

Gay Marriage and the Gospel

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Ps 11:3 *if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*

Psalm 94:20 *Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?* [KJV, or NKJV “*evil by law*”]

That verse is not talking about same-sex marriage law controversy in UK/US in 2012 but it introduces controversial questions today: Is homosexual marriage *evil* or not? Should it be *framed as a law* by judges or by the vote of the people (and should judges overturn the vote of the people one way or another)? Can a bench or *throne of iniquity have fellowship with God*? Did man invent marriage and should man re-invent marriage or redefine it by majority opinions? If marriage’s *foundation is destroyed, what can the righteous do?*

The DNC platform (9/12) said: ‘We support marriage equality and support the movement to secure equal treatment under law for same-sex couples ... We support the full repeal of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act [a current law Bill Clinton signed with large majorities in both houses of Congress defining marriage as the legal union of one man and one woman. The DNC platform instead calls for the] Respect for Marriage Act [bill in Congress to require the federal government to recognize same-sex marriage].’ⁱ

10 years ago, no State in America allowed same-sex marriage and 15 States had laws against sodomy (sinful homosexual activity, the term comes from the Genesis story of Sodom and Gomorrah). Less than 10 years later, what was then against the law in some places, some now want to make against the law to disagree with them! The game has changed a lot in the last decade, even since last election.

It was ‘gay pride’ latter 20th century, *celebration* of small minority, then media *normalization* of homosexuality, and now in the 21st century it’s all about the *legalization* of homosexual *marriage* and the legality of state courts or governments to usurp the votes of the people on this issue. Beyond *legalization* of same-sex weddings, the agenda of the gay rights movement is pushing for everyone’s *affirmation* of homosexuality, and some will never be satisfied until biblical *declarations* of the sinfulness of homosexuality will result in our *criminalization and incarceration* if we dare to differ.

The intolerance of those arguing for our ‘tolerance’ is ironic, but even more ironic are professing Christians affirming gay marriage (ex: Christian singer, PCUSA NorCal lesbian pastor controversy). Denominations or associations marrying/ordaining homosexuals are vivid illustrations of religious apostasy the NT warns about. Focus on this issue will only increase approaching 2012 elections:

- 3 years and 10 months ago, Barack Obama reiterated on MTV he still believes marriage is "between a man and a woman" and that he is "not in favor of gay marriage."ⁱⁱ In subsequent interviews even till early 2012 he said the same.
- He had said earlier: ‘I’m a Christian. And ... I do believe that tradition, and my religious beliefs say that marriage is something sanctified between a man and a woman.’ⁱⁱⁱ

Where does that religious belief and come from and has the basis of it changed? The answer is Genesis, and the text is the same it was when God inspired it, and it hasn't changed and it doesn't 'evolve.' My purpose in this is not *political* but I want us to have a *biblical* understanding and balanced perspective on this important subject and consider the news in focus of gay marriage, and the gospel.

When we read these stories we need to understand what's going on in our world, what the problem is and what our ultimate solution is, which is not going to be found in the government, it's in the gospel that can save and can change homosexual and heterosexual sinners. We don't fear gays, we fear God. I'm not anti-gay, I'm pro-gospel. The church's mission isn't to change laws, we aim to change hearts and lives by the gospel.

On Sunday evenings I've been teaching through Genesis and we are going to be there again if you want to turn to the first page of the Bible. I'm committed to teach through books of the Bible as the regular diet of the church rather than letting topics from the news drive us, I want the text to drive us. And as we teach through books, there are times when the very book I'm in intersects with contemporary controversies swirling in our world, and today is one of those times. Genesis 1 is about an event that happened 6,000+ years ago, but it is relevant and more up-to-date than tomorrow's newspaper and it speaks to marriage and same-sex couples. I don't have to go out of my way to confront issues if I let the text speak in the books we study, the text itself confronts and clarifies the issues. Let's hear what the Commander-in-Chief of the Universe has said:

Genesis 1:26 *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image ...*
*... ²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; **male and female He created them.** ²⁸ God blessed them [man/wife]; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and **multiply** ... ³¹ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.*
2:24 *For this reason a **man** shall leave his **father and his mother**, and be joined to his **wife**; and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And **the man and his wife** were both naked and **were not ashamed.***

Genesis 1-2 rules out homosexual marriage on several levels:

- partnership (2:18, a woman is his "suitable helper/partner")
- procreation (1:28 only man/woman can *be fruitful/multiply*)
- picture of relationship of Christ and His church (Eph 5:32)
 - o Paul quotes this verse as being about the gospel mystery of Christ, His bride. Marriage pictures that image of the Man Christ Jesus and His beloved wife and it's a picture 2 men or 2 women can't duplicate
 - o The image of the man as head who loves and leads and protects and provides for his wife as his body that submits to the head's direction for its good, it's not only part of God's good design for marriage, it's also a picture of our submission to Christ our head
 - o The church is those who repent, turn from their sin
 - o Marriage is about God the Father presenting to His Son a bride He will escort to meet Him (Rev. 19), and it is a pure and perfect and permanent union.

One writer points out: ‘homosexual couples often do not uphold other aspects of biblical marriage such as *monogamy, fidelity, and durability* ... homosexuality does not merely misrepresent or mis-understand God’s design for marriage and the family at just *one* point; it rather skews the Creator’s model at *almost every point*.’^{iv}

Sin and Satan have attacked God’s design from the start of Gen. 3

- 3:16 wife’s sinful desire to rule him vs. his rule of her
- 4:23 “Lamech said to his wives” (plural, polygamy already)
- 6:2 records marital sin (possibly involving fallen angels?)
- 9:22 Ham sees father naked and drunk and dishonors him
- 12:18-19 near adultery because Abraham lies to Pharaoh
- 16:2-3 Sarah talks Abraham into actual adultery with Hagar
- 19:4-5 homosexuality, angel strikes the mob blind in v. 11

All those departures from God’s design, not just homosexuality, all of those deviations of Gen. 2:24 (one man, one woman, one flesh, one lifetime) all of them are serious, and all of them are answered in the gospel of Gen. 3:15, what theologians call “the first gospel.”

It’s one thing to say “God didn’t create Adam and Steve...” that’s true, but let’s go deeper beyond the first man from the earth to a Man who came from heaven, the God-man Gen. 3:15 prophesies. We have all departed from God’s plan for man in various ways and have all sinned in Adam who sinned in Gen. 3. All need a gospel to save them. Genesis 3 not only points to our sin and need for Christ to come, this chapter gives the first prophecy of the Christ to come in v. 15. Jesus had His heel wounded and pierced on the cross, but He crushes sin and Satan at Calvary, rising victorious from death! And this is what I want us to focus on for the rest of this message that it doesn’t seem enough focus on in talking about gay marriage – we need to talk about the gospel even more because this issue is a spiritual issue that requires a spiritual solution. And liberals or lesbians or lobbyists aren’t our enemies. They’re our mission field!

Our struggle isn’t against flesh and blood sinners, it’s against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places (Eph 6 says). It’s spiritual warfare not won by our legislation but by God’s salvation. Again I say the solution is not a government one, it’s a gospel one.

And yes, we should vote for biblical marriage, but let’s also show a hope within us in a sovereign God so that even a homosexual may ask us the reason for the hope that is within us and we can give the hope of the gospel that can transform lifestyles from the inside-out. And yes, there are passages like Genesis 1-2 which clearly teach us God’s plan for marriage, and why homosexual marriage is wrong but here and in other passages, there is grace not just condemnation

Not just in Paradise Lost in Genesis 1-3, as we go from Paradise to Paul in the NT in a moment, each key passage showing the sin of homosexuality goes beyond guilt and sin to grace and the Savior. Even in Gen. 19, when God rains down fiery judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah for their sin, there’s grace, the gospel picture there.

2 Peter 2:6 says if the Lord “*condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;*”⁷ and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct ...⁹ *then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly ...*

That’s a gospel assurance to godly believers in ungodly times: the Lord knows how to rescue the godly. If He saved Lot from Sodom, He can save you, and He can rescue a homosexual willing to flee and not look back. We all need a lot of grace like Lot. Those God rescued from Sodom and Gomorrah weren’t better, they were also sinners in other ways who were saved only by God’s sheer grace.

Before God rained down judgment, He sent His messengers of grace who rescued Lot and his daughters. We need to remember God’s grace and we also need to remember Lot’s wife, who looked back and turned back as a warning spiritually to us. And we need to remember God intends to use us as messengers of grace to rescue the perishing and to care for the dying by giving the gospel. Jude 7 talks about the sexual sin of Sodom but then he says in v. 23 rescue them, ‘*snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.*’

Turn to Rom. 1 We need to have mercy on those who need to be saved, just as we did. Our sins undoubtedly seem more respectable to us (Bridges, *Respectable Sins*) but it’s not just the wretchedness of Sodom and Gomorrah that is an abomination to God, it’s the righteousness of religious people like us (Isa 64:6) that is offensive to God. When Proverbs 6 lists seven things that are an abomination to God, the sins include stirring up dissension and pride (Pr 16:5). Jesus said judgment day will be worse for the religious who heard but rejected His gospel than Sodom and Gomorrah (Mt 10 and 11).

But here’s where the good news of the gospel comes in, not just for people enslaved to sexual or homosexual sin but also self-righteous and prideful people like us whose greatest religious efforts are like filthy rags in God’s sight: Jesus in the gospel takes away those rags and gives us robes of His righteousness, and takes away the bonds of sin and gives freedom in Christ. Even to those who feel they’re born a certain way, or oriented to a particular sin, and can’t change –from a human level it is true we are born in sin and can’t change on our own—but the gospel is the power of God to save and change.

Rom 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ...*

Nothing else is the power of God, not laws, lobbying, legislation—those are all fine and well if an individual Christian wants to be involved, but Paul and ministers recognize those things aren’t “the power of God” but “*the gospel...is*” so the church rallies, gathers around this power

But in v. 25 this truth of the gospel when rejected, it says “... *they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷ 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 ...

Robert Gagnon's book *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, is the most extensive and exegetical treatment on this (over 500 pages):

'With good reason, Rom 1:24-27 is commonly seen as the central text for the issue of homosexual conduct on which Christians must base their moral doctrine. This is true for several reasons. It is the most substantial and explicit discussion of the issue in the Bible. It is located in the New Testament. It makes an explicit statement not only about same-sex intercourse among men but also...lesbianism ...if one...asks oneself what clues existing in nature might aid in discerning the Creator's will for sexual expression, then human anatomy and procreative function comprise the most unambiguous indications of divine intent. One can debate the "naturalness" of homosexual urges. Many human emotions (for example, lust, anger, jealousy, covetousness [also listed in v. 29-31]) obviously run counter to God's intended design ... Paul attributes such sinful impulses to the fall of Adam (Rom 5:12-21). However...same-sex intercourse represents one of the clearest instances of conscious suppression of revelation in nature ... denying clear anatomical gender differences and functions (leaving them "without excuse") ... [but he adds] only the gospel can effect liberation from sin's power... the demonstration of universal human sinfulness affirms the indispensability of the gospel for rescuing people both from sin's penalty and also from sin's power. Only the gospel reconciles sinners to God and transforms sinners into God's holy people.'

But the gospel is only good news if we humbly acknowledge the bad news of sin in us and the judgment we deserve and come for grace to save us and to suppress these desires. We can't give them hearty approval and continue to suppress the truth to practice sin.

³² and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Marriage is an ordinance of God in creation and since creation, all have known certain truths about God and His nature (v. 19-20). If we exchange His truth for a lie, God gives man over further to sin, even further deviation from his plan, as v. 25 and following show. You can trace the progression of this passage in American verse-by-verse decade-by-decade, and we are now in the approval stage.

In our day if you don't give hearty approval, you get media wrath. If you don't tolerate and heartily approve of gay marriage, they are very intolerant of you. They don't just want the right of marriage, some want to take away your right to say you don't approve of it.

Andrew Sullivan, a supporter of gay marriage, writes:

‘Including homosexuals within marriage would be a means of conferring the highest form of social approval imaginable.’^{vi} It’s about *approval*. Anyone not giving full approval to gay marriage today is vilified, except our President who up until a few months ago said he didn’t support it, yet has been “evolving” (was “against” it, now is for it).

But we have a higher authority than what the most powerful man in the world now admitted to on national TV on this issue, or what our Supreme Court eventually decides on this, the high King of the universe calls homosexuality sin. What the world calls LGBT, God calls S-I-N. And because of sin, all sin, not just this sin, the wrath of God comes, not just because of sins that disgust or don’t tempt us (and are easy for us to be up in arms about), but also in v. 29-31 it’s things like coveting, gossip, pride, lack of love, lack of unity in relationships, slander (things non-gay married folks are guilty of!)

But the good news for proud, coveting people like us is the gospel in v. 16 which is the power of God to salvation to all who believe! There is condemnation and wrath for sinners, but there’s kindness and riches God has for repentant sinners in 2:4: *Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?*

As we call people to repent, it’s the kindness of God that leads them to repentance. Mere condemnation doesn’t cause repentance, God’s kindness can. Guilt alone doesn’t have power, but the gospel does, to ‘break the power of cancelled sin, to set the prisoners free, His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood availed for me!’^{vii}

Homosexual sin may be particular enslaving, but good news in 6:6: *knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin ...*¹² *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,*¹³ *and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*¹⁴ *For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.*

Telling a homosexual what the OT Law says about their sin isn’t enough, the power they need is found “under grace” in the gospel. If someone struggling with this is hearing this sermon, if you know it’s sinful and evil, and you hate it, but can’t find delivery, I pray you find hope from what Paul says in Romans 7:15:

¹⁵*For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate ...*
... ¹⁹*For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want ...* [look down at v. 24 and look to Jesus] ²⁴*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ...*

And thanks be to God the Spirit in Rom 8:24 who helps us in our weakness.

And thanks be to God the Father in 8:29 who makes us conformed to the image of His Son, and makes sure we make it to the end because all He calls, He predestines, justifies, and glorifies. 8:37 says *we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us*

Turn to the next book, 1 Corinthians 6, Paul's next text on this. It could also be called 1 Californians, because it is so relevant to us. Again a text discussing the seriousness of homosexuality and other sins, but then it moves from there to the sweetness of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 6:9 (New English Translation) *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, passive **homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals,**¹⁰ thieves, the greedy, drunkards, the verbally abusive, and swindlers will not inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ **Some of you once lived this way.** [another translation says it this way: "that is what some of you were] *But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*"*

The Corinthian church had former drunkards, but that's what they *were*, not who they *are*. If we believe the power of God and gospel we cannot say "once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic." And the church in Corinth had members saved from various aspects of the homosexual lifestyle and heterosexual immorality as well. But it's no longer them, that is what they *were* (past tense) and how they used to live, but it's not what they are and how they live now. You *can change* through Christ and His Spirit by the gospel with His people. It's not your identity anymore if you're a new creation in Christ, old things are gone, new things have come (2 Cor. 5:17).

Turn to 1 Timothy 1, the last key cross-reference in Paul's letter. We've gone from Paradise Lost to Paul to the power of the cross and this text, like all the others that address homosexuality, does so connected with other sin, and does so with the sinner-saving gospel

1 Tim 1:10 talks about the sin of "*immoral men and **homosexuals** and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,*¹¹ **according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.**¹² *I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,*¹³ *even though **I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy** because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;*¹⁴ *and **the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus.***¹⁵ *It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.***¹⁶ *Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.*

Paul wouldn't give full acceptance to gay marriage legislation, but he does want everyone to give full acceptance to this statement in v. 15, which the NIV translates: *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst...the worst of sinners...*

Paul could tell any homosexual sincerely, “I am the worst sinner I know, but good news for you if you know you’re a sinner is this: If God could save me, the chief of sinners, foremost worst of sinners, if He could have mercy on me, then His glorious gospel can save someone like you without breaking a sweat! If He can change me, a hard-hearted hypocrite, He can change homosexuals no problem! Your sin may not be as big or bad as mine, but He’s a big Savior!”

Click here for one church who I think presents the message well that I wish every sinner could hear as what we as Christians believe and want to be all about:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rxipuPcoec>

ⁱ www.democrats.org (referenced marriage acts also available online)

ⁱⁱ <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2008/11/obama-on-mtv-i/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://politics.blogs.foxnews.com/2010/08/05/his-own-words-president-obamas-nuanced-view-gay-marriage#ixzz26V2mNrIt>

^{iv} Andreas Kostenberger, “Abandoning Natural Relations: The Biblical Verdict on Homosexuality,” in *God, Marriage, and Family: Recovering the Biblical Foundation* (Crossway, 2010), p. 201.

^v Robert A. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Abingdon Press, 2001), p. 229, 241, 244.

^{vi} “To Defend Marriage, We Should Learn a Lesson from Apologetics,” by Jay Richards, *Christian Research Journal*, Volume 35/4 (2012), p. 41.

^{vii} Charles Wesley, “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing.”