

Providence Presbyterian Church (OPC)
Pflugerville, Texas

S E R M O N T R A N S C R I P T

***A Christian Perspective on
Homosexuality***

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Scripture: Romans 1:18-32

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¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves; ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, ³⁰backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³²who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Let's pray and ask God to bless His word to us:

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for this portion of your inspired, inerrant, infallible word. We pray, O Lord that by your Spirit you would bless it to our understanding and apply it to our hearts and lives for your glory. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

You probably saw in your bulletins that the title for the sermon this evening is A Christian Perspective on Homosexuality. Verses 26 and 27 deal specifically with homosexuality.

Now you can have a cultural perspective on homosexuality from the culture that many of us grew up in; and with that perspective you may just condemn homosexuality and homosexuals because that just wasn't done in the culture that most of us grew up in. Or if you take a more contemporary cultural perspective on homosexuality you may simply say "well, homosexuality's okay, it's fine, it's another choice; and people make their own choices; and so we want to be open to that and not to condemn." And that would be a current cultural perspective on homosexuality—at least in the minds of many people.

But as Christians, we want to have a Christian perspective on everything, and that would include homosexuality as well. And we will see, I hope, that the cultural perspective on homosexuality of either an older or a younger generation will have its weak points; but a Biblical perspective or a Christian perspective does not. So we will talk about those.

First ii want to set this in its context. You remember where we are in our study of the Book of Romans. Chapter 1 verse 18, and we've looked at this section a few times already, that begins (1:18) begins what I call "the bad news" section of Romans; from 1:18 through 3:20 is bad news. From 1:18 through 3:20 deals with unfolding what the first part of verse 18 said. It says:

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, ...

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Listen! That's not something you apply to homosexuals only. We apply that to all mankind—in fact there was a listing of **lots** of sins from verses 29 through 31 and that's still not an exhaustive list of all sins. But we find the idea is presented here that all sinners deserve the wrath of God, and God has revealed that He's going to pour out wrath on all sinners.

Now, why is it that that's there—why does Paul have essentially two chapters, from the middle of chapter one to the middle of chapter 3, on God's wrath against sin? Well it is basically to underscore the importance of the good news, which he had introduced in verse 17 of terms of his theme; *for in it* verse 17 says in the Gospel, *the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*. And as that gets explained when after Paul drops it here for two chapters and comes back with almost identical words in chapter 3 (in verse 21 and 22), it's a righteousness from God that is given to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But apart from the gospel, the bad news is the news for everybody. If there was no gospel, all would be subject to the wrath of God. There is a gospel and so we as Christians need to understand that while we are not subject to the wrath of God because of the gospel, yet all of those around the world who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, have not received Him through the gospel, are subject to this wrath of God. So that this bad news section is an incentive on the one hand to unbelievers to trust and see the importance of trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ is an incentive to believers to proclaim the gospel to all the world; because the situation of those who don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is hopeless. That includes those who haven't heard. All mankind is in a hopeless situation apart from faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what I want us to understand is that in giving us this instruction about the bad news about the wrath of God, Paul takes up as an example of sins that which he writes about as being in a sense in terms of what we call "second table" or "second tablet" of the Ten Commandments sins, those having to do with our relationship with our neighbor as opposed to those having to do with our relationship with God. This seems to be the acme, the pinnacle, the worst of the sins. That's why Paul brings this up—now he's doing it to show not what bad sinners people are. He's doing it primarily to show what ungodly people people are—now how bad their sins are in the bad things they do, but primarily how far they have turned away from God Himself. And he's saying this is the reason they've turned away from God and God has given them over. That's what you see in verse 26 right after saying in verse 25 that *mankind had exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator*, he says **for this reason** God gave them up to vile passions.

So you understand that really all sin comes because of ungodliness; a lack of piety; a lack of love for God. If there's no love for God, men have chosen to go their own ways. We saw in verses 21 and 22 and 23 what they do; we see it again in verse 28 where it says *they did not like to retain God in their knowledge*. Back in verse 18 at the end of the verse it says *they suppressed the truth in unrighteousness*. So that's what's going on; and as they do that, as they refuse to deal with the truth of the existence of God, then they end up going into all sorts of sin and depravity; because if there's no God, there's no reason for restraint, right?

I mean the guy who does all the right things and the good things? He's going to die, if there's no God, just he's going to die and that's it. And the guy who restrains himself not at all and does all the bad things, well at the end he's just going to die. What's the difference if there is no God? You see.

And so because there is a God, but men have suppressed the knowledge of God, they moved into sin and God has given them over to the vile passions that they chose. He has allowed that to go ahead and happen.

And verse 26 and verse 27 deal with one particular sin:

For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

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Now one of the issues that comes up when people talk about homosexuality is whether it's natural or not. You see, they make the claim (many of the homosexuals of our day say) well, we can't help this; we're born this way; these are our natural inclinations. And because this passage says that they're doing that which is against nature and against—and they're abandoning the natural use—then Christians have sometimes too quickly and too glibly denied that that was in any way natural for them.

What we have to recognize, don't we, is that since the Fall and since the giving over of men to their vile passions, all sorts of sins are natural to us. But they are at the same time, unnatural. It's not the way God made us to be. God did not make us to sin. And so every single sin is unnatural. But after the fall of Adam and its impact on everyone else who's come into the world since, sin of one sort or another has been natural.

And so we want to see that this is both unnatural—it's not the God-ordained way for mankind to live. It's not a way that is in line with the commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden—"Be fruitful and multiply"—you don't do it by following this path. It's not natural in that sense.

In another sense, while it is true no doubt, in many cases people have fallen into this sin, not because it was their natural inclination but because it was easier, it didn't require the same kind of overtness in relations with the other sex, or something like that. And there are many people who have fallen into homosexuality who see it as wrong and want to be out of it. And so we need to recognize that is true too. But it may well be; I mean we can't—I don't trust and you probably don't either, some of the medical things that say "Oh well we can prove that medically some people have this inclination and we don't really know whether, you know, which comes first, the horse or the cart, in terms of those tests that they have done". But still there is one sense in that in which for some it's natural and for others it's unnatural.

But given that, the claim that it's natural that these kinds of urges were things that certain people were born with, is given to excuse the sin. And to say "you really can't call this sin—you can't call this sin because it was natural for me." Well, if homosexuality may be some sort of natural inclination for some few, normal sexuality is clearly a natural and normal and not unbiblical type of desire for most!

But clearly the Bible does not allow unrestrained expression of that natural desire. People that want relations—man/woman type of relations, male/female relations—have to restrain their desire except for that one situation in which God has designated that those relations are proper, and even good; and that is within the institution of marriage.

And so even if homosexuality were entirely natural, it **does not** mean that's it is okay to practice simply because it's natural.

There are too many things—it's natural, isn't it, when it looks like you're going to get in trouble, to tell a lie to keep from getting caught in something. That's pretty natural for a lot of people. Those of us who experienced our children doing that didn't have to teach our children to do that; they didn't have to be exposed to other people to do that. It was a matter of what were they going to say and for some of them, what was natural and easy to say is "I didn't do it!" ; hoping to get out of the problem. So none of those things make sin okay. **Sin is sin!**

The real issue is that there is God! **God is real.** And so—and I want our young people that are here to understand this: Because God is real and God says things are wrong, whatever things they are, including homosexuality, that means we cannot do what our culture is prone to do and make everything simply a matter of a person's individual choice. This person chooses to do this and that person chooses to do that—who's to say who's better. That's the attitude of the culture in our day, and it is completely non-biblical. It completely ignores that God is. What does it do? It goes back to the root: They chose. They

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wanted not to have the consciousness of God in their mind. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge.

Now that's—you have what are called, they call themselves "Christian homosexuals". And they believe that homosexuality is fine; and they will argue that the Bible doesn't teach that homosexuality is sin. Some of you will have heard people make that claim—the Bible doesn't teach that homosexuality is sin.

If we didn't look anywhere else in the Bible, it's taught very clearly right here, is that this is a major expression of sinful depravity. This is an expression of it that is given to us to show how bad people can be. And so, yes, it's here taught to be sin; and I'll take us to one other passage, and there's several Old Testament passages that deal with it as well—but what I want to say first is simply this: The tendency, my tendency would be to call that kind of thinking the result of the most distorted exegesis imaginable, except that there's a better word for it. Some of you know what exegesis is, it's how we get **out of Scripture** what's there. And there's another word that's often used, isogesis, that's when we read into the Bible what we want. And there's no way that you even can count any kind of interpretation that calls homosexuality something that the Bible doesn't condemn as sin—as being exegesis—it's an isogesis—and even that, it's extremely forced.

Keep your place here, but turn for a moment to First Corinthians chapter 6—it's interesting that this won't show you much in terms of your reading it from this translation; it didn't even go back and look this up because it's so clear in other translations and also specifically in the Greek. But let me just refer you to I Corinthians—Ah! There it is! I was turned on the wrong page. Okay. I was looking at some very strong things in I Corinthians 5.

But chapter 6, if you begin with verse 9 in First Corinthians:

⁹Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?

Now that's a starting statement and question. And then it amplifies that.

Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

So we need to understand that there's really no such thing as a Christian homosexual. That all such persons, including—and similar people, fornicators, adulterers, thieves, covetous, all of those, those people will not inherit the kingdom of God. They will not go to heaven.

Is this picking on homosexuals? No! It's simply looking at what the Bible says about sin in general, but one sin in particular that in our day has become culturally acceptable in many places—not only that, but culturally promoted by many people. We need to see what the Bible has to say against it so that both homosexuals and sodomites are particularly listed here.

You know there is a story in Genesis about the angels that appear, after having been with God in talking with Abraham and taking a message to him, they appear to visit with Lot in Sodom to warn him to get out of the city. And the desires of the men there were such that the city was given its name—or not the—the sin derives its name from the name of their city. And Sodom was destroyed because of such sinfulness. We need to recognize that as sin.

But we also need to recognize something else that shows up both in the passage of I Corinthians 6 (that I still have open) and also our text in Romans chapter 1. And that is **as bad as this sin is, the good news of the Gospel is that there is forgiveness for every sort of sin, every sort of sinner.**

Look at the way this text goes on in verse 11, after listing all of these sins and saying that none of those will inherit the kingdom of God, verse 11 says *and such were some of you, but you were washed, you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

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There is forgiveness for every sin. That's part of the whole reason for the "bad news" section in Romans from 1:18 through 3:20; is because on the one hand sin is real, sin is horrible, sin is subject to the wrath of God **BUT God sent His Son to die for sinners.**

And even the very context of this "bad news" section is such as to teach that God's Son—if the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, and the good news is that there is salvation from all sin and ungodliness; then it's already right there, even before we get to the definition and explanations of it in chapter 6; that for those who are believers **Christ bears the wrath of God against those sins.**

The Christian Church, maybe not in its entirety, but certainly in many of its people; has sometimes moved too much in a cultural direction—maybe an older culture—but still cultural rather than Biblical, in having a complete disdain towards sinners in certain categories, including that of homosexuals. "We won't have anything to do with them. We won't talk to them. The Gospel is not for them". That's not true! Even to think that way is to admit that we somehow have not seen our own sinfulness and our deserved condemnation. Our only hope for ourselves in salvation is the **grace of God through Jesus Christ!** None of us are good enough to go to heaven. Homosexuals are not—that's true! We are not! That's also true. And so as sinners we are not to look down on other sinners of whatever category they may be. Rather we're to have sympathy for sinners—I don't mean that we're to act condescending toward any sort of sinners; but we are to have sympathy for them as being sinners. We're to care about people as people created in the image of God; that's what the Bible teaches.

And so as much as disgust, as the more vocal—I guess "advocates" is too light a word—but for those who push for homosexuality as being normal and natural and to be taught and promoted as one option alongside other options for sexual expression; as much as that kind of thing and those people may disgust us, we are to treat them with charity and love and compassion as those who need the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Go back in your mind to what it was saying in I Corinthians 7, all that list of bad sinners and about all of the things on that list, Paul says *and such were some of you*. There were Christians in the Church at Corinth who had been homosexuals. They didn't become Christians without the Gospel, without Christian sympathy and compassion and love and the willingness to talk to them about the Gospel.

So we can't fall into a cultural view either on the underside of our culture which says, "Oh whatever anybody wants to do is okay"; or in the older side of it that looks at all of these things as horrible simply because our cultural has taught us that. They **are** horrible; but instead of simply approaching them with disgust, we approach them as Christians.

For a long time Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, which is a PCA Church, a sister conservative Bible-believing Presbyterian denomination; Tenth Presbyterian Church where Jim Boyce was the pastor for many years, has had a ministry to homosexuals. Where they saw a lot of homosexuals come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They showed them compassion. But you know what, there was more than simply seeing those people come to repentance and faith, they also saw homosexuals change and drawn out of and given strength to leave that homosexual lifestyle.

Now homosexuality as a sin is just a horrible thing. The homosexual lifestyle, if you've ever read about it, talked to people about it, is horrible just about beyond imagination. And yet the gospel has the power to pull people out of that lifestyle. And so the ultimate lesson in this passage—you see we have a gracious God and a glorious gospel and a wonderful Savior. And instead of with our sins looking down on their sins, instead of that, with our forgiveness we ought to point them to forgiveness as well.

Now I understand how much the homosexual movement, as much as they try to be in your face about their particular preferences and activities, I understand how much that is unappealing to us, how much it

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intentionally opposes Christianity; and you see it in the news. They've been opposing Christian churches through the years, in California in particular; but in other places as well. Understanding all of that, we still are to follow say an example like that offered by Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church (another PCA church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida) where James Kennedy was pastor for a long, long time. When I was in the PCA, they hosted a PCA general assembly and they knew ahead a time that there were going to be homosexual protests there at their church building against our denomination because of the stand that that denomination had taken against homosexuality, as being sin; and was very clear about it as is the OPC. And basically that group was wanting to portray the idea that Christians were intolerant, that Christians were guilty of hate crimes.

And so they showed up in their anger to be welcomed by cookies and punch. They showed up with their hateful signs to be welcomed by loving people who wanted to point them to the Lord Jesus Christ. That's an appropriate type of Christian response.

We as Christians need to see it as clearly sin, but we need to see it as being like every other sin, wrong in God's eyes, deserving of God's wrath, and very capable of His forgiveness. We have a wonderful Savior! Tell the world about Him!

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father we thank you that your word gives us specific teaching about things that become issues in society and in culture. We thank you for the teaching about homosexuality, that it is sinful, that it is deserving of your wrath, that it is against nature, that it is a perversion of creation. And yet, Lord, we thank you that that sin, as sinful as it is, is a sin that can be forgiven under your grace; and that tells us, Lord, that every other sin is also forgivable through Jesus Christ. How we thank you for Him as our Savior; how we pray, Lord that the world would see Him as Savior and Lord and come to Him.

We pray, Lord, for homosexuals in our own community whether Pflugerville or the wider Austin area. We pray, Lord, that through the witness and the grace of Christians and Christian churches, that many of them might be forgiven of their sins and come to Jesus Christ and be changed and turn away from their homosexuality; so it could be said about them as it was in Corinth "and such were some of you". Oh Lord, we pray that many of them would be washed, justified, sanctified, and in the end glorified, through the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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