

The Achilles Heel of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christianity  
3-Year Bible Reading Plan  
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Tonight, we're going to spend the overwhelming majority of our time in two things: the reading and the understanding of Scripture and in prayer, for tonight we deal with the subject matter that we, the church, must address. Not just on its right or wrongness, but on how we approach it and how we dialogue concerning it and how we respond to it. So tonight we're going to begin with a time of prayer and allow me to share with you that our invitation tonight, though I will be available for any decision that might be pertinent, is going to be an invitation to pray, an invitation to pray for those who are in a battle, who are in a cycle or struggle of addiction and sin, but also a time of prayer for us, that we would be the agents of healing that God has called us to be. So let's begin with prayer.

*Lord, tonight we come hopefully with a very contrite heart and spirit, Lord, a posture of humbleness. Lord, we humble ourselves before your word recognizing that it is not our own intuition, our own thought, our own ingenuity of which tonight will give us answers and direction. Lord, you said very clearly that though heaven and earth should pass away, your word would never pass away and so, Lord, on issues and subject matter such as tonight, Lord, we just simply yield that your word is timeless and true. It is not to be maneuvered and/or bent, to react or respond to the loudest cries of the day. Help us, O God, as we navigate through it. Empower us with your Spirit not just to understand but to live out as we depart from here that which we learn from your word in here. It is in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

I want to begin this evening by addressing several aspects and the first one is this: to those who may be questioning or wondering why are you addressing this issue and why tonight, this is not a response to a situation nor a reaction to a scenario but many of you may be familiar but those outside of our family of faith may not, that we are on a journey together through the Scriptures. For about three years, we're going to walk through both the Old and the New Testament chapter by chapter, day by day, and so this week as a part of our assigned text, we read a passage of Scripture in Genesis 18 and 19 that deals with the famous story of Sodom and Gomorrah, of which has been traditionally and properly addressed as a passage regarding human sexuality, in particular what we know commonly as homosexuality, and so hear me very clearly, tonight's message is not one to address the subject matter just because we can or just because we should, but we are simply just walking through Scripture together and this is one of the issues and one of the subject matters and one of the texts by which we walk through this week.

That being said, just to kind of give you a layout of this evening, we're going to address several texts in Scripture dealing with this subject matter and then we're going to talk about the subject matter as a whole and how you and I need to respond as a church, and then in the end I think we're going to address those who are struggling with and those who are caught in this particular lifestyle and sin and I think that the word of God is going to share not only that there can be healing and freedom, but even more so than we could ever imagine.

So this evening, if you would, turn to the book of Genesis 19. Just as a tad bit of context, when Abram and Sarai went to the land they knew not of as described in Hebrews 11, they did not go alone. Abram's nephew by the name of Lot was with them and they prospered on their journey. They prospered so much so that those who worked for these two men and the cattle and the land by which they had oversight of was so great that they came to the conclusion and the decision that it would be best that they part and separate their ways and so hopefully you read through this week and you understand and realize that there was even a skirmish over the life of Lot of which Abram took his men and rescued him from, but Lot settled in a place known as Sodom and Gomorrah and while he is there, as we read in chapter 18, it says that their sin was grievous and great. There are three men who come and visit Abram and Sarai, one of which the angel of the Lord, but these men are angelic hosts. They come and not only declare that Isaac shall be the name of their son because Sarah laughed, the child of promise, but they inform Abram or Abraham, that they are going to Sodom and Gomorrah as agents of judgment and destruction. In chapter 18, Abram discusses with the Lord and, for lack of better terms, he bargains for, "If there be not 50 righteous men, what about 45? If not 45, what about 40?" They get all the way down to 20. It makes you wonder what would have happened if he had gone to 10 but that's another sermon for another day.

We pick up tonight's story in Genesis 19. This is the first of what I'm going to call pertinent texts, Scriptures in the Bible that deal with this issue in particular. It says,

1 And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; 2 And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. 3 And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat. 4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: 5 And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. 6 And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, 7 And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. 8 Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you,

bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. 9 And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door. 10 But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. 11 And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door. 12 And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: 13 For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it. 14 And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. 15 And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. 16 And while he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. 17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

As we continue the story, we find ourselves in verse 24. He says,

24 Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

This is the first passage of Scripture which has been viewed by and seen as a passage that deals with this issue that is commonly known as homosexuality today.

The next pertinent text is found a few pages to the right to the book of Leviticus 18, the book of Leviticus where we see line after line and list after list of admonitions of life and warnings thereof. Chapters 18 and 19 primarily deal with the sins of the body, the sins of sensuality, the sins of sexuality. The verse and the passage of Scripture that is most identified with this particular subject matter is verse 23 of chapter 18, however I want to begin reading in verse 20 because this is important for an aspect that we're going to address later tonight, that this sin is not dealt with as an island or just as an isolated scenario, it's actually a part of a larger context. It says in verse 20,

20 Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her. 21 And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the

LORD. 22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. 23 Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion.

As you walk through what we know as the Old Testament, these are two of the pertinent and primary passages of Scripture that deal with this particular subject matter, and even though there are allusions to all throughout the context of the Old Testament in regards to this subject matter, these are the primary ones that are utilized in a discussion, in a dialogue.

I want to call your attention now to the New Testament as we go to the book of Romans 1. As we go to Romans 1, we are dealing with the subject matter of those who are not only denying but resisting the Creator; denying that they came from the hand of God; denying that they have a response or they must respond to their Creator God, and beginning in verse 21 of Romans 1, it lists the consequences, the ramifications or the reality that occurs when someone consistently and constantly denies the acknowledgment of their Creator and to respond to him as he has laid out life. Verse 21 of Romans 1 says,

21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

Another passage over to the right in the book of 1 Corinthians 6 prior to describing that our bodies as believers are the temple of the Holy Ghost, the temple of the Lord, in verse 9, it says,

9 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind [and some of your versions will read, nor those men having sex with other men], 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall

inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. 12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

And finally tonight, allow me to call your attention to the very end of the New Testament, the book of Jude and Revelation. In the book of Jude, there is a series of passages describing those in times past who have rebelled against God and the consequences of the rebellion used as an illustration, as a warning to each and every one of us that we should not go down the same path. In verse 5 of the book of Jude, it talks about when they were in the land of Egypt, verse 6, it talks even about the fallen angels, and here in verse 7, it says,

7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

Then finally in the book of Revelation 21, we find ourselves chronologically on the other side of eternity. Allow me to describe what I mean by that: life as we know it as a series of events within the realm and the scope of time, that ends in chapter 21 for in chapter 21 we see the creation of a new heaven, a new earth and a new Jerusalem. We see that the tempter, whom we know as Satan, is bound for all of eternity, those who have rejected Jesus Christ have experienced what is called the second death, they are in the lake of fire for all of eternity. So chapter 21 and 22 are describing to the best of our understanding what we know as eternity in a place the Bible calls heaven and I want you to notice what verse 8 says,

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Now as we read these passages tonight as I mentioned earlier, there are other passages that allude to or illustrate the particular sin and the lifestyle which we are discussing tonight, however, these are the primary pertinent texts of which people both not only utilize to describe the sinfulness of such behavior but as we have seen throughout the years, the same passages are utilized to justify such behavior, and I want to address tonight as we deal with these pertinent texts some of the excuses that people have and continue to use to dismiss, shall we say, the literalness of that which we have read as well as the reality thereof.

In the book of Genesis 18 and 19, this story of Sodom and Gomorrah, nobody can deny that God brought judgment upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, the question is why did he bring judgment. A very clear, simple reading of the passage says that there were two men that were in the city of which the other men in the city desired to know them,

which is biblical language for desired a sexual experience with them, so much so that even Lot said, "Please do not defile these, my guests. You may even have my daughters to do as you so choose," even reinforcing the fact that it was a sexual union of which they were most interested in and that God judged them for. Those that wish to justify the behavior of and the actions of what we know as homosexuality do not deny that judgment came to Sodom and Gomorrah but they do discuss a different reason why. It is of their belief that the reason that God judged Sodom and Gomorrah is because of their lack of hospitality to those who arrived to the city. Simply put, that those in the city because it says it was every man from every quarter, they were so inhospitable that God judged them because, in our terminology, they did not adhere to, in fact, were very contrary to what we might call the Golden Rule. The reason that that excuse or that explanation biblically speaking cannot be justified is what we just read in the book of Jude. The book of Jude says that Sodom and Gomorrah was judged and it was destroyed because they went after strange flesh; that they desired to have an intimate encounter with those that God never intended them to have an encounter with. So even though there are those that would claim that passage does not describe judgment based on what it does in a very simple reading, I think that when you read Genesis 19 it makes it very clear, and when you add Jude 1:7 to the mix, it makes it abundantly clear what was actually taken place and why God judged what we know as Sodom and Gomorrah.

The passage in Leviticus 18 is dismissed by those who want to justify this particular sin and this lifestyle by simply saying that it is a part of the Old Testament Levitical law and just as we oftentimes no longer abide by the multitude of laws that were described in the Old Testament, that because it finds itself in the context thereof, it should be dismissed as well. There are several problems with this excuse. The first one is this: on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made this statement, he said, "I came not to abolish the law but I came to fulfill it." The book of Galatians goes a little further and says that we should not dismiss the Old Testament law for "it is a schoolmaster teaching us, showing us where we have sinned and rebelled against our God," and Jesus himself said that, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my word shall never pass away." They oftentimes allude to Acts 10 where Peter has this grand vision where he sees this cloth that is tied at four corners with all the unclean animals of the Levitical law and he argues with God that he has never eaten anything unclean, he has always abided by the Levitical laws but God says, "Rise up and eat," three times. They oftentimes use that as a pertinent text to say, "See, the Lord has dismissed these laws. They are no longer pertinent." As you do a study of how Jesus and the apostles addressed what we know as the Levitical law, I think our best guide should be to go to the book of Acts 15 where the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers found themselves at a crossroads. How do those that want to advocate circumcision and how do those that want to advocate Levitical law, how do they become one body, how do they become one fellowship with the Gentiles who did not grow up with nor have these Levitical laws? I find it interesting that there are only two statements that were made in Acts 15 by the Jewish believers. They said, "As we go forward, can we ask you two things? Number one, do not eat any meat with the blood in it, and number two, do not commit fornication." So again, there is this allusion that the laws particularly with Leviticus 18 that regard sexuality, are just as pertinent on this side of the empty tomb as they were on the other side.

Romans 1 says that the men and the women were doing that which was unnatural and that which was unseemly and the particular community that would like to advocate the lifestyle which we are addressing tonight simply says that the problem with Romans 1 is that those that were born homosexual were acting like heterosexuals and those that were born heterosexuals were acting like homosexuals and therefore you ought to be the sexuality that God gave you, not the one contrary to, however, there is nothing in Romans 1 that says they were doing something different than they were born with, it just simply says that there were women with women and men with men.

In 1 Corinthians 6, it describes a multitude of collective sins of which humanity struggles with. When it specifically says "those men that are abusers of themselves," or as some versions have said, "men with men," again the same argument is posed that Romans 1 is utilized, that those that were born of a heterosexual disposition should never behave in a homosexual disposition, just as those that would be born in a homosexual disposition should not do so in a heterosexual.

So simply put, all the texts that we read tonight can be viewed in two different ways: those who would advocate a very simple understanding and reading that says that this behavior and that this action is contrary to the will of the way of God, and those that would take the same texts and would describe that they are not so much contrary to the ways and the will of God. It often reminds me of discussions like this where one has a preconceived disposition that's not going to change no matter what evidence may be placed before them, so how do we take a proper position? If we take just a simple literal reading of Scripture of which we have read with these passages that seem not only coherent but conclusive, what is our proper position? How do we as believers in Jesus Christ, as Bible believers, what is our position on the subject matter on this issue? The first thing we must recognize is this: that what we commonly call homosexuality is a sin like all others. There is a reason that in Leviticus 18 I read it in context. The entire chapter is describing what we call fornication. It's a big fancy biblical word that means any time that you are acting in a sexual manner contrary to what God has ordained and laid out as proper. It describes intimate experiences with other individuals: spouses, the close of kin, and of the same gender. However, James 2:10 makes this statement: if we have broken one of the laws, we have broken all of the laws, and so tonight we have to recognize that when we deal with the subject matter commonly known as homosexuality, it is a sin like all other sins, and as I'll discuss in just a moment, I think sometimes we have a superiority complex of which we say that we have not traveled down such roads so we must be better than, however, the problem is whatever sin we have been guilty of, we find ourselves in the same trap. All sin leads to death no matter what the particular sin may be.

One of the reasons that I wanted to read Revelation 21 is that I believe a simple understanding of Scripture not only calls homosexuality sin but it also calls lying a sin so, therefore, it is a sin like all others, however, it is a sin that is not like others and here's why. As you read a very simplistic understanding of the Scriptures we read tonight, this sin has descriptions of it and adjectives used that are found in no other sin. It is described

as an abomination and it is spoken of as a reprobate mind and life and so, therefore, even though it is a sin like all others, we also discover that it is a sin unlike all others because of the description thereof, the results thereof, and shall we say, the response of God thereof to it in particular. No other sin in the Bible is described as being turned over to a reprobate mind and even though there may be multiple sins that are described as abominations, this one in particular as well.

So let's describe our problem. Having laid out all that we've laid out tonight, we, the church, have a problem when it comes to this issue. I've selected tonight to only deal with two of these problems. We have a multitude of them and the first one is this: our attitude toward this subject matter and our attitude toward this sin and our attitude toward those who are struggling with this lifestyle. Oftentimes we, the church, have possessed an attitude of superiority and that those who struggle with this sin somehow, some way must be second class citizens. Can we go ahead and get it out there that that is the wrong attitude to have? How dare we say that we are superior to anybody? How dare we say that those that struggle with this particular sin are of second-class nature or disposition? We have surrounded ourselves with the stained glass windows of our own piety and say that we would never dare such paths. Be careful when you say the word "never." In fact, I would dare say that in a room such as this, in an audience not just in person but those on the other side of the camera, that we all, notice how I used the personal pronoun "we," not "you," we all know many individuals both of family and friend, coworker and neighbor, who find themselves in this particular sin, disposition and lifestyle. One of our biggest problems is we've taken a superiority position and somehow believe that they were of a less desired relationship to their Creator.

The second problem we have is our actions, in particular the last 30 to 50 years, we have decided that the best way to address this sin is to burn bridges, not only by burning them but throwing the Bible and its verses at them, speaking in words that are vile, which by the way, is interesting because Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no unwholesome thing come out of your mouth." How dare we condemn somebody else's sin with our own sinful language. We have burned the bridge to the homosexual community. In fact, one of the most enlightening books that I've read in recent days, a man by the last name of Dickerson wrote a book entitled, "The Coming Great Evangelical Recession," where he speaks that the church of Jesus Christ in what we know as North America today finds itself on the post-Christian side of our culture. The first issue he deals with, he says that we are bloated or that we think that there are actually more of us than there actually really are. The second issue he deals with is that we're actually more hated than we ever could imagine we are, and he says in that book that the Christian community because of our past actions in our words, one particular community that which we know as the homosexual community so despises us, and possibly even with right cause. What other sin, what other people have we acted with such hatred toward? With such vile language toward? With such caustic disposition toward? You see, the problem is our attitude of superiority has allowed us to throw rocks through the windows, metaphorically speaking, of those that not only endorse, promote, live, but support this particular position and/or lifestyle.



So tonight we've dealt with the pertinent texts, we've dealt with the position that it's a sin like all others yet it's a sin unlike all others, and we've also dealt with our problem, we've had the unfortunate attitude of superiority and the actions of burning bridges. Allow me to postulate tonight maybe we would be better served according to Scripture rather than burning the bridge to this community, what if you and I built a bridge, not a bridge of our own doing, our own ingenuity, what if we built a bridge based not only on Scripture but on the healing, saving, gracious person of Jesus Christ? You know, we've built bridges to all other sins, why don't we build a bridge to this one? Rather than burning and being vile, why don't we build a bridge?

You know, anytime you build a bridge on an issue of which you have a disagreement with somebody else, it's a little something like this: by building a bridge rather than standing on the other side saying, "You are wrong and I am right," you are stating, "I believe I am right and I would love for you to have the same view I do. I would love for you to agree with my position." So building a bridge is not negating your belief that your position is correct, it is just the attitude and the actions by which you address it with those who disagree with you, and I believe that there are some possible solutions that you and I, if we would build these bridges not only with our words but our lives and our actions, that those who are struggling with and those who are advocating what we know as the homosexual lifestyle and position, may see a love that Jesus demonstrated rather than the common expression that is most associated with contemporary Christianity.

The reason I entitled tonight "The Achilles Heel of Christianity" is simply this: I know it's an allusion to mythology but that which was grand and that which was strong, that which was mighty and that which was powerful, was taken down by the smallest of segments of the body and we, the church of Jesus Christ today, in the form and in the discussion and the debate of this issue, we find ourselves being out-talked, out-loved, and outlived on this issue.

Two possible solutions that I want to bring forth to you this evening and I would encourage you to go to the book of Matthew 19. Two possible solutions in regards to two issues, the issues of brokenness and the issue of birth. Over the past two plus decades of ministry, I have had the privilege, and I mean that word literally, I'm not being sarcastic, I have had the privilege of speaking with the families of and the individuals that are struggling with this particular lifestyle and sin in such a great number I've lost count, and the reason I consider it a privilege is this: it doesn't matter what our sin is, we serve a Savior who can break that sin and heal us from it whatever it may be. So when somebody is struggling with this sin, my heart goes to them because we live in a world that wants to justify and advocate and dismiss and yet we have a Savior who wants to heal and give us a life that we could never imagine therein. In my dealings with the homosexual community based on a one-on-one individual discussion level as well as in group settings, I have discovered that there are two what I might call, and please forgive me for using this word, there are two classifications of how people find themselves not only attracted to, interested in, but active in this particular lifestyle and/or sin.

The first classification is what I would call the area of brokenness, that their lives are broken, their lives are fractured. In fact, throughout the years I have had numerous situations and stories where for a variety of reasons, people have found my phone number, found my location, and said, "I am struggling. I have a friend that is struggling. I have a relative that is struggling. I have a neighbor that is struggling. Is there any way they can come and talk to you, we can come and talk to you?" And I do with those that come to see me on this issue like I would do with anybody on any issue, I simply begin by saying this, "Tell me your story. You didn't get here in my office by accident. What led you to this point?" In particular on this subject matter, I may be more specific and say, "What has led you to or why would you advocate or what is it that has caused you to advocate and to defend in this particular position?" Sometimes people take 15 minutes to tell me their story, sometimes they take an hour. Sometimes it's a humility of spirit and sometimes the pride is so much you can barely fit in the room. But more times than not when their story is told, I just listen with respect. I have learned that there is a question that I can ask them that more often than not, and shall I say in excess of 90% of the time, gets an immediate response and very clear answer. I ask this question, "How old were you and who was it that sexually took advantage of you?" They don't pause, they don't look at me like a calf at a new gate and go, "I don't know what you're talking about." There's an immediate response. Sometimes it's the response that you would expect. I've had young men say it was my uncle, it was my grandfather. I've even had young men say it was my babysitter, it was my coach. I've had situations where when I asked them that question, who was it and who took advantage of you, it was not somebody of the same gender but somebody of the opposite gender. Sometimes it was somebody significantly older than them, sometimes it was someone of the same age and their sexual intimacy and activity, and shall we say, the lack of success thereof caused them to entertain such a position. In other words, more often than not, in fact I would say probably 90% of the time when someone is or I'm in a discussion with someone in regards to this subject matter and they are the ones who are personally dealing with it, when I ask them this question, "How old were you and who was it?" they don't bat an eye. They are broken. You know, we are all broken at some level, however, in 1 Corinthians 6 of which we read earlier, it says that all sins that we commit our outside of the body but sins of a sexual nature are within the body, and it says that it's just different, sexuality as a whole.

Oftentimes there are people that are broken and I'm reminded of Jesus in Matthew 4:19, he says, "I have come to make you fishers of men." It's been stated before by people much wiser than I but allow me to state it again: you catch a fish before you clean a fish. In other words, don't expect one's lifestyles, decisions and positions they advocate to be holy before they meet the Savior Jesus. Oftentimes the homosexual community in my discussion, have a series of or an event of brokenness in their life and their advocating of or their encouragement of is simply humanity's fleshly way of trying to silence the cry and trying to numb the pain, but what about the other 10%? What about the people that when I ask the question they look at me like a calf at a new gate? What about the mom and the dad who come into my office with tears running down their face because their son or their daughter, because their niece or the nephew, because their sister or their brother, or as I've even experienced, how about a wife who comes in and talks about her husband, and it's not that they've had some abnormal sexual experience in their life, it's

not that someone utilized them in a predatory manner, it's not that they've had an unfortunate sexual history and/or a scenario that has taken place, but it is this issue and this is the one that we hear so much that is critical of the Christian biblical position, is what about those who say, "But I was born this way. I've never been attracted to the opposite sex. I guess this is just how God made me."

You know, when it comes to brokenness, I think all of us understand the power and the healing that Jesus Christ alone can bring, whether it be homosexuality or whether it be perpetual lying. I think we get that, but this is the angle, this is the position, and this is what is so utilized because you and I as Bible believing Christians, we would say that God creates no one, maybe they have a disposition towards it but he does not create them for the purpose of sin or for the celebration thereof. That's why I want to turn to Matthew 19 where Jesus is being asked about marriage and the Pharisees in particular are coming to him and they are dealing with the subject matter of not only marriage but the issue of divorce and putting away, and as we go further in context here, I want to get to verse 12. Jesus makes a statement that I think could possibly be the absolute perfect not only answer but antidote to this issue in our culture, in our society. Now, understand if someone is broken in life, Jesus is the healer no matter what their sin may be, even this particular one we've addressed tonight, but in verse 12 of Matthew 19, listen to what Jesus says.

12 For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.

Now this is a passage of Scripture that I'm sure many of us tonight are somewhat familiar with, however, and I cannot share with you quite how and or where it happened but some years ago in my study of Scripture, this verse just leapt off the page because I saw something that I had never seen before. Jesus did not classify these individuals into two classifications, he classified them into three.

Now before we talk about their classifications, let's discuss what is being described here. It says they are called eunuchs. Now generally speaking when you describe or look up the definition for a eunuch, it is somebody who does not have the ability to reproduce, however, even within Jesus' own context here, there is a secondary definition of a eunuch, not only someone who cannot reproduce but someone who has no desire to reproduce. So I want us to take this verse and work through it backwards for just a moment. The third classification says there are those eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. In the "Christian tradition" there are many of men and even many of women who have taken a vow of chastity. They have said that they will not entertain marriage, they will not entertain a biological family so that they can dedicate their entire life to prayer, fasting, Bible study and the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is not that they cannot have children, it is that because of their relationship with the Lord they have said they will possess no desire to do so.

The second classification in the middle it says some men have been made eunuchs by other men. The first encounter of one-on-one evangelism in the book of Acts 8, there is a man known as the Ethiopian eunuch. There is a reason particularly during the exile in Babylon and in other passages, that men took other men and made it to where they could not reproduce so that when they were in charge of the king's harem and/or ladies, the seed and the heritage thereof would not be defiled which is interesting because the last classification is someone who is exhibiting no desire, the second classification is someone who has no ability which means that Jesus Christ himself has said that the word or the term or the concept known as a eunuch can fulfill both definitions and those are the ones that we typically talk about.

But I want you to notice the first thing that Jesus said, there are some eunuchs which were so born from their mother's womb. I think it's interesting that Jesus starts with this one and then he gives us those that we can easily dissect into understanding what it specifically meant. Jesus says very clearly there are some. Last time I checked, "some" does not mean "most," "some" does not mean "a majority thereof," but there are some who were born from their mother's womb. So we can suppose that from the words of Jesus himself, there are some individuals that they are born and they do not have the ability, they do not possess the genetic makeup in order to reproduce. It just happens, we understand that, but is it also possible that there are some that are born with no desire to entertain what we know as the union of marriage and no desire for what we would know as having a family?

I have encountered numerous individuals who either find themselves in the midst of or struggling with what we might call the homosexual lifestyle and after we've gotten past the first question, "How old were you and who was it," and that's not pertinent, I ask them a second question, "How old were you when you began to desire the opposite sex?" Do you know what the answer I get every time is? "I've just never desired the opposite sex." I ask them, "Well, how old were you when you desired the same sex?" And they say, "I've never desired the opposite sex," and they share with me that whether they were in kindergarten, third grade or going into high school type functions, that they just never had an inclination, they never had a desire. There was nothing inside of them that said, "That's what I desire to do." They say, "I've just never been interested in those types of relationships."

Two of the statements that I am pseudo-known for are the statements, "Could it be?" and "Is it possible?" Could it be here in Matthew 19:12 when Jesus said there are some that are born eunuchs from their mother's womb, he was saying that there are some that they will be born for the kingdom of heaven's sake, you understand that's the conclusion here, that they are born for the kingdom of heaven's sake, that they are not born with the desire for the opposite sex, they are not born with the desire for marriage or for family so that their entire life can be dedicated to the person and the cause of Jesus Christ? If you question that, you need to read Revelation 14 because the famous 144,000 witnesses are actually young men who are virgins with no desire for women. In other words, there are multiple biblical accounts of individuals whose purpose in serving the Lord was apart from the distractions of, and even though there may be the blessings of a biological

family both in marriage and children. If this is the case, then you and I potentially biblically from the mouth of Jesus have an unbelievable biblical position that we can and I encourage you to subscribe to. There are those who come out of brokenness. No matter what the brokenness and whatever the response is, Jesus is the answer. Period. But there are those in our culture and in our communities who say, "But this is just the way I was born," is it possible that those who claim such a position and those that claim such a disposition were not born for a sexual union with the same sex but they were born with a special relationship with their Creator, a special relationship to not only promote but to preach and live the Gospel message?

Allow me to make some generalities that will probably be politically insensitive and incorrect, but nonetheless does it not marvel you that those who are a part of what we know as the homosexual community are quite possibly the most talented, most gifted, most artistic, and most successful people in our culture? I'm serious. It's true. In fact, when I have people with tears streaming down their eyes describing their son or describing their daughter, their sister, their nephew, whoever it may be, as they begin to describe the fact that they are in this lifestyle, they're in this type of living, I'll ask them, I'll say, "I bet your son is incredibly talented. I bet your son is brilliant. I bet he's athletic. I bet he's creative. I bet he's artistic. I bet he's musical." Every time they say, "How did you know?" You see, when it comes to those who claim that they were "born that way," we're dealing with the most creative, innovative, artistic and smartest people that the world knows and doesn't it just makes sense that that's who the Lord would call to himself? Doesn't it make sense that those are the ones of whom the Lord would set aside for his purpose and for his mission? I want you to imagine something with me tonight: can you imagine what would our worship services be like if Elton John were the worship pastor? I'm not kidding. Can you imagine what the international mission board would look like if Tim Cook was the CEO? The most brilliant, most talented, most gifted people on the planet who say, "I was just born this way."

Let me flip the script, what if you, and I mean this metaphorically, what if you were the devil? Years ago Paul Harvey penned a piece called "If I were the devil," what if you were the devil and you knew that the Lord had set aside some gifted, talented, incredibly innovative people for his sake, for the proclamation of the Gospel, what would you do? Just sit back and say, "Let's see how it pans out"? I'm telling you what I would do, I would get in at the earliest time possible and convince them and deceive them that something must be awry and wrong and that they must go this direction.

You see, when it comes to this one particular sin, I believe based on Matthew 19:12 that rather than a position of you and I taking superiority, it's quite possible that we need to take a position of humility. Let me share with you what happens. When you are sitting across the table from a young man, you're sitting across the table from a young woman, you're sitting across the table from somebody who admits and confesses this is the lifestyle they are in, the struggle that they are in, and yet they just feel like somehow they were born this way, and you share this verse with them and you tell them that God has a plan for them that is even greater than the plan he has for me; that God has purposed their

life to give him greater glory than even his plan that he has for me, who is in the position of superiority now? Those who have been called and set aside by God.

As we look at Matthew 19:12, what we discover is that those who claim, "I've just never been attracted to the opposite sex. I've just never desired what we know as a traditional, biblical, heterosexual marriage." I believe that just like we all have in some respects, they have listened to the words of the deceiver, words that go a little something like this, "Well, since you're not attracted to the opposite, you've got to be attracted to somebody so I guess you're attracted to the same." And we are fed lie after lie after lie and we are told in our culture, "You have to go to the prom. You have to. Everybody goes. You've got to go." "But I don't have an attraction." "Then go with the other because everybody must go." According to Matthew 19:12, Jesus said there are some people that from their mother's womb, this has never been the avenue that they would travel.

Earlier I addressed our attitude and our actions as the church, that we've had a position of superiority and that we have burned bridges instead of built them, so let's talk about this bridge. When you are having a conversation with someone or you are addressing the subject matter and you say, "Yes, I do believe homosexuality, biblically speaking, is a sin. I do believe that it is as the Bible describes. But I believe that you or your son or your daughter or your niece, whomever it may be, has been called by God to a purpose and a position greater than you can imagine and greater than even I could fulfill, if they would listen to their Creator's voice rather than the deception of the enemy," you talk about building a bridge. You've just said and allow me to say it simply, that they are actually more important to God than you are. They have been called by God to something greater than you have which means that on this issue, there are those that have been broken by a series of events in life and we recognize Jesus is the only healer for brokenness, but for those who claim the position of birth, it's becoming more and more frequent today, our attitude should not be superiority, it should be humility, and rather than burning the bridge of, "You're wrong, I'm right," we build a bridge that says, "You've been called by God to something greater than even I have been." You are placing them in a position of distinct purpose by God.

You know, I think one of our failures in times past is we've been so quick to call sin sin that oftentimes we forget that the Lord hasn't just called us out of sin, he has called us to righteousness, he has called us to living as he has and desires for us to do so. So tonight, can we not take away from the biblical truth of homosexuality but can we change our approach? Can we change our understanding and can we change our attitude and our actions? And as we close tonight, here's what I'm going to call upon you to do. In just a minute, we're going to have some soft music that's playing and I'm just going to call you to pray. You can pray where you are. You can come up to the steps on the side here, whatever it may be, and here's what I want you to pray for. First and foremost, I want you to pray for yourself. It's easy to pray for others, pray that you will take a biblical position and response to this issue. Then I want you to pray for those that you know are dealing with this issue. I want you to pray for those that you know they have family members that are dealing with this issue. Then I want you to do something that may be very difficult for you to do, First Baptist, I want you to pray that God will utilize you and God will utilize

us corporately to be a voice in the wilderness on this issue, a voice of healing and a voice of forgiveness and a voice of building bridges and not burning bridges because it's quite possible that those who we find ourselves throwing rocks at may be the very ones God has called to a greater purpose than even ourselves.

So I'm going to ask that the music come up. If you want to come in a public format or just privately, I want to entertain just a season of prayer, and then in a few moments I will close us.

*Lord, tonight first and foremost we recognize that you are the Deliverer, you are the Healer, and you are the Savior of all sin whatever it may be. God, we've addressed a specific issue tonight, Lord, a sin that unlike some others is tearing apart homes, fracturing relationships, so God, tonight we pray for those who are struggling with the pieces of a broken life. Oftentimes they've had things said and/or done to them that no person ever deserves to have said or done and, God, we cannot change their past but we know that, Jesus, you can change their future. So God, we pray for healing. God, we pray that you somehow supernaturally would take the broken pieces of their life and that through the person of Jesus Christ, through the power of his life and the power of his death and the power of his resurrection, that you would heal them and they might know themselves through you and not through their consequences or their environment. Lord, we pray for those tonight that quite possibly you have set aside for incredible purpose but the enemy has spoken not just quietly but very frequently to them and they have believed, they've believed the positive encouragement and the deceitfulness of the lie. God, we pray that they would see themselves as you have formed and fashioned them, not as the world tells them they must or should or could possibly be.*

*Lord, we pray for us. Lord, we know it's very clear in Scripture that sin is sin and we should call it what it is when it is, but you've also called us to be a bridge. You've called us to minister to, to be salt and to be light to those that are trapped in or living in darkness. So God, tonight may you as you've described in Ephesians 6, that the word of God is the only offensive weapon we've got, the sword of the Spirit, may you somehow tonight, God, may you arm us with your truth and with your love to be willing to dialogue and discuss to a lost and dying world the truth of your word not just because it's right but because you've called us to penetrate the darkness and to show a lost and dying world not only the reality of their sin but the fact that Jesus can forgive them and save them and give them a life like none other. Lord, thank you that no matter what we've dealt with, no matter what traps we've fallen into, no matter what temptations that we've discovered in days gone past or even days present, that Isaiah 59 is still true, that there is nothing that we can...*