

Degrading Passions: Homosexuality

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Bible Text: Romans 1:24-27
Preached on: Sunday, March 26, 2000

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Please turn with me this morning to the book of Romans chapter 1 and follow along as I read verses 18-28. I do see that once again we have visitors among us this morning. Let me please explain that we have been involved for quite some time now in a series on this letter to the Romans, what has been called the Magna Carta of the Christian faith, one of the most important books of the New Testament. This morning's is the 16th sermon on just chapter 1. We're endeavoring to go through this book with great thoroughness and with great thoughtfulness. Please follow as I read Romans chapter 1 beginning at verse 18 today and reading through verse 28.

“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. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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.”

We have seen even in just our reading this morning and certainly in our previous studies that there is a threefold refrain at verse 24, 26 and 28. The refrain is the phrase “God gave them over.” This action on the part of God is an action or, perhaps better, a reaction of justice. Because of man's defiant sin, God responds in wrath. That is revealed, that is able to be seen, able to be discerned objectively as one studies society. The wrath of God is revealed.

The Apostle says in verse 18, he is not speaking of the wrath of God that *has* been revealed in centuries gone by. He is not speaking of the wrath that *will be* revealed at the end of human history, he's speaking about the wrath that is revealed now, that can be seen, that can be objectively seen as somebody studies society today.

Indeed, John Stott in his commentary on this passage corrects any erroneous view when he says this, "When we hear of God's wrath we usually think of thunderbolts from heaven and earthly cataclysms and flaming majesty instead of which his anger goes quietly and invisibly to work in handing sinners over to themselves." As John Duesler writes, "It operates not by God's intervention, but precisely by his not intervening." By letting men and women go their own way, God abandons stubborn sinners to their willful self-centeredness and the resulting process of moral and spiritual degeneration is to be understood as a judicial act of God. This *is* the revelation of God's wrath from heaven, as God in this threefold refrain, this terrible refrain, "God gave them over."

Paul is telling us that it matters what you think. Paul is telling us that ideas have consequences. Paul is telling us that when man refuses to retain God in his knowledge any longer and abandons the knowledge of God any longer God reacts. And God gives them over to degrading passions.

You will note then that the title of this morning's sermon as you find it in the bulletin is simply "Degrading Passions." It is taken from verse 26 where Paul begins to deal with an issue that was a problem in his day and an issue which is a problem in our day and one that I *have to* address if I'm going to address Romans 1 in clarity and in thoroughness. And it's a subject that I would choose even *not* to address. Paul deals with the whole issue of homosexuality.

Many of you received a letter from me this week written not from a pastoral perspective but written simply as a concerned citizen of the Fifth Congressional District of this state. And in that letter I tried to explain that liberalism in America is a monolithic undifferentiated system of belief and action. That is, it matters not if you're speaking to a liberal minister or a liberal professor or a liberal politician, they are part of a monolithic undifferentiated system. And whether it's a liberal minister or a liberal politician or a liberal educator, all of them alike are endeavoring to force the political agenda of homosexuals on society. Therefore, we cannot skip over a subject that Paul deals with merely because we find it to be unpleasant to think about or to discuss. Instead, we ought to bring truth into the discussion to refute the lies that are constantly advanced by liberalism. And it is truth, precisely truth, that liberals do not want you to learn.

In fact, and I'm quoting now from McIlhenny's book, "When the Wicked Seize a City." It is written by a Chuck McIlhenny who is an Orthodox Presbyterian Pastor in San Francisco. And if there is one book that you ought to have and read on this whole very difficult subject, it is this book. I hope that it's still in print. I hope that you get it and that you read it, that you might understand the issues that we're speaking of today. Quoting from page 98, he is quoting here about just the strategy of the left and the strategy of

particularly, of the whole homosexual community and what they don't want you to know. And a couple of their authors say this, Marshall Kirk and Erastes Pill encourage gay activists to discuss gay rights as often as possible but discourage any discussion of gay behavior. And according to these authors and quoting them now, "In the early stages of any campaign to reach straight America, the masses should not be shocked and repelled by premature exposure to homosexual behavior. Instead, the imagery of sex should be downplayed and gay rights should be reduced to an abstract social question as much as possible. First, let the camel get his nose into the tent and only later his unsightly derriere." That's *their* agenda.

They say in their own words, "Don't talk about our behavior, don't let America know what we do, just have the discussion be a discussion of rights. Let's keep truth suppressed. Let's not have the light of truth shine on us or on our agenda or on our behavior or on our practices." Because they know that if the light of truth were to shine on their behavior and their practices as far as we have fallen in America there would still be wholesale revulsion that would set them back.

You will never find video of the so-called gay rights parade on the evening news. You won't find extensive video on it at all because they can't show it. They can't show what goes on in any of those parades without losing their license by the FCC. You can't find newspaper reporters reporting graphically what takes place in any gay rights parade in any city of America today. You can't find them writing specifically about what takes place at every one of those parades without violating their own standards against what can and cannot be printed.

I'm committed to handle this subject but to handle it in a biblical way, to handle it with biblical restraint. I refer to the way in which the Bible addresses the problem and that is, the scriptures deal with the issue without describing the behavior. The scriptures deal discreetly with the issue. In fact, in Ephesians chapter 5 and verses 11 and 12 this is part of Christian law, "And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness but instead even expose them for it is disgraceful to even speak of the things which are done by them in secret."

On the one hand, we are to have an expose but an expose in such a way that is still discreet. And this is the way the Bible always handles this particular subject whether in the Old or the New Testament. It deals with it in a straight-forward way but it deals with great discretion. And I know, and I want to maintain that balance, I know I run the risk of offending people who are simply more discreet and cautious than the scriptures are. There's always that risk. But I want to let you know that I've worked hard this week on saying what I want to say this morning and saying it in the way that I believe that it needs to be said. And if I stick more closely to my notes, it's because I want to be careful and I don't want to err on the right and I don't want to err on the left. We should recognize that we must deal with what the scriptures deal with and we must deal with it in the way that the scriptures deal with it. I think every Christian would agree with that. We have to deal with what the scriptures deal with and we have to deal with it in the *way* that the

scriptures deal with it. Of course, no study of Romans 1 would be complete without addressing this theme.

We note that the Lord Jesus never dealt specifically with this subject and this was likely because it was not common among the Jews. The Lord Jesus dealt with the root of the subject in Mark 7 and Matthew 15 when he says, “it’s out of the heart that proceed” and he lists a whole catalog of the evil that proceeds quite naturally from the human heart.

As soon as the gospel made its way into Gentile society, however, this sin was confronted and Paul wanted the church at Rome to have a Christian perspective on the subject. This whole issue is dealt with in three passages in the New Testament. It’s dealt with here in Romans 1 extensively, it’s dealt with in 1 Corinthians 6 and it’s dealt with in 1 Timothy, chapter 1 and verse 10. It’s dealt with very extensively in the Old Testament. But it is a common problem, a common problem that Paul had to deal with, it’s a common problem that you and I have to deal with and we have to have a Christian perspective on the subject. It has always been a common problem.

On Saturday, December 22 in 1804 the Lewis and Clark expedition ran into this problem. In their journals and on that date, Saturday, December 22, 1804 they ran into a bunch of Plains Indians and here were a number of squaws and here were a number of men that were dressed like squaws. It surprised me, but here were homosexuals among America’s Plains Indians. And the footnote made that clear.

Winston Churchill when he was Lord of the Admiralty in England before he came into his own and was Prime Minister, but when he was Lord of the Admiralty he had to confront the problem in the Royal Navy. And he said, “Here’s three words that sum up Britain’s Royal Navy.” And the three words were, “Rum, sodomy and the lash.” It was a problem that Churchill had to confront back then. So, we have to deal with the subject but we have to deal with it with biblical restraint.

I want to make a few observations from Romans 1 this morning and what Paul has to say. I want you to observe in the first place that homosexuals live out a miserable existence. That is the first thing we need to see. Taught by the scriptures and confirmed by their lives. Observe in the first place that homosexuals live out a miserable existence and by miserable I’m speaking simply of a life full of misery. That’s what I mean by miserable, a life that is full of misery. In other words, the depictions on the tv sitcoms are a myth, young people, because the actors who portray gay people on the tv sitcoms constantly appear as healthy as the straight people and this is simply a lie. That is not true. The homosexual community around the world and around America is not as healthy as the heterosexual community and their misery is from their own behavior.

And so the Apostle says in Romans chapter 1 and verse 27, “Receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.” He is speaking there about male homosexuals and that is his language that they receive in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And many people today have no idea as to what homosexuals actually do to one another and I’m not going to tell you. But suffice it to say that their behavior is destructive to the

human body for the human body is not capable of enduring their practices without injury and disease. And it has been well documented, the pathology doctors have documented the pathology of it and we ought to understand quite clearly that it is a myth. If you ever watch any sitcom that portrays these people as being as healthy as the straight community it is a lie. They live out a miserable existence. This is what is part and parcel of their experience.

San Francisco alone has seen a venereal disease rate 22 times the national average since gay right laws were passed in that city. There's been a 100% increase in the spread of infectious hepatitis A, a 300% increase in hepatitis B, amoebic colon infections increase 2,500% and venereal disease clinics see 75,000 patients every year of whom 80% are homosexual males.

These are the figures when it comes to obituaries. The average life span of a married man is 74 years but the average for homosexual men is 42 years. If you add AIDS then a homosexual man's life span drops to 37 years. One survey examined 5,371 obituaries from American homosexual newspapers. Only 2% lived to age 65. Whenever I pick up the NJ Herald every day, the first thing I look at is the obituaries to see if anybody died that I know. I always look at the ages. When you look at the obituaries in the NJ Herald most of the people you see dying are old, old people. Only 2% of homosexuals live to age 65. For lesbians, median age of death is 45. One in five are murdered, kill themselves or die from accidents and this 532 times the rate of heterosexual females. The Bible says that homosexuals live out a miserable existence and their own figures confirm that.

The editor of Time Magazine wrote this in 1966, he could never get away with writing this today. In fact, he could never be editor of Time Magazine today but in 1966 when I was 16, the editor of Time Magazine wrote this, "Even in purely nonreligious terms, homosexuality represents a misuse of the sexual faculty and in the words of one educator, of human construction. It is a pathetic second rate substitute for reality, a pitiable flight from life. As such it deserves fairness, compassion, understanding and when possible treatment. But it deserves no encouragement, no glamorization, no rationalization, no fake status as a minority martyrdom." That could not be written today.

Homosexual behavior spreads disease because it is hygienically filthy. And homosexuals are a threat to the public well-being. Far more than all the gun manufacturers combined. Take all the gun manufacturers combined and all the illegal firearms combined and nowhere near as many people die every year as just the people who die in San Francisco prematurely because of this problem. But it's popular to go after tobacco, it's popular to go after the gun manufacturers but where will be the politician that will dare to stand up and say, "I will not march in a gay rights parade ever because it is one of the greatest problems of public health and safety in the United States." Wouldn't you like to meet one? Wouldn't you like to vote for one? It is a terrible problem of health.

And so the first observation from Romans 1 where Paul says that they "receive in their own persons the due penalty of their error." The first observation we make is that they live out a miserable existence. If you do not want misery in your life you must resist that

temptation at all costs or you will be a miserable individual rather than a happy and long-living individual. They cannot dispute those figures, they do not want that truth to come out, they do not want it to be known the health hazards that they are and that their behavior produces. They want that kept under wraps, they want the argument only to be about rights but they don't want the argument to be about behavior. And I'm convinced that that's one of the areas that any true statesman, be it a Christian or not, would have an avenue of opposing the whole movement just on the basis of the health hazards to society.

Tuberculosis is spreading rapidly in all of our major cities. Almost unheard of years ago. You know who's starting it? Over 90% of the all the cases are by gay men. You see that exposes you and I to the disease. You and I are not exposed to AIDS, you and I do not have to be worried at all about AIDS if you're able when your surgery is coming up to do as many of us can do and donate your pints of blood ahead of time. You don't need to worry about having that disease transmitted through the blood supply if you're donating your own safe blood. You don't have to worry about that disease if you are pure before marriage and faithful in marriage, you need have no concerns about that disease. But you do need to be greatly concerned about the person who sneezes in the bus who has tuberculosis because his immune system has broken down because of his behavior.

Observation number one, homosexuals live out a miserable existence and what you see presented on sitcoms is a lie. They are not as healthy as their heterosexual counterparts.

Observation number two is this, observe in the second place that homosexuals rebel against natural design. Paul puts it this way in verse 26, "Their women exchange the natural function for that which is unnatural." In verse 27, "And in the same way the men have abandoned the natural function of the woman." Of the natural function. The natural order of creation is *heterophilea* which merely means the attraction of male and female of the species to the opposite sex. That is what is there in creation. All of creation is built around *heterophilea*, the attraction of the male and female of every species to the opposite sex. That is the natural order of creation. In fact, even if you were an evolutionists you would be able to say, "That is the natural order of the physical world in which we live." If I were an evolutionist, I would have to say that homosexuality is unnatural and there are some secular evolutionists who do say that, that it is unnatural.

One wrote this, Warren J. Gadpeel, a secular psychiatrist at the University of Colorado Medical Center in Denver states, "From an evolutionary perspective homosexuality as a preferential or obligatory mode must be by definition biologically deviant." He's not a Christian saying that. But you look round about you and all of the world is structured around *heterophilea*. The male and the female in all the species being attracted to the opposite sex. It's what's making the squirrels go nuts at this time of year, young people. The squirrels chasing each other around the tree, the male squirrels getting into battles with the other male squirrels, why are they doing that? Because the girl squirrels are making them nuts. And they're being attracted to the girl squirrels. It's what's making the turkeys when you're on your way to work in the morning and you are seeing that tom turkey out there and he's just puffing himself up and putting out his great big fan and

strutting his stuff. Not before the other toms but before the females. It's *heterophilea*. It's what makes the deer go crazy in the fall around November. The bucks have been getting along fine all during the summer season, they've been hanging around in bachelor groups and then one day they get a sniff of a doe in season and the bucks that have been getting along fine and hanging around in their bachelor groups are now trying to kill each other in mortal combat. Why? Because they're attracted to the opposite sex. And that is the natural order of creation. It is *heterophilea*.

This issue that we're discussing is not an issue of love for people of the same sex. I dearly love my brother, I dearly love many of the men in this congregation. It's not an issue of love for people of the same sex it is an issue of unnatural behavior and practices. That's the issue.

So we observe in the second place that homosexuals rebel against natural design.

We observe in the third place that homosexuals live an immoral existence. Romans 1:24-27, "Wherefore God gave them over to the lusts of their own hearts, to impurity that their bodies might be dishonored among them for they exchanged the truth of God for a lie. Worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passion,"s and we've read it. It is an immoral lifestyle. In fact, in verse 27 where it says that "the men burned in their desire toward one another," that word "burned" can even be translated as "burned out." Once again revealing that the destructive tendencies of being caught up in that kind of behavior and that kind of practice it will lead to an unnatural and untimely burning out of the human body. And their own obituaries in their own newspapers confirm it again and again. It is an immoral lifestyle.

Leviticus 18:22 said in the Old Covenant, "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female. It is an abomination." You see how discreet even God's law was. It doesn't go into really describing the behavior it just says, "You shall not lie with a male as you lie with a female. It is an abomination." In fact, under the Old Covenant it was a capital offense. It was such an attack against family, it was such an attack against the natural order of creation that in Israel those who were found guilty of this were guilty of a capital offense.

Leviticus 20:13 says, "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon their own heads." That's not the way the New Covenant deals with it thankfully but that is the way God's law dealt with it in Israel's day. We must be unequivocal in saying that homosexuals live an immoral existence.

But I need to end with this, in my last observation, that homosexuals are not in a hopeless condition. I read this week of a minister who said to Pastor McIlhenny in San Francisco and you really need to get this book and read it to see what being a faithful Christian means in San Francisco. The homosexual community tried to burn his house down, tried to burn his children up. If he had not smelled the fire, they would've been burned out.

Many a time that their lives were threatened, many a time that they had to get out of the city for the safety of their children. It is a gripping story and we need to read it. But he had a pastor say to him, "If I knew that there was a homosexual sitting in the congregation I would ask the deacons to escort him out." That's a terrible pastor. If I knew that there was a homosexual sitting here, I would welcome you and I would say you are not beyond the grace of God, that there's help and there's hope.

And the last thing we need to observe is that homosexuals are not in a hopeless condition. It must be clearly understood that liberalism advances a hopeless agenda. "Well, if you're a homosexual that's just the way it is," liberals say. Some of the liberals are chemical determinists. They say, "You are what you are merely because all you are really is just a collection of chemicals and you're just chemically determined." Others are psychological determinists, "Well, you are what you are merely because psychologically you are determined in that way." Others are genetic determinists. Others spread their hopeless liberal views for political reasons but in all of liberalism there is no hope and there is no help.

In fact, the liberal agenda doesn't even want you to know about the organizations that minister to homosexuals today that see great help in having them leave that immoral lifestyle and become heterosexual people. They don't even want you to know that those organizations exist. And that's why I say we have to let truth shine on things. Not just the truth of what the Word of God says, but just truth. Because you will not hear truths from the liberal side. But the word of God offers hope and the word of God offers help. And have you ever wondered why Paul addresses this subject here in Romans 1? He addresses it in Romans 1 not only because he wants the church at Rome to have a biblical construct, a biblical world view and a Christian world view of that particular subject, but he addresses that subject here because he was convinced that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. To the homosexual who believes, to the adulterer who believes, to the fornicator who believes and for every other manifestation of sexual sin, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

Listen to this, John Paulk wrote this, he's a former homosexual. "It was a gorgeous morning when my wife Ann and I were walking across the parking lot after church." His wife, Ann? And he was walking across the parking lot after church. "Cheryl, a new friend, rushed up to us. 'Ann,' she cried, 'it's good to see you. Are we still on for lunch tomorrow?' Ann and I had moved to Colorado Springs only a few months earlier and meeting people was a top priority for us. Ann had met Cheryl at a women's Bible Study. 'Oh, Cheryl, I'm so sorry,' Ann replied, 'I was going to call you this afternoon. I'm really disappointed to have to cancel but John and I got a call this morning and we have to do an interview tomorrow at 11 a.m.' 'An interview?' Cheryl asked, 'why are you and John being interviewed?' And Ann took a deep breath, 'Oh, it's a long story. Sometimes we're interviewed about our lives and about our decision to follow Christ out of homosexuality.' Cheryl's face was a study in astonishment. 'Ann, I had no idea, I didn't even know people could come out of homosexuality.' 'Well, they can, John and I did with God's help. But a lot of media types don't believe people like us exist. It's important for us to share our story so I'm afraid I'll have to reschedule.'

O brethren, there is story after story like that. And if you want to read the testimonies of former homosexuals that are now walking with God they are available. Log onto Focus on the Family's website, family.org. Log on to that, type in homosexuality and do a search and read the articles and you can read the testimonies of people.

Liberals don't want to say that there's any help or hope. But Christ in the gospel says there's help and there is hope. And I want to end with this, one of the three passages that mentions this theme in the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 6. As I said, it's Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Timothy 1. In 1 Corinthians 6 I'd like to once again end with these words, verses 9-11. "For do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revelers, nor swindlers shall inherit the kingdom of God." It says don't be deceived if your life is characterized by these things. If this is the way you live you're not going to heaven, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.

That's pretty serious, isn't it. It's pretty straight, isn't it. That doesn't provide a lot of hope, does it? But verse 11 provides tremendous hope. Lenski says, "There's a sermon in tenses and there's a sermon here." Verse 11 says this, "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." And that "were" ought to be underscored. Paul is saying, "Now I know you Christians there in Corinth, I planted the church there in Corinth and the gospel came to some fornicators and you were fornicators and you're not now and the gospel came to you and some of you were drunkards at that time and you know you're not now. Some of you were adulterers at that time and now there were some homosexuals among you at that time and you're not now. You're God's people, you're walking in purity, you were but you are not."

Let the liberals have their determinism, let them have their helplessness, let them have their hopelessness. In the gospel of Jesus Christ the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

I hope that provides hope for some of you non-Christians that are sitting here. I hope that you don't say, "Thank God I'm not like them." Jesus had something to say about self-righteous people. You can go to hell being a faithful heterosexual and still go to hell. And you could have some miserable homosexual get convicted of his sin, repent of his sin, believe the gospel and go to glory. And we ought to understand that there is no sin that is outside the forgiveness and the grace of God. And that provides great hope for people doesn't it? The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, Romans 1:16.

And that is what we offer to people, sincerely. In spite of their real guilt, not just their guilt feelings but their real moral guilt, we come and offer the gospel that you can be forgiven of your sins if you believe that when Jesus Christ died on the cross of Calvary he died there to atone for your sins, he died there to meet the demands of God's justice,

that called for the death penalty and he died to take your place in experiencing the death penalty and he lived in order to live in your place. And if you will turn from your sin and believe on the Son of God you can be cleansed and washed and forgiven of your sins and made new in Jesus Christ. And there is great hope and that is what we offer to people today.

How thankful we ought to that there are such good churches in San Francisco. They are not running away but are endeavoring to go through the AIDS wards and minister for Christ to these miserable people who have brought misery upon themselves because of their behavior and because of their practices, to go through those wards and minister to those people in love and minister to those people in grace. And brethren that's what you and I must do. That's what we must do and I trust that you will take these things to heart and that's the last you're going to hear about this because I want to deal with it, because the Bible does, but to deal with it in the way that the Bible does with biblical discretion.

Shall we pray.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ there is power for the sinner to break his bonds that enslave him. Whether it is slavery to one sin or another, we recognize it as slavery and we thank you, our Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ who said if the Son shall set you free you shall be free indeed. And we pray, our Father, that you would help us to be a people that in grace and truth would reach out. We pray, our Father, that you would help us to be wise in resisting the political agenda that surrounds us on every hand, that we would see the rising up across our nation statesmen that would not be afraid to resist this agenda that is being forced upon us that will lead to greater and greater calamity to our communities. And we pray that for those churches that minister for Christ in the inner cities where these things are indeed rampant, that you would bless their ministries to the conversion of everyone who sits under the sound of the gospel. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.