

Scripture Reading: Acts 16

“35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, “Let those men go.” 36 So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace.” 37 But Paul said to them, “They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out.” 38 And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. 39 Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city. 40 So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them & departed.”

"Confronting Wicked Rulers"

Most of the messages I will bring to you in 2022 are going to be topical and we are taking this week to address some serious concerns for the Saints in Canada and by extension our own situation here in the United States. Though both nations were birthed by strong Christian men and women who built many of their foundations on solid Biblical Truths, most would agree today that are living in a post-Christian world.

- **Sadly, many today celebrate that fact, but if we understand our Bibles we know it is a very dangerous place to be for us and our children.**

Our CREC Council & Presbytery meetings this year were themed, ‘Fight the Good Fight’ and addressed some of the concerns before us today. The goal today is to draw attention to a new law in Canada that threatens Gospel ministry. Canadian Pastors have asked American churches to highlight that danger, and the CREC has responded to that call along with many others.

- **So with all the problems in our world why focus on this one?**

First because our brothers & sisters to the north asked for help and second because we are facing the same types of challenges right here at home, especially in our state of California.

I approach this with Pastor Literati’s message from last week fully in mind, knowing that reformation must be bottom up rather than top down and of course the many lessons we had from Ephesians on the nature of our battle. When facing such challenges from wicked rulers, we must remember that it is the Gospel that is at the core of these battles: And so this morning I will begin and end with the Gospel!

- **What is the Gospel some might ask? Well the Apostle Paul left us no doubt in his first letter to the Church at Corinth...**

15: “ Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ...

And the Apostle then confirms the Truth of this Gospel by saying that the Risen Jesus, “was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.”

As we stand with our brothers and sisters to the north, we fight for the Truth of the Gospel, because that is what is under attack AND because it is the only way to help those in need in our lost world!

As background, last year the federal parliament of Canada passed Bill C-4 with the support of all political parties and no opposition from any elected member of parliament. This legislation was billed as one to protect individuals from coercion and abuse in what they call “conversion therapy!”

However, the bill’s wording is sufficiently broad enough to allow for the criminal prosecution of Christians who would speak biblical truth into the lives of those in bondage to sexual sins. Even a mother or father who offers their children freedom from sexual sin through repentance and faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ could be threatened with five years in jail.

This bill has now become law and they have asked as many churches as possible to publicly preach a sermon that specifically proclaims the Biblical truth that sexual sins are serious sins condemned by the law of God and will exclude a sinner from salvation without repentance.

- This is why the focus of our opposition is centered on the Gospel that the Apostle Paul so clearly proclaimed. Because our Savior Jesus Christ, in His atoning death and life-giving Holy Spirit is a perfect and complete Savior for all those caught up in any sexual sin.

So I want to briefly point out the problems with this particular bill and then give us caution about how and when we are to deal with such sins, and finally some guidance with regard to our personal interactions with people as we learn from the example of Jesus.

First we have the Preamble of the bill: Whereas conversion therapy causes harm to the persons who are subjected to it; “Conversion therapy” can be good or bad depending on how it is defined.

- If it is a program that uses coercion or force to make people change we would stand in opposition to it.

If on the other hand, it would be a BIG problem if it is defined as someone sharing the fact that the person is in sin and that Jesus died to save us from our sins!

Sadly we see this is exactly what can be prevented by this bill when we come to the 2nd Whereas which begins with something many consider high blasphemy, stating that “conversion therapy causes harm to society because, among other things, it is based on and propagates myths and stereotypes about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression including the myth that heterosexuality, cisgender gender identity, and gender expression that conforms to the sex assigned to a person at birth are to be preferred over other sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.”

- Saying that God’s Word is mythical is pretty dangerous ground to be on and what they are saying at bottom is that you have no right to tell a man who declares to the world that he is now a woman; is in fact, still a man.

There might have been a glimmer of hope for compassion or compromise in this bill, when we come down to the line that begins, “For greater certainty, this definition does not include...”

Do they go on to say something like the practice of the Christian faith?

- No, there is no exemption for God’s Truth, no exemption for religious practices, BUT they go on to make it clear that any propaganda leading folks into such sins is not prohibited by this act!

Why are we concerned? For starters, it could make a sermon like this illegal... and as our morning text illustrated there are times where we should confront wicked rulers.

If we think such laws cannot be abused, we need look no further then how the laws meant to combat the foreign terrorists who flew planes into our building are now being used by our government to target parents who speak up at school board meetings about such sexual perversions.

And of course as our friend Pastor Toby Sumpter pointed out it is at bottom an attack on Jesus, reminding us that they have no way of reaching Him on His Throne, so the attacks are made against His Body, the Church.

As I prepared this message I remembered how Dr. Schaeffer often used the term ‘true truth’ to distinguish it from our modern relativism and I also remembered a warning from Dr. J. Gresham Machen, quoted by Wilbur Smith in his book *Therefore Stand*:

“There are, indeed, those who tell us that no defense of the faith is necessary. ‘The bible needs no defense’ they say: ‘let us not be forever defending Christianity.’ But I have observed one curious fact – when men talk thus about propagating Christianity without defending it the thing that they are propagating is pretty sure not to be Christianity at all. They are propagating an anti-intellectualistic, non-doctrinal Modernism; and the reason why it requires no defense is simply that it is so completely in account with the current of the age. It causes no more disturbance than does a chip that floats downward with a stream. In order to be an adherent of it, a man does not need to resist anything at all; he needs only to drift, and automatically his Modernism will be of the most approved and popular kind. One thing needs always to be remembered in the Christian Church – true Christianity, now as always, is radically contrary to the natural man, and it cannot possibly be maintained without a constant struggle. A chip that floats downwards with the current is always at peace; but around every rock the waters foam and rage. Show me a professing Christian of whom all men speak well, and I will show you a man who is probably unfaithful to his Lord...”

- Now we need to understand the nature of the problem and how we should respond, and I want to do so with some VERY familiar passages.

I started with the Gospel because it is the only way that we can provide the help that sinners need. Where we need to be careful is thinking we are talking about THOSE sinners over there and somehow leaving the nice people out. So let me take us to Romans 1 for the proper balance...

At verse 16 of the first chapter the Apostle Paul says very plainly,

“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first & also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

- What was the Gospel again?

“ That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures!

Now an obvious question is who needs the Gospel and Paul will spend about two chapters showing us that it is everyone!

But for this morning, I want to focus on just his opening argument to help us understand both where the sexual sins this legislation is focused on come in, but also the proper perspective that we need to have when condemning them. Paul begins with the unpleasant topic of God’s wrath which is not popular even in church circles today because we have forgotten that the Bible presents God as Love, which we like, and God as the Just Judge, which we try to avoid.

“18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

- *The first question to consider carefully is just what truth are we suppressing?*

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. *[our conscience]*

20 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, 21 because, 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.”

So yes, all those Canadian experts and politicians who think of the Bible as a bunch of myths, had to get up that morning and live in God's universe and to be troubled by the conscience He has placed within them.

- **We don't get to pick our own universe to live in and we do NOT get to pick our own morality or true truth!**

And thus the Apostle rightly says in verse 22: "Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds & four-footed animals & creeping things.

- **The Proverbs many of us are reading this month remind us over and over that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom!**

The problem is that fallen man would rather be in God's place, and so the Apostle Paul now shows how the rejection of God leads to foolishness, and yes all sin is foolish.

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

Can you see how this is our modern problem? We do not want God's objective truth we want our own truth! We ignore the Creator and tell young people that the glorious Creation is just the result of chance working over billions & billions of years! And just where is our modern culture as a result of those choices? Paul tells us in verse 26: "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. 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."

- **So here comes my caution to not only think of all THOSE BAD sins that others are engaged but to finish the teaching that the Apostle presents regarding what happens when we reject God's Truth for our own truth...**

28 And 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;

- **So again, the Apostle is about to show us the sins that result from ignoring God's Glorious Creation that demonstrates His power and wonder and suppressing the conscience He placed within in us: It is an extensive and very convicting list...**

29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, 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."

- **Here we are reminded in very stark terms that EVERY sin is a capital offense!**
- **We also see why wicked politicians pass laws like C-4 in Canada to promote such evil.**
- **May God grant us the wisdom and courage to hold such elected representatives accountable!**
- **May we have the courage to give them the warning of Psalm two: That they should kiss the Son lest He be angry and they perish from the way. May God help us to train up a new generation of Covenant Children who know and believe that God is in control of history and knows where things are going.**
- **A generation who believes in all the power of the Gospel and presents AND obeys Jesus as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings!**

But how are we to interact with people who are caught up in such sins?

For insight I want to turn to an unexpected passage: One that our opponents will often try to use against us when we speak about confronting people in their sin. In John chapter 8, Jesus is again teaching at the Temple when the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, 4 they said to Him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.

Those religious leaders, who forgot to bring along the man, begin to explain the Law of Moses and ask if Jesus thinks they should stone the woman.

Jesus does not take the bait, but stoop down and writes on the ground as though He did not hear.

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.” 8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. 10 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?”

11 She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

- **So we are NOT to be those judgmental religious leaders who abused God’s Law and rejected the Savior in their very midst.**

On the other hand we are NOT to learn the wrong lesson propagated by those who promote sin, that Jesus does not judge people.

- **Jesus certainly judged all of the woman’s accusers did He not?**

And more importantly for our lesson today, Jesus did not say or imply that the woman’s sins were not a problem.

- **Jesus specifically tells her to sin no more!**

Jesus did not condemn her that day because He had come to bring Good News, the Gospel. He would soon die for our sins, He would be buried and then raised in power on the 3rd day reminding us about what Jesus taught back in John chapter 3:

“16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Communion Meditation: Romans 3:

“16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”