority group protected by civil rights laws.

What counsel does the Lord give the homosexual person?

First. We’ll spend a great deal more time here because this is where the issue is being joined today in terms of defining what the scriptures say on the subject of homosexuality. What does the scripture teach in respect to homosexuality?

The traditional Christian position has been that the scriptures condemn homosexual acts and that homosexuality itself is a perversion away from the creation model. “Male and female created he them.” In his own image God created male and female.

The major scriptural references dealing with homosexuality are these. The reference in Sodom – Genesis 19. In a town called Gibeah north of Jerusalem, Judges 19. Three specific references in the Mosaic law – Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, Deuteronomy 23:17-18. Then several references in Paul’s epistles. Romans 1:18-32, especially v. 26-28. 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10. And finally scriptural references in the general epistles 2 Peter 2:6-10 and Jude 7 and 8.

Many evangelicals are unaware of the radical interpretation that is going on in scriptures by those homosexuals who indicate that they are members of the evangelical or Christian community. With the rise of the Metropolitan Community Church the writings of some Evangelical authors have raised the question, Is the homosexual my neighbor? These writers

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

have basically attempted along with another group called Evangelicals Concerned – EC – to reverse the traditional evangelical understanding of scripture on homosexual behavior.

One EC limit says, “It may take some of them [church leaders] another 400 years to stop condemning homosexuals and to learn that covenantal homosexual relations as such are not contrary to Christian faith. However if you don’t have 400 years to wait for ecclesiastical justice for gay Christians we invite you to join with us in EC right now.”

The radical reinterpretation of scriptures that is underway I think I can illustrate.

Genesis 19, the case of Sodom. The traditional Christian understanding is that Sodom was destroyed for its homosexuality which especially expresses itself in the desire of the citizens of the town for experience with the angels that have come to Lot to get him out of the town. Of course, Lot instead offers his virgin daughters to the crowd. That rape does not occur. But ultimately the city is destroyed and Sodom has become synonymous with homosexuality. The term “sodomy” springing out of the name of that town.

The head of Evangelicals Concerned offers this interpretation of Genesis 19: “The biblical story demonstrates the seriousness with which these early eastern people took the important customs of oriental hospitality. It appears that if necessary they would even allow their own daughters to undergo abuse in order to protect guests. The sexual aspect of the story is simply the vehicle in which the subject of demanded hospitality is conveyed. As it is clearly interpreted in Ezekiel 16:49 ‘Behold this was the guilt of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters had pride, surplus of fool and prosperous ease but did not aid the poor and needy.’ Evangelical references to the sin of Sodom an their concentration on the scene at Lot’s door and the homosexual explanation completely overlook Ezekiel and the biblical fact that god had already declared Sodom to be grievously sinful before the Incident at Lot’s house, Genesis 18:20.”

What basically this is say is that what is being condemned at Sodom is not homosexuality per se but homosexual gang rape. That covenantal relationships between practicing homosexuals are not at all the focus of the Genesis 19 story.

The second thing he is saying is that if you look at the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and they’re pointing out the sins of Sodom they point to the discrimination of Sodom against attention for the poor and in hospitality to strangers and the needy. And therefore Sodom is destroyed because of these facts.

Let’s look for a moment at the text of Genesis 19 and kind of get in mind a response to this interpretation. One thing certainly that we know right off the bat is Lot knew better than let the visiting angels who were in the form of men, he knew better than to let the men spend the night in the square. Verses 2-3. He offered them to come to his house and they said, No, we’ll spend the night in the square. But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him to his house.

Same kind of phenomenon occurs in the Judges story of Judges 19 where Gibeah the elderly man who hosts the visitor with his concubine and hired servant also is aware of the danger of staying in the city square alone at night and insists that the guests come to his home. The fact that Lot is concerned would be an indication since he sat at the gate that he is aware of some of the

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

practices of the town and that it is not indeed a safe thing at all for an unprotected stranger to spend the night there.

We also look at verse 4. The fact that all the men from every part of the city, young and old gathered. In Genesis 19 itself there is almost universal attribution of the residents of the town to the fact that they were of a homosexual life bent. Indeed homosexuality long before it becomes gang rape had in some way become a matter of lifestyle.

There's also the example of what the community of Sodom has done to Lot's own sensitivity. Living in this community of Sodom Lot has even become desensitized even to his own daughters and therefore he offers his daughters as a substitute.

It is clear also in looking at what the townsmen want to do with the strangers is that they want to "know" them. The Hebrew word in the 900 times used in the Old Testament, only 12 times refers to sexual intercourse. But in those 12 times the use is determined by context. And here the context means that. And the same in Judges. There is within the text itself clear allusion to the fact that the city has a life style, young and old. The citizens around the house have a gay or homosexual bent.

The Evangelicals Concerned view is that later on the prophets do not single out Sodom as an example of homosexuality but rather inhospitality. Ezekiel 16:49 "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom. She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned. She did not help the poor and needy." What often is overlooked is in that same chapter the next verse in Ezekiel 50 the prophet goes on to say they were haughty and did detestable things before me" the word "detestable" is used in Leviticus 18:20 to describe the practice of homosexuality as being detestable or an abomination to the Lord.

Isaiah also says in condemning the crowds sins of Judah "The look on their faces testifies against them. They parade their sin like Sodom. They do not hide it." There's a flaunting of sin like the flaunting of sin in Sodom.

The New Testament however ultimately controls our view of the Old Testament. The New Testament is very clear in its statement that Sodom is destroyed not imply because of a lack of hospitality. Not is it destroyed for lack of caring for the poor. Although that I part of it. Sodom is destroyed because of its immorality and perversion. 2 Peter 2:6-10 "If the condemns cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes and making them an example of what was going to happen to the ungodly if God condemned them and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man who was distressed by the licentiousness." That means "wantonness or unbridled conduct." In referring to sexuality it refers to a person who breaks all normal boundaries of sexual ethnic and moral. And includes matters like willful promiscuity on a heterosexual level and homosexuality and bestiality.

So there is a reference in 2 Peter 2 back to the sin of Sodom as not imply being gang rape. But a wontonness.

Jude 7 also makes a specific reference back to Sodom and Gomorrah. "As for Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, in like matter they gave themselves to immorality and having gone after 'flesh – other – different – from.' [Other than male female relationship it was

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

the male-male or female-female relationship.] And are set forth therefore as an example of fire eternal undergoing penalty.”

Obviously the reason why Sodom was destroyed was not simply the gang rape attempt. God already had determined to destroy Sodom before the angels were sent to warn Lot. That’s clear from Genesis 18. The sin of the city which reached not only into homosexuality we must I think be careful not to say that the only sin of Sodom was homosexuality. Obviously that kind of behavior lifestyle when it comes as a mass level begins to set off certain other hardnesses in the social psyche. This is happening at Sodom with its lack of concern with its inhospitality and the like. God would have even spared the city, he tells Abraham for ten righteous persons. But failing to find those he chose to destroy the city.

Another case of Gibeah in Judges 19. Evangelicals Concerned again say in this case that what is being condemned in Judges 19 is probably the most violent story in the scripture. It’s not covenantal homosexual relationships – and when I use that term what I mean is where two homosexual lovers agree to live together as a man and woman would live together in marriage. They covenant themselves to one another. This would be distinguished from a homosexual lifestyle that simply is going from one gay bar to another picking up any number of liaisons in terms of relationship.

What is being represented in Evangelicals Concerned say that Gibeah is again a case of gang rape not a condemnation of covenantal homosexual relationship. One might again ask, what spiritual and psychological steps are involved that bring a person to such debasement.

The Mosaic law has three restrictions or prohibitions against homosexuality. Leviticus 18:22 “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman. That is detestable [or an abomination].” Leviticus 20:13 “If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death. Their blood will be on their own heads.” Homosexual biblical interpreters say to those who take a traditional view of scripture that if you believe these passages from Leviticus ban homosexuality then you must also take their force literally and support laws which will bring capital punishment for practicing homosexuals. In other words, you can’t take part of the scripture literally and not take the other part literal as well. So if you’re going to say that God bans homosexuality then you also have to come behind that and say the advocates the death penalty for practicing homosexuals.

The response to this once more is understanding how the New Testament interprets the Old Testament. We’ll get into this as we look at the Deuteronomy passage more. But the Old Testament law has three aspects to it – moral, purificatory laws and judicial laws. God gave the Old Testament community sort of a theocracy. That is the Old Testament community without police force or court systems using the Old Testament was to keep law and order within society. The church however very clearly is distinguished as having a different function as a governmental entity. Paul says in Romans 13 that the power of the sword has been given to the state. Not given to the people of God, not given to the church.

Jesus shows us a model of how to understand Old Testament law which advocated the death penalty for persons who had been guilty of a moral offense. In John 8 a woman has been brought to him who has been caught in the act of adultery and they want Jesus to indicate whether she should be stoned. He replies “Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.”

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

The homosexual community is great in pointing out that Jesus waved the death penalty – neither do I condemn thee. Not quite so strong in pointing out that he also said to the woman, “Go and sin no more.” Jesus upheld the spirit of the Mosaic law without insisting of the enforcement judicially of the provision of death. We need to let our Christian response flow out of Christ’s responding and fulfillment of the Old Testament law.

It is not the question of punishment but rather the question of confession, the admission of homosexuality as a sin that is the crux of the whole question. Deuteronomy 23:17-18 is the third Mosaic law passage. “No Israelite man or woman is to become a temple prostitute. You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or a male prostitute into the house of the Lord your God to pay any vow [Male prostitute there would be *with men*.] because the Lord detests them both.” Homosexual biblical interpreters when they come to these three references in the Torah, in the Pentateuch or the Mosaic law make these three basic responses.

First, that as Christians now we are under grace and not under law. The law has no effect upon us. Secondly the response might be that Deuteronomy and Leviticus are passages to disassociate Israel from pagan worship practices. Therefore there is not a forbidding of homosexuality per se but only homosexuality as it is linked to cult prostitution. Pagan religions of the period practice various illicit sexual union as part of worship to god. God was simply giving these laws so that in the process of worship his people might break free from those kind of entanglements of denigrating human behavior that would involve prostitution as an act of worship.

These texts the Evangelical Concerned would be saying do not prohibit consensual homosexual relationships.

The third response that these persons who interpret scripture take toward the Mosaic Law is if you’re going to take homosexuality literally as a prohibition in Leviticus 18 & 20 and Deuteronomy 23 then you must also take all the rest of the laws that are found in those chapters as literal.

One writer to the *LA Times* several years ago put it this way, “Let’s stop eating pork or rabbit. No more shrimp or crab meat. We must also correct the way we’ve been treating the victims of Hampton’s Disease – leprosy. Let us return to the way God wants it to be done. ‘And the leper in whom the plague is his clothes shall be rent and his head bared and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip and shall cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’ Everything will be much simpler now that we are not to leave room for change or improved knowledge since the days of the prophets. Whenever we must make a moral judgment we will look it up in our Leviticus. Our slogan will be homosexuality is an abomination. So is shrimp.”

So there’s a really neat way of moving into those passages and discounting the prohibition against homosexuality because in the same passages there are discrimination against eating shrimp and pork and other kinds of things.

What’s basically wrong with that position? Jesus teaching in how he fulfills the Old Testament. Matthew 5:17. He talks about the fact that he has not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. That every jot and tittle of the law will be fulfilled and not a bit of it will be broken or will pass away. The Old Testament law is divided into three various aspects. Ceremonial law which had to do with the whole sacrificial system and the matter of ritual cleanliness which God and

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

ordained in order that his people might be a separate people. Laws related to circumcision and dietary habits and dress codes and the like. Which as we see from the New Testament Jesus both fulfilled those in terms of his own sinlessness and taught beyond that that the inner righteousness was what's counted. He dismissed the ceremonial law as no longer valid for his church, his body. We see that really coming to pass as we look at the book of Acts and the epistles.

A second dimension to the law was the judicial aspect, which had the code of enforcement for various penalties that were applied. But since the church is not the government and in the Old Testament the government was the church, Israel was the state. But in the New Testament a differentiation occurs so that no longer is the church given the power of the sword to uphold punishment, therefore the judicial aspect of the law is fulfilled in Christ. Of course is not applicable today. The moral law, that is the Ten Commandments, and laws relating to moral life, Jesus goes on to intensify. In Matthew 5, the Old Testament only addressed the outer external element of the moral law. He identifies the law as even going in the heart. Whereas the moral law of the Old Testament said don't commit adultery. The moral law of the New Testament drives it into our hearts and says, Even if you lust and go on lusting you have already committed adultery in your heart. The Lord never waves the moral law only intensifies it. The reason why he intensifies it is that we might come to an appreciation of our need for God's grace.

When it comes to Leviticus 18 & 20 we might point out that surely not even the homosexual community who interprets the Bible in this regard would wave all the requirements of Leviticus 18 & 20. Granted there are in Leviticus texts, which deal with eating shrimp and eating crabs and eating pork. But there are also in those same passages texts, which deal with the prohibition with incest, the prohibition of child sacrifice, and the prohibition of rape. Surely no one wants to then look in and say the Old Testament speaks to us about eating pork and we can throw that out. We can throw out all the laws on incest as well. We can throw out all the laws on child sacrifice as well. We recognize as we all look together at scripture, look at Leviticus 18 & 20 some laws pertain to ceremonial cleanliness and some of them pertain to moral matters, which are fixed, and eternal. Our determination of what is ceremonial and what is moral is controlled by how the New Testament itself treats those texts.

Which brings us then to the New Testament. Romans 1:18-32 are the crux of the matter. Paul is starting out in a section of Romans, Paul spends the first few chapters laying the groundwork for the case of "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and that outside of the grace of Jesus Christ and out of justification by faith there was no hope for mankind because no one has ever kept the law. He starts out in chapter 1 with a condemnation of the pagan world. Then later in chapter 2 he picks up the condemnation of the Jewish world, the religious world so that he might finally show that all are in need of God's grace. In his condemnation of the pagan world he shows that the pagans, those without the scriptures, without the law and the prophets have nonetheless had two things going for them that they could recognize God in. God in creation had revealed his personality and nature. And also through the conscious God had revealed his nature. But the pagan world had abandoned glorifying God and giving him thanks as the creator, the one who gave them the sense of conscious. Therefore when we come to verse 26 we find that after they had abandoned God and began to serve idols God then gave them over, handed them over to shameful lusts even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

This text appears to be rather clear in a statement that homosexuality is outside of God's order, outside of his will in the creation. It is clearly a sin in the presence of God and one which we need to repent from like the sins listed in verses 28-32.

The homosexual community that works with the Bible.... And I keep qualifying that because there are many homosexuals that have no interest in religion at all. I'm basically talking about people who are attempting to look at the scripture and still remain tacitly Christian while practicing a homosexual lifestyle. They say Christians again historically have misunderstood Romans 1. Paul here is condemning perversion. But he is not condemning inversion. Inversion is a term that has been created by the homosexual community to describe what they believe to be a person who is not a homosexual by choice but who is a homosexual by birth or by basic constitutional makeup. Therefore the homosexual community looking at this particular text says Paul is not condemning covenantal homosexual relationships. He is condemning heterosexuals who try to practice homosexuality. That would be perversion. But for homosexuals for whom homosexuality is natural it would be a perversion for the natural homosexual to practice heterosexuality. Therefore the condemnation from Romans 1 would be on the homosexual invert attempting to be a practicing heterosexual person.

The emphasis here is placed on the word "natural." Since it is the assumption often within the homosexual community that homosexuality is rather natural and you really don't have a great deal of choice in the matter if any choice at all, you are what God as made you and God didn't make anything bad at all. If you're a practicing homosexual then it is within your nature to be homosexual and you can't do anything about it and this scripture doesn't refer to you at all.

In dealing with this scripture and this issue we have to really take time then to see what does the scripture mean. Because people can use terms like we're using like the word "natural" and get something totally different than the actual context of the passage demands. The word "natural" is used in Romans 1 as a clear reference back to creation which is spoken of in verses 19-20. What is by nature, has nothing to do with someone's feeling that what they're doing is natural. It has to do with the natural order that God established when he created. Jesus himself said at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife and they two will become one flesh. The only one flesh relationship permitted in scripture is the relationship between a husband and wife. A male and female in a covenantal marriage relationship.

So the word nature has nothing to do with what feels natural to me. The word "natural" has a reference back to the creation and what God designed in his creative order. Homosexuality therefore does not express what God's nature is in creation.

Someone has said that there is no more a Christian form of homosexuality than there is a Christian form of adultery or a Christian form of bestiality or a Christian form of rape.

Another New Testament passage is 1 Corinthians 6:9 where Paul is giving a list of those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. He says, "Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders or thieves or the greedy nor drunkards or slanderers or swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you were." There were converted homosexuals in the Corinthians church and in

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

the church of Jesus Christ today. “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God.

The two key words in verse 9 as they relate to homosexuality are the words “male prostitutes” and “homosexual offenders.” In the Greek the word in its original means “soft to touch, weak.” And therefore commonly carried the King James definition “effeminate.” It sometimes used to refer to men and boys who allowed themselves to be used homosexually. It carries with it the connotation of passivity in the sex act. Therefore it is translated in the NIV as “male prostitutes.”

“Homosexual offender” comes from the word that means “male bed.” It is perhaps used to describe the active-aggressive person in the sex act.

The biblical position is that homosexuality is a sin but it is a sin alongside that of adultery, thievery and greed. It is neither worse nor is it better. I think this is sometimes a mistake the church has made in elevating homosexuality to the sin above all other sins. In Paul’s list it’s neither first nor last. It’s simply there and it’s to be noted. It’s to be recognized as a sin. But there is cureability for this sin as there is cureability for all the rest.

The other reference is 2 Peter 2 and Jude. The other reference is 1 Timothy 1:9-10. Again we are dealing with a list of those who are lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly, the sinful, the unholy, the irreligious, for those who kill their fathers and mothers, murderers, adulterers, perverts – the same word used in 1 Corinthians as homosexual offenders. This group he goes on slave traders, liars, perjurers – all such are outside of God.

I might note one other thing. The text continually uses the word *porneia* to refer to all forms of immorality. The word from which we derive pornography. Pornography literally meaning fornication writing. *Porneia* in its New Testament Greek sense is a word used to describe all sexual activity or intercourse outside of marriage – whether it’s fornication, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality or the like. Whenever *porneia* occurs it is a blanket condemnation of all sexual relationship that is outside the marriage. In that one word alone in its use in the New Testament one sees the condemnation of all forms of sexual immorality.

In summary, the Old and New Testament references to marriage and sexuality, the thrust of the Genesis creation account, the testimony of Paul and of course Jesus about marriage. These constitute the whole fabric that unanimously portray heterosexual love as God’s will and therefore as good and normative.

We need to be careful to recognize that homosexual desires or temptations are like heterosexual desires and temptations. Simply because one is tempted in this area does not constitute sin. The sin comes in failure to respond to God’s will to those drives. All of us are responsible before God for our actions and how we respond to temptation.

We recognize that some people enter an adulterous relationship and they want to make it permanent and loving. But here’s no way from scripture that you can make an adulterous relationship that pleases the Lord. So, here, there is no way to make a homosexual relationship pleasing to the Lord either.

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

The witness of scripture and the right and fair understanding of letting the scriptures speak for themselves without twisting them would indicate that scripture witness is against the practice of homosexual.

The second question: what the church's response should be to the homosexual person.

A lot of things can be said. But three things basically are incumbent upon the church as the New Testament gives us admonition.

The first thing incumbent upon the church of Jesus Christ, that's all of us, is that the church stands to proclaim the judgment of God upon all sin including homosexual sin. As biblical Christians we acknowledge that we do not have an unlimited right to do with our body as we may please. Therefore we take issue as Christians with the abortionists and with the homosexuals. The body is the Lord. The creation of sexual differentiation by God from the beginning established heterosexuality as the normative direction for the sexual impulse and act. Therefore homosexuality is not some aberration or accidental variation within culture like left handedness. It represents setting ones desires and satisfying ones physical drives contrary to God's appointment and creation. Scriptures would bear witness to the fact that homosexuals are made and not born. There's a great deal going on in our society saying that homosexuals are born that way. Scriptures represent all of sin as a matter of choice. Albeit that some person's choice appears to be more free than others because some persons conditioning in their home life may give them a disposition that is passed on in a terrible way within the family structure. But ultimately homosexual like adultery becomes a matter of choice. The church cannot condone what God condemns without losing its own integrity and coming under God's judgment.

I might also add that the idea that homosexuals are born that way and can never change destroys hope for the individual to be different. When responsibility for homosexuality is destroyed hope is also destroyed.

That brings us to the second response of the church and that is the church needs to proclaim the gospel as the power of God unto salvation. The church cannot imply get stuck proclaiming God's judgment upon all sin. We have good news. The power of Jesus Christ is sufficient unto salvation to the last and the lost and the least. To the most ingrained wrongful sinful habit.

Romans 1 is saying that outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ God has given up on mankind. But in the gospel there is hope. That's why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6 when referring to homosexuals, thieves, adulterers and the like, such were some of you.

When you read that list in 1 Corinthians 6 you wouldn't have wanted to wander into that group before they were converted. For one thing you'd have walked out without your wallet. And perhaps you would have walked out with some losses in some other areas. But such were some of you.

The church needs to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ as the hope of the homosexual. We will never win anyone we disdain. You cannot ever win someone to the gospel of Jesus Christ if you are looking down upon them. When you call a person fruity or queer or something like that you're demeaning them and it's impossible to win someone to the Lord whom you demean. We

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

will never win anyone whom we disdain. We must keep in mind the understanding that while God hates the sin he loves the sinner.

A third thing we need to do as a church is to support and encourage a transformed lifestyle. We especially need to distinguish between homosexual feelings and homosexual activity. The persons will come to faith in the Lord who still have not gotten the victory over all their homosexual feelings. But the gospel calls us to end all immoral activity. As that activity is immediately brought to an end. Let him who steals, for example, steal no more. Maybe the thief is still tempted to steal but in terms of activity, the activity other has ended in conversion. The activity of adultery has ended in conversion, even though the temptation may still be there. The activity of homosexuality has ended even though the temptation may still be there. As a church, a body of people we need to support and encourage those who are making these important changes in their life. Such were some of you.

A third critical question has to be raised in regard to the issue of the Christian facing homosexuality is what should be the Christian's response to political efforts to accord homosexuals recognition as a minority group protected by civil rights laws. The whole matter of rights leads us to try to define terms. It's right for you to tithe to our church but our church doesn't have the right to force you to contribute. There's a right involved. But different people have different rights.

We also make the distinction between being right and having a right. You have a right to overeat. But it's not right for you to do so.

The state is in a position to enforce it's will against all sins. But only some sins are legal wrongs. Therefore for example, the state does not enforce a punishment against drunkenness. Although the scriptures understand drunkenness to be a sin. The state imposes no punishment upon drunkenness unless you are drunk in a public place and making a nuisance of yourself or drunk driving a motor vehicle.

However the state does punish some things that are clearly sin. Rape is clearly a sin. The state has a right to punishment. No one has a right to rape.

When it come to homosexuality, is homosexuality a right? Do homosexuals have a right to pursue homosexual relationships? Basically when we talk about society there are three kinds of rights that are accorded to citizens in the United States.

One time is the freedom right. Free to act without coercion. Free to assemble. Free to speak. Free to own private property.

Another kind of right is the benefit right. Right to receive something from others who correspondingly have a duty to provide it. Such as if you're disabled. You have a benefit right to receive help from the state.

The third kind of right is the non discriminatory right. Right not to be discriminated against when it comes to services and support – employment, housing, education, public accommodations and the like.

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

The homosexual community is talking about this third aspect being extended like the civil rights movement, a non-discriminatory right. If they are given a non-discriminatory right it would be at the cost of depriving Christians and others of their rights to shun contact with moral perversion.

We also have the prospect that once homosexual is made a civil non-discriminatory right that homosexual couples will be able to adopt children and there will be no barrier of the law to prevent that from happening.

We'll face equal time provision for television broadcasting that presents homosexuality as other than natural or desirable.

There will be the use of public funds for housing for homosexuals as there are for other minority groups.

And Christians and others will be exposed to lawsuits regarding employment, rental and others on the grounds of sexual discrimination.

Finally in this whole thing there will be an intrusion into the church and church related institutions regarded hiring and firing homosexual persons.

Then we have the problem of homosexual in the military and those ramifications.

I think these are sufficient reasons to say to us Christians that we cannot be naïve or uninvolved on this issue. I think we as Christians and the general public as a whole have been asleep on this issue. Somebody needs to get involved and informed and know where legislatures are standing on issues. I believe there is a legitimate Christian and moral position on this issue of the homosexual lifestyle.

We as Christians do not want to be known as bigoted judgmental or legalistic. These are terms thrown at us. To simply speak on this issue is to be identified as bigoted, judgmental or legalistic. But our opposition doesn't flow out of bigotry at all. People need to be warned about what is displeasing to God, what is injurious to themselves and what is destructive of the family unit and society as a whole.

The use of the word bigot for anyone who opposes the position is another disinformation word, clearly thrown around.

What counsel does the Lord give through the word and through the spirit to homosexual persons?

The Lord has a lot of things to say that are wonderful. The first thing the Lord says to the homosexual person is the same thing he says to everyone who is involved in any kind of sin: repent. The word repent means not to change emotionally but to change mentally. To change your mind. God has not created anyone gay or homosexual. God's word says that God made us in his own image – male and female created he us. Part of repentance is reaching out to accept the lordship of Jesus Christ. Christianity is trusting Jesus even above our own feelings and

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

above our conditioning. In spite of our feelings and in spite of our conditioning God calls us to repentance and trust him and his word.

A second thing the Lord would say to a homosexual person or anyone else caught in any kind of sin is I think he would speak grace. God is full of compassion and mercy. Homosexuality is not a sin categorized in scripture as worse than all others. It's a sin simply outside of God's will. And where sin abounds so does grace.

A third word I believe that the Lord through the Spirit would speak to the homosexual person is the word power. When the Lord asks you to do something he will give you the power to do it. He will never lay any command upon you which is impossible to fulfill. True, sex and the sex drive is a very strong force but it need not be the dominating force. In heterosexuals the scripture does not allow sexuality to be dominating. That's also true in homosexuality. You do have power through the Holy Spirit to stomp all over acts of homosexuality.

We recognize that often a process is involved in our minds so that we gain strength. But power is available to those that trust the Lord.

A fourth word the Lord would speak is forgiveness. He offers full and complete amnesty and forgiveness and is treating the sinner as though they had never sinned. They're home free. The prodigal son has taught us that. Forgiveness is also important for the homosexual person because often there are people in your past you need to forgive. That when you become aware of what has happened to you is not only through your own choice but sometimes through the bad example and encouragement of others. You'll need to reach out in forgiveness toward them as well.

The last word I'd mention is the word love. What we're all looking for is love. Not sex. Love is far better. Our deepest need is not for sex but for love. The Christian's love for the person with a homosexual bondage is to be a kind love. Love is to be the modus operandi of the church. God calls us to have our deepest needs met and the love he has for us and the love that is present in he body. Too many times the church has been unloving in its treatment towards some people with particular sins. That day must end. It must be over. Only the cross of Jesus Christ with the love God has for people will ever effect a change in anyone's life. It is only the love of God that can change me or you. We must speak again and again of God's love.

Our Father, in these last moments we have covered a lot of things. The danger is we wouldn't pause and ask for personal application into our lives of what we've heard. We ask Holy Spirit that you would reveal to us now your mind and your spirit. Perhaps there are men or women here who are indeed trapped in a homosexual lifestyle looking for a word of hope. I pray that your Spirit would minister to them, speak your word of assurance and your word that says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." That their life does not have to go on in a downward trail of misery and loneliness and one night stands. But that you can change and free and deliver and minister to our lives even when we feel like we're under the most powerful addiction. There's nothing stronger than you, Lord. You're all powerful and we confess your power and your help. For persons here this evening struggling with homosexual activity in their life, we pray that such persons would come to repentance and come to know your wonderful love and your power and your forgiveness in their life. There are others who have members of their family and friends who are involved

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Christian Faces the Issues

in the homosexual lifestyle. We pray that you would use as an effective witnesses to hold true to the scripture and be a true beacon and compass while at the same time reaching out in the most loving and intercessory ways possible to claim that friend or relative for you and for your grace and care. Through the eyes of faith to see them as something other than homosexual. Maybe their bondage needs to be broken first as we in our own mind begin to give them freedom to be something other than what sin has made them. We pray too, Lord, for the body, the church of which we're a part. That it will be said of us as was said of the Corinthians, such were some of you. This body of people would through arms wide open to all of those who are distressed and in bondage to the devil and the flesh. I encourage and welcome and pray for and love those whom you love. And that we will see many wonderful deliverance from all forms of sin as we seek your face. We pray too for our involvement as Christians as your people in the society in which we dwell. We pray that we'd be as harmless as doves and as wise as serpents. That you'll give us wisdom to discern the signs of the times and stand for what is right without giving the appearance of judgmentalness or bigotry. Help us Lord. You said that for ten righteous people you'd spare Sodom and we pray, Lord, that with the decent upon this country of situation which no longer sees right from wrong that there will come a vanguard of people that seek your face and stem the tide of lawlessness and act as lights in a world. Make us that kind of people Lord. We pray that our desire for righteousness will go arm in arm with our deep desire to be lovers of men and women, to present the wholesome life that only you can give. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.