

### 3 – Scripture, Shellfish, and Homosexual Sin

*The Bible and Homosexuality*

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One of the nice things about doing these messages in this format is that you don't have to wait a week to follow up on what you just said. We can get right back into it without further ado. We ended our last session asking the question, "What does God think about all of this? What does God think about homosexuality?" We don't have to guess. God hasn't left us in the dark. He hasn't blinded us and left us with very little to see or to say about it. We can know exactly what God thinks about the issues of our day by going to his word and what we want to do today in this session is, I want to answer that question biblically, "What does God think about homosexuality?" And I also want to take the opportunity to refute some of the objections that skeptics make against the biblical teaching on this matter and so we will kind of lay out a passage and discuss it and then we'll say, "Well, here are some of the objections," and we'll answer some of those and just try to give a little bit of an overview looking at both the Old Testament and the New Testament together in a single message which means that we're necessarily just going to kind of do a little bit of a 30,000 foot overview as we look at it.

Old Testament and New Testament. What can we say? First of all, the Old Testament looking at it. What does God think about homosexuality? What does he say about it in the Old Testament? Point number 1: the Old Testament condemns homosexuality. Look at Genesis 19, the familiar story of Sodom and Gomorrah which to this day is deeply embedded in the consciousness of man, a testimony to the stirring nature of God's judgment at that time. You'll remember the story, 2 angels came to Sodom, chapter 19, verse 1, the city of Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom and when Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground and he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." So he is extending hospitality to these angelic strangers. "They said however, 'No, but we shall spend the night in the square.' Yet Lot urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called to Lot and said to him, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.'" It's a stunning demand for homosexual activity from a mob outside their house fitting with the things that we saw last night: the mass promiscuity of it all.

Verse 6, "Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, 'Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof.'" Now, in the ancient Near East culture, when people came under your roof and you were extending hospitality to them, there was an obligation, a cultural expectation, that you would protect them no matter the cost and that's a little bit of what's going on here. There is an element of hospitality being extended here and trying to protect these guests for whom Lot felt the responsibility for their safety.

Verse 9, you see the response of the men of the city. "But they said, 'Stand aside.' Furthermore, they said, 'This one came in as an alien,'" referring to Lot, "and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door." Now notice embedded right in this story is nothing has changed in the ensuing millennia. Whenever you speak to this issue, whenever you try to restrain people on this issue and point them to truth, righteousness and biblical reality, they say, "Stop acting as my judge." This started in Genesis 19. It's no different today. When they say that to us, take heart, you are in good company because the New Testament says that Lot was a righteous man and so the accusation of being a judge is something that we dismiss and don't pay much attention to because we're just trying to honor God's authority.

Verse 9, "So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door. But the men reached out their hands," that is, the men who were inside, "reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway."

What does God think about that unbridled homosexual passion that they were manifesting? Skipping over many of the details, see what happened in verse 23. Genesis 19:23, "The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar. Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife, from behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD; and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace. Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived." When you think about what God thinks about pervasive homosexuality in a culture, smell the smoke of Sodom and you have a picture of what he thinks.

Now, skeptics try to reduce this passage to only being a breach of hospitality. They say the men in this city were guilty and judgment worthy because they did not treat the guests

in their city with kindness and respect but the context shows that it's a clear reference to sexual immorality that was at stake here. Lot offered them his daughters in place of the men that they were demanding to have relationships with. That has nothing to do with simply showing cultural respect to the men. He was trying to substitute out and to redirect their passions into something that would be a protection for their guests. The context is pointing to these men were after sexual intercourse. Lot refused them and God judged the city as a result. The condemnation is obvious.

Turn to another Old Testament passage in the book of Leviticus and we'll spend a little more time here. Leviticus 18 and I've said several times this weekend that it's not enough to simply quote one or 2 verses out of one or 2 chapters and expect to settle the argument in our day and age. That is not to say that these passages aren't of crucial significance to what the Bible has to say about it. And let me just step back for a moment in the light of the culture in which we live and the hostility and the political correctness, and just preface what I'm about to say with this: as we said in the last session, we respect the authority of the Bible here at Truth Community Church and that means that we don't have the liberty to soften its language when it speaks with clarity and directness. It's not up to us to be like Floyd the barber in Mayberry and shave things down when it seems a little bit uncomfortable. It's not for us to smooth things over to make it more palatable to the modern ear. Our job, our responsibility is to give voice to God's word, not to try to distill it into something that is weakened and diluted and is therefore more acceptable. It's necessary to say that in our day and age and particularly in light of what these passages have to say to us.

The book of Leviticus, the book of Moses writing under the inspiration of God, God giving his law to his people, says that homosexuality is an abomination to him. Look at Leviticus 18:22-23 and there is a lot to be said about this passage. In Leviticus 18:22-23, God says, "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination." Verse 23, "Also," in like manner, in other words, "you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion." And so words like "abomination" and "perversion" are used and homosexuality is equated with having sex with animals. That's just the testimony of Scripture.

Now, in light of this clear passage, it's necessary for those who would support homosexuality to try to find a way around it; to try to find a detour that gives you even if you have to go on a narrow country road, you can get back to the main road and head on to the destination and not have to go through the obstacle that this passage represents. So some teachers will say, "Well, that passage only applied to Israel. This is an Old Testament passage limited in context, in culture, to the nation of Israel and therefore has no applicability to anyone else." What are we to say to that? And some of these things, if you're hearing these things for the first time and you say, "Wow, I don't know exactly what to say about it," well, let me say this: that's why we're having this conference is to acquaint you with what is said in opposition to these things so that you can see that there are answers to them. I understand that when you hear something for the first time, it kind of knocks you back and you say, "Well, I've never thought about that." Well, I promise

you even if we don't cover everything today, any objection that you hear to the biblical teaching on homosexuality has been answered multiple times with clarity and force somewhere by someone in the course of human history. There is nothing new that is being said in opposition to homosexuality, what's new is just the fact that people are more open about their unbelief.

So what do we say about that objection? "This was only Israel. This was Moses, Israel, that culture, that time, not applicable to anyone else." That doesn't work. As I've often tried to teach you, all you have to do is keep reading in the context and you can see that that argument has no merit. Look at verses 24-30 which teaches us that the condemnation of homosexuality is universal because it applied to nations also at that time who were not the recipients of God's law. Look at verse 24 and watch the argument that God prevails upon Moses here. He says in verse 24 of Leviticus 18, "Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled." He says, "The nations that I am casting out so that you can enter into the Promised Land, they are guilty of these same defilements and therefore I am judging them as a result."

Verse 25, "The land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants. But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you," and watch how God repeats it. Verse 27, "(for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled)," a parenthetical comment. Now he goes back to the main point, "so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you. For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people. Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the LORD your God." It's a defiling sin, so defiling that God says, "I judged prior nations over this." Keeping in mind that those nations were not the recipients of his law in the way that Israel was but still, their conduct led to their judgment and being dismissed from the circle of nations. How could that be? Is God being unfair here when they didn't have his word? Well, beloved, let's remember what we talked about beforehand: this was established from the beginning of creation. This is a creation ordinance that these things were established. It's a creation ordinance that is being violated and the nations are violating that which God established at creation. So yes, they deserved their judgment even apart from God's law because the order of nature and their own consciences taught them that this was not right.

Now, turn over to Leviticus 20. Homosexuality is there again listed as a defiling sin, companions with adultery, incest and bestiality. Leviticus 20:10, and if this sounds jarring to your ears, if this sounds like this is so harsh and severe, then beloved, that is a measure of how much our current culture has impacted our own thinking. It's a measure of how the world is influencing our thinking that this seems initially something that, "Oh! Really? Oh! Ouch!" When you're in line with the mind of God, then these things all seem very appropriate, natural and obvious.

Leviticus 20:10, "If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. If there is a man who lies with his father's wife, he has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death, their bloodguiltiness is upon them. If there is a man who lies with his daughter-in-law, they have committed incest, their bloodguiltiness is upon them. If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them." This is the punishment. The death penalty on this was a penalty for the theocratic nation at the time but you see the measure of guilt that God attaches to it. He goes on there in verse 14, "If there is a man who marries a woman and her mother, it is immorality; both he and they shall be burned with fire." Verse 15, "If there is a man who lies with an animal, he shall surely be put to death; you shall also kill the animal. If there is a woman who approaches any animal to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them." It is stunning and it promotes the fear of God to realize how he views this sin. We get a picture of it from the book of Leviticus and it is severe, not to be mitigated, not to be explained away.

Now, some people will mock the quoting of Leviticus 18 and 20. They mock it in this way: they object and say, "Leviticus has other commands that you don't follow and so you are being inconsistent with the way that you apply them." One example that they give is found in Leviticus 11. Turn over to Leviticus 11 and they try to make any reliance on Leviticus a matter of absurdity by trying to make the appeal to this authority look ridiculous. So they will allude to, television reporters will do this in their ignorance. I'm trying to keep it polite. In Leviticus 11:10 it says, "Whatever is in the seas and in the rivers that does not have fins and scales among all the teeming life of the water, and among all the living creatures that are in the water, they are detestable things to you, and they shall be abhorrent to you; you may not eat of their flesh, and their carcasses you shall detest. Whatever in the water does not have fins and scales is abhorrent to you." One writer notes in discussing what's covered by this that unclean fish would include things like lobster and crab and shrimp. So the nature of the argument is that you say, "You're appealing to Leviticus to show that homosexuality is wrong but didn't I just see you eating a shrimp cocktail? Ha, ha, ha! What's the matter with you? Do you see how foolish your argument is? You eat shrimp but you condemn homosexuality." If you do that, you have waived the argument, so to speak. You have waived everything that Leviticus might say about it.

What can we say to this? Like all such arguments, the superficial appeal of them is quickly exposed as being ignorant and uninformed. Their scoffing only shows the ignorance and the darkness of their own mind. There is no weight to that argument, particularly in the weight of the totality of biblical revelation. First of all, let me give you a few things to understand as we respond to this. First of all, Leviticus does not condemn the nations for eating shellfish like it does condemn the nations for homosexuality so even within the context of Leviticus you see a distinction that is made. The penalties applied are not the same.

Beyond that, this objection fails to understand what God was doing in this time. God gave a number of ceremonial regulations to his people, gave them instructions on what they would and would not eat because he was doing something transcendent, there was a transcendent level at which he was operating which our modern critics are incapable of even thinking in transcendent terms because they are so consumed with the immediate materialistic nature of the present day. So it's hard for them to even conceive that there might be something else going on besides arbitrary rules about what to eat and not to eat, what to do and not to do. God was using food regulations to keep his people, to separate them and to keep them from assimilating them into other nations. The food regulations were designed to create a separation so that the racial lineage would be kept pure and that God's unique, small nation of people would not be lost because they intermingled with other nations. What they ate was one manner of preserving that distinction. It's probably worth saying as some writers have noticed also, comparing that regulation today to the present day, this isn't the most expositive of arguments but I think it has merit: today we've got refrigerators and freezers that can keep that food healthy. In days when there was no refrigeration, this kind of food was particularly prone to spoilage and making people sick. And so there is a logic to it and you just see that what we presuppose in our existence was something that was completely different from the time back then.

But the most compelling argument about this for those of us that love the Lord Jesus Christ goes beyond even what we said here. The food regulations in Leviticus are different from its sexual moral code because Jesus declared things different during his time on earth. Look at Mark 7. When you think about the ceremonial aspects of the law, you realize as you study the New Testament, that Jesus came and fulfilled those aspects of the law in his own life and in his sacrificial death. He has become the ceremony to which we look. He is the fulfillment of all of those ceremonies and therefore the need for them has passed away.

Mark 7:18 says that Jesus said to his disciples, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.)" The Lord Jesus who first gave the regulations in the first place as the word of God was recorded through the hand of Moses, the Lord Jesus now comes in the progress of revelation and says, "The need for those dietary regulations has passed. I am here. I fulfilled the law with my righteous life and therefore all foods are declared clean." The subsequent revelation in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ has changed and altered that which we find in these narrow food regulations in the book of Leviticus. Homosexuality is utterly different. The grounds of condemnation were universal unlike with the food regulations. Furthermore, the Lord Jesus did not contradict the laws on homosexuality, instead he did set aside the food regulations. So when you examine the totality of Scripture, you see that there is a difference between the 2 that we are intended to uphold and honor.

Now, beyond that, the condemnations of homosexuality in the Old Testament are different because the condemnations of homosexuality are repeated in the New

Testament. That brings us to our second point here this morning: the New Testament condemns homosexuality also. God's word gives a unifying and a unified condemnation and approach to this issue. First of all, we see homosexuality condemned in society. Look at Romans 1 with me. So we have seen the Old Testament condemning homosexuality in passages like Genesis 19, Leviticus 18 and Leviticus 20. We have dealt with some of the objections there in a quick overview fashion. Now let's look at what the New Testament says about this in condemning homosexuality. In Romans 1, you see a condemnation on a societal level and Romans 1 teaches that rampant homosexuality in a society is a sign of God's wrath upon that culture.

Romans 1, beginning in verse 18. Give me a moment to turn to it in my own Bible here. Romans 1:18, where it says, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." So this is the the context here, the narrow context here is about the wrath of God, the anger of God. Verse 19, "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." Let's stop right there for a moment. Take a little breath and catch up with what the Scriptures are saying here. God, it says, has made himself known in creation. He has revealed himself and put the imprint of his existence in an undeniable way in the creation that is all around men. Men have seen that. Men have understood that. Mark it, Scripture says they have seen it and they have understood it. But rather than giving honor to the one who created it and what they see and understand, rather than giving thanks to him for what he has done in creation that is to their good, they reject it. They spurn it. They suppress that truth. They deny it. They deny the testimony of their own conscience for the sake of being rebels against God and Scripture says that they are without excuse as they do that.

What happens when men do that? Look at verses 22 and 23, "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." God did not sit idly by while men rejected his creation. You remember in the last session I said that this was a slap against the hand of God, the good hand of God, and it is slapped away. That's a very pertinent illustration of what's going on here in Romans 1. They knew God but they slapped him away. They did not honor him. They knew God but they did not give thanks. They slapped him away.

Now, what did God do? Verse 24, this is chilling to be honest with you. Verse 24, "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity." Verse 26, "God gave them over to degrading passions." Verse 28, "God gave them over to a depraved mind." Now, before we go any further in that, I want you to understand something about that phrase translated "God gave them over." That is a judicial term which means that God delivered them up to judgment. It is used of Christ being handed over to judgment

and I just want you to see the way the verb is used so that you can understand what's going on in Romans.

Look over at Matthew 27 for a moment. Matthew 27:2, actually we'll start in verse 1. Matthew 27:1-2 says, "When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death." There is a judicial sentence being delivered against our Lord. "And they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor." That's the same Greek verb that is used there translated in Romans as "gave them over," here translated "delivered them up." They delivered Christ up. They gave him over to Pilate so that Pilate could execute the sentence against him.

Look over at Luke 24 where, again, the same verb is used in the same context of judgment. Luke 24:20. These are the disciples on the road to Emmaus speaking to Jesus without knowing to whom they were speaking and they are describing what happened to Jesus at his trial and at his execution. In Luke 24:20 now, they say, "the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death." Our own people, they say, delivered the Christ up to the sentence of death. They gave him over to judgment. They delivered him up so that Pilate would judge him and execute him. So you see how this term "gave them over," again, it's the same Greek verb in Romans that is being used here. God is displaying himself to mankind and men have rejected it and God, in his prerogative as deity, responds to that. What Scripture teaches us here is that he has delivered them over. He has judicially condemned them and delivered them up to a judgment which expresses itself in perverted thinking that leads to greater darkness.

Look at the verses with me again in light of that. Verse 24, "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity so that their bodies would be dishonored among them." He gave them over. He delivered them up and what was the judgment? To Jesus he was being handed over to Pilate for execution, what's the judgment of God on a society that has denied him and refused to give thanks to him? He delivers them up to the realm of their own lusts where things go from dark to darker. Verse 25, why did he do that? Because "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." Let all the people of God say, amen. The whole nature of the flow of this passage is God made himself known to men. They rejected that and as a judicial act, God delivered them up into the realm of the lusts of their own heart as an expression of his judgment. "If you would be ungodly in your thinking, I will give you up to unrighteousness in your behavior and thought."

So God has withdrawn his hand and handed these people over, handed the society over to judgment which is expressed in sexual degradation. Verse 26 of Romans 1, "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." Interesting isn't it, the health effects of homosexuality that we saw last night in light of this verse.



Verse 28, "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice," and on it goes. Sexual rebellion being embraced by a society is in itself the judgment of God. It is both a mark of God's judgment and it is the judgment of God on an ungodly society. And here is what you need to see, beloved, and see the connection, this is really important: perversion in life manifests a prior perversion toward God. Ungodliness, a denial of God, inevitably leads to ungodly living. You cannot separate the knowledge of God from righteous behavior ultimately because one leads to the other under the judging hand of God.

So thinking about this from macro to slightly less macro realms, the world rejects God in creation and that rejection leads to his judgment which includes being manifested in their rejection of his design for sexuality. The spiritual implications of what's going on around us in our culture are devastating. What this means and what it says is explained to us by the word of God is profound and searching and should cause us to humble ourselves and to cry out to this God for grace and to plead with God for mercy because he is already manifesting his judgment. And it shows, at the risk of beating a dead horse, it shows how foolish and how wrong it is for us to try to mitigate this and to deal with the problem superficially. "Oh, the world embraces homosexual marriage now? Well, let us as a church be more accepting and welcoming," those are the words that they like to use. "We are a welcoming church," which is another way of saying, "We have abandoned Scripture for the sake of trying to please you." Oh, that Christ would come down with a whip on people like that just like he cleansed the temple, huh? Cleanse it all out, Lord, if they are going to claim your name and endorse that which you abominate. Oh God, have mercy on us.

Now, in this passage on Romans 1, you will find people and the language of this is so clear that it's very hard to try to wriggle your way out of it, but homosexual interpreters and so-called gay Christians have tried. Sometimes they'll say that Paul here is only condemning heterosexuals who violate their own personal nature by engaging in homosexuality. Honestly, they make this argument. They say, "No, you see, it's not those who are homosexual by orientation that are being condemned here, they are acting according to their nature and so that's good and proper. What's wrong here and where Paul is condemning is that there are heterosexuals who are acting in homosexual ways and they are the ones being condemned." Well, please. That is not Paul's point here. It's unnatural, not because it varies from man to man, it is unnatural because it is a universal revolt against the order of creation. That's his argument. Look at it, verse 20, "since the creation of the world," that's his appeal. "They don't honor God as the Creator," that's the argument here. "They exchange," verse 25, "the truth of God for a lie. They worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator." It's an appeal to creation, not to the personal nature of individual men. Their argument has no merit.

So what we see is we are witnessing God's judgment manifest in the open embrace of the homosexual culture in our society. And how blind are men? How bad is the situation? How lost are they? Instead of fear over what's happening around us, they are tripping

over themselves to endorse it. Either at a political or corporate or ecclesiastical level, men are tripping over themselves to get on the bandwagon. This is awful, really. What this expresses is the darkness and the blindness is so vast. Instead of fear, they embrace. They endorse. And they attack those who raise biblical objection against it.

Now, it's not that Paul never said anything about individuals. Here he is making a societal argument in Romans 1 but the condemnation does extend to individuals as well. Look at 1 Corinthians 6. We looked at this last night. 1 Corinthians 6. You know, I think I can honestly say that I would never, you know, I realize that this is heavy material, that's what I'm trying to say and that this isn't light and fluffy and it's not watered down. This is a reminder to us that sometimes the themes of Scripture are heavy. Part of the reason that we fear God is that this book deals with not only issues of grace and forgiveness but matters of sin and judgment and if we are to grow as the people of God, we need to embrace and understand what he says about judgment as much as we do the things that are a little easier to talk about and it sobers us and it humbles us even if it wouldn't play well on a TV sitcom. I don't think any of us are interested in TV sitcoms these days.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" So the framing word here is "unrighteousness." "Do not be deceived," we talked about that last night, didn't we? You are prone to deception on this point. You are prone to excuse all the sins that we are about to list out here but don't be deceived about it. "Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." Unrepentant people like that are not going to heaven. Another way to say it is: unrepentant people marked by these sins are going to hell. They will not see the kingdom of God and elsewhere Scripture teaches us that there will be judgment that comes instead of an eternal nature. Read Revelation 20 for that.

And this passage condemns all manner of sexual immorality. It's not focused only on homosexuality and that's another objection that people make, "Well, why don't you speak out about the other sins like adultery and other things that you people are guilty of?" Well, we do, first of all, and Scripture does and we don't minimize those sins but, give me a break. Is there an obvious concerted political and legal effort to redefine society to approve of adultery like there is homosexuality? When people make the attack, then expect a response from the faithful people of God where the attack is being made. So yes, we will respond. We will speak in detail about the issue of homosexuality because that's where you're making the battle lines at. And as you deny the word of God on a particular issue, we will respond in kind with what God's word says and that doesn't obligate us to dilute it by pointing to other things that are not at issue. If it was a courtroom, we wouldn't even present evidence on the issue because it's irrelevant to the point at hand and violate every law of evidence in a courtroom to talk about things that didn't have anything to do with the matter that is being discussed. So not only do we need to understand the biblical case and the biblical arguments about this, we have to be very careful not to let people lay traps for us that have nothing to do, that are simple red herrings designed to divert from the issue at hand. Let's stick with what the issue is. That's all we're doing. Without excusing the other sin, we have to address what is at issue.

Now, so we see that this passage condemns all manner of sexual immorality but for our purposes, we need to see that it specifies homosexuality as, quoting from one commentator, "a blameworthy activity that keeps men from heaven." Now, I didn't check before I came the language that the ESV uses; here in our NASB translation, it translates "the effeminate and the homosexuals." Just a word about those 2 terms. The word "effeminate" is a term that is used to the receptive partner in homosexual intercourse. "Homosexuals" is a term that by its structure in the Greek language means "males who go to bed with males," and refers to the active partner. Those are the distinctions between those 2 terms. Paul is very specific in what he says about the nature of the homosexual activity and he says that this sin keeps men from heaven. Now, government and culture may embrace homosexuality. Our responsibility is to say, "Ah, but Scripture says it leads to eternal judgment. Take your pick. Choose carefully and choose wisely because there are implications to this."

Now, there is one other place in the New Testament where Scripture addresses this. Turn over to 1 Timothy 1, a text that is not as often mentioned in the discussion. 1 Timothy 1, beginning in verse 8. Believe it or not we're going to actually end on a very hopeful note at the end of this message. 1 Timothy 1:8, the Apostle Paul in writing to his disciple, Timothy, says, "We know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person," people who are living righteously don't need the law to condemn them. "But for those who are lawless and rebellious." Yeah Paul, who are you talking about? "The ungodly and sinners." Proceed. "For the unholy and profane." Could you be more specific? Yes, "for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." Homosexuality is listed among many other scandalous sins as being that which is contrary to the law of God, that which God does not approve and never could approve of.

So we see from this little survey the Old Testament condemning homosexuality; we see the New Testament condemning homosexuality. And we state with clarity, with presence of mind based on the authority of God's word and by the aid of the Holy Spirit: unrepentant homosexuals are under God's judgment. There is no other way to say it. I would not be a faithful minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ if I offered hope to unrepentant homosexuals and said, "You can keep your sin and still go to heaven." The judgment on my head would be even greater if I said that or implied it. I'm not going to do that.

Now, 2 things that I would say then. What is it then that our society should be saying? What is it that you as an individual homosexual seeing the clarity of God's word being laid out before you, what should your response be? Well, look over at the book of Acts 2 and without mitigating the sin of homosexuality, the greatest crime that was ever perpetrated by men was when they murdered the Lord Jesus Christ, a perfectly righteous man, murdered under lies and false pretenses at the hands of ungodly men. What is it that they said when they were confronted with their sin? This gives us a pattern and an

entryway into what we would say to our condemned society and our condemned friends. The Apostle Peter is preaching in Acts 2 and having laid out the crucifixion of Christ and convicting his hearers of their role and responsibility in it, the convicting work of the Spirit had been done in their hearts, in verse 36, he says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ - this Jesus whom you crucified." And in a great splendid moment of preaching, Peter condemns a nation and says, "You are guilty of crucifying God's own Messiah. You killed your own Savior," not backing down from the guilt of the moment. To our culture we say, to individual homosexuals we say, "Follow into the next verse and find your response to the conviction of God's word on your heart. Follow it. This alone is the open door to forgiveness and eternal life. This is the only means of escape for you."

What did the people of Israel do when Peter convicted them? Verse 37, "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" Rather than mitigate their guilt so that they wouldn't feel bad, Peter pressed home their guilt there in verse 36 and it had a convicting impact upon their hearts. They realized, "Oh, I'm guilty! Oh, I can't save myself! Oh, this is really bad! Peter, help me! What do I do?" They were crying out for mercy under the weight and guilt of their own sin. What did Peter say to them? He said, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself. And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'" Peter said, "Your only hope is to repent and to turn to Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." Peter said, "You must abandon your prior guilt. You must turn away from it. You must renounce it and decisively turn to the Lord Jesus Christ if you are to be forgiven." The last thing that he said, "Aw, you know, it wasn't so bad. You know, we want to be welcoming to those who crucified the Messiah. Let's not talk about that little incident there." No, he pressed the point home and convicted them and called on them to turn to Christ in repentance and faith and he said in verse 40, he said, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" What do we say to every unconverted person in our day in society here today? We say, "Come out. Be saved from this perverse generation that is evidently under the judgment of God. Get out with your own soul before it is too late. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation." And we don't mitigate the urgency of it by minimizing the sin. We say, "No, this is really profoundly serious. God's judgment is real and as long as you have breath and as long as I have breath, I'm going to plead with you to be saved from this perverse generation!"

Now, that brings us to our third point: we make that plea for sinners to turn to Christ on the authority of God's word and knowing that we serve an incredibly merciful Savior. That we present these things and we make this call on behalf of a God who is gracious. That the Lord Jesus is the one who said, "I have come to seek and to save that which is lost." Well, if you are pierced by the guilt of your sin here today, realize that that is the condition that allows you to turn to Christ and ask for mercy. He said, "I'm like a doctor. You don't send people who are well, who think they have no need for healthcare to a doctor." He said, "It's those who are sick that need a physician." He said, "I didn't come

to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." So even as we speak clearly about the sins of our age, we realize that we do so in the context that says there is mercy for those who would turn to Christ. In the midst of judgment, there is hope. And those New Testament passages that we looked at a few minutes ago, if you look at a little bit broader context, they consistently put the sin of homosexuality in the context of the free offer of forgiveness of sin found in the Gospel of Christ. Consistently. Homosexuality is not the unforgivable sin and we don't preach it like it is.

Go back to the book of Romans. We saw Romans 1. Look at this, remembering the context of everything that we have said last night and this morning and again here now, remembering the clarity with which Scripture speaks to the issue of homosexuality, what is the attitude of the Apostle Paul, that apostle to the Gentiles, that one who was uniquely appointed by Christ to bring light to the nations, what did he say? Verse 14, Romans 1, just before he gets into the discussion of the wrath of God, he says, "I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.'" Paul, even while he was carrying the burden of the wrath of God that he was going to exposit there in the subsequent verses, sets the context by saying, "I am eager to preach the Gospel. It is the power of God to salvation. Jesus will forgive everyone who comes to him in faith and repentance." So Paul says, "I'm not ashamed of the Gospel. I'm not afraid of this world situation. I'm just glad and eager to proclaim the saving mercy of Christ to a generation as perverse as this one." So the Bible, in this context of Romans 1, brings the hope of salvation as the context in which it is presented and just establishes the wrath of God as the urgency which would cause men to turn. It's a gracious word of mercy. The offer of hope is held out with nothing to restrain you from receiving it but your own insolent refusal to do so.

Now, for some of you in here, some of you on the live stream, perhaps you've been guilty of homosexuality in one form or another and you feel the weight of your sin, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I promise you, he will forgive you even of those darkest moments in your life. Go back to 1 Corinthians 6. You don't have to stay and rot in your sin. There is a way out. There is an open door. There is a window open to breathe fresh air into your soul and it is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Having said that all of these sinners in verses 9 and 10 will not go to heaven, in verse 11 he says, "Such were some of you," speaking to Christians here, "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." He reminds them of their prior life of sin simply to remind them of the greater mercy that Christ had showed them. "Do you remember way back when you were a sinner like this? Okay, do you remember that since then Christ had mercy on you and changed you and washed you and forgave your sins and now the Spirit of God indwells you? Do you remember that?" He says, "Some of you were like that and now you have been redeemed by grace." Implicit in that, the Gospel hasn't changed. Implicit in it is that those of you who are in sin up to this moment find yourself hearing and receiving the Gospel of Christ

which says, "Come to Christ for forgiveness because he will save you too." I'm no better a man than anyone else, just on the receiving end of divine grace and God in the Gospel offers you that same grace today. How merciful that in his wrath he offers mercy to those who will come.

One final passage. This is the last place that we'll turn. 1 Timothy again, chapter 1, and if you go back and look at your notes you'll see how the context informs all of this. Point number 3 here was: the Bible brings the hope of salvation. I don't know if I ever made that clear. Probably not, it's okay. So while the Old Testament and the New Testament condemn homosexuality, the Bible in the totality brings the hope of salvation to those who would repent. 1 Timothy 1:12, Paul says, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor." He says, "Despite my prior life of horrific sin," he says, "yet," there is the word for you today in your sin, "yet." Yes, you are in sin. Yes, God condemns sin. Yes, God will not be trifled with in his holiness. And yet, however, but, God has displayed mercy and made it known. And Paul says at the end of verse 13, "I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus."

We close on this verse. We say it to a world mad with sin. We say it to those in chains of sin. Verse 15, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom," Paul says, "I am foremost of all." Friend, you may be a great sinner but Paul says, "I was the chief. I was the number one sinner," and the point that you are to draw from that is that if Christ saved the worst of them all, he'll save lesser sinners like you, just like he saved a lesser sinner like me. Glory to God for the mercy that is found in the Gospel. Glory to God for the truth which doesn't condescend and compromise to the sin and error of man but rather confronts it and then offers hope on the other side.

Let's bow together prayer. As we pray, I just extend one final offer to you who do not know Christ. Cast yourself on Christ. Flee to him because he will save you. He will cleanse you. He will give you eternal life as a gift and begin to change your life from the inside out.

*Father, just as you showed mercy to Paul, just as you showed mercy to this sinner here, show still more mercy to those who do not yet know you and establish your people in the truth that we might properly uphold your glory in this age where your wrath is being made known. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

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