

Unnatural Affections

Understanding Leviticus

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Bible Text: Leviticus 18:19-30

Preached on: Sunday, January 10, 2010

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Turn to Leviticus chapter 18 and verse 22. And the title of this evening's sermon is this. "Unnatural Affections."

Now this subject that we are looking at tonight, I can't be accused of having a particular insight or a special knowledge of, nor is it a subject that frequently I have preached on. I have been with you dear brethren nine years and this is the first sermon on this particular subject that I preached, and prior to that, fourteen years stretching back, we think, my previous pastorate.

But it is here in the Word of God. And, moreover, it is here in Leviticus which is the book of the Bible that we have been reading through and preaching through over these last three, four months it must now be.

And it brings us to a subject which we have to admit is very much in the public eye, the matter of homosexual behavior, homosexuality, homosexual orientation in its broadest sense. It can cause great outrage, great consternation among Christians it must be said. It can cause great discomfiture for Christians to think about these issues and to try to understand them and can cause considerable embarrassment. And, likewise, amongst people who would claim to be homosexual in terms of their interests and attractions, they would claim to feel very angry, some of them at least, outraged that's the word, isn't it, at a text like this and other texts that are found in the Bible.

But we can't ignore either the culture that we are in, the views that people are taking outside and inside the church, nor can we ignore the Word of God. And we have a duty to try to apply Scripture, the Scriptures that we have before us, including those in Leviticus.

Why? The events of this last week and the way, sadly, and the difficulties that the Robinsons, Peter Robinson and his wife Iris, the leader of the Democratic Union Party in Northern Ireland have experienced, she having been quite outspoken in her view there about what homosexuality is and what it receives from God, but herself now found to be having had an illicit relationship with a man much younger than herself, and battling now financial impropriety accusations.

Well, it is meant that the book of Leviticus is very much in the public eye. And I was looking at a blog site that is one of the most looked at political blog sites in the country and the man looking at Iris Robinson and her comments there talking about her Leviticus view of the world. And you will be thinking particularly of a verse like Leviticus 18 verse 22 which we have before us tonight.

So, it is in the news. We are on the subject that, in a sense, has been brought into the public eye. So it can't be ignored.

We may have members of our families, may have those who have explained to us, expressed to us that they are what they might call homosexual in their outlook and orientation. You may meet people, friends. We may have acquaintances, work colleagues who would say that this is them, that this is their understanding of themselves.

I have mentioned the news. It is in the news, laws that are passed and new laws that are also being proposed that are going to influence or could do potentially the Church and have an impact upon us. It affects people in churches. It affects Christians.

Whether it be any of us gathered here now or at any other time who have battled with this issue and had temptations and had difficulties with this issue. Many Christians—and I would hold many of them to be true Christians as well—have issues of the heart concerned with these things.

We hear of people speaking out, coming out. We hear of people being cowed into silence and felt that they have been unable to speak about the temptations and the difficulties which they have experienced in this area. And, in truth, all of these issues are far, far more than one sermon can adequately deal with.

I suspect that this sermon will be longer than average as it tries, at least, to incorporate some of the Bible's teaching, the Church's response and to articulate as well concerns that we as God's people may have living in the culture that we presently do. I am sure one sermon is not going to be anything like adequate enough to, as it were, open up all the issues or address them adequately.

But here it is in the Word of God.

And here is what the Bible teaches, Leviticus 18 verse 22.

“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”¹

Now when you... often on the television you might hear such texts read, it is... I have heard it read by somebody there with a kind of voice full of malevolence and a kind of cruel enjoyment that such a thing is written.

¹ Leviticus 18:22.

God does not take pleasure in sin and God does not take pleasure, either, in the death of the wicked.

And Leviticus we know to be inspired Scripture and we know, as well, that it isn't something that is consigned to a bygone era, something that is irrelevant today. No. Though we must interpret carefully the law of God and many don't, though we must apply in our present age carefully the things that we find here, there are matters, many matters which transfer across from the old covenant to the new covenant. In the times of the Old Testament to our own times, matters that the Lord there has expressed his displeasure of that remain still matters that he is displeased with.

The context which we considered some weeks back now, looking at the 10 Commandments and here, really, breeches of the Seventh Commandment. It is sandwiched in among those things there. There is a breakdown somewhere in that commandment about adultery.

“You shall not commit adultery.”²

And opening up a whole area to do with sexuality and sexual behavior. That is its context.

And we must note that the Word of God is always careful in what it says and what it doesn't say. That here before us we have actions. These are actions, acts, that God places his anger against, his sanction upon and says no to and declares them to be in his sight an abomination. And that is a strong word. It is not a word to be conjured away or dismissed or its power lost. It is enforced as is Leviticus in various places with this very solemn declaration, “I am the Lord.”

And many, taking Scripture out of context, fail to see that it is the Lord speaking these things, the law giver, a holy God, a righteous God.

But it is and we are careful to note this, the actions that particularly here are before us in our consideration. It is not necessarily the temptations, the temptations to do these things or the pull or the draw to do these things. It is the actions, deliberate sexual stimulation, gratification, fulfillment, arousal, man with man or a woman with a woman, members of the same sex.

And this is where the strength of the Lord's rebuke and condemnation rests.

And so we have to see that in context not saying, “Well, that is Leviticus. That is years ago.”

No, this is God's moral law, just as other laws pertaining to adultery, pertaining to the marriage and its importance and its status. These things remain to this day and, likewise, God's displeasure with these particular kinds of acts.

² Exodus 20:14.

So people should not, I suggest, rush to find outrage and anger not to be as some, I understand, finding these pages, who will then tear them out of the Bible they may have found, or, as in that church in Glasgow offer people the chance to write their amendments or their comments about the Bible in its margin and basically deface it. Neither is it to be met with, I would suggest, abuse, and certainly not deicide, for, dear friends, that will never work.

“I am the Lord.”

People may rail and hate what he has said. They may hate him. But he will have the last word and we must always be mindful of that.

Now it is not as if this is an isolated text. There are other texts, not huge numbers of texts, but there are also some very powerful examples. And where God’s particular judgment in Genesis was visited, was of course, upon Sodom and Gomorrah, cities where things had really gone completely out of control. And what direction that excess had gone into was in a particular expression of homosexual behavior and activity. Why there was violence indeed. But there must have been a lot of violent sexual activity in those days.

What attracted God’s attention was this particular species of it. And, thus, in Genesis 19 and in those passages there we read of God’s judgment upon that city and those cities. And in Jude in the New Testament and in verse seven where this is commented upon, not, again, as if, “Well, that was Genesis, God’s displeasure against these acts surely has passed. He has updated. He has got over it, hasn’t he?”

No, in Jude seven we read these solemn words about how he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them in a similar matter to these having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

However much people try to play around with that phrase, ‘strange flesh’, and try to point it in a different direction or weight it towards a different kind of lust than was actually there, those people were out of control. This wasn’t a life-long stable relationship kind of relationship. This was just wild, inflamed lust.

It is still called going after strange flesh. There is the fact of it. And we have Jude seven interpreting the events of Genesis 19 and God’s particular judgment that was visited on that occasion.

And, again, we are, not to miss, I think, in Romans chapter one these verses which describe to us society, societies where things, again, have gone in a decidedly downward direction, where there is the exhibition of behavior which attracts the judgment of God.

We find in the midst of Romans one and verses 26 to 27 these strong words again.

“For this reason,” we read:

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 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.³

The Bible, the apostle Paul speaking there, not, I believe, as some poor benighted bigot, some poor man unable to cope with these sorts of things, or, just plain ignorant to the fact that actually out there, there were loving stable relationships, something like that, that he was just living within his own culture.

Well, not if we receive Scripture as being infallible and not if we receive Scripture as telling to us something which, in a sense, is plain because this idea of women and men leaving the natural use of one another, being attracted to each other and, indeed, burning in their lust for one another, this rather takes us back to verse 20 of Romans chapter one.

What is this natural use of things? What is it that we are finding in what is happening now, that men are leaving women to be with men and women are leaving men to be with other women? What is it in this that is a leaving off of the natural use of the woman or of the man?

And there we learn of this. “For since the creation....”⁴ Or, rather, reading from verse 19:

Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For 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.⁵

There is that which dates back from creation. There is that which may be known of God, his plan, his will and intention. Still, something of it kept in the conscience. It is known. It is manifest in them for God has shown it to them. This is his truth. This is what has been from the creation of the world. It was “clearly seen being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.”⁶

Well, we look on. What are the things that he made? Well, we know about the world, the inanimate world, as well animals and plants and all sorts of things like this. But, of course, what was the crown of his creation? What is that which he made that stood forth before Him as very good. It was man and woman, Genesis one verses 26 to 28.

³ Romans 1:26-27.

⁴ Romans 1:20.

⁵ Romans 1:19-20.

⁶ Romans 1:20.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."⁷

Creation sets forth the standard, in a way, there, for what is natural. And what is to be made manifest in us, that God made us male and female.

And, likewise, we could read further in Genesis chapter two where God, well, describing here the beautiful account of the creation of woman and how he blessed them both.

Then we learn in Genesis two verse 22:

Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."⁸

"Therefore," and this is the comment, isn't it, on it? "A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."⁹

That is setting forth the creation account. That is what we may therefore infer from God's intention and God's will. And what is the natural use of the woman regarding it from the man's point of view, but also vice versa. That is the intention, that the man should leave his family, his father and mother and be joined to his wife and that they should be one flesh. That is how it was from the beginning "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."¹⁰

We can know this from God from creation. We can understand something of his work and something of his wisdom in the making of man and woman and in the ordaining of the relationship there which he has promised to bless of marriage, a man and a wife, a man and a woman together.

In that sexual union is all implied there, one flesh tells us this, male and female, created him they. This tells us that this is part of what it is; the natural use, what nature speaks to us of and speaks to us there. It tells us something of the Trinity, doesn't it? We learn there of the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in some imperfect way,

⁷ Genesis 1:26-28.

⁸ Genesis 2:22-23.

⁹ Genesis 2:24.

¹⁰ Romans 1:20.

mirrored there, their own self giving love, their own commitment and covenant together, the persons of the godhead.

And we see in the love, man to woman, there being perfectly mirrored the love of God. And we see the mystery of life too in procreation and these glorious things that take us back to the creator and make these things evident in our conscience. God has manifested it in them.

But we know this, don't we? The Bible teaches us also about the fall. It teaches us that though there was this work that displayed so clearly his intentions, this mirrored there His desire and his will, marriage, male and female. We record as well; the Scripture does, the fall, the disorder that this brings. The new: the different affections. Dare we say the unnatural affections which this unleashes where it is no longer the love of wife to husband and husband to wife, now things are liable to go in another direction. It can be the affection of a man for another man or a woman for another woman and looking on each of their own sex as being exciting in a sexual sense, stimulating in that sense. And, of course, it is not confined there. The fall has meant disorder in marriage, that a man who has a wife may then still not be satisfied and range elsewhere and his affections are naturally pulled to another and his covenant commitment and his pledges brought to nothing by going after somebody else's wife or somebody else's husband as it accords.

So the Bible teaches, yes, there in this created order we trace back to this for the intention of the Creator. And we see within that following on from it in the form, difficulties, new things that develop; affections that are not functioning in the way that here in creation without the effect of sin they would have done.

Thus we have to say we live in a fallen world.

That takes us, then, to consider. Well, if that be so, how much, then, of this attraction one would minimize it and we wouldn't say, well, there is no such thing. And we wouldn't say that the affections that may be felt there may be very strong and the kind of commitment may be in many ways very loyalty based. But can we see that within the fall explanations for the difficulties—put it that way—that people feel, these temptations, these draws, this magnetism, not for the natural use of the woman, but for an unnatural use of the man? Can we find something in that?

Well, yes. The flesh gives forth all kinds of yearnings and desires. And many of them we recognize and have recognized, which, if expressed would bring great disaster, great, great ruin, great harm. We see a host of evils in our own hearts as Christians and still subduing sin, still mortifying sin, let alone those sins that we are addicted to and that were our problem before we were converted.

And within, in this spectrum of troubles and disorders which are in all our hearts, somewhere within all of these species of sin and draw and magnetism to that which is forbidden we can say is this desire, a man for another man, a woman for another woman.

Now people have tried and I am no expert on this, but as far as I can understand the evidence, though people have tried hard to sort of nail it, to say, “Well, look, there it is. It is in their genetic code. There is a difference between people of homosexual orientation and a heterosexual orientation.”

Though there are studies that have brought some interesting pieces of evidence to light, there has been nothing conclusive there. Or hormonal things which help to shape our bodies and bring these things to bear, chemicals that sort of work within us or don't always work as the case may be.

But, again, though there have been some interesting evidences and some things that point in a direction that suggest, yes, that can have a contributory factor here, the end is not something there where one finds that sort of smoking gun and say, “Well, there for sure, is an explanation that lies there or any other biological function or anything written within our constitution.”

Scientists have looked and people have looked and, of course, they will often try to, you know, prove the case one way or the other and you have to take these very carefully, these studies. And they are often not on particularly representative samples of people either.

There is, there are element within that that suggest, yes, various bundles of nerves in the brains, all things that hypothalamus there where maybe we can see some differences there. Maybe in some of the genetic things there are some differences that can be discerned there. They must be taken very carefully and the evidence is by no means conclusive.

Likewise, there have been studies that have looked at these folk and their backgrounds and there have been elements pointing towards some difficulties, perhaps, within families that have made it more likely that a child may go in that direction, absent sort of father, domineering mother, perhaps in some of the lads in that direction.

But, again, these things are not conclusive. And we can't then say, “Well, then that happens and then that happens.”

And those—and this includes Christians—medical people have looked on these things and say, “Well, it is very complex.”

And, of course, there is also the element of personal choice. There are those things that people have chosen to do and activities that they have deliberately sought out. Indeed, in the end that always has to be the case, there. People may... and we can all say, “Well, I am tragically pushed in this direction or hormonally I am pushed this way or it is the family that I came from.”

Ah, yes, these can be difficulties. These can produce issues within our constitution and we can say, “Well, it is the fall and it is other fallen people and what they have impacted upon us.”

But it is still the element of choice. Attraction doesn't have to end in activity. Temptation doesn't have to lead to yielding. One cannot privilege people because of the genetic baggage they are carrying, whatever special difficulties they have labored under. There may be great sympathy that may be needed to be shown and kindness and compassion. But not to assert some privilege there, and, therefore, some autonomy from God's law and some divine right as they might believe it to conduct themselves in these particular ways.

So, yes, we look at creation, the standard there. We learn about ourselves, about God. It is imprinted upon our consciences and what God's approval is upon.

Then we see the fall and we see the difficulties that that has brought.

Next I want to move to a response. Certainly many more things could have been said on that subject, so many studies that have been done at least some of which I have read about. So many also of writings by people who profess to be evangelicals and try to support the idea that the homosexual acts are not forbidden in Scripture.

I have to report that those are highly unconvincing in the plain reading of Scripture is still the safest and the best.

So then what of us? What of us as Christians?

However much we may find the subject difficult, however much we may have different views on it or different takes on it, what is to be our response?

Well, I have read something that somebody who is involved very much as an evangelical who came out of the gay scene, converted and has always had his battles and his temptations and he is honest about those, seeks to help people in those communities.

He has written, well, what, what is it that people out there think about us? What does the homosexual community think about when they are given the name evangelical Christian?

Well, this is what is the answer according to this Christian counselor?

If you ask the average gay or lesbian person what they believe evangelical Christians think of them, they will say, “They hate us, don't they? They hate homosexuals.”

Well, the man writing that didn't write that to grind an axe or to state something that was just to generate controversy. That is what he over his years of experience has gleaned. That is what they think of the evangelical church.

“They hate us, don’t they? They hate homosexuals.”

And we have to say that the behavior of some who profess to be Christians has only reinforced that view. One reads with horror of this particular American Baptist, isn’t it, and his family who turn up at the funerals of men, service women who have died in battle professing to be homosexuals and who have stood at the cemetery at the funeral and protested and said that God hates gays and been there at a time of personal grief to the families, being in this way present and making this stand.

Well, dear friends, this has nothing to do with evangelical Christianity, may I suggest. This has nothing to do with us. To use the parlance, not in my name. And I don’t think, in all truth, it is in God’s name either.

These responses and these kind of behaviors, though by a minority in this respect, get the publicity and it can become, then, an issue that people out in the gay community or wherever else will pick up upon and say, “Well, there it is. They just hate us, don’t they? They just hate us.” Their blood pressure rises. “They just want to strangle us.”

I was listening to a, well, let’s call him a false prophet for that is what he is, on a program and this man, I won’t say his name, but I many of you can guess I am sure, these prophecies that he was making at the end of the 1980s, the 1980s, I stress, regarding the 1990s. And he was authoritatively, and backed up with some tongues as well, telling us what the 1990s would bring.

Well, as the decade closes and 2010 is now with us we can look back on this as very much history. And this fellow, well, he was saying all kinds of things in the 1990s. You were going to see great earthquakes down the eastern coast of America which were going to shake the whole place. You wouldn’t miss them, apparently. Well, I missed them. I think we all missed them for they never happened. But this is what he was saying.

He was telling us various other things, of a great economic collapse. I guess that did happen in America, but he was about 10, 15 years late on this one. That was going to happen in the 1990s.

And then the one that I want to bring to your attention tonight is this. And he said, and he put a date on it. I say, “The fool.” Well, he did. He put a date on it. In 1994-1995, there about, well, he has nailed his colors to the mast now. And he said this that God is going to destroy homosexuals. And I take that to be in America. He is going to destroy them, he said. And he said it isn’t going to be by ordinary means. It is going to be by fire.

And do you know what happened? Their people cheered and clapped. They didn’t cheer and clap about the collapse of eastern coast’s cities or the financial ruin that was coming or any of the other things. There was going to be a dictator. I have told you about this before, a short man. Anyway, he never turned up either. But they didn’t cheer and clap about that. They only cheered and clapped when he announced that the homosexual community was going to be destroyed by fire.

O dear friends - those who may listen in to these things... And I tell you these so called televangelists are some of the most vehement in these things that do no help to the cause of Christ. They do no help in seeking to win people to the gospel. And we must say that these things are out there in whatever professes to be evangelicalism. But, again, I assert, not in my name. And I am ashamed of those who cheered and shouted at the thought. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and that we should take no pleasure either in those who come under God's judgment whoever they might be.

I can remember, just a personal testimony, really, when I was at university as a Christian. And I was at University College London which seems to be a breeding ground of terrorists at the moment. Well, I quickly say I was there many, many years before that young fellow who tried to blow up a plane. But when I was there it was part of the gossip or rumor that one of the lecturers was homosexual and he was living somewhere in north London with his partner. And I was told this and my response was... you say, "Oh, right, there's a bit of news, ok!"

I didn't exactly jump up and down and rather suggest I was sad to hear it. And there was surprise. They were surprised that I hadn't been angry. They were surprised that I hadn't denounced him or, I don't know, wanted him hung or drawn and quartered, something like that.

And I was a little surprised that that should have been what was the expected response of me; known to be a Bible believing evangelical Christian.

But I suppose many in the homosexual community have learned otherwise, that those who profess to be evangelicals do hate them; do loathe. And so we have to say that that is not what we are expected to be or to do in my view. No, rather this, let's think of it like this.

Dear friends, whoever we are we are made in the image of God, whoever we are. Whatever may be our professing orientation, whatever may be the precise areas of temptation that we experience, we are all made in the image of God.

Now that means that we are worthy of being treated with dignity and respect, of being listened to and expecting others to listen to us, that not all who claim to be homosexuals and that are necessarily promiscuous, necessarily predators, necessarily the bearers and the carriers of AIDS. No, we do well to stop and listen, to try to inquire, to try to understand and to treat people with dignity and respect.

We are all made in the image of God. People can demonize other people very easily. We will be thinking about the way that, perhaps, the Church has been wrongly demonized in a moment, but it works both ways. There can be some very untrue caricatures, some very unhelpful caricatures. No, I shall also be saying that there are many issues within the homosexual community of which we may rightly ask of them and their behaviors.

But there we see that it is incumbent upon us to treat all as made in the image of God.

Whatever we think whatever we say that we treat people with dignity and respect. Don't avoid them. Nothing to be embarrassed about them. We are not going to demonize them. We, ourselves, recognize that we, too, are strugglers against sin. We, too, have our own battles, our own issues. We, too, yield to things and difficulties that we experience. We meet with people on the ground of a fellow sinner meeting a fellow sinner.

They, really my second point under our response here, we, they, whatever distinctions we might make on the grounds of sexuality, we are together in our need of Christ's blood. We need forgiveness. They need forgiveness. Acts that are committed in this way, I am not going to elaborate on them here in this context, but they are not unforgivable. Oh no, dear friends. They are forgivable like every other sin. Because the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. It doesn't reach to a certain area, to certain communities, to certain difficulties and certain temptations, to certain lusts but not to others.

The blood of Christ can cleanse from all sin. We are made in the image of God, yes. And as they have fallen, as we have fallen, yes, they need Christ's blood. It may be a painful admission for folks to admit as much and they may feel greatly offended that that is the expectation, but they admit as much. But there is in Christ a sufficiency in that blood. There is always hope. There is always, in Christ, his willingness to forgive those that turn to him in repentance and in faith.

1 Corinthians chapter six verses nine to 11 which, in this context, again, are helpful verses to us.

“Do you not know?”¹¹ Paul says. These are strong things.

...that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.¹²

There is always hope, and in those translations there again speak more to the actions and the temptations we are subject to. They speak in very specific terms there which I won't elaborate on now, the various behaviors of homosexual men together and Paul and such folk in the Church in Corinth and they have been wonderfully saved.

I dare say their troubles hadn't ended and their temptations hadn't been just then evaporated away. But they had found the Lord and they had been washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God along with all the

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9.

¹² 1 Corinthians 6:9-12.

others in that list there, respectable people with their respectable sins and everything and every part else. Christ's blood is sufficient for any sin and any sinner.

And we should not, from this, miss the point either of saying that the Spirit of God can do remarkable things. And though it is an unwelcome thing to be heard by those who are militant and strong in their homosexuality, people can change. There are evidences that they have and can. That is not to speak well of every therapy or so called or every particular counseling service that is offered. There are certainly not many within the charismatic movement, but there is the sanctifying, and a helping, and the encouraging power of the Spirit of God. People can change.

But there will be some Christians who will be battling with these temptations and battling with these lusts until they have a new body and the new heavens and the new earth.

But also this: they, we, everybody, everybody seeking God, seeking to be part of his family needs a family. We need the Church of Christ. We need that togetherness and that love and that forgiveness and that willingness to work alongside each other and encourage each other to the glory of heaven.

I have got to admit, a homosexual community looks after its own very well. And many within that find friendship and help that when they look to the Church don't find it. But there is love, loyalty, commitment. There is degrees of these things. And when that is absent in the church, then we have to say, "Well, that is a sadness and a shame upon us."

But here any and all who are looking to find salvation in Christ should find a home and a welcome. We are saddened to think, perhaps, that some, perhaps, over the years, with literature that has been around maybe didn't find quite what they were looking for. No, we are not phobic. We are not people filled with dread fear, not driven by some irrationality in this. No, we reason from the Word of God. It may not be welcome, but we can't compromise it and have no intention of compromising it. But we are not phobic. We are not fearful. We are looking to meet with and speak with and listen to and exhort and encourage. Neither are we angry as though we are shouting, as though we are standing here and abusing people, can't cope with their difference, can't cope with this, can't cope with that. No, we can cope and we are not angry and we want to be able to bring the gospel and the love of Christ.

Neither do we say that here we have all the answers. Yes, come. Come to us. We are skilled in answering all the problems that there are. Don't worry. It will all just get left at the door. You will be just fine. We can't promise that. God has a path for each and every one. His Spirit will work and he will hold on to his own. He will keep his people to the last. And he has used each of us to encourage one another.

Likewise, I hope our response isn't one of judgmentalism. 'Oh, we are just so glad that it is not us with these problems. We are just so pleased that we don't fall under the strictures of Leviticus 18 verse 22 - and that we might look down on others.'

Well, I have said, “We are fellow sinners seeking to help fellow sinners. And if there is judgmentalism in our hearts, then shame on us.”

God has a way, perhaps, to bring across our path people who will challenge us in that and teach us in that. One hears testimony of people, who their own children, perhaps, come and tell them that they are homosexual or whatever and their world falls apart. Well, dear friends, our world, I hope doesn't fall apart by meeting somebody who professes to be a homosexual.

So we are experiencing in ourself God's mercy. We look to tell others of God's mercy and to encourage, and to say, hopefully a home is to be found for all sinners that are looking for grace and salvation.

But finally this and really my own personal concerns in a way, that here we have thought about the Church and we have thought at times how wrong her attitude has been, and her words, and her reactions, how unsanctified we might say. But our concerns at the moment, I think, are very real concerns as evangelical people looking to uphold the Word of God, saying whatever commitment and love, whatever good may be found so we are told in these relationships. They are forbidden by the Word of God as against nature. They are against what was the Creator's view, of the need of turning from them; that we have concerns in turn about the way that we are regarded by those in the homosexual community, and the stereotype that there is about Christians.

Can it not be allowed that we – ‘fundamentalists’, we Bible believing people are not the sort that abuse and shout at people? And we are not consumed with anger, that we are not obsessed by this whole matter. I say this is the first sermon on this subject I have preached in my nine years here. That we are not shocked and unable to cope with people who make any kind of admission along these lines that we are likely to be floored and left speechless and without any kind of help that we can give. Can it not be allowed that actually we are offering biblical counsel, biblical help in the name of the Lord? Can it not be allowed that actually the greater violence and the greater anger is not so much found within the church, but out there in popular culture, that very much that is the place that incubates the kind of insulting pejorative view, using gay as a sort of insult kind of thing.

I have never heard actually that insult if that is what it is used as amongst Christian people. I have never heard that named as such. I know it happens in the playgrounds at schools and not from Christian children or from Christian homes either.

Can it not be allowed that we are not looking to ridicule or insult people or seek to arrest people or criminalize people? Can it not be allowed that we disagree with their sexual acts and that we are able to do that in a spirit not of rancor, not of hatred, not of anger against them, but with real sorrow and with real sadness in our hearts about what is done?

Can it not be accorded to us that we accord marriage its special place as we find it in the Word of God and as most people's consciences affirm, is actually the best way and the right way.

We are told, and we have seen it in posters in London, "Some people are gay. Get over it." I think that it was Stonewall had these things put up.

Well, can it not be also in return accepted some people disagree with gay sex. Get over it.

Where is our phobia? I find at times when I look at some of the literature and some of the reactions within the homosexual community and its spokespeople a fair degree of anger and, nay, phobia. I find a fair degree there of misrepresentation and their own version of a heresy hunting attitude. When Stonewall can have its 'Bigot of the Year' award, I ask: Can that help communication and dialog? Is that bringing people closer together? Is that making the church there out to be in her true colors when it is stated that bigots of the year, and amongst those, Christians often feature in their nominations list. What is that doing to affect any kind of communication?

Can it not be allowed that public servants who are working diligently and effectively in their spheres of service, but having, as we have, real issues, conscience issues. "This is what God's Word said and we are not able to change it and we have no desire to." We find that these behaviors, we don't want to condone, we don't want to explicitly further. We don't want to be part of the bringing together of this. Can it not be allowed? Teachers, Registrars, whoever they may be, be allowed space to exercise their freedom of conscience, their freedom to practice their religion without being imposed upon and where this Equality Law, which might come in would even impose upon the Church regarding the people working in the Church who are not directly involved in teaching, preaching and worship, that among such there can be then no restriction against those who are acting in homosexual relationships and in a sexual way at that. Can it not be allowed that the Church should be able to live here under God's rule and God's law? Can it not be allowed that we have that right to continue to preach what we find in Scripture?

Are we those who are burning people? Are we those who are blowing up people? Are we those—though you would think it as some speak—who are here fomenting riots and ready to go out and put bricks through people's windows?

So there are questions which if plenty have ears to hear and they hear in the internet or wherever else it is, that I have about these reactions towards the Church.

So we finish. We speak, I trust, the truth in love. We come in a spirit there as humble servants of God or ever being more humbled as servants of God, needy sinners to needy sinners, called to repentance, to call to faith.

The example of our Lord Jesus Christ is oft quoted, the woman caught in the very act of adultery who is brought to him with a view to the Lord Jesus condemning her and having

her put to death which is what the Pharisees were looking to be done. And, of course, he declines to follow in their ways.

And at the end he says, doesn't he, to this woman in words that are so carefully chosen there. He has not condemned her. He has not condoned that she should be stoned to death. He has not gone down the road that these Pharisees were wanting him to go. But then as Jesus was left alone and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had raised himself up and saw no one but the woman he said to her:

"Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."¹³

So we call on people as in the Lord Jesus Christ's example there, not our condemnation, but, "Go and sin no more."

So as best we can that subject there I dare say we may have to return to it again and look at some of the other aspects and perhaps some of the text in more detail. May God bless us. May he bless all who may hear this message. May he encourage us to keep close to Scripture, to believe in his power to transform and to bless the lives of all who seek him. Amen.

¹³ John 8:10-11.