

## 4 – Addressing the Heart of Same-Sex Attraction

*The Bible and Homosexuality*

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We come tonight to another just really crucial aspect of this whole matter of dealing with the Bible and homosexuality and it's very practical and it's one that you are going to face, no doubt, as you interact with family or friends in the future and it is certainly a prominent issue in the way that homosexuals argue and try to vindicate their position even as so-called Christians and the idea is that, "I was born this way. I didn't choose to be this way. I can't help it and therefore it must be okay." A worship leader in Chicago associated with Willow Creek Church recently issued this statement. He said and I quote, "I'm a follower of Jesus. I'm also gay. As a Christian, I've been on a long journey to reconcile the reality of my orientation with the various views that the church world has on the topic of people who are attracted to the same sex. I have begun a journey of celibacy and prayerfully discerning what that means for my life." It's easily and readily available. If you just google "Willow Creek gay pastor," you'll come up with this statement right at the top of the results.

Well, look, here's the question: is it okay to have as your settled approach to life to be attracted sexually to the same gender just so long as you do not engage in physical activity? Can you have that as the cornerstone desire of your heart in human relationships and still be a Christian? That's an important question because this thought is greatly influencing the Christian church today that, yes, you can be that way. It's simply if you control that and you're celibate, then, you know, there's nothing to be concerned about. Now look: we're talking tonight about more than a passing perverse thought that you quickly reject in your mind and, "Oh, where did that come from? That's not me." No, we're addressing whether someone can identify themselves as a homosexual by desire, by heart attraction and still be a Christian. What do we say to this? Can you affirm the desire as long as you separate it from the act? The answer to that question is: no, you can't. The sin of homosexuality is more than external behavior. The disposition toward it is also sinful and must be repented of if a person is going to be a Christian.

Now, that may be surprising to you. It may be surprising to many if you have approached Christianity as a series of external rules to be obeyed and that Christianity is not much more than simply going to church on Sunday. Those who have an external approach to Christianity do not have the capacity or the experience or the knowledge that is necessary to respond to this biblically but Scripture is abundantly clear on this matter that biblical

righteousness is far more than simply avoiding external sin and we're going to walk through this here today. This is a crucial issue that is far more important than simply dealing with the matter of homosexuality and homosexual attraction. There is something much greater at stake here. What's at stake in this discussion is the very nature of what it means to be a Christian. What's at stake in this discussion is the very nature of the righteousness that God requires from man and to try to define sin down by limiting it simply to external behavior without regard to what the heart attraction is, is to utterly redefine and overturn everything that Scripture says about what God requires from man and so we need to deal with this decisively. We need to deal with it clearly. We need to deal with it without apology and without being intimidated by influential voices that try to argue this to the contrary. Even John Piper's ministry, for crying out loud, has published an article on its blog going back a year or two ago, affirming the very thing that we are contradicting here tonight. So we need to be clear and decisive on this because the people that some look to for their spiritual direction are unreliable on this matter and so we go back to the word of God and see what the word of God has to say about it.

What does Scripture say? Well, I think I'm going to give you a total of 4 points here this evening and I'll be mindful as we go through this that you've heard me talk a lot already this weekend and so I'll try to be sympathetic and merciful in my treatment of you here this evening, not only you but those of you on the live stream. Building off that, obviously I'm saying that in a bit of a light-hearted sense but let me also just say, let me say this: as I said as we opened the service here this evening, we're dealing with weighty issues and you can't help but feel the weight when we're talking about sin and condemnation and repentance and addressing things at a serious level. You know, I'm mindful of that as we talk, as we preach here this evening, in light of everything that we've said this weekend but, beloved, I want you also to see that the reason that these matters are weighty is because weighty issues have come against the church in our day and we can't respond to weighty issues with a superficial response. Five minute, 10 minute devotional messages or motivational messages with a loud band and, you know, colorful lights, doesn't respond to the spirit of the age and we have to step up to weighty issues with a weighty response and we're not going to treat this superficially because we know, we understand as a church, that that is not going to equip you to live in life and to respond to matters that come to bear against you from those who have been influenced by this thinking. So while it's weighty and while I'm mindful of that, while I'm grateful for you sitting through these things, we also realize that weight must meet weight in response. We must have a serious response to serious issues and Scripture teaches us to think seriously and to think profoundly and to think internally as well as externally.

So for our 4 points this evening, we want to start here and point number 1 is this: that the Bible judges sinful desires which is another way of saying that God himself judges sinful desires. The biblical approach to sin, as we've seen in past times together, is far more than external behavior and this is not unique to homosexuality. This is not something where we're targeting homosexuals and bringing something to bear only upon them. This applies to all of us. Sinful desires provoke God's judgment not simply sinful deeds, because God by his nature, God in his attributes, is an omniscient, all-seeing God and he looks upon the heart, not merely the outward man. In 1 Samuel 16:7, the Bible says that,

"God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." And this idea that I can be oriented toward being a homosexual and that I can embrace that and I can affirm that and still be a Christian runs absolutely counter to what Scripture says about that. How does God see it? What does God see? He looks on a heart that says, "I want homosexual behavior but I'm just going to restrain my outer man from it." Well, that's not righteous. This is all rooted ultimately in the tenth commandment that we looked at earlier where it said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." Going back to the law of God, going back to the Ten Commandments, we see God outlawing illicit desires as being subject to judgment. He prohibits a sinful heart. He prohibits a heart that is captivated by sinful desires.

Jesus condemned heart sins like anger and lust. Look at Matthew 5. We looked at it last time and we'll go back to it again today because of how important this is. Matthew 5:21-22 where Jesus is responding to a perversion of the law that the Pharisees had made and they had made the application of God's law purely external and he says in verse 21, "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.'" So he says, "You have heard that the outward action is unlawful," Jesus says, "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell." Without any kind of physical assault, just the mere angry, the vitriolic word, Jesus says, incurs a judgment that consigns men to hell. Jesus says, "Don't be fooled by those who would restrict the concept of sin to merely the external act. Why? Because the anger itself is judgment-worthy. Because God prohibits coveting. Because God looks on the heart and judges the man by what is inside him."

He goes on and says the same thing in another area of illicit desire in verse 27. He says, "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Even the look, the illicit desire from across the room, Jesus says, in God's eye is an adulterous moment in the life of that person. So without touching her, without doing anything, the very motion of the heart in that direction, Jesus says, is an adulterous motion of the heart that is condemnable before God.

Now, this gets pretty personal pretty fast, doesn't it? All of a sudden, God has taken a big spotlight and is just shining it in the dark corners of our heart and exposing the sin that is there: the anger, the lust, the desires that maybe no one knows about but that you harbor in your bitterness, in your resentment, in your settled longings for someone that doesn't belong to you. Jesus says all of that incurs guilt before God. Scripture says that God sees that and God, listen, God who created the outer man also created the inner man and we are responsible with our outer man as well as our inner man before God. We don't get to harbor sin in our heart that would be wrong if we acted upon the desires. They are both equally full of guilt. The desires themselves are sinful.

Now, that's pretty sobering. Forget homosexuals, that's sobering for us, isn't it, to realize that and to realize how searching the omniscience of God is; to realize how utterly responsible and accountable we are before him. What man meets that standard? What man has not incurred guilt just in anger and lust or coveting? None of us. Not a one of us. Not a one of you is innocent of these heart sins and so while we're addressing them in the context of homosexuality because the homosexual community and so-called Christians are pressing this upon us and vindicating themselves with their wicked hearts, we realize that we ourselves are humbled by what God requires from us.

Now, that leads us to our second point here this evening. We said that the Bible condemns sinful desires, let's go some place where we don't often go, where you don't often let your thinking probe this deeply. Have you ever wondered where your sinful desires come from? Where do they come from? Do they just spontaneously happen in a matter that is unconnected with anything to do with who you really are? Well, no, that's not true. Point number 2 here this evening: Scripture teaches us that sinful desires come from sinful hearts. A sinful heart is that which produces sinful desires that produce sinful deeds and so when you see external sin, when you see somebody that has fallen into sin or when you yourself have sinned, you can trace things back. That sinful deed is simply the by-product of things that were going on inside your heart long before and you can draw a linear line from the sinful deed back and you go, "Well, there was the sinful deed, where did that sinful deed come from?" The sinful deed came from a sinful desire. Where did that sinful desire come from? You can't say, "Oh, the devil made me do it," like Flip Wilson used to say many, many years ago for those of you who remember that name. If not, that's okay. I'm dating myself here. That's alright. But the sinful desires come from a sinful disposition, from a sinful nature. The inner man itself is corrupted and Scripture teaches this clearly and repeatedly and if you remember that God looks on the heart, God judges the inner man as well as the external man, you can realize how serious this issue becomes.

Look at Mark 7 as we consider this point that sinful desires come from sinful hearts. And notice that really up to this point, I've really said very little about homosexuality and that's really important to understand because we're talking about something that applies to all men generally. Homosexuality and the idea of an orientation while being celibate is just a very small subsection of the greater teaching of what it means to be a human that has fallen into sin and in Mark 7, Jesus helps us see this with great clarity. We'll actually start in verse 20. We alluded to this passage earlier today as well. Jesus was saying in verse 20 that, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man." Verse 21, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." And notice that with one or two possible exceptions, especially in verses 22 and following, that Jesus...let's put it this way: there in verse 21, Jesus kind of emphasizes some of the external actions: fornication, theft, murder, adulteries; things that you could take a picture of. You could take a movie of somebody doing these things and you see the external sin being played out. But he goes on and equates as equally guilty

those things that you could not use a camera to take a picture of; of those things that men cannot see. Things like coveting and wickedness and a deceitful spirit and a sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness, those things that are not external. Jesus says that all of that, the external and the internal, it all proceeds from a deeper source. It proceeds from the heart of man, from his inner nature, from his spiritual control center.

So sinful desires come from sinful hearts and this means something. You see, your heart, your unconverted heart before you were a Christian, your heart was not neutral and the heart of unconverted men, it's not neutral and then as if sinful desires and sinful orientations just kind of pop out of nowhere and the way that people think and their sinfulness, that doesn't just spring out of neutral soil. It comes from the fact that the very nature of man itself is fallen and perverted and sinful and unacceptable to God. In James 4, you can turn over to James 4, if you would, just after the book of Hebrews. In James 4, I'll give you a moment to turn there. He says, "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?" Where does this division between men, where is it's source? He says, "Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel." James says, "The reason that you are seeing this sin in your life is traced to your perverted, sinful heart," and people murder because they want something that they can't have. That's why so many of the crimes that are committed are called...that's why we have the phrase "a crime of passion." People murder. People superficially would mock this passage as being an overstatement but, "You lust and do not have; so you commit murder." This is so common in our news that it shouldn't even be debated anymore. Of course that's the case. Men want to control their girlfriends and when they can't they go out and they slaughter them. Well, it's rooted in their lust and their lusts are rooted in their sinful, wicked hearts.

What did Jesus say about these things? Well, he said we can't whitewash this. We can't pretend that this isn't a serious problem. In fact, he condemns those who were outwardly religious and outwardly conforming and yet their hearts were impure. Look at Luke 11:39 and 40. Ah, let's start in verse 37. We're having a good time tonight. Scripture says, "Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and Jesus went in, and reclined at the table. When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that Jesus had not first ceremonially washed before the meal." Look at what Jesus says in response, verse 39, "He said to him, 'Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?'" Jesus says, "Outwardly you comply. You worry about washing cups and platters before you eat. What about the wickedness that is in your heart?" So what we see here is clear evidence from the mouth of Jesus himself saying God is going to hold us accountable and he does hold us accountable to the motions of our hearts, to the affections and the desires of our heart and illicit, sinful desires incur the judgment of God. Nothing could be plainer in Scripture.

So, beloved, watch this because this is so very important: God not only forbids us to do wicked things, he also forbids us from wanting wicked things. He forbids us not only from doing things that violate his will, he forbids us from wanting to do things that

violate his will. He is Lord over the outer man and he is Lord over the inner man and he sees them both with equal clarity. So taking that and applying it to the topic of the weekend here, beloved, settled homosexual desires violate the order of God and therefore are sinful and are inconsistent with a profession of Christ. Someone who, and to be very clear what we're talking about here, someone who has those desires and does not fight against them but rather embraces them and says, "This defines who I am. I am gay. I am homosexual but I'm not going to act upon it," understand that that is a distinction the Scripture does not recognize or affirm. You cannot separate the inner man from the outer man. You cannot separate the inner man from the entire person that God sees. So a man who desires men for sex as the order of who he is sins against God's design and if he does not see that as a matter to repent of, he should not consider himself a Christian and we should not consider him a Christian either regardless of whatever else he says with his lips about himself.

Look, Scripture illustrates this for us in another way with the testimony of the Apostle Paul. Look over at Romans 7. This man who was outwardly the perfection of what a Jew should be, who was found blameless as to the application of the law, what was his testimony about where he realized that he was undone and that he was guilty before God? Well, look at Romans 7:7. He says, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COVET.' But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead." Verse 11, "sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me." Paul says, "What awakened me to my need for the Lord Jesus Christ was that I was convicted of sin in the inner man. I was a covetous man and I realized how guilty I was because the law of God convicted me of my sin."

So we realize that it's absurd in light of biblical teaching, it is no different to say, "Oh, I'm a gay Christian," as it is to say, "You know, I'm a covetous Christian and as a settled part of my personality, I want you to know that I covet after everything that this world has to offer." It's no different than to say, "I'm a Christian given over to heterosexual lust and I lust after women all the time but, do you know what? I never act upon it and so you can just call me the lustful Christian. Do you know what? I'm bitter at everyone in the world. Everything has gone against me and people have wronged me and I'm angry and I'm bitter about it but do you know what? I've never assaulted anyone. I've never raised my hand. I've never struck anyone. I've never murdered anyone and so you can just call me the angry Christian." This just turns Scripture on its head. Why would homosexuality be any different than all of these other perversions of Christianity? To say, "I have this inner man, this inner disposition that is given over to sin. I just don't act on it externally," is a violation of everything that Scripture says about spiritual life and about how God sees men. So we reject the idea that there is such a thing as a "gay Christian" who is nevertheless celibate. They have misunderstood the whole nature of what Scripture says about the heart of men and about what God requires.

That brings us to point number 3 and we can title it this way and this really gets to the heart of it and this is where we do the hard work on this topic. Point 3 with an

exclamation point says: "But I didn't try to be this way. I did not choose to be this way," is what you hear homosexuals say. They say, "I was always this way. I was different from the youngest age. I didn't choose it. This is just who I am." Now, what shall we say to that? The implication, the unspoken assertion in that is that, "Therefore I am not responsible for my immoral heart because I didn't choose to be this way. Therefore God can't judge me because this wasn't an act of my volition." What shall we say to that? This is a very important point. Again, it's not too much to say that the very essence of what Christianity is is at stake in this very point. The truth is just the opposite as is so often the case. Prevailing conventional wisdom is usually an expression that the truth can be found biblically in just the opposite direction and it's just as true here. Listen to me very carefully as we do some heavy theological lifting here: the fact that those desires come so naturally and so easily simply shows how badly sin has infected the human race. In Romans 5:12, Paul says that, "Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." When Adam fell, sin entered into the human race and had a contaminating effect on every aspect of human nature and men have propagated since Adam that nature; that sinful nature is passed along from generation to generation. We're sinners not simply by what we choose to do, we are sinners by nature. We inherit a sinful nature from our parents who received it from their parents and on back it goes. And when Adam fell into sin, beloved, he brought a whole host of evil upon the human race. We inherited a guilty a nature from him that is corrupt and perverse and cannot be reconciled to God unless a man be born again.

Now, why is it that some people feel same-sex attraction so early in life? Well, why did you feel sinful motions in your heart early in your life? Why were you a liar from the earliest age? Why were you angry and why did you strike out at your siblings and hit them? Your parents certainly didn't teach you to do that. I didn't sit down with my daughter and say, "Here, do you know what, honey? Come here, sweetheart, I want to teach you something. Let's put aside the little bear book. I want to teach you to lie and let me just teach you how to lie. When you get in trouble, say something that isn't true and maybe people won't know." You don't teach your children that, they just naturally know how to do it. Why? Because they have a sinful heart from birth that teaches them to sin. That teaches them to lie. That teaches them to be angry. That teaches them to be selfish. And when they act on those sinful desires, they develop sinful habits that gradually take control of them. No one has to teach them. They received a sinful nature at birth and it expressed itself in their sinful behavior. Some lie. Some do other things.

Listen to me carefully, this is so very important this next section. Actually, everything this weekend has been important, okay? I'm not setting it against each other. This is just so important because it's so hard to respond to this. You can't respond to that argument without really sound theology but really sound theology helps you understand what's going on. Look: the fact that sinful desires come naturally is not unique to homosexuals. Anyone who has raised children understands this. You understand this from your own personal experience, that you found yourself in anger, in lust, in sinful behavior, and no one had to teach you how to do that. You just naturally knew. Children naturally get angry when they don't get their way and it's not because someone taught them to be naughty, they just are naughty. It's not genetic in a physical sense. They are born with

sinful hearts. Now, beloved, watch this really carefully. Pay close attention to this because there is a lot of important direction that hinges on what we're about to say right here and this applies not only to homosexuals, this applies to all of us. This convicts all of us. The fact that sin comes naturally to you does not excuse your guilt, rather to the contrary, it proves your guilt. It manifests your guilty nature the fact that sinful desires and sinful behavior comes so readily and so easily to you. It proves your guilt, it doesn't excuse it. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" It's a statement about human nature.

So taking this general truth that applies to all men and then making specific application in the realm of homosexuality, beloved, without being taught to do so, some people rebel against God's will for sexuality even at an early age even though no one taught them to do so. And beloved, as those who are committed to upholding the authority of Scripture and vindicating the holiness of God, we must stand on this principle that I'm about to say right here. You're listening, right? I can tell everybody is locked in. That's great. After all this time, you're all locked in to hear this statement: sin does not become righteous simply because it comes naturally and so to say, "I didn't choose this," proves nothing. It says nothing about what is righteous and about what God accepts or what God condemns. It says nothing about that. If it was just a matter that natural behavior was automatically righteous, parents would have no grounds to discipline their children for tantrums and lying and all other manner of childish foolishness and sinfulness that manifests itself because the child's response, if he had the mind to say it was, "This just came out of me. It's just natural. This is who I am. I'm an angry child that throws tantrums when I don't get my way therefore you can't correct me." Please. None of you would parent that way. None of you would accept that as a premise. You understand intuitively, instinctively, apart from biblical revelation, "I've got to stop that or that's going to become a problem. I can't have my kid lying to me all the time. I can't have him hitting his little brother with bricks even though it comes naturally." So what makes homosexuality different? How is that any different than what we're talking about here? There is no distinction. There is no difference.

So beloved, and I understand that there is just a head-on collision with the spirit of our age with what we're about to say here and praise God that we can have a head-on collision like this. You know, there is a reason why you stop and look at car accidents, there is something fascinating about it. When a collision takes place, the aftermath is something to be seen. What do we say in response to the homosexual who justifies himself by saying, "I didn't choose to be this way. This just comes naturally. It's just who I am"? What do we say to that? Homosexuals have completely misunderstood and misinterpreted the spiritual significance of their experience. They think that the fact that they didn't choose this means that therefore it must be okay. That is wrong. The Bible says, "No, that is the incorrect way to understand your existence." Rather their desires manifest and show forth a corrupt nature. Those who desire homosexuality as the favored orientation of their life, to use their terminology, they are guilty even if they did not consciously choose it. God will hold them accountable for their sinful nature because God is an omniscient God who looks on the heart; who says, "I have commanded and set up one way for sexual expression to be taken and it's in a monogamous marriage," and if



you are oriented toward wanting something different than that, then your whole heart is out of order. Your whole nature is corrupt and you can't excuse it any more than my kids could excuse, "Yeah, I lied but I'm pretty good at it because that's what I do." None of my kids are like that but some of them have been like that in the past.

Homosexuals, in other words, bringing all this together and this is what I would say to those of you watching on the live stream who are about to throw a brick through your computer screen because you're so angry with what I just said, but understand that what we're saying here is that homosexuals are no different than the rest of us. We're all like this. We all naturally knew how to sin, it's just a question of the symptom that expressed that, the manifestation of it. Whether it was a proud spirit or an angry spirit or a lying spirit or a homosexual spirit, we're all condemned by the same thing: that we have a sinful nature that manifests itself in sinful desires. This is the testimony of Scripture which we must uphold because it is the authoritative word of God and we can do no other. But we're not targeting homosexuals by saying this. They're just like the rest of us, it's just a different manifestation of the same fundamental spiritual problem. What can we say about homosexuals? Say the same thing about every one of us: humanity is born into a condition of slavery. We were born as slaves to sin. In the Gospel of John 8:34, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin."

Now, that standing alone might sound rather depressing but do you know what? Sin is like that. Sin is enslaving. It is a taskmaster. It owns sinners. We are a slave of sin. And here's the thing that Scripture leads us to, it is shocking if you're not familiar with biblical teaching. You react against it, I understand, but the testimony of God's word stands: you can be a slave of something without even knowing it. Men are slaves of sin without even being aware of it. It is a silent owner of men and we're born into that condition and then as we grow we choose sin of our own volition and the problem just multiplies and the chains get wrapped tighter and tighter around the soul and around the man until he realizes that, "This alcohol owns me. This sexual sin owns me. This anger, this bitterness owns me. I can't get free from it. I can't choose anything differently." And that's precisely the point. That doesn't justify your condition, it shows how guilty and corrupt and helpless you are. It's a pretty bleak picture, isn't it?

In Ephesians 2:3, Paul says, "We all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." You see, part of the problem of going and just addressing this at an even broader level, part of the problem over the past 50 years is that we've all been conditioned through our public exposure to public education if that's been your experience, to cultivate, to think good thoughts about yourself as if the worst sin that somebody could commit would be to have a bad self-esteem and so, "You're the greatest. You can be whatever you want to be. You can be President if you want to be," neverminding that there are 320 million people in the United States and we're currently on what? Our 44<sup>th</sup> President? Count the odds on that. And just this whole idea of human capacity and, "Be what you want to be. Just set your mind to it." Well, look, that all sounds good and appeals to the flesh but it's just a horrible depressing lie. We're slaves to sin, Scripture says. We're blinded by the devil. We are mastered by our own corruption and rather than

justifying our existence by that, we simply realize that we are helpless and condemned before a holy God who does not accept our self-esteem movement, who does not accept our excuses. Romans 1 says, "they are without excuse," and on and on it goes.

Is there an answer to that enslaved condition? What are we to say to this? Well, in the context of our conference tonight I'll frame the fourth point like this: what this tells us is that homosexuals need the Gospel. Homosexuals need the Gospel. If sin has a hold on you, don't try to justify it. Don't try to excuse it. Don't multiply your sin by twisting the word of God around to try to make it fit your human experience. That's the wrong response and only drives you deeper into sin and guilt. If you find sin coming naturally to you, if it is the defining nature of your existence, rather than justifying yourself, what this should do is cause you to flee to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy for he alone is the one who has conquered sin with his death and resurrection at Calvary. You see, Christ didn't come simply to relieve us from the penalty of sin with his life, death and resurrection, Christ came to liberate us from sin's enslaving power. And when you deny the guiltiness of sin's enslaving power, you separate people from the saving power of Jesus Christ; you condition them to think that they don't need it because their inner man is immune from judgment. That's not true and no one should be standing on a platform professing to represent Christ and say what your inner man is like doesn't matter, just don't get into the external stuff, because that inoculates people from the penetrating power of the Gospel which alone can save them.

So rather than justifying ourselves in our sin, we should acknowledge it and say, "I am mastered by desires that I have no control over. I need someone to save me! O Jesus, would you exercise your saving power toward me because I want to be free from this monster that is inside me." That's the only way to respond to sin and, I don't know, maybe if I hadn't preached 4 times in the past 24 hours I would be more animated about what I'm going to say but, people, to deny, to contradict what we're talking about here is to eviscerate the power of the Gospel. It is to seal people off from that which alone can save their souls. It is to condemn them to being in the chains and dungeons of their own experience and their own wicked desires. It's to tell them that that's okay and that is a manifestation of God's saving grace that you're still in that condition and that you have that corrupt nature unchanged and that that's okay. Do you know what? It's not okay. And in saying this, I'll say the same thing I said last night: I don't hate you by telling you this. I did not become your enemy by telling you the truth. I do not become anyone's enemy by pointing out their sin and then pointing them to Christ as the one who can liberate them and save them and deliver them from their sin. The Gospel is Good News. The Gospel says, "We recognize you in your enslaved condition and there is one greater than sin. There is one with power over sin who can deliver you and set you free."

You see, beloved, what's at stake in this homosexual discussion is the very throbbing heartbeat of Gospel truth and to twist things and to pervert the Gospel and to pervert the Scripture in order to avoid offending homosexuals is to commit treason against God and to assign their souls to hell because we tell them, "You don't need the Gospel so much after all." And those Christian leaders, I'll refrain from naming names, I don't know why, but those Christian leaders who are leading the church down the path toward affirming

these things, their judgment before God is going to be especially severe. Much of the whole nature of professing Christian leadership needs to profoundly repent for affirming people in their slavery rather than dealing honestly with Scripture and dealing honestly with their souls and pointing them to Christ. I'll make you a promise as a pastor of this church: no pastor who compromises on that issue, on this issue of what we're talking about this weekend in this particular message, no pastor like that will ever stand behind this pulpit. Ever, as long as I'm here. And that will be just one simple way that we distinguish our testimony from the rest because we realize that so much is at stake. There are eternal matters and eternal souls that are at stake in this. We can't trivialize this. We can't play games with this. Good gracious, Christ went to the cross to save people like this and would we cloud the cross? Would we hide the cross in order to avoid giving offense to men? No. We will not do that. So to you who are homosexual by nature, to those of you who are bitter by nature, angry by nature, we say the same thing to one and all: all of us are in this sinful soup together and you must confess your sin and repent or you will perish, even if you have never acted on your sinful desires.

In Matthew 5, the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount, I've said this so many times: those 3 chapters in Matthew are so crucial and they explain so much for us and give so much clarity to us. Matthew 5:3-4. One day I'll actually preach on this and you'll be shocked, "Oh, he finally got around to it." But Jesus said in verses 3 and 4, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." In other words, acknowledging a spiritual bankruptcy that, "In my soul I'm bankrupt. There is no good thing that is within me and I have no control over sin, rather I am owned by said principle of evil that is greater than I am." That's what Jesus is describing here, a humble spirit that says, "There is this wickedness in me and I mourn over it. I want to be free from it," rather than saying, "I proudly acknowledge that my heart is oriented toward rebellion against God."

Look, beloved, do you want to know how to recognize a Christian? I'll give you another way. A Christian is somebody who desires righteousness that he lacks rather than someone who desires sin that is forbidden. A Christian desires righteousness that he lacks rather than sin that is forbidden. Look at Matthew 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." What are they saying except, "I want this sin but I'll not act upon it." That is the exact opposite of what Jesus describes the repentant heart looks like. The repentant heart says, "I want to be righteous. I want my desires to be righteous. I hunger and thirst and long after that which God affirms and commands," rather than saying, "I long and hunger after that which God forbids." This turns the whole nature of Christian righteousness on its head if we yield on this point.

So being mindful of the fact that this is a conference primarily directed to the church to strengthen the church, beloved, what I want you to see is when you encounter that in conversations you have to stand firm on this point. To affirm someone who is advocating their so-called "gayness" and saying, "I'm a gay Christian," to affirm them in that is to lock the door of their damnation and to throw away the key rather than offering them the key of the Gospel that would open the door and free them from their deception and their

sinful desires. We cannot do that and be faithful to Christ. We have to love people enough to let them hate us for telling them the truth if that's what it takes.

So what do we say then if we don't affirm them in it? What do we say? Look over at Mark 8. You know, I said this on one of my Facebook posts recently and I'll try to repeat it here if I can remember it. I have a friend who is a Navy SEAL, used to be a Navy SEAL. He is now a pastor. Smart, bright, committed guy. I love to talk about military tactics with him. It's just interesting to hear how a trained guy like him thinks through military matters and military maneuvers. He told me one time that when a SEAL is ambushed by an enemy, here's how they are trained to respond: the temptation might be to run, to try to get away from that; SEALs do the exact opposite, they pick up their weapon, they train it on where the fire is coming and then they fire and fire and they just go toward, right toward where the action is. They walk into the attack, firing their weapon rather than running from it and by doing that you take away the element of surprise and violence and you take control of the situation by using your weapon against the hostile force. Well, this is a picture of what the Christian church needs to do in response to this issue that is impressed upon us. The exact wrong thing to do is to affirm these so-called "gay Christians" in their assertions that they make about themselves, rather what we should do is point them to what Christ himself said. What did Christ say? Rather than justifying sinful desires, Christ calls us to deny them. To reject them. You say, "But this is who I am!" and Jesus says, "I understand that and I offer you salvation." In Mark 8:34, he says, Jesus says, "I'll forgive all your sins. I've paid for the debt of sinners at the cross with my own blood. My own righteousness will satisfy God if you put your faith in me," he says. He's a perfect Savior who will save any sinner who comes to him but he says, "Don't trivialize who I am and don't magnify who you are." In Mark 8:34, he says, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

So with this philosophy of "gay Christianity" being foisted upon us and us being called to affirm that and to not question anyone's salvation claim in light of saying, "I am a gay Christian," what we don't do is turn from that and yield the ground to those who would assassinate the Gospel by what they say and teach, rather we go straight toward the issue and we say, "You say that that's who you are, well and good. No matter who you are, Jesus says, 'If you want to come after Me, you deny yourself and take up your cross and come after Me.'" We don't affirm them in it, we say, "If that's who you are, then here's what you need to do, you need to deny that. You need to reject it. You need to repent of it and come after Christ because that's the only way that he'll receive sinners." You can't hold onto sin with one hand and receive Christ with the other. You must receive him with both hands empty, rejecting yourself and receiving him saying, "There are no preconditions. I receive you. I deny who I used to be for the sake of receiving you as my Lord and King." We say to all men everywhere, not simply homosexuals, "Turn from your love of sin. Turn from your desires for sin. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ and make this the day of your salvation."

Let's bow together in prayer.

*Our Father, we see these things from your word and we humble ourselves before them. We're not singling out any particular group of humanity. We all acknowledge that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We all acknowledge that we need a Savior. We all acknowledge that we had to leave our own individual sinful past behind in order to come to Christ and to receive him. So we haven't tailored the message, we haven't made it more difficult, our Father. We haven't placed demands on one group of humanity that aren't applied to others. The demand of Christ, the call of Christ, is the same to all men. And Father, I pray that Christian leaders who are leading people away from your truth, I pray that you would stop them in their tracks and either make them repent or somehow silence their ministries that the corrupting, deluding influence of their words would no longer have an effect on your church.*

*Father, I pray for those that struggle with these homosexual desires and don't know what to do with them and find themselves captive to forces that are greater than themselves. Father, I ask you to have mercy on them. To show grace to them. To help them in their helpless condition. Open their eyes to sin and then open their eyes further to Christ and turn their hearts so that they would willingly receive a gracious Lord who is able to save them from the penalty of sin and also deliver them from the power of sin.*

*Father, I pray that for some in this room who don't know Christ and, Father, for those of us that do know you, we thank you that you've done that work in our hearts. We take no credit for it. We did not save ourselves. We're not more righteous than others. We are the privileged recipients of divine favor through your grace and we thank you for that and we ask you for the grace as a church and as individuals to be faithful, to stand firm on the Gospel, to not be swayed by the spirit of our age because, Father, ultimately we don't care what this age says about us. We don't care what media folk would say or what those that are hostile to truth would say about us. We only care what you think. What matters to us is only what Christ says to us when we see him at his judgment seat and he rewards us for our lives. Lord, while that day seems remote sometimes and it is certainly unseen, that's the moment that we're living for. That's the moment that we long for, Lord Jesus, to look in your face and see a countenance of approval from you toward us individually and that we would enter into your heavenly kingdom with the glorious sense that you approve of how we lived our lives here when we were saved by your grace. That we responded to your grace with a faithfulness that is befitting of your grand glorious character. The world would turn us away from that, would tempt us away and so, Lord, we ask you to preserve us and to keep us, to guide our steps in such a divinely powerful way that you lead us not into temptation, not into the temptation of compromise or sin or disloyalty but rather, instead, that you would deliver us from evil and deliver us from the evil one who is the father of all these lies. Father, I beg you on behalf of these gathered in front of me that you would work with power in their lives over time and in a sustained wonderful way so that when time is done and life is over they would find that you are granting them at that great moment a wonderful, blessed, full and safe entrance into your heavenly kingdom.*

*Lord, we've asked for a lot with that prayer and yet we know that you are able to do exceeding abundantly far beyond all that we ask or think and so our asking hasn't exhausted or limited the extent of your power or your intentions for us, Father. Do supernaturally and eternally greatly beyond everything that we've asked and accomplish so much more than we could think simply because, Father, we have appealed to your grace and mercy in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and it's in his name that we pray. Amen.*

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