

Sermon Title: I Am Not Ashamed Of The Gospel
Scripture Text: Romans 1:16-32

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-16-22

We are working our way through the Book of Ephesians, and we are in Chapter 4—and I remember that, but that's not where we are going this morning. Today, our sermon is in response to a specific request, and we've never done this before at Heritage Bible Church. The request began with Pastor James Coates of Grace Life Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. If you love Heritage Bible Church, and the Lord should providentially move you to the Edmonton area, you would likely choose Grace Life Church. This is *us*, this is our circle of fellowship and theology and missions and encouragement. Pastor Coates is an alumnus of the Master's Seminary, just as is Dr. Scott Basolo. I am *not* a graduate of Master's. I've been accused of it; but no, I fossilized *before* the Master's Seminary came into existence.

You likely learned the name of James Coates when he was jailed last year. His crime: He led his church to worship, resisting some absurd COVID restrictions that were specifically targeted at churches in Alberta. He landed in jail on a couple of occasions, for a total of a couple of months; and their church building was surrounded, fenced off, and padlocked by armed police.

You get a whiff of what that was *really* about—what the *motive* was behind it—when you learn that Pastor Coates could have been released *at any time* during his imprisonment. All he had to do was sign a statement which had been prepared for him, stating that he would *not* return and lead *any* services, or preach.

That was a Bible-believing evangelical church that was *driven underground* and had to start meeting at *secret* locations—in *Canada!* Canada—not the Soviet Union, not North Korea, not China, not India, not Pakistan or a Muslim-dominated country somewhere in the Middle East. My friends, Edmonton is a *one-day drive* almost due north of where we sit! This is *right on our doorstep*.

The legal wrangling over that travesty, I understand, is not over yet. But *something else* has happened in Canada. "Bill C-4" in Canada was passed unanimously by their Parliament. It criminalizes so-called "conversion therapy." "Conversion therapy" is the label for those things that are designed to help a person who wishes to reject homosexual desires. Now, "conversion therapy" *has* been controversial—in some cases, rightly so. There *have* been, sometimes, cruel practices used under the banner of "conversion therapy"; but *that's not* what the Canadian bill—and many like it in the U.S., for that matter—is all about.

Bill C-4 is worded *broadly* and *ambiguously*—apparently, *intentionally* worded ambiguously enough *so that* it can be applied to mean that it is *criminal* merely to *preach* or *teach* that sexual expression is designed by God for one man and one woman, only in the context of marriage (see Heb. 13:4). That is now criminal to say that.

I have read the wording of C-4. I think it's ironic that *that's also* the name of a deadly explosive; this is sort of a *spiritual* explosive. I can assure you that our co-laborers in Christ up in Canada are *not* overstating how bad this law really is!

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It would be easy to derive our mental bus off into the weeds by delving into all the details of the wording of the bill, so I won't go there—I'll just mention a *little bit* of it. Check it out for yourself as much as you like to, if you have a stomach for that kind of thing.

But I'd like to quote from a Canadian pastor; this is *not* James Coates, but one of his fellow pastors there. He writes: "In the Preamble of the Bill, it says that the belief that 'heterosexuality, cisgender gender identity'—"cisgender" is the fancy word that means you believe there are only two genders—"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' is a 'myth.'" Canada has declared: God's design for man and woman and marriage is a myth. Back to the quote: "According to Canadian law, as of January 8, 2022, the belief in God's design for marriage and sexuality will now be seen as "myth."

"The definition [of 'conversion therapy'] is intentionally broad, and it can clearly be used against any preacher or elder who either speaks against homosexuality or transgenderism or who counsels a person to obey Christ and abandon their homosexual or transgender actions and lifestyle. This means, as of January 8, 2022, it will be against the law to preach, teach, or counsel regarding God's design for marriage and sexuality."

Then he quotes from the bill. It says: "Everyone who knowingly causes another person to undergo conversion therapy—including by providing conversion therapy to that other person—is guilty of an indictable offense and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than five years." So, preaching what I'm going to preach to you this morning—in Canada, it could be jail; five years. It goes on: Similarly, "Everyone who knowingly promotes or advertises conversion therapy is guilty of an indictable offense and liable to imprisonment for a term of not more than two years." So, I can get five years for *saying* it; *you* can get two years for *inviting* somebody to come to church, where they might hear that their behavior is contrary to God's plan.

So, in this letter, it says: "On January 16th, 2022, faithful men across this country"—meaning Canada—"and many in the United States as well, will be preaching on God's design for marriage, and a Biblical ethic of sexuality. *We* will be doing so *illegally*, declaring to the State that there is *one* God and *one* Lord over His Church, and that Christ alone gets to both define marriage *and* dictate what is required in the pulpit. We are honored that our American brothers will be joining us in this." (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 1:22; Matt. 19:4-6; 28:18-20; 1 Thess. 4:2; 2 Tim. 4:2-4) That's what we're doing. We are standing in solidarity with them (1 Cor. 12:26a).

So today, if you are a Bible-believing pastor in Canada—or *any* Bible-believing Christian—you are a *target* for the action of C-4. Suppose someone, even a family member, says to you, "I have fallen into homosexuality. I am convicted that my behavior is sinful, and I want to *escape* from those desires. Will you help me?" My friends, *the trap is set!* According to the new law, *if you even agree* that homosexual acts are sinful (Gen. 13:13; 19:5; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:10; 2 Pet. 2:6-8), *or* that the *desire* for homosexual acts is sinful (Rom. 1:26-27; Jude 7), you are simply *a criminal!*

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Under this law, *any discussion* of the morality of *any* behavior has to *begin with* and *stick with* the presumption that *all* such behavior is acceptable! If you go *further*, and actually say something like, "Yes, my friend, I will pray with you, and I will give you godly counsel from the Bible to help you put off this sin and put on righteousness" (cf. Is. 55:6-7)—well, make your reservation in the local jail. Could be five years.

Now, suppose someone came to you and said, "Please help me! I'm a consummate *liar* and manipulator. I've embezzled from several employers, and I've destroyed my marriage and my family because I feel *addicted* to lying! It's like it *gives me a rush* to see if I can get away with it. Will you help me?" Or, "Please help me break the cycle of listening to and repeating gossip." Or, "Please help me get out of this circle of friends that keeps *dragging me back* into my old lifestyle with drugs!" Or, "Please help me break the mindset that was instilled in me by my parents, who taught me to think that dark-skinned people are not fully human!" Or, "Please help me get control of my anger and my propensity for getting into fights!" Or, "Please help me stop fantasizing about sexual contact with children!"

That's what we live for—to be able to take God's Word and *apply it* to broken, hurting, convicted souls who are dealing with sin! (Jer. 23:22) *Should it be a crime* to do Biblical counselling in response to requests like that? Should it be a *crime* to show people trapped in circumstances like that, that the Gospel *is* the answer—that everything that is the answer to those problems *begins* with the Gospel of Christ? (e.g., Rom. 8:1-4)

The "sexual revolution" that most of us in this room have already lived through—some of you were born afterward—the sexual revolution that has swept through America and most of the Western world has made such a political impact that *now*, there *is* this support to actually *outlaw* the preaching of the Gospel as the solution to mankind's sin problem!

So, Bill C-4 became law on January 8th; and in response to it, James Coates and a number of likeminded pastors made a pact to set aside today to preach on Biblical morality in their churches, and to preach on God's design for marriage. Then, Pastor Coates reached out to my dear friend of 53 years, John MacArthur; and he asked if John and Grace Community Church would join in. John, in turn, put out the call to the *thousands* of pastors who are part of the loose fellowship associated with the Shepherd's Conference—a gathering of pastors every year at that great church. And they invited pastors to sign a pledge to join in. It took me as long as it takes to click on the mouse about three times to say, "Yes—I will do that," when I read the request.

Now, if we were in Canada, *anyone* preaching a sermon *remotely* resembling this *would be committing a criminal act!* That's how *serious* this is!

Obviously, time doesn't allow us to do a *full* treatment of what the Bible says about marriage and sexual morality, and I don't think there is *anybody in the room* that has a doubt about what the Bible says about those things (e.g., 1 Cor. 7:2; cf. Mal. 2:16; Matt. 19:4-6; Mk. 10:11-12; Heb. 13:4).

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As a matter of fact, I will say, "Be patient and keep coming," because in the next chapter of Ephesians, we will deal *in depth* with one of the most *specific*, glorious passages on marriage.

But for today, I'd like you to come with me for a visit to Romans Chapter 1. We're not going to do justice to it, but we're going to skim from Romans 1:16 through 32.

Romans 1:16 is where our sermon title comes from. The Apostle Paul writes: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.' " (vss. 16-17; NASB-1995, and throughout, unless otherwise noted)

Today, in solidarity with our Canadian brethren, and all the faithful proclaimers of the Gospel since Jesus ascended to the Father, we declare: The Gospel is "*the* power of God for salvation"! There is *no other Gospel* that will save (Gal. 1:8-9); this is the *only* message that will save (Acts 4:12; cf. Jn. 8:24; 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

What is that message? It's pretty clear: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried, and...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4; cf. Rom. 4:25). That is the Gospel that the Apostle Paul "received" (1 Cor. 15:3; cf. Acts 26:18; Gal. 1:12); that is the Gospel that he "preached" (1 Cor. 15:2). That's...well, *that's the Gospel!* Galatians Chapter 1—"If any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (vs. 9).

So, it's "the power of God for salvation to"—notice the phrase—"everyone who believes." Every single individual who "believes" that one and only true Gospel *is* "saved" (Jn. 3:16; cf. Acts 10:43). It's the same message for everyone, everywhere—"every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9), "male" or "female" (Gal. 3:28), all people of all various social strata *anywhere* (Col. 3:11).

We will preach that Gospel, and we will call everyone who "hears" to "come" (Rev. 22:17) to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Mk. 1:15; cf. Rom. 10:9). We will not *withhold* that message, we will not *compromise* that message—even if it is declared *illegal*, even if we are threatened with our lives or our freedom for standing for the truth. We are "not ashamed of the gospel"!

Now, let me say at the same time: We *do not seek* to rebel against any government! Romans 13:1-7 is *just as true* as Romans Chapter 1. We do not seek to rebel against a government or its laws or its ministers. We seek to live in "peace" (Rom. 12:18; Heb. 12:14a; cf. 1 Tim. 2:2), and respect the personhood of *every human being*, because *everyone* is "created...in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27; cf. Jas. 3:9b; Prov. 14:31; 17:5).

And yes—every one of us has fallen into sin (1 Ki. 8:46; Ps. 143:2; Ecc. 7:20; Jas. 3:2). Every one of us was *born* in a state of sin (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12). "*All* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

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We don't *distinguish* between them! The answer to the sin problem is *the one and only* answer to the sin problem, and it's the Gospel—of which we are "not ashamed"!

So, we *seek* to live in peace. We *respect* people—even those to whom we have to lovingly say: "What you are doing is wrong. And there is a Savior who died to take care of the penalty for that, and to set you free from the bondage to that." (cf. Rom. 5:1; 6:3-7)

But when those governments say, "You can't say that"—well, that's when we recognize: We also serve a higher authority. And if the laws of man contradict the Law of God, we have no choice but to obey the *higher* law—and therefore, to *continue* to "preach the Gospel" (Mk. 16:15; cf. Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).

You know this passage that I'm about to read to you. It tells us what happened when the leaders of the Jews came after Peter and the other Apostles for preaching the Gospel in Jerusalem, not very long after Jesus had ascended. It's in Acts Chapter 5; let me read to you Verses 27 to 32—"When they had brought them"—"they" is the Jewish leaders; "them" is the Apostles—"they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them, saying, 'We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name'—the name of Jesus, of course—"and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching"—I can just see Peter nudging John and saying, "That's a *compliment!*"—"and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.' But Peter and the apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.' "

So, yes, we submit to "the governing authorities" (Rom. 13:1; cf. Prov. 24:21a; Ecc. 8:2; Matt. 22:21; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13-14, 17)—*except* when they tell us, "You must disobey God," and then we obey the *higher* authority (Matt. 28:18; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 6:15).

The rest of Romans 1—after those two verses I already read to you—is the beginning of the part of Romans that runs through Chapter 3, Verse 23; and that section concludes with that famous statement: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We are not going to get through that whole segment of Romans, but let's look at the rest of Romans Chapter 1, and pluck just a few key thoughts from this passage.

Look at the next two verses: Romans 1:18-19—"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them."

What brings "the wrath of God" is—it's right there in the text—"all ungodliness and unrighteousness." It's not one particular sin, it's *all* of them—in *any* variety that you happen to specialize in, if you can't get around to all of them; there are *countless* ways to manifest "ungodliness and unrighteousness," and those things bring "the wrath of God"!

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What, then, *satisfies* "the wrath of God" so that a sinner can be forgiven? It's the Gospel—it's the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 4:25; 8:33-34).

So, part of being "created...in the image of God" is that the innate knowledge of God is built into you. He says: "That which is known about God is evident within them." Do you understand: No one is ever born an atheist (cf. Ecc. 3:11; cf. Ps. 14:1). *You can't be!* You are born with a "conscience" (Rom. 2:15), which is a *reflection* of the will of God and the Word of God. And Creation *screams* of the existence of God (Ps. 19:1)! It requires a lot of chipping away over a long time to completely expunge the awareness of God—but *man* "suppresses the truth in unrighteousness" if he doesn't turn to "God," who is his "Creator" (1 Pet. 4:19; cf. Ps. 10:3-4, 6-7, 11, 13; 36:1-4; Prov. 14:9a; Jn. 7:7; 8:40).

So now, go on to Verses 20 and 21 in Romans 1—"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Even before I came to know the Lord in my late teenage years, I was immersed in the world of science, and I was taught about "evolution" and the "Big Bang," and that's how everything came to be. I couldn't buy that, even then. I mean, I *believed* what they taught me in Physics and Chemistry and stuff, but I just could not believe that the formula for the Universe is: "Nobody" times "Nothing *for a long time*" equals "Everything"! That doesn't make sense! That's *irrational!* That is *foolishness* to say that! (Ps. 14:1a)

But, ever since Adam and Eve plunged the human race into sin (1 Cor. 15:22; cf. Gen. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:13-14), mankind has been trying to replace the true God with any number of manmade ideas (1 Cor. 8:5; cf. Ps. 135:15; Jer. 11:13; Acts 17:16).

Now, let's look further: Romans 1:22-23—"Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." Understand: The effects of the Fall reached to *every* part of life! The Earth *itself* is "cursed" (Gen. 3:17; cf. Rom. 8:20-22), and the thinking of anti-God mankind is *cursed* (Jer. 17:9; 1 Cor. 2:14); and it continues to spiral downward (2 Tim. 3:13).

The following verses outline that spiral that rages through *every* civilization—and we are seeing it played out *vividly*, and ever more frenetically, in our civilization—in *this* generation. As we look through the rest of this chapter, notice a four-word phrase that occurs three times: "God gave them over..." You see, when people persist in "suppressing the truth" (cf. Is. 59:14-15; Jer. 7:28; 9:3), burning out their "conscience" (1 Tim. 4:2), "professing to be wise" and saying foolish things in place of godly things—there comes a point that God's judgment begins here on Earth. We are not talking about Hell—we are not talking about eternal "torment" for sin (Lk. 16:23); but God will actually *back off!* "You want to rebel? Okay! I'll let you have what you think you want." And God "gives them over" to begin reaping consequences of their own thoughts and actions.

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One of the first ways that God's abandonment shows up toward people who "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" is that they depart from His design for marriage and sex. Not a surprise, because that's *right at the very beginning!* Where are you introduced to the idea of "male and female" and marriage? Chapter 1 of the Bible!

So, our society has gone down that path. It was when I was in my teen and college-age years that our society raced through the "Sexual Revolution." And now, we've gotten to the point where *people don't ask anymore*, "Is it right or wrong?" Now the only question is, "Are you consenting adults?" We have replaced "right and wrong" with the *idol* of human autonomy (Ps. 12:4)—sexual autonomy: "What I want, when I want it, with whomever I want it! And as long as we both agree, you can't say it's wrong!" That's the fruit of the "Sexual Revolution."

And *that* leads to the *next* step of abandoning God: Romans 1:24-25—"Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." If you don't want to be accountable, you have to get rid of God (Ps. 2:1-3)—so, let's replace Him with something like: Me—what *I* want—*that's the god!* (cf. Is. 14:13-14; Ezek. 28:2)

Following that wholesale abandonment of God's plan for marriage and sexuality through the "*Sexual Revolution*," what's the next circle of the spiral? It is the next step of the "*Homosexual Revolution*." Look at Verses 26 and 27—"For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

When I was a kid—believe it or not, way back then, there was sin; some of us knew how to lie, some of us knew how to sass our parents, and *some* were even *naughty!* But, you know what? It was a *secret*. And we *heard of* "homosexuality," but back in those days—to use the cliché—that was "in the closet." *Nobody spoke of that!* It was *shameful!* (cf. Eph. 5:12) Well, that's not the case now!

Once society has had its "Sexual Revolution" and its "Homosexual Revolution," the next phase is: They break through the final bonds of *any semblance* of acknowledging God, *any* sense of accountability to Him. And *this* is the stage that our world has reached. Now—*anything goes!* And very few people even give lip service to *any* kind of accountability to God for sin (cf. Ps. 73:11).

Look further in Romans Chapter 1: Verse 28 through the beginning of Verse 32—"And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer"—See, they used to "cheat"; now, they're just saying, "Now we're not even cheating. There isn't a God. There is *nobody* we're accountable to!" "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife,

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deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death..."

Now, that is not an excerpt from the Writer's Manual For Popular Movies—they just happen to use all of that stuff all of the time.

"God gave them over"—this time, "to a *depraved mind*." "Depraved" translates a Greek word that literally means "not passing the test." Outside of the Bible, that word was used to describe useless, worthless metals that were discarded because they contained too much impurity. That's what "depraved" means. God has tested men's minds, and found them worthless and useless—"depraved" (cf. Mk. 7:21-22; Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 3:20). Second Corinthians 3:14 says that people's "minds" are "hardened" (cf. Heb. 3:13). Second Corinthians 4:4 says: "The god of this age has blinded" their "minds" (NKJV). (see Lk. 4:6; Eph. 2:2; cf. Jn. 8:44; 2 Tim. 2:26; Rev. 20:3, 8, 10a)

So I'll give you what, to many of you, might be a new word today. The word is "noetic." We're speaking of the "noetic" effects of sin. That means we are talking about the way that sin affects the mind. "Noetic" comes from the Greek word *nous*—the word for "mind." Philippians 3:19 says their "minds" are "set...on earthly things." Ephesians 4:17 talks about "the futility of their mind," and it says they are "darkened in their understanding" (vs. 18)—or, in their "mind."

My friends, this—the "noetic" effects of the Fall—*this is* the Biblical explanation for how something *patently false*, downright *absurd*, can be put forth as an idea, and then *accepted* in the world (cf. Jer. 2:13; 5:31; Ezek. 13:19b; 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Listen—I've said this, and I'm willing to stand on this: There are *two* genders—*only* two genders (Gen. 1:27; 6:19; Lev. 3:1; Mk. 10:6; cf. Deut. 22:5). And as I have said: There is an objective test to determine gender; it is 100 percent reliable, and it can be performed by amateurs! It is *not* a "gender assigned at birth"! It's *recognized* at birth! It is a reality!

But, given the effects of the Fall (e.g., Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Jer. 13:23; 17:9), and all the permutations and combinations of confusing and wicked thought "suppressing the truth" over and over and over again, and "fools...professing to be wise"—if you add that together and *boil it* for a few centuries, it is *not a surprise* that a male can think he is a female, and vice versa. It's *sad*, it's *tragic*—but it's not a surprise.

And is it *possible* that the deception could run *so deeply*, be *so ingrained* in a person's fallen mind, that they could *actually* think and believe: "I was born this way!" Yeah! *That's deception!* "God has given them over" to their "foolishness" that they think is "wise" (cf. 2 Thess. 2:10). Being steeped in idolatrous thinking and "suppressing the truth in unrighteousness" *eventually* leads to a *completely* upside down view of reality and truth and morality (e.g., Jer. 44:16-17; 2 Tim. 3:2-5, 8).

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Our world is in a place that Isaiah describes in Isaiah Chapter 5. Look at this: Isaiah 5:20-23—"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink, who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!"—*Exactly* as has happened *this month*, just to our north! Oh, and it's happening in various states in the United States as well (cf. Prov. 17:26).

A moment ago, I quit reading in the middle of Verse 32 of Romans 1. Look at the end of that verse: "They not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them" (cf. Ps. 12:8; 49:13; Prov. 28:4a).

The new law that we are protesting today is an example of *exactly* what that describes! It's no longer enough that we extend respect to people and their choices, even if we *know* that they are sinful. Now, we are being mandated to "give hearty approval" for things that we don't even *discuss* in polite company (Eph. 5:12), things that the Bible calls sin. *Even if we are asked*, we are not supposed to say the truth.

We must *submit* to "governing authorities." We have the government we have because God placed this government over us *for our sanctification* (Rom. 13:1; cf. Dan. 4:25b). The same is true of the nation of Canada. And we *do* as the laws of the land demand—that's our *standard* for being God's people, living in society. But, when the government orders us to *do* something God *prohibits*, or the government *prohibits* us from doing something God *orders* us to do, then our submission takes a new stance. That's the situation of our Canadian brethren. We, with them, humbly and lovingly say: "We must obey God rather than men."

How do you say *that*, and maintain submission to the government? You obey God, and you accept the consequences that the government gives to you (cf. Matt. 5:44; Lk. 6:28). How do you do that? Well, you start a jail ministry, *from the inside!* (e.g., Acts 16:25-34; Phil. 1:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:8-9) Ask Pastor James Coates how he feels about that; he has some wonderful stories of his months-long jail ministry! How do you think that Daniel and his friends felt about it when the government told them, "You can't do what God says you must do," or, "You must do what God says you can't do"? (Dan. 3:16-18; 6:7-10)

So, what have we learned? Well—only the Gospel saves (Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6). *We are not ashamed of the Gospel!* We understand: All deserve the wrath of God (Gal. 3:10; cf. Eph. 2:3b). We understand that all who are in Adam innately, instinctively, systematically "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (cf. Job 15:35). We understand: Man's "wisdom" is "foolishness before God" (1 Cor. 3:19; cf. Jer. 8:9). And we understand that the consequences of man's rejection are not *just* for "the lake of fire"; *some* of them begin *now*, because "God gave them over" to all sorts of "impurity," as in a *sexual* revolution; "God gave them over to *degrading* passions," as shown in a *homosexual* revolution; and "God gave them over" to *unbridled* outpouring of sin—to "not only *do* the same, but also *give hearty approval*" to those things. Government says we have to do that (Ps. 94:20).

Sermon Title: I Am Not Ashamed Of The Gospel
Scripture Text: Romans 1:16-32

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-16-22

I read an article this week. Someone has written an article, saying what letter logically needs to come next after "L, G, T, B, and Q"—the next letter, they say, is "P" for "Pedophilia"! "That's just an 'inclination'; that's just an 'orientation'!"

Being immersed in all of these things, that *horrible* grocery list of sins—you need to understand: Doing those things is *not what sends a person to Hell!* Those are the things that are the evidence that shows in the lives of people who are on their way to Hell (see Jn. 14:24; cf. 1 Jn. 3:10). The *default setting* for your eternal destiny is "the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10, 14)! You are "dead in your trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1).

My friends, our message is *not* about trying to reform the morality of people (cf. Matt. 12:43-45). Our purpose today is not to try to help you be *appalled* at these things that are being done, that we are told we have to "give hearty approval" to. Our purpose is not even trying to reverse the twisted thinking about gender in our world. Our message is: People are "dead" in their "sins"—*and they need a Savior!* (Gal. 3:24) And we should not be shocked that they *live* as if they are "dead" in their "sins," and they need a Savior (Dan. 12:10; cf. 1 Sam. 24:13).

That is first and foremost—that we preach the Gospel. *Then*, when we preach the Gospel and people believe and they are regenerated (Titus 3:5; cf. Jn. 3:5), and they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:15; 2 Cor. 1:22), and suddenly they have a *hunger* for God's Word (Ps. 119:97; Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13), we can guide them to the fullness of truth, and we can help people escape the sinful patterns of their lives (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16).

Now, *it might be* that it is the earthly consequences of somebody's sin that makes them miserable enough to first even come and be willing to hear the Gospel; but our problem isn't to *tweak* their behavior—our problem is to bring them to the Savior so that they can be "new creatures...in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Phil. 3:9).

We *won't* stop preaching the Gospel (cf. Acts 4:20; 5:42); we *won't* stop telling the truth about sin—including sexual sins—just because the government says it's illegal. And our goal is not merely to push back against anti-God laws. How sad for those who *will* answer to God for *making up* those laws (Ps. 94:20; cf. Ecc. 12:14; 1 Pet. 4:5). Can you imagine what God has to say to the person who *worded* that paragraph I read you, that what God says is a "myth"? Whoever wrote that is going to deal with the Lord (cf. Jer. 44:28b).

But our goal is to be faithful to the Lord, *always* to "speak truth in love" (Eph. 4:15; cf. Prov. 3:3)—to one another in the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:5), and to everyone to whom we can proclaim the Gospel. We need to "speak truth"—including the Gospel—"in love." If you speak truth without love, you are—I think Paul politely described it—about as much fun as a "noisy gong" and a "clanging cymbal" (1 Cor. 13:1). It is *sinful* to beat people up with the truth! We "speak truth in love," because that truth comes from the One who *is* "love" incarnate (1 Jn. 4:8). Speaking truth without love is wrong, just as loving without speaking the truth is wrong (cf. 1 Cor. 13:6). You can't let go of *either end* of that!

We "speak truth in love." We are not "ashamed." May we be faithful.

Sermon Title: I Am Not Ashamed Of The Gospel
Scripture Text: Romans 1:16-32

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 1-16-22

Before I pray, I would like to point you to the notes that were distributed with your church bulletin when you arrived. They are also uploaded to our website, along with the recording of this that will land there, eventually. There are two resources that I thought I would give to you. You might want to save them for future use. Obviously, we're not going to talk about them, but you will find those two resources there—supplements:

"What The Bible Says About The Wrath Of God" (see "Supplement #1" below). *Why* do you need to know that? Because, if you're going to preach the Gospel—which is the "good news"—you have to let people know: It's the answer to the "bad news"! And the "bad news" is: You are headed for "the wrath of God" (Col. 3:6; cf. 2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7).

Then there's another page: "What The Bible Says About Homosexuality" (see "Supplement #2" below). One of the most *common* things to say to try to torpedo Christians who are sharing the Gospel is to say, "The Bible doesn't really talk about homosexuality! Jesus never said anything about homosexuality!" (cf. Jn. 13:20; 1 Thess. 4:2). Or, there's another one popular among some of the pseudo-preachers of this day: "The Bible *whispers* about homosexuality!" *Bunk*—that's the Hebrew word. *Hogwash*—that's the Greek word. No! Become familiar with what that is, so that you can "speak truth in love." "Here is what God says. Can I *show you* from His Word? I don't want you to spend eternity in the 'lake of fire'! I want you to spend it with me, with my Lord and Savior!"

Let's pray:

Father, thank You for the Gospel. And with the Apostle Paul, we proclaim that we are "not ashamed of the Gospel" because it, and it alone, is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." Thank You that by Your grace, we stand "complete in Christ," "blessed with every spiritual blessing." And we know that no one can "pluck" us from Your "hand."

We stand with our Canadian brethren against those who would seek to criminalize proclaiming Your Word and preaching the Gospel, helping people to apply Your Word and to come under its authority. Please, Father, if it be Your will, cause this evil law to soon be rescinded. And if that is not Your will, please make us strong to stand in Your grace, and to "speak the truth in love" to all who will listen.

Thank You for delivering us from the tyranny of sin and the penalty of sin, and all the habits that grieve You, by bringing us to faith in Your Son. We pray for those around us, and in our own families, who are still enslaved by all sorts of sins—be they sexual or otherwise. Father, give us compassion for them. We do not hate those people, nor do we fear them. So teach us to love them with Your everlasting love, to the point that we will relentlessly invite them to believe the Gospel, and to turn to the Savior!

As we stand with our brethren who are now in the crosshairs of this evil law, we pray that they will be spared from arrest and prosecution—at least that much. We pray that their churches will flourish, and that it will be evident that Your hand is upon them for their faithfulness.

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And Father, we see it coming. When this persecution arrives at our doorstep, we pray that we likewise will "stand firm" in the faith, "girding our loins with the truth," putting on "the breastplate of righteousness," and "having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," "taking up the shield of faith" with which we can "extinguish all of the flaming arrows of the evil one," and donning "the helmet of salvation" and "the sword of the Spirit," which is Your "Word" (Eph. 6:14-17).

Father, convict us where we need correction. If we have been thinking of a sinner as an enemy, instead of the captive of the enemy, change our thinking. Strengthen us where we are weak or fearful. Embolden us to "speak the truth in love." And whatever it takes, have Your way with us, individually and collectively as a church. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

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SUPPLEMENT #1: What The Bible Says About The Wrath Of God

It is important to understand God's wrath. It is different from fury or anger. The wrath of God is God's holy aversion to all that is evil (Ps. 5:4; Rev. 19:15b). It is His ultimate determination to punish sin (Ecc. 12:14; Is. 13:11; Matt. 12:36). It is His attitude toward sin, which is a settled and permanent "indignation" against sin (Ps. 7:11; cf. Ps. 97:10a; Prov. 8:13; Zech. 8:17; Mal. 2:16). God hates sin. He has promised and guaranteed that He will "judge" sin (Acts 17:31). Yet, He does not strike sinners dead at the instant of disobedience. Instead, the person who disobeys God has God's wrath "abiding on him" (Jn. 3:36). Through sinning, people "store up wrath" against themselves (Rom. 2:5). When God's wrath is unleashed in judgment, it becomes His "fury" (Heb. 10:27).

2 Peter 3:9-10, 15a: God's wrath will one day consume the world. It is being held back now because of His patience.

Hebrews 9:27: Every person will have to deal with God's wrath personally after this life. There are no second chances after death to avoid wrath.

Matthew 3:7: John the Baptist's message was to avoid "the wrath to come" (cf. Rom. 5:9; Heb. 6:18). For believers, Christ means salvation; for unbelievers, He brings wrath (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

John 3:36: To not believe is to have the wrath of God "abiding" on you. The opposite of "eternal life" is the wrath of God (Matt. 25:46).

Romans 2:5: Each sin "stores up wrath" (cf. Ecc. 12:14; Rev. 20:12-13).

Ephesians 2:3: Unbelievers are "children of wrath."

Colossians 3:5-6: The wrath of God rightly comes upon every sin (cf. Is. 3:11).

1 Thessalonians 5:9: Again, salvation and wrath are opposites. For a believer, there is no future wrath (Jn. 3:18; 5:24; Rom. 8:1, 33; Jude 24).

Revelation 6:16-17; 9:20-21; 16:9, 11: When the wrath of God is poured out, unbelievers will know what it is, but they will still not repent.

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SUPPLEMENT #2: What The Bible Says About Homosexuality

The word "immorality" (1 Thess. 4:3) includes all sexual sins, including homosexuality.

Leviticus 18:22-23: "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion."

Leviticus 20:13: "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them."

Deuteronomy 23:18: "You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the Lord your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God." ["dog" is a Hebrew epithet for a male prostitute or "sodomite" (1 Kings 22:46)]

Romans 1:26-27: "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error."

1 Corinthians 5:9-11: "I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one."

1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators [Greek: *porneia*], nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall 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 Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Ephesians 5:5: "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."

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1 Timothy 1:9-10: "...realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching."

Revelation 21:8. "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Revelation 22:15: "Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying."