

**Suggested Scripture Readings:**

**Genesis 2; Romans 1; and Ephesians 5**

## ***"Marriage: Who Decides?"***

**I am doing a topical sermon this morning on marriage: The topic of marriage will be much on our minds and in our news over the next few months thanks to some judicial activism by the California State Supreme Court, where they decided to change the definition of marriage. There will be a ballot measure to reverse this decision in November and we as Christians must be ready to engage in this important battle!**

**For Christians to be properly engaged we must stand on a solid foundation!**

- **We must believe that marriage is a creation ordinance, so that we understand the fundamental nature of this battle**
- **We must understand and lovingly respond to the sin of homosexuality in its proper Biblical context**
- **AND finally we must know the importance of demonstrating the glory of our Christian marriages before a watching world!**

**For years secular forces in the California legislature have sought to change the Biblical definition of marriage as the covenantal union of one man and one woman. A few years ago the voters of California passed Prop 22 which said the State of California was to define marriage only as a union of one man and one woman. The State Supreme Court recently threw out this measure, saying that to deny a man the right to marry another man or a woman another woman was unconstitutional under the California Constitution because it discriminated against them.**

**The measure on the November ballot will put the proper definition of marriage into the constitution and overturn this court decision.**

- **Now, this IS going to be a BIG political battle, drawing much national attention... BUT the Church must be ready and willing to respond Biblically!**

**We must begin with the Biblical definition of marriage if we are going to rightly respond to what has been done. We learn from Genesis chapter two, that it is NOT good for man to be alone and that marriage is a creation ordinance, from before the fall. Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."**

- **Marriage was established by God to demonstrate in a very special way in God's creation the love & union that has been present in the Trinity from all eternity**

**We also see in our text from Ephesians 5, how the Apostle Paul explains that even in our fallen state, it is still marriage that is used to most clearly demonstrate Christ's great love for His Church!**

**So IF we believe the Bible to be God's authoritative revelation to man, & in the Bible God has defined marriage as the loving union between one man and one woman...**

➤ **THEN it is NOT within man's power to change that definition!**

**Marriage is not established by the civil magistrate. Marriage is not a privilege granted by the state like a driver's license! Now, it should not surprise us that the Kings of the earth seek to throw off or change God's laws because that is exactly what Psalm 2 says they will do! The Psalmist tells us that God laughs them to scorn and then gives a sobering warning to our civil leaders, which we as His Ambassadors are to deliver: "10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. 11 Serve Jehovah with fear, And rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."**

➤ **Here we see the real battle!**

➤ **We must remember that this battle is not over if the marriage amendment passes in November**

➤ **AND it is not the end of the world, or America, or even California if it fails**

**The institution of marriage was established by God: The definition of marriage does not change because presidents, governors, legislators, judges or even voters say that it is going to be different than what God has established it to be!**

**Think about it this way: Suppose a group of atheists got together and qualified Proposition 666 which amended our state constitution to say that the 66 Books of the Bible could no longer be quoted or used in California...**

**So IF they put up enough money to get this measure passed: Would the Bible no longer be the Word of God in California? Of course not, any more than it was not the Word of God for the seventy plus years that it was banned in the Soviet Union!**

**God's Laws 7 Commands are eternal: This is not a battle between one group's morality and another group's morality: It is a battle between righteousness and sin!**

**It is also important to remember that this is not the same as the battles fought to have different races respect each other or the work we do to understand other cultures.**

➤ **It is VERY important that we understand this, because in this debate there will be much confusion thrown up in the coming months.**

**The State Supreme Court argued in its own decision, that what they did was the same as when courts in the past struck down the ban on interracial marriages or other forms of racial discrimination: Nothing could be further from the truth!**

**As we learn to break down these racial barriers and learn to enjoy other cultures that is a sign of maturity in the faith! God tells us that we are ALL to be one in Christ!**

**However, changing the definition of marriage violates the very command of God that it was to be a union between one man and one woman.**

- **This is not just linguistics: Changing the definition of marriage challenges the very nature of the creation God has given us!**

**A man and a woman were designed by God to be in union under a marriage covenant, to become one flesh in their loving relationship and if it is the Lord's wills, to bear children and nurture them in that union.**

**A man can only have unnatural relations with another man and they cannot bear children... BUT they want what they do to be called marriage anyway.**

- **They may wish it to be so, but as we often say – God is God and they are not!**
- **Court decisions or changing our state's marriage laws CANNOT make these relationships a marriage!**

**Allow me to illustrate this with another example from Creation:**

- **God has given us food and drink to enjoy and to nourish us!**

**-- We all have different tastes: I choose to pass on avocados and artichoke. Some might try to convince me that I should like them and that they are good for me and that is something we can argue about. We have an almost endless supply of food & drink where we can have endless arguments about our preferences and tastes!**

**But what if someone wanted to drink motor oil? Should it be called "food?"**

- **If a lot of folks wanted to drink motor oil could it become a new food group?**
- **Would calling motor oil a "smooth soft-drink" make it so?**
- **This name might sound better, but it is still motor oil and NOT real food**

**If some motor oil activists managed to get the FDA to define motor oil as a real food? It might get more people to try it, but in the end it is still just motor oil!**

- **Such is the case with homosexual relationships...**
- **The Supreme Court is trying to make them something which they are not!**

**In the coming months, we will see a lot of "homosexual couples" talking about their loving relationships and often with children present that they are raising...**

- **No matter how they dress this up, in reality they do not have what God calls marriage.**
- **This is the point Christians must keep front and center as this battle rages in the coming months!**

**We must also remember that this is not simply a battle between homosexuals and Christians: The Apostle Paul in Romans chapter one makes it VERY clear that the heart of this battle is rebellion against God, and not just sexual preferences or certain sins!**

**As Christians, we must begin where Paul begins in Romans 1:16 by saying  
“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes!”**

**Those in rebellion will always try to frame the debate in such a way that we should be ashamed of our position...**

**-- We are hateful**

**-- We discriminate**

**-- We are insecure in our relationships**

- **To these charges, we must proclaim with Paul that we are NOT ashamed of the Gospel!**

**We must also remember the state of those who oppose God:**

**“18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”**

**In this battle, and all the other engagements we have in this life, when it seems like all our discussions are futile and no one seems to be listening... This is when we must remember what Scripture says about EACH & EVERY person:**

- **In their mind or conscience, no matter how hardened it has become, they know God exists!**
- **No matter how much they have rebelled against or rejected God, they must get up each and every day and live in HIS creation!**
- **This side of death, there is no one beyond the reach of the Gospel**

**Paul goes on to show this rebellion is NOT primarily a sexual rebellion:**

**“22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”**

- **Modern humanism has replaced God with man’s reason and God’s creation with mindless evolution... They have become fools!**

**BUT we are also foolish if we don't see that this is a major battle in which we are engaged! Many Christians who did not see the importance of the battle for six-day creation will now be outraged that the definition of marriage has suddenly been changed! We must welcome them to this battle, but also help them see the true nature of the battle!**

**Finally, we should be familiar with how Paul shows this rebellion will progress: Remembering this rebellion results in much more than just the sin of homosexuality: Man rebels and then sin progresses: “26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.”**

*[Here we should think about immodesty, the sexual revolution, Hollywood, pornography, prostitution and other ways women have been exploited]*

**“27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.”**

*[Here we see the sin of homosexuality which comes with grave judgment, but this is NOT the end of the progression]*

**“28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness,”**

- **Paul is going to give the full list of sins that result from rebellion against God**
- **We might think ‘I have never committed this or that gross sin!’ but Paul shows we are ALL guilty before our righteous God**
- **We must ponder these sins as we engage in this important battle, AND we must never forget what Paul told the Saints at Corinth: “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 and by the Spirit of our God!”**

**Listen carefully to Paul's list of sins that result from rebellion against God:**

**“Sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;”**

- **And Finally Paul reminds us about why we need to be engaged in these battles when God gives us the opportunity:**

**“32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”**

- So we are going to have a BIG battle this year in California over marriage:

Not a battle of our choosing, but one that we have an obligation to engage in just as the Apostle Paul took time from his VERY busy missionary travels to hold the Roman officials accountable in Philippi after they falsely arrested him.

- We must remember that it is not a battle between “us” and “them” but rather one they have picked with God Himself
- Our calling is to do our small part as Paul did at Philippi. [Acts 16:35-40]

In conclusion, I want to take us back to our text from Ephesians chapter five: Here we are reminded that the greatest challenge we as Christians will have in this battle is to show forth to a watching world the glory of our own marriages! IF we fail here we provide ammunition for the other side: A treasonous act during a time of war!

- It is difficult for us to challenge their desire to change the definition of marriage when the divorce rate in many churches is the same as the world’s.
- How can we confront the sin of homosexuality when we look the other way with the sins of fornication or adultery to say nothing of the others on the list that Paul has given?
- Not only is marriage a creation ordinance that must be honored, it is also the institution which God has chosen to show forth the great love that His Son has for His Bride, the Church of Christ!

I could spend all summer making this point from Ephesians chapters three, four and five, but let me hit the highlights and commend them to your further study!

In chapter three Paul begins to ponder the mystery of Christ and His great love for His Bride the Church. In Chapter four, Paul challenges the Saints to “walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” and discusses the unity of the Church where we must bear “with one another in love” In the first few verses of chapter 5 Paul makes the same argument that we just studied in Romans chapter 1.

- Paul then tells the Saints they are to submit to one another in the fear of God.

Once again, on the 2nd Sunday of normal time, we have practical applications following the proper fear of God: Hearing & Doing the Words of Jesus!

But, we must grasp the BIG picture Paul is presenting rather than just seeing these as some familiar verses used as proof texts for marriage counseling.

“5:22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.”

- Paul immediately links marriage with Christ & His Church: You cannot separate them in this entire passage.

**“24 Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”**

- **As Pastor Wilkins points out in his many lectures on church history, the center of all of history is God’s dealing with His people, the Bride of Christ!**
- **Marriage IS meant to demonstrate this great mystery of Christ’s love!**

**“28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. 30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."**

- **Do you see the linkage Paul makes: Union with Christ is linked with the creation ordinance of marriage!**

**“30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”**

**So our lessons to remember as we enter a very public battle are these:**

- **We must NOT be ashamed of the Gospel, being ready to meet this challenge the world has presented to us: As the great reformer Martin Luther pointedly said:**  
*“If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.”*
- **As we engage in this battle, we must remember our marriage vows and obey God’s commands so we can demonstrate the love of Christ to a watching world. We must also remember that our failure here brings shame to the Gospel of Christ and weakens our position on the battle field!**

**Let us keep on our hearts and lips the words of Martin Luther in his famous hymn *A Mighty Fortress*: “And though this world with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear for God has willed His truth to triumph through us.**

**The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we cannot endure, for LO! his doom is sure; One little word shall fell him!”**