

A Biblical View of Gender and Sexuality

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Across America to join with pastors in Canada and churches across America and churches in Canada to focus on the issue of a biblical view of gender and sexuality last Sunday, January 16, as just an encouragement to our brothers and sisters in Canada that we stand with them, but also as an opportunity for us just to be clear on this issue ourselves. It's such an important issue and so when it looked like we were having snow and we were trying to evaluate, it was supposed to be getting worse during the day, we decided we weren't going to do it and I determined not to do a live stream largely because I wanted to have a service like this and a subject of this importance, I wanted to have the congregation here to meet together and not to just be online with, you know, kind of a skeleton group here. It's just too important.

And so I want to explain to you what's behind this. The reason that this has come up is because of a law that was passed in Canada on January 7, it went into effect actually, it was passed in the latter part of last year, which outlaws what is described as conversion therapy, and the way conversion therapy is defined by the legislation that is now law in Canada is conversion therapy means a practice, treatment, reading from the text of the law itself here, conversion therapy means a practice, treatment or service designed to do one of these six things. There is a lot of redundancy but just listen carefully to what it says. If you have a practice, treatment or service designed to do this, this is now against the law in Canada: to change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual; to change a person's gender identity to cisgender which is defined in the next point as well; to change a person's gender expression so that it conforms to the sex assigned to the person at birth. That's essentially what cisgender means, to have a gender identity consistent with what you received at birth, that's cisgender. That's a new word that they've invented but that's what it means. So if you're trying to change someone to be cisgender, that's against the law. To repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behavior; to repress a person's non-cisgendered gender identity; to repress or reduce a person's gender expression that does not conform to the sex assigned to the person at birth. You can encourage someone who's heterosexual to be homosexual, you can encourage someone who is biological male to be a female, but you cannot encourage someone who believes they're something different than they were created to be, to be what they were created to be. That is the law in Canada. They criminalized essentially evangelism. They've criminalized attempts to convert sinners to Jesus Christ; to help another person put off sinful behavior and put on godly behavior is now against the law.

The language of the preamble to this legislation is even in some ways more disturbing in the way that it describes the beliefs that we hold, that there are two genders and that heterosexuality is to be preferred over homosexuality and that the gender that you are assigned at birth is to be your preferred gender. It says this in the preamble to that Bill in the law in Canada: 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 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. It's a myth they say. It's not an opinion. It's not a belief. That would be one, thing, right, but it's a myth the government of Canada says to believe that.

So that's quite disturbing and so James Coates, the pastor, one of the pastors in Canada you may have heard about in the last year who was imprisoned for keeping his church open during the COVID pandemic against the law of the areas he was in, was put in jail. He is encouraging, he encouraged John MacArthur to preach on this subject and so all across Canada and all across America churches were doing this and John in his sermon last week said there were 5,000 churches so we're one of those churches that signed up to be a part of that.

What we see here is that the spirit of the age is now the law of the land. The spirit of the age, you could say the spirit of this age is radical, unbridled, personal autonomy. Radical, unbridled, personal autonomy. You are completely the master of your fate. You can even define your gender. You can define your reality. The spirit of the age, radical, unbridled, personal autonomy and I can't fail to mention, too, another expression of that radical, unbridled, personal autonomy is something that we celebrate, we didn't celebrate, we remembered with grief yesterday was the 49th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the decision by the Supreme Court that made abortion on demand legal in America, made the killing of unborn children legal, all under the rubric of a woman's right to choose. You see, unbridled, personal autonomy, your desires are so important that you can murder another human being.

So we see the spirit of the age is continuing to be lived out and it's not just in Canada. You may have also heard about an ordinance in west Lafayette, Indiana that's due to be voted on, it's a city-wide ordinance in west Lafayette, Indiana that will also seek to criminalize conversion therapy. Faith Church pastor Steve Viars, someone who's really well-known in the biblical counseling area of ministry these days, we've got some books by him in our resource center. West Lafayette Faith Church which is in that city has a very robust biblical counseling ministry. They minister to just literally hundreds of people each year and they have been targeted by the city council so that now if they practice conversion therapy defined essentially the same way as Canada defined it, then they will be subject not to going to jail yet, they're not going that far, but they're going to fine them \$1,000 a day so they're going to try to financially ruin churches.

Now when you look at this and I'm sure many of you have already seen these stories, I'm not telling you something you don't know, some of you may have missed some of these

details. I know if you're like me, sometimes you just don't want to watch the news, you don't want to read the news sites, and there's certainly a wisdom about how much you should spend, how much time you should spend on that, you know, 10 times more reading the Bible, listening to sermons than you do on news sites, something like that. That's probably a healthy ratio. But when we see what's happening in the culture, we're tempted to be, well, we're tempted in a lot of ways. We're tempted to be very discouraged, aren't we? We're tempted to be depressed, even maybe to the point of despair. When you continue to fill your mind and you look at how far we have fallen and how quickly, we think about our future, the future of our children, our grandchildren, and we're tempted toward depression.

We're also tempted to be angry, sinfully angry. Now there's a certain level of righteous anger when we see this kind of, these lies being propagated and the damage that they're doing to human beings, I mean, because that is what's really so devastating, the damage that is being done to children in the name of this new freedom of gender identity. It's actually a more cruel form of bondage and slavery that is being pushed upon young people who are very vulnerable. So we're tempted to be angry, sinfully angry, righteous indignation quickly can pass into sinful anger. We can begin to see those who are pushing for these things as our enemies. We can feel hostility toward those because we can be tempted to revile those who are reviling us. They're saying that we're haters, that we're bigots, that our speech is hate speech when we talk about the fact that God says that he made them male and female. He intends for one man and one woman for life, that's where sexual relationships are to happen in the context of a covenant marriage. We're tempted to be angry but we're not to be sinfully angry, we're not to be in despair, we're not to see those on the other side of these political issues as our enemies. No, they are not our enemies, they're the mission field. They are people that need to be saved. The Bible is clear our struggle is not against flesh and blood. It's not against these people themselves. Our struggle is against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places that have enslaved them and so we have to be careful to think biblically about these things.

We can also be tempted to be afraid because we can see persecution drawing ever nearer, the reality of it, and some of you have already experienced in your own workplaces the pressure to be silent, in your own families, but we can begin to see the threat of persecution becoming even more real and imminent. And when we're tempted to be discouraged, to be angry, to be afraid, what are we to do? I love what the psalmist says in Psalm 11. Let's begin there. We're going to be going through a lot of Scripture this morning. But Psalm 11 is a good passage to meditate on and it shows that there's nothing new under the sun. The church has been in circumstances like this before and it had all the resources it needed: we have the gospel and we have the Holy Spirit.

But Psalm 11, the psalmist David, look what he says, "In the LORD I take refuge; How can you say to my soul," somebody's saying to David based on the circumstances around him, they're saying this, "Flee as a bird to your mountain." Why? Because "the wicked bend the bow, They make ready their arrow upon the string To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart." David says, "Why do you say to me, how can you say to me to run for the hills because the wicked want to destroy us?" Look what he says in verse 3 and this is

what they're continuing to say, "You should run," this is still the quote of the person speaking to him, "Flee as a bird to your mountain; For, behold, the wicked bend the bow, They make ready their arrow upon the string To shoot in darkness at the upright in heart." And then he says this, "If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?" And David gives us the answer, his answer to that person who would offer that bad counsel. He says this, "The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven." The Lord is in his temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. His throne, he is ruling, he is reigning. No time to run, it's time to look at God and to look for God's glory in the midst of this moment. He says, "His eyes behold." He sees what's going on. "His eyelids test the sons of men. The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked, And the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain snares; Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; The upright will behold His face." We can leave vengeance to God when we are reviled. We don't need to revile again because, "Vengeance is Mine. I will repay, says the Lord." And we can love our enemies because we know the one who is on the throne.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Our Father, how grateful we are that You are the living God, that You are reigning and ruling over all, that You are on Your throne, that though the nations rage, the peoples plot in vain, they rise up against You, the One who sits in heaven laughs. There's no threat to Your plan. You're not unsettled. Your kingdom will advance in exact accordance with Your eternal will and Your eternal decree and You are a refuge and strength to us. Help us, Lord, in these dark days to shine brightly the gospel of Christ and the glory of God. Lord, You are good. Your ways are good. They are perfect. They're right. They fill our hearts with joy. We look at a world that is in darkness proclaiming their liberty when, in fact, they're slaves, proclaiming their joy when, in fact, they're increasing in misery. Lord, set Your light on a hill. Help us to be all that You want us to be for the glory of our great Savior Jesus Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

I think this time calls for us to bring certain things to the moment and so I've got five points this morning that we are going to get through one way or the other; I'll have to speed up to get us through them if necessary. The first is we need to have urgency. In the moment that we live in, we need these things, the first is urgency. This is a moment of great urgency. You know, when the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? Well, when the foundations are destroyed, the righteous need to be doing something. They need to see who God is and proclaim who God is. We need to seize the moment. This is not a time for complacency. This is not a time for apathy. This is not a time for discouragement. This is a time for action.

There's a verse in Daniel 11, I think it's verse 32, when it's talking about terrible times that would come upon the nation of Israel, which did come upon the nation of Israel under the reign of a Greek tyrant named Antiochus Epiphanes in the second century BC. Daniel prophesying about that moment, Daniel writing around 530 or 530 BC, several hundred years before the event says that those who know their God will be strong and

take action. He talks about incredible difficulty will come but those who know their God will be strong and take action. The key is knowing God.

The urgency of the moment. It's time for action. The second thing that we need to have in this moment is clarity. We need to see God as he is and we need to see his will, and his will is so clear on the issue of gender identity and sexuality. He has been absolutely crystal clear in his word and you and I need to be crystal clear in our understanding of the issues. So I want us to look at the Scriptures together about that. God has defined gender and sexuality very clearly in the pages of Scripture and we're going to see that but the first thing I want to do is start with a passage that speaks about the church's mission because he's very clear about our mission too. What are we to do? We need to take action and we need to be clear on what our action is.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11. I Corinthians 6:9,

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

Paul is clear that unrepentant sinners will not be in heaven. All sin. Unrepentant sinners will not be in heaven. Those who will be in heaven are those who have met Jesus Christ, the Savior who came to save us from our sins. Remember his name was Jesus, the angel said, "You shall call His name Jesus." Why? "Because He will save His people from their sins." The name Jesus means Yahweh is salvation. What does he save from? He doesn't save from being depressed, that's not his main reason in saving. He doesn't save from a sense of purposelessness. Sometimes the evangelical gospel has been weakened to seem like Jesus is only a therapist to make you feel better. No, Jesus doesn't save you from those things, that's a byproduct when he saves you from the real issue which is he saves you and me from sin. He saves us from our sins.

And that's what we see here. Paul says, "Listen, if someone has not been saved from sin, if they're continuing on in unrepentant fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality," the word "effeminate and homosexual" that I'm reading from the New American Standard speaks of the passive partner in a homosexual relationship, effeminate, and the active partner in the word homosexual. He covers the gamut. If someone is unrepentant in that lifestyle just as if they're unrepentant in adultery, they're an unrepentant thief, greedy, reviler, swindlers, they will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the good news is Paul says here in verse 11,

11 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.

This is what you were before you met Christ and now you've been changed. If any man is in Christ he's a new creature. To come to Jesus is to get a new heart and then we have to

fight against sin the rest of our lives and we have to put it to death, we have to put off and put on but there's a new disposition when you come to Jesus and Paul is saying if you've not received a new heart, you will not be in heaven. It doesn't mean you won't have to fight, you will have to fight but if you haven't received a new heart you won't be in heaven, and what he's telling us here is that the mission of the church is to see people who are in bondage to sin be delivered from that bondage by coming to Christ. No matter what the sin is. And they come to Christ by faith and they are transformed and they begin to be transformed in the process of sanctification, they continue to grow in holiness. This is the business of the church, so what the government of Canada is saying, "Listen, you can convert sinners except for this particular type and we're making a law against converting this type of sinner." And the church, the clarity that God's word gives to us is we will not obey that command because we will obey God. You choose for yourselves is it better to obey God or man? God calls us to call sinners to faith in Christ. We know you can't change yourself. None of us can. Can a leopard change his spots, Jeremiah says. Can an Ethiopian change the color of his skin? Neither are you who are sinners do righteousness. You need a Savior. You need Jesus Christ. But he is a mighty Savior.

So the clarity of our mission, we must call sinners to repentance; whether it's against the law of the land or not, we will obey God. But the second thing the Bible is crystal clear about this issue of gender itself and this is something that you sadly in evangelicalism, there are too many Christians acting like it's not clear but the reality is it's crystal clear. Turn with me to Genesis 1, the very first chapter of the Bible. God tells us the story of creation and the high moment in the first chapter, the six days of creation, is his creation of mankind. And when he creates man in Genesis 1:26 it says,

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

So the image of God is the reason God created man, to reflect his glory to the world, to rule. In submission to his loving kingship, we are to rule over all that he's made. Incredible dignity he's given to human beings in the creation order and a key part of that is his image is presented in the two roles male and female. It's a part of God's glory being made known. He creates man male and female. Verse 28,

28 God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

This is how God has made things. To argue against this is foolishness. You know, and essentially that's our argument, our argument is there is a God who has made the world and made us. It's clearly evident as you look at creation. His handiwork is everywhere and he is the one who determines how we are to live. He's the one who sets the rules. He is the one who is in authority and we have come to experience the joy of living under his

authority through Jesus Christ. The problem is the world is out from under his authority. Everyone is doing what is right in his own eyes and that's why the world is in such misery. But God is clear on how he has designed us.

Turn with me to Deuteronomy 22:5. You see there are two genders, male and female. We begin to see how seriously God takes this issue because his glory is at stake. Look at what he says in Deuteronomy 22:5,

5 A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.

Now that's very offensive to a lot of people but let's just lay that aside for a moment because it doesn't really matter if it offends me or it offends you, the question is what does God say, and the issue, God finds it offensive for a man to act like a woman, to dress like a woman; he finds it offensive for a woman to act like a man or to dress like a man. It's clear in the Scripture.

Psalms 139:13. The Bible is clear that God has created every single one of us exactly as he wanted us to be and David, this is a Psalm of David. In Psalm 139:13 he says this,

13 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb.
14 I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; 16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them. 17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

Listen, "You knew me in my mother's womb," David said. "You knit me together." God is actively involved in the creation of every single human being. God is actively involved in choosing the sex, the gender of every single human being. He claims that authority because he has that authority.

So we also see that Jesus affirms this in Matthew 19:3-6. The Lord Jesus is asked a question about divorce and look how he understands this issue of gender identity. It comes up as a side note in his answer to how he sees marriage and the sanctity of marriage. Verse 3 says, Matthew 19:3,

3 Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" [That's the question they ask.] 4 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5 and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO

SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

So we see clearly that God has made two genders, male and female. We see clearly that God makes you the gender that you are.

Now sexuality, an expression of sexuality, why is heterosexuality to be preferred? It's because that's the way God has intended us to express our sexuality. It's not up for debate. It's not up for a vote. It's not up for a poll. People can poll and we don't have the ability to make them do anything. No, we're not trying to do that, we're just trying to clearly present the truth that, "Listen, God has laid it down and you resist His kingship at your own hurt, to your own hurt." His way is best. He is the Creator. He is the Designer. He knows how he made us to be. It's like trying to use a piece of equipment and not following the manufacturer's guidelines and using it completely differently. It's like I've used this illustration before, you have a blower or, you know, some other equipment you use around the yard and you have to put a gas/oil mix in and it's real important to do what they say on that. If you try to run straight gasoline in a gas/oil mix blower, you won't be doing it very long. You will destroy the blower. Why? Because the manufacturer made it a certain way. And so in the same way, when you or I, I know that in this day and the darkness that is here, the lies that are told, the deceitfulness of the human heart, there are people who really struggle with these issues and we should have compassion, we should love them, but loving them is not giving them more rope to hang themselves. Loving them is compassionately, with understanding calling them to Christ.

If you live in contradistinction to the word of God, then it will only bring misery. The way of the transgressor is hard. There's a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof is the way of death. That Proverb is repeated twice in Proverbs, 14:12 and 16:25. There is a way that seems right to a man but the end thereof is the way of death. Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Our message is, "Listen, it's really not a good idea to follow your heart." We know from experience and so we don't condemn anyone and we have people in our body who can say, "Yes, I know what it is to struggle with same-sex attraction. I used to be a slave to this." And there are some who may be struggling with gender identity and we are here to help you and to walk with you through that. We're not to reject you because you struggle with sin because we are all sinners but, listen, the good news is Jesus Christ saves from sin and misery comes from yielding to sin and ultimately the misery of eternity separated from God forever.

So we love you too much to let you continue on that course without warning you and calling you to Christ. He is a glorious Savior. To submit to his kingship is ultimate freedom. The world promises freedom and they give misery. That's what Satan does. He offers you life but he gives you death. And in coming to Christ, he says, "Listen, to follow Me is to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me." There is a sense of dying to what you want because of the greatness of Christ, but in dying you find life. Jesus said this, "The one who saves his life will lose it but the one who loses his life for My sake will find it." That is, you hold onto the way you want to live and you lose it, but

you live the way God wants you to live, by his power, by his grace, by his Spirit, and you find it. You lay down your life to Christ and you find it.

So we saw that sexuality is meant to be between a man and a woman, one woman, one man for life. Back to the first book of the Bible, Genesis 2. I mean, God lays this down right at the very beginning of Scripture. Chapter 2, verse 18. It's really striking when you read this in context. The way chapter 1 and chapter 2 fit together, chapter 1 covers the six days of creation, chapter 2, verses 1 to 3, the seventh day of rest, and then chapter 2, verse 4, is a second account of creation through verse 25, but it's an account that's really like a slow motion instant replay of part of day six that was covered in chapter 1. Do you see what I'm saying? He goes through the seven days and then he says, "Let me tell you what happened on day six," and he goes back to the creation of man and woman which was talked about in the verses we read earlier in chapter 1. And he says, essentially what he shows us is when God created man, he made him first male and a little bit later in the day he makes female, and he lets the man understand how much he needs the female by doing this. Verse 18,

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

This is a completer, a counterpart, a perfect complement. The male needs a female because she is the perfect complement and counterpart to him. This is God's design. I remember hearing a pastor say one time, you know, you can argue against the law of God until you're blue in the face, you can argue against the law of gravity and step off the side of a building, marshal your arguments all the way down, it's still going to end in an absolute mess. That's the fact. God will not be mocked and if you mock him, you will reap what you sow.

It is not good for man to be alone; I'll make a counterpart, a helper suitable, and then it says in verse 21,

21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man 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." 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

The beauty of how God made man, I mean, to stop and make the man realize as he names the animals, he's looking at animals that are coming up 2 by 2 just like they went on the ark, 2 by 2. Why 2 by 2? Male, female. Male, female. Male, female. He's looking at all these animals and he's saying, "Wait a minute, I'm missing something here. We have a problem." He didn't know he had a problem until the Lord leads him through this process. That kind of shows how even Adam before sin, there's some deficiencies in us as men. We sometimes miss the most obvious things. He doesn't know he's not complete but the

Lord shows him this graciously and powerfully. He could have just made them male and female right away, could have made the woman right away, but he wants to do something so beautiful to show us how glorious it is what he's doing. That's why he stops and does it this way, he's emphatically, it's like he's underlining, highlighting, circling, putting in bold print, "Do you see this? Man, male and female. That is My glory."

So when the man receives the woman, he is ecstatic. "This is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh." The connection is organic. "She is exactly what I need." And so God intends this to be a one flesh relationship, alluding to the sexual relationship but also the oneness of the soul, that we are to pursue mental oneness, emotional oneness through becoming more and more understanding of one another, and in this a man, male and female, we picture the glory of God.

You see in Leviticus 20 this is the norm, it's one man, one woman for life. It's not up to what you feel. God is very clear on this. Leviticus 20, the Lord is talking about the wickedness of the people of Canaan and he's telling the Israelites as they're getting ready to go into Canaan, "You must not live like the people of the land. They are an abomination to Me. They are not living under My authority." And he says this in chapter 20, verse 13,

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.

Now he's going to talk about a lot of other sexual deviance including adultery, including all kinds of heterosexual sexual sin, but it's clear that God says that homosexual relationship is detestable to him just like all of these other detestable acts. God finds it offensive.

Turn with me to the New Testament. I remember in a class I had in college a professor trying to convince us that the New Testament didn't teach that God was opposed to homosexuality. But he was wrong, the New Testament clearly teaches this. We read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 earlier where we were told that no effeminate or homosexual that is not repentant, that is not seeking Christ, loving Christ, trying to walk in holiness, will enter heaven just like all of the other unrepentant sinners will not enter heaven. Romans 1:18,

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

Paul, his purpose is to present his gospel, that's what he says in the preceding verses, verse 16 and 17. "I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It's the power of God unto salvation." And this is why we need the gospel, the power of God, because he launches into chapter 1, verse 18, to tell us the bad news, because God's wrath is upon us, his holy indignation is upon all men because we have suppressed his truth in unrighteousness. We hold it down. We don't want to submit to his truth. We want to live our own way.

And he describes in verses 18 to 32 the incredible degradation and moral decline that happens as people live autonomously for themselves. They don't submit to God, then they become enslaved, and it's shown in a key verb that happens in verse 24, verse 26, and verse 28, that "God gave them over." It's a powerful verb which pictures a judicial decision and I think a good way to describe it is it describes judicial abandonment, that as people turn away from God, he, and what we see in this passage, he three times, to three different levels, he abandons them. They're basically saying, "We don't want anything to do with You. We don't want to submit to You. We don't want You to be our authority." And God then gives them over and say, "Okay, here, have more of your own will." And he gives them over. It's almost like, this image is helpful, I think, if you imagine fences that are around, you know, a herd of animals, cows or horses, and they break through one fence because they keep pushing against it. Finally, God removes the fence and they go into another pasture that is even more barren and just unfulfilling than the previous one. And then they get to the edge of that pasture and they push on the border again and God gives them over to another even deeper level of bondage and wickedness. They're wanting to go there and God lets them go. That's what this "gave them over." Verse 24, because they have,

23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man [worshiping idols, their own will] 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

What an unthinkable wicked act. This is what sin is, to exchange the truth of God for a lie and to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator, to say, "I will determine the way I live." That's what that is. And so God gives them over to these degrading passions. Look what he says in verse 26, the second time God gives them over,

26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 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.

That's homosexuality. That is, as we become more and more committed to our own way, God gives us over to more and more lust, heterosexual lust that becomes more and more wicked and evil, leading to homosexual lust and continued wickedness all around. And then finally in verse 28,

28 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, [this is the next step] 29 being filled with all unrighteousness,

wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

What a horrible catalog of sin, and look what it says next, "and although they know the ordinance of God," they know that God has decreed these things, they know in their heart because God made them to know it,

32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

That's being played out right in front of our eyes, isn't it? But you see how God feels about homosexuality, it's one of the catalog of sins and lust that corrupts the heart.

There's also one other passage. I mentioned 1 Corinthians 6, we read that earlier, but turn to 1 Timothy 1. I just want you to see how this is so clear in the New Testament. There is no mistaking this and you'll hear many people try to explain these things away but they just have to reject biblical authority to do so. 1 Timothy 1:8-10.

8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 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 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

You see, those are the kind of people that need to be converted. All of those sins including homosexuality. But it's not that it is the only sin, it's just that we have to convert all sinners.

So gender is clearly made by God, you're either male or female; sexuality, it's heterosexual relationship with one man and one woman for life in the covenant of marriage. That's clarity. The third point is opportunity. We talked about urgency, now clarity, now opportunity. We need to see our lives, that our lives are being lived at a time of great opportunity. I mean, we need to be grateful that we live in this day. Listen, I want to tell you something, that Romans 1 passage, I didn't read all of it, I encourage you to read it later, the decline starts when they don't give thanks. Although they know that God has made them, they don't give thanks and it begins this descent into more and more decay and wickedness. Now you who know the Lord Jesus Christ and you've been washed, you can still live in disobedience to the Lord in ways that cause great problems in your life and one of the things that you can fail to do, and I know I'm tempted to fail to do, is to be thankful. You and I need to cultivate a heart of thanksgiving that we live in this day. If God made you male, then you must take what he made you and praise him for it and you must. God made you female and you must praise him that he made you female

even if you are struggling with these different desires. God's Spirit will help you. His word will help you. Christ will be your righteousness.

But you must thank him for the way he made you, like David said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." There are things that you don't like about the way you're made, everybody is that way. We all have things we wish were different. You know, you wish you were taller and bigger so you could be a better athlete. You wish you had more brain power so you could pursue this particular field and you weren't able to do it. You wish that you had this color hair, or these color eyes, whatever. You wish that your body type was different. You are fearfully and wonderfully made, praise God for it. Thank him for it. If that is true, it is also true that God didn't make an accident when he put you and me in this century, in this moment, in this place, all around us in the circumstances. He has done this for his glory and our good, and we must praise him, and if you won't praise him, you will not be effective in shining the light of the gospel in this dark time, and this is a moment of incredible opportunity. As the world gets darker, the light shines brighter. Philippians 2:12-14 talks about this, do everything without grumbling or complaining so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God, who shine like lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. This crooked and perverse generation, you can shine a whole lot brighter as you love God, love his truth, embrace it, submit to him, rejoice in him, love Jesus, you shine brightly. You know, a candle, if you've got a dark night far away out in the wilderness where you don't have all the lights from the houses and stuff, isn't it amazing when you get away from the city and you can see stars that you couldn't see before? Well, now imagine a night where you don't even have starlight. You're out there in the wilderness and it's cloudy and it is dark and there can be a kind of darkness that's oppressive, the light of a single candle can be seen from 10 miles away. Think about that, a candle, how small is that light, how insignificant is that light, yet in the darkness it can light the way 10 miles away.

You can shine like that. I can shine like that. Just being faithful to Christ in this day, rejoicing in him. What an opportunity. Jesus said you are the light of the world. He said, "I am the light of the world," when he was here. "The one who believes in Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life. If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed." Every sinner can be free, all they have to do is go to Jesus. Any who come to him, he will set free and so he said, "I am the light of the world." They are coming with all of this darkness and Jesus, they come to Jesus and his light just rushes into their hearts and then he says to you and me who've received his light, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid but it gives light to all around. Man doesn't light a lamp and put it under a peck measure." You don't light a light and then cover it up. No, you light it so that it can give light to all in the house. He says this, "Therefore let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." You let the light shine with your words proclaiming the beauty of God's truth, the beauty of God's design, the beauty of God's gospel, the willingness of God to save any who come to him, but you also do it by your life, by your good works.

I was thinking about this in relation to that wedding yesterday, Dalton mentioned Nick and Mckay got married yesterday and just the beauty of marriage and getting to talk

about that and celebrate that, and so many Christians they have so many wonderful Christian friends. Nick plays for the Miami Marlins, they used to be the Florida Marlins, now Miami Marlins, I believe I'm right on that, and not the Braves, but the Marlins. But I tell you, getting to know some of these brothers, there are so many wonderful godly men that are in that organization. It's like there's a revival going on. The Lord is doing something powerful among the Marlins. So if they play the Braves in some kind of playoff game, it may be tough next year. Start praying now for grace to support the Marlins.

But anyway, no, seriously the Lord is doing something awesome and so we have all of these Christians celebrating marriage and I know how much Nick and McKay love Jesus, and seeing them come together and realizing the Lord has ordained this, and the beauty of a man who loves his bride and a bride who loves her husband, and the glory of that, just the beauty of that in itself, and then realizing that that is a picture of Christ and the church, that God in saving sinners sees it in the same way, the marriage supper of the Lamb, all of history moving to that moment when God will call us redeemed sinners who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and we will be prepared as a bride, Revelation 21, and we will come down as a bride out of heaven to meet our husband, the Lord Jesus Christ, and he will have the same sense of anticipation that a groom has looking at his bride, and we are a part of that. He wants us like that. Isn't that amazing? And we know what a joy it is to submit to his loving headship. No better place in the world than to be submitted to Christ and we find it, listen, as Christians don't we, the Christian life is a daily process of learning in new areas where I need to submit to his loving headship. He has a way of exposing you're not submitted in this area, and with the word of God and other Christians helping us, we keep helping one another to more and more bow the knee to Jesus. And every time you have those moments where you surrender to him, it may not immediately feel it but at some point you find out what he said is always true, "He who lays down his life for My sake finds it." You resist his headship, his lordship, whatever pleasure you have goes away. You submit to him, not immediately but sometime not too long after the joy and pleasure of his love.

So we are not as Christians we're friends of sinners. We're to be friends of sinners just like Jesus was a friend of sinners. We're to be people who engage in relationships with people who are struggling with these things but, listen, we do it with a guarded heart and a loving heart because we know that what needs to happen to this person is that they experience the love of God from me and they experience the liberating power of coming to know Jesus Christ. Truly what Martin Luther said about evangelism is true for us. We understand that we are no better than any other sinner and if we think we are, we need to get back on our knees before the cross and remember that we are nothing. Luther said this: we are simply, when you evangelize a sinner you are simply one beggar telling another beggar where you found bread. That's all it is. But if you've found bread and you don't tell someone who's dying of starvation, how is that love? You tell them, "Just continue to be happy in your miserable hunger that you think is actual happiness. Just stay there in it." And that's not love. That's hate speech, to say, "Be warmed and filled," with a sinner who is on the way to hell. That is hate speech. To say, "Come to Jesus," and

to be willing to lay down our lives so that people can come to Jesus, that is love and that's what God's called us to.

The last word of actually, I'm going to give you the last two words. I kind of merged them all together. The fourth word was authority and we have to have authority when we teach and it's not being prideful to speak authoritatively. It's humble. When you are humble and acknowledge that whatever God says is true and you submit to it, that's humility and when you speak you don't say, "It's just my opinion." You say, "Thus says the Lord. It's not what I think or what you think that matters. God says this." And that's what needs to happen in this day, there needs to be that kind of clear expression of authority. The world that is just getting deeper and darker needs to hear with a clarion clarity, "Thus says the Lord. "

We have a word from God and we need to speak with authority and what we're doing is we're calling them to come under his loving authority. The message is stop being your own king. Listen, the gospel really begins with that. It's really interesting, the first preaching of the gospel in the New Testament, what is it? Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Your problem and my problem is we are not a part of the kingdom of heaven. We're living without Jesus' kingship, without God's kingship. We're doing like the days of Judges, we're doing whatever is right in our own eyes and we're experiencing the misery that comes from that, and we are heading to hell, and what needs to happen is we need to submit to the kingship of God's appointed King, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that means turning from sin to Christ and submitting to his authority, and we know that his authority in submitting to him is ultimate freedom and joy, and that continuing to be your own authority is slavery and misery ending in hell.

The final point is beauty, to proclaim the beauty and perfection of God's design. That's what we're called to do. That's part of what it means to shine the light, you know, if you're married, to seek to make your marriage more and more like Christ and the church is one of the ways you can shine the light so clearly in this day. I mean, think about it, if people see you opening the door, you're a man opening the door for your wife, you know, opening the car door. I don't do this like I ought to either and sometimes you have the problem if you don't have the button that hits the thing, it's not working, you have to go around to your side anyway. Anybody have that problem? I'd like to open your door but I can't unless I go around and walk all the way back around. It seems a little over the top to do that. It probably isn't, though. We ought to be thinking about how can we show how much I treasure and value this other person? Wives, the same way, how can you honor your husband and make it such a habit of life that there's so much joy in it and when unbelievers get around you, they just see the beauty of it, glimpses of it. Not like you're trying to make a show, you're just being who you are and being who you are is lighting the world. And you tell them, "I just love my wife so much. I do, I love my wife so much, so much more after 35 years." Marriage is such a wonderful gift. God knows what he's doing.

So live it. Proclaim it, the beauty. Tell people about it and shine the light of the gospel. Love sinners. Live before them, speak to them, engage them. Don't hate them. Don't hate

them because they're voting for these things. Don't hate them because they're advocating for these things. Don't hate them because they hate you. Hate sin. Hate Satan. Love them and leave it to God. If they won't repent, God will deal with them. But we should be brokenhearted for sinners like Jesus was, but Jesus when he met sinners, he didn't leave them the way they were and may God help us do the same. We have a high calling. It is a great day to live in this time, in this place, it's a great day to know Jesus Christ. We have the treasure that is so clearly missing, more clearly missing than at any time in my life, more clearly missing than I could have ever imagined it being like it is now. Don't you feel like that? If it doesn't change, it just makes the glory of the gospel shine brighter. We've got work to do. May God help us.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your glory, the glory of the gospel, the glory of how You have designed marriage, the glory of how You've designed man, male and female. Lord, we know that we all are sinners, we all are rebels. There are people here today that are struggling with various sins, every one of us fighting against sin. Some are experiencing bondage in deep ways and they're in pain, they're in agony. Lord, let them know that the church is a place for sinners, that we help one another, we love one another, but we lead one another continually to Christ for He is mighty to save. Help us walk together through life becoming more like Him. And Lord, shine Your light so brightly that many will stream to the cross and stream to the side of the Savior and bring about a great spiritual awakening across the world for the glory of Your Son who is worthy. Lord, let His bride and His church be filled with more and more redeemed sinners singing His praises forever. We pray this in His name. Amen.