

Why Is Homosexuality Wrong?

The Bible and Homosexuality

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We begin our sessions here today addressing the most fundamental question of the conference topic today in one sense, answering the question, "Why is homosexuality wrong?" And I want to help you think through the way that we need to think about this and answer the question as we begin here this morning. What a person thinks about homosexuality is ultimately not going to be disconnected from much greater principles that are operating in his thinking. What you think about homosexuality is directly tied not only to what you believe about the Bible but what you believe about God, about ultimate authority, about truth, eventually even what the position of man is vis-à-vis God in the universe. It is not unfair, it is quite accurate to say actually, that the way that the world is seeing this issue now is that whatever consenting adults want to do should be allowed. If you are in agreement with me, we can do whatever we want to do and so it's just become a matter of mutual consent, divorced from any other considerations of morality or authority or anything of the like. So when you have that situation, those of you who are biblically informed, you find yourself immediately in the book of Judges where every man is simply doing what is right in his own eyes and if there is no ultimate authority, if there is no truth, then you don't have the right to tell me what's right or wrong and I don't have the prerogative to tell you what is right or wrong.

So what you see is that there are much greater principles than simply a view on a particular form of sexuality that is in play and we're going to try to work through some of those issues today, but I want to say that if we were really going to treat this topic properly and set it in the proper context, it would take like 20 messages to do everything and to start all the way back and work our way through up to the point of dealing with homosexuality and we don't have the time to do that. But ultimately this issue comes back to how do we know that there is a God? How do we know that the Bible is authoritative? And what do we do with the Lord Jesus Christ? And so those most fundamental questions about the purpose of existence and the reality of the universe ultimately come into play in this very quickly and so for those of you that aren't familiar with my teaching ministry, the messages that I have done on "Why do we believe in God?" and "Why do we believe the Bible?" and on the recent messages on "The fear of God," all of those matters inform this subject in a way that we can't go into today but we need to understand just on a very basic preliminary level that there are multiple, compelling, authoritative reasons that we believe that God has made himself known. We

utterly reject as foolishness the mocks of people who say, "Tell me about your imaginary friend?" That's a horrible thing to say. It is a despicable despoliation of the way that God has made himself known in so many different areas and it reflects a heart and a mindset that it wants nothing to do with Scripture and obviously has no fear of God in it whatsoever. Well, when you've defined God out of existence and you've rejected the authority of the Bible and you fear nothing but your own consent, well, then obviously you're going to go in a spiritual direction that is far removed from anything remotely connected to the Bible. So today we appeal without apology to the fact that the Bible is our authority. That's the starting point and the premise and that's really, in one sense, where the conflict over this begins. It's not simply one view of sexuality versus another, it goes to matters of ultimate truth and ultimate authority and here in this church and the position of historic Christianity is gladly one that recognizes the primacy of the authority of Scripture alone and submits to that and whatever the Bible says is law and to be respected and obeyed. So as we address this topic, "Why is homosexuality wrong?" we realize that we are engaging a conflict in fundamental worldviews and we can only give passing notice to that.

Since this is a conference designed primarily for people in the church, however, this is a conference designed to strengthen believers, this is an opportunity for us to assume those things, assuming the reality of God, assuming the authority of Scripture and to help us understand our own position and why it is that we take the position that we do. So first of all, this is by way of introduction, we must remember that our authority is the Bible and when people want to define it in terms of mutual adult consent, we realize that they have already gone astray because they make themselves the authority. They make themselves the reference point and we say, "No, it doesn't start there, it starts further back in the Scripture." And why do we accept the authority of the Bible? It's based on the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the one who said in John 10:35 that the Scriptures cannot be broken.

In Psalm 19, in fact, let's turn there to Psalm 19, a Psalm that in part is about the authority of God's word. In Psalm 19:7 through 9 it says this. I'll give you a moment to turn there. Psalm 19:7-9 says, "The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether." So in Psalm 19 we see God declaring about his word its authority, its purity and its veracity. It has authority over men. It is completely true and it can be believed and trusted to tell us the truth. In other words, to tell us what reality is as it really is as opposed to the figments of our imagination or what our personal preferences might be. So the starting point is God's word.

Look over at 2 Timothy for another familiar passage that needs to be in our minds as we contemplate these things. The word of God is not simply the product of human writings from 2,000 years ago, it is the abiding, living word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." In other words, all Scripture was breathed out by God. It was the Spirit of God moving on the hearts and minds of the writers so that they recorded

without error exactly what God intended them to say. When we read the Bible, we read the very word of God himself. He discloses himself in the Scriptures. He makes his laws and commandments known and because he is the Creator, he has authority. He has the prerogative to define for humanity what its existence must be.

Verse 17 for those of us who are Christians today, we find our marching orders from Scripture. We find that which defines life for us. We find that which tells us how to think and we gladly submit ourselves to that. We gladly embrace that. We gladly say that, "My thoughts are only legitimate in so far as they conform to what God has revealed in his word." When I start to think contrary to God's word, when I start to think apart from God's word, then my thinking is no longer legitimate and we see that in verse 17 where the Apostle Paul said, "so that the man of God," so that the Christian, "may be adequate, equipped for every good work." We find in the Bible that which not only rightly tells us how to rightly think, we find that which equips us for any measure of conflict or difficulty or life situation that we might encounter.

Now, you and I are used to thinking about this in terms of our own personal life and helping us to get through our daily existence and it's good and right that we should love Scripture and embrace it in that way. Psalm 119 says that, "Your word is a light unto my feet and a lamp unto my path." So we take it in that personal way. But, beloved, what I want you to see here today and the way that we must think as a church and as Christians is this: Scripture does far more than equip us for the challenges of our personal day, it equips us for the challenges of our point in history. We find in Scripture that which is sufficient to prepare us for the philosophical and worldview challenges that are presented to us in our day and age and we believe because we believe in the superintending Providence of God, that God has appointed us for precisely this time in history. He has appointed his people, people like you and me, he has appointed us to be faithful to his word and to stand for his truth in precisely this time in history and while we stand on the shoulders of great men like Martin Luther and John Calvin and Martyn Lloyd Jones and many others too numerous to mention, we stand on their shoulders, we must understand that God appointed them for their age and they were faithful in their age. What he has done in this age is appointed us for this time and it is our responsibility to respond accordingly. And you young men who have talent and intellectual vigor, you rise up to the challenge of that and embrace what that means for the future of your life because God has appointed us for just such a time as this. He has given us an all-sufficient word that equips us for whatever the world throws at us so that we are not afraid; we do not back down from the challenge; we are not intimidated that somehow something new has come to light which overturns the authority of God and the authority of his word. We reject that notion out of hand. So our authority is the Bible and it's why we sweetly embrace it. We kiss it with loving submission because we recognize how precious it is.

Now, with God having given us a word like that and, again, this is still by way of preliminary introduction, our authority is the Bible and the fact that God has given us a word from himself indicates that there is a second principle that needs to guide us as well and we could say it this way: our duty is discernment. Our authority is the Bible and therefore our duty is discernment. God in his wisdom permitted and even ordained that

men would rebel against him, that there would be a fall of man that would result in spiritual catastrophe and he did this so that he would reveal his saving grace and mercy in the Lord Jesus Christ and ultimately bring greater glory to his name through the wonder of salvation rather than simply by not allowing the fall to take place. It pleased him to allow a fall that would ultimately reveal the multicolored splendor of his grace and mercy. In light of that, he has given us his word and he has given us a command to be discerning in the midst of a fallen world. Part of the way that we glorify God is that we exercise discernment and we distinguish truth from error based on what God has made known in Scripture.

Now, coming to the topic at hand, the approval of homosexuality in our society and ever more inside the walls of the professing church is undeniable. It's tragic but we can deal with that. Open homosexuals are found in every level of government, in every level of entertainment and are becoming increasingly noticed and honored even in the sports world, for heaven's sake. You can't escape it and let me just say, this is a little bit of a tangent, let me just say that for a long period of time early in my ministry, I wanted simply to, I didn't want to really have to address this issue head on because you realize that we are talking about a subject that is dark and there was a reluctance that I had to introduce something that maybe otherwise wouldn't come to the minds of people and you would prefer to talk about that which is good and pure and noble and in conformity with God's word. You would prefer to focus on that which is pure and lovely as a teacher but the unfolding of events makes it so the man of God cannot avoid this issue any longer. It must be addressed. We must speak about it and we must bring the word of God to bear on rebel thinking so that it is challenged; so that it is refuted; so that the people of God are strong to deal with it and that's why we are having this conference here this weekend.

The thing that we need to say about it is this: the fact that the world openly embraces this and affirms it and is opposed to us and you start to weary of the people who try to stop you from speaking about it in the name of not being judgmental, we have to understand this and we have to get beyond that superficial tripe that sometimes animates people's thinking. We cannot adopt the thinking of the world. We are not at liberty to think like the world thinks. 1 John 4:1 tells us, "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world." That is 1 John 4:1. Scripture, which we accept as our authority, tells us, commands us, "Be discerning. Test the spirits." And so we step back with that general principle in mind and we say, okay, the spirit of the world is affirming homosexuality in great open ways. Our question is then, "Okay, let me test that spirit by God's word. Let me judge whether that is true or not. Let me judge whether that is right or not." As Christians we say, "I want to think rightly about this issue because there is something greater at stake than just this issue. The thing that is greater that is at stake is that my mind must be conformed to the mind of my Savior, Jesus Christ. I must think like he does. God saved me in order to conform me to the image of Christ and the thinking of Christ and therefore it is my responsibility as a Christian to be conformed to the way that Christ thinks and the way that Christ thinks is revealed in the Bible." So we say, "Alright, if this is the spirit of our age, then we are going to engage it. We are not going to shrink back from it as if we are intimidated or that we are ashamed of the Gospel or we're ashamed of what the Bible

says." No, no, no, no! We will never be ashamed of this word which reveals Christ to us. We will never be ashamed of the word that is the water of life to us. So we will gladly see what God's word says. We will gladly stand on God's word in face of the spirit of the age. We'll gladly stand alone if we have to. As Luther says, "Our conscience is taken captive by the word of God," and we will not surrender our conscience to the thinking of the spirit of the age.

So, we say, "What does the Bible say about it?" Now, let me say something very important to you. Write this down even if you're not taking notes. This is very, very important for you to understand. This is pivotal. This is where the conflict, this is the crucible of the conflict of our age: we evaluate homosexuality in light of God's word. We do not judge Scripture by public opinion on homosexuality. Let me say that again, everything hinges on that simple point: we evaluate homosexuality in light of God's word. We do not evaluate Scripture by public opinion on homosexuality. If Scripture declares homosexuality to be wrong, then it is wrong. The river does not flow the opposite direction where public opinion says homosexuality is right and therefore Scripture is wrong. This is so fundamental. Everything hinges on that one point. God's word, homosexuality; one is the standard, the other is not. What the public thinks, what the spirit of the age is, is subject to the authority of God's word and we realize as we say that, we realize that we are declaring an all-out war on the mind of men who are unregenerate. We realize that. We embrace that. We call them to bend their mind and submit their need to the authority of Scripture because God's word is authoritative and men do not have the prerogative to think contrary to God's word without incurring judgment on themselves. So our duty is discernment in light of the authority of the Bible.

Now, let me help you and strengthen you just a bit more on this point. Turn over to 2 Peter 2. I want to just call your attention to the first 3 verses of this letter recognizing that the prominent voices in so-called evangelical Christianity are evermore going to be pushing the church in the direction of accepting homosexuality and silencing the voice of Scripture on this issue. Here's what we have to say about them and here's that which strengthens us against that spirit even within the church. We recognize what the Bible says. 2 Peter 2:1-3, "False prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves." False teachers bringing destruction upon themselves. Beloved, watch what the passage goes on to say to people like you and me as a result. It says, "Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned." Be on guard, in other words, that as these false teachers introduce that which is contrary to Scripture that there will be a swarm of people going after them wanting to follow after them in the spirit of the age and in the spirit of the false teaching which they are hearing. Scripture makes it clear that men have itching ears and will gather teachers around themselves in accordance with their own desires. Many will be like that and what do the false teachers do? Verse 3, "in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep."

So we realize in light of the authority of the Bible, in light of our duty of discernment, we realize that there are going to be false teachers who make the matter of discernment difficult for us. They confuse matters. They flatter us. They appeal to our senses of wanting popularity and those kinds of things in a way that is designed to entice us away from following after the truth. Our only protection against that is to know the word of God. So to come back to our question this morning, "Why is homosexuality wrong? Why is it sinful?" Well, we can only understand homosexuality in one sense, in a limited sense for this session, we understand homosexuality in light of God's design for marriage and that's what we need to look at here this morning. The reason that marriage was a battleground and the reason that it will always be the battleground whether the issue is homosexuality or incest or polygamy or whatever the case may be, the issue is always going to come back to one simple theme in terms of what God designed and established marriage to be and where God appointed sexual expression to take place. The exclusivity of what God has said is that which is the point at which this whole matter is settled. Once you abandon the biblical principle of marriage, you have utterly lost the argument and historians, I am confident, church historians will look back on this age, 50, 100 years from now and see that when the church and when the public arena silenced the Bible on this issue it was inevitable that the whole argument would be completely lost because when you abandon Scripture as the authority, the only thing that you are left with is what a man's opinion is and when it is simply about men's opinion, then competing opinions can never come to a final resolution of truth.

So for us and while some of what I have to say in this session is going to seem very simple and basic, what I want you to see in a very profound way is that what we are seeing here in this session is that which defines the issue and it's because the church lost clarity, loss commitment to this point and that this principle was sacrificed, that ultimately the argument was lost but God's word hasn't changed and what Scripture has to say about this hasn't changed and therefore the whole situation, in one sense, is completely unchanged. Marriage is still between one man and one woman. Homosexuality is still wrong as a result and there is nothing left to be said. But as Christians, we need to understand our own position before we evaluate the nature of homosexuality so let's look at our own position. Let's look at what the Bible says about marriage and let me give you a definition that would no longer pass constitutional scrutiny, apparently, in the United States but I don't care about that. Our authority is the Bible, remember, not the Constitution. Not what the Supreme Court says. Our authority and our loyalty belongs to God's word. What does God's word say? Marriage, here is a definition for you: marriage is that God ordained institution in which a man and woman covenant with one another to live as husband and wife in an exclusive, monogamous relationship for the remainder of their earthly lives together. I'll say that again: marriage is that God ordained institution in which a man and woman covenant with one another to live as husband and wife in an exclusive, monogamous relationship for the remainder of their earthly lives together.

Now, let's back up for a moment. For a long time, even in my lifetime, for a long time it was sufficient to answer any thoughts about homosexuality by appealing to a couple of verses in Leviticus, maybe in Romans 1 and because there was a more prevalent

deference to Scripture at the time, that was enough to settle the argument. Now however, now that those verses themselves are under attack and misinterpretation, we need to step back and realize that those individual verses of which you know occur in a greater context, a greater biblical and theological context which informs why they condemn homosexuality. There is a bigger context than simply a couple of random verses being thrown out, there is a whole worldview that is engaged in this and marriage is part of that. So what I want to do here in the rest of our time here in this session is to simply give you 4 major points about God's plan for marriage. And as we understand this perspective on marriage and as this starts to become settled in our mind, then the problem with homosexuality becomes evident from the beginning and this is so crucial to the way that you should think. We start our thinking with God's word rather than that which the world would have us to think. We start with what God's word says and then we look and examine at what the world says and what the world is doing and then we say, "Aha, I see here, here and here why this is wrong and it goes far beyond what any one or 2 individual Bible passages say." For us as Christians, those one or 2 Bible passages silence the issue. They settle the matter for us but what we have to see is how do we engage the thinking, the philosophies that are informing the opposition to what we believe; those who don't accept the authority of those 2 passages. Well, we start further back with a broader biblical picture and that begins to shape the way that we respond.

So 4 major points about God's plan for marriage. I'm going to have very little to say about homosexuality in the rest of this session. First of all, what do we say about marriage, first of all, marriage is a permanent union. It is a permanent union and God designed marriage to be a bond, a lifetime bond between a man and a woman and he established that pattern at creation. The pattern for marriage, the institution of marriage, is established and woven into God's entire design for creation.

Go back to Genesis 2 and we gladly realize that we are repeating fundamentals as we engage this material here today. Genesis 2:18, God, and we're kind of picking up the creation story midstream here, God had created the world and he had placed a solitary man within it named Adam and in verse 18, chapter 2, verse 18, look at what God said. "The Lord God said," chapter 2, verse 18, "He said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.'" God saw man in his creation, in this perfect creation, and said, "It's not good for him to be alone here," remembering that God of his own initiative and by his own power and prerogative without consulting anyone established creation so that it would please him. He established creation. He put man in it and he is continually in the first 2 chapters of Genesis, continually exercising his prerogative as deity to make creation what he wants it to be. It pleased God to put a man in creation and in his generous kindness and consideration of man, he looked at that man alone and said, "You know, that's not good." He said, "I will remedy this situation in a way that pleases me. I will make the helper for this man in a way that is suitable for him," and you know what he did. Look down at verse 21, "The LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man," so man had nothing to do with what transpired after that, "and he slept," the man slept, "then God took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man." Verse 23, "The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, And

flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." Then look at this in verse 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. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

So God in his prerogative as Creator said, "Here is how we will deal with the isolation of man. I will create a human companion to him who is like him but different from him; who comes from him and yet is distinct from him; that will complement him and supply that which is missing to him. That pleases me," in a manner of speaking, God said, and that is what he established. And with a man and a woman, one gender and a different gender, put together, God said, "This is why men will leave their parents and join together and become one flesh." There was the establishment and the ordination of the institution of marriage. By God's design, by God's authority, according to his good pleasure, one man, one woman, God say, "This is good."

Now, people like to say in their ignorance, have you noticed that, people love to speak out of their ignorance, don't they? They love to spout their own opinions even when they are completely uninformed. People like to say that Jesus never said anything about homosexuality. That's completely false and we will deal with that more later in the conference. But turn over to Matthew 19. Our Lord Jesus Christ affirmed the pattern of Genesis as being the abiding standard for men and women in marriage in the New Testament. Matthew 19 is a critical passage on this and when asked about the institution of divorce, Jesus appealed to the creation ordinance of marriage as being the grounds for his answer. Look at what he said in verse 3. "Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?' Jesus answered and said, 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.'" Oh, the authority with which Christ spoke and how it applies directly to our situation today is frightening. Jesus, who is God Incarnate himself, refers back to creation and says, "God established marriage," in the context of a question about divorce, he said, "Let's go back to marriage," and so you see the pattern for what we are doing here this morning. When a question about marriage comes up, we go back to Scripture. We go all the way back to Genesis and we review what God has done because there were ignorant, rebellious people in Jesus' day combating God's institution of marriage. Jesus took them in their ignorance and rebellion and went back to Scripture. That's all that we are doing here today. We are following the pattern of the Lord.

Notice what he did, as he speaks about marriage he says there in verse 4, "male and female, this is what God has joined together. The two shall become one flesh. This is what marriage is." And notice what he says, this frightens me, honestly, to read it in light of the world in which we find ourselves living in 2015. Jesus, speaking as God says, "Let no man separate this." Our legislators, our justices, our political leaders, our governmental officials have done just what Jesus said not to do. They separate men from women in the institution of marriage and redefine it according to their own desires. That

is an illegitimate use of political power. It is an illegitimate use of authority because the highest authority, our Lord Jesus Christ, said, "No one shall separate this." And now here we are. Do you know what? This can't come out good. This can't come out good humanly speaking for those who are embracing this, those that have authorized it and compelled it upon an unwilling populace. This can't come out good for them because Jesus spoke directly to their authority and said, "Don't you separate this," and they say, "Pfft, I will separate this." Listen, this conflict isn't over. One day this conflict will be settled at the judgment bar of God where judges and attorneys have no one to represent them if they have not come to Christ. They will stand alone before the judgment bar of God and having exercised judicial authority here on earth, they will find a greater judicial authority exercised against them in that final day. I fear for them because Jesus could not have been more clear, "Don't touch this one. This is a live electrical wire. Don't touch this. There are consequences as a result." So God designed marriage to be a permanent union between a male and a female, established at creation, reaffirmed and stated again by Jesus in Matthew 19. Male and female, don't separate this. Don't play with this institution. So God assigned 2 distinct genders at creation to marry and engage in sexual union: one man and one woman and that was the pattern for all time.

Now, what else can we say about marriage? Point number 2 here this morning: marriage is an exclusive union. Marriage is an exclusive union. Go back to Genesis 1, if you would, Genesis 1, and we see that God designed marriage, God designed the genders, the 2 genders, to be an instrument for the propagation of humanity, a way that humanity would continue and thrive and multiply and in Genesis 1:26, God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Look at verse 28, "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" So God established marriage in a way that required the man, commanded the man and the woman, blessed them and said, "You go and be fruitful. You go and multiply," referring that they would go and engage in intimacy that would result in the production of children.

As you read on in Scripture, going back to some things that we said on Tuesday night months ago, we remember, I have referred to this multiple times that Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, those 5 books as we have them in our English Bible are frequently called a single book in Scripture: the book of Moses, the book of the law of Moses, the law of Moses, referred to in the singular. We should see it as a comprehensive unit rather than seeing these as distinct books that have no relationship to one another. When you understand that unifying nature of things, it makes it more important to look at Exodus 20 in light of what we were just seeing in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. So turn over to Exodus 20, if you would, as we look at the 10 Commandments and we see a couple of things in the 10 Commandments that reinforce the exclusivity of marriage in ways that go beyond even in the 10 Commandments what you're probably used to seeing. So God said the man and woman shall join together, they will leave, they

will become one flesh, speaking to exclusivity and permanence, and in the 10 Commandments, God said in Exodus 20:14, "You shall not commit adultery." You shall not engage in a union outside of your marriage. You shall not engage with a woman who is not your wife or vice versa with a man who is not your husband. He establishes a strict perimeter around marriage. He builds a fence around it and says, "The permanence and the exclusivity which I have assigned to marriage, you shall not violate."

So the 10 Commandments reinforce the exclusivity of marriage but notice this as you continue to read in context. Context is everything in biblical understanding. Look down at verse 17. Look at how much even in the Old Testament God assigned exclusivity not only of body but of soul, not only of acts of intimacy but of affections of the heart. In verse 17, he said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." God, in assigning this exclusivity to marriage, said that not only shall you not engage the physical act but your heart itself shall not covet that which is outside of marriage. So you see that the exclusivity that God assigns to marriage is more than a physical one, it is a matter of emotional affection as well. It is a matter of the desires of the heart. Scripture condemns illicit desires as much as it does the illicit act. This is very hard for people in our materialistic age to understand and embrace. It's going to become important in what we say tonight at our 6 PM session.

Jesus reinforced this idea of purity. Go to Matthew 5, if you would. Matthew 5 in verses 27 and 28. This is really Bible Basic 101 that we're talking about here. Matthew 5:27-28, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery,'" he's going to go on and add his commentary about the significance of what that command means. He says, "but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." And so Jesus says and is basically reinforcing the command against coveting in Exodus 20 and he says, "Understand that those who would limit adultery simply to the physical act, I want you to understand this that God in commanding the physical separation is also commanding you to separate your heart from that which is lustful, that which is internal. Even if you never act upon it, if you are actively lusting after your neighbor's wife, you are guilty of the sin of adultery." That's how exclusive the relationship of marriage is called to be.

So as we consider this matter of homosexuality, you start to realize, especially in light of what we said last night, we start to realize how haywire it is. To call it haywire is really not adequate because it's just so disconnected from reality as God defines it. It is so messed up. Here God says marriage, man and woman, lifetime commitment, nothing else to the point of such exclusivity that you don't even lust after another woman within the marriage relationship. Now, compare that to what we said last night about the nature of homosexuality. By definition, man with man, woman with woman. Utter violation from the start of creation. Utter rejection of God's authority from the start. Remember what we said last night about the nature of homosexual promiscuity. I won't rehearse it here. If you missed it on the live stream last night, you can go back and listen to the audio files. They are online now already. But not only is it a violation of separate genders coming together, the whole culture revels in anonymous promiscuity. Nothing could be more different and

hostile to the intentions of God than what the reality of the homosexual culture is. It violates gender. It violates exclusivity. It can never be made right. There is no county clerk under compulsion from the governor or the Supreme Court giving a stamp of the government's seal upon a marriage license that can make that legitimate. In legal terms, the Latin term is void ab initio. It is illegitimate from the beginning. There is never a stroke of legitimacy to it. Nothing can make it legitimate. So all of this one way or another from the President to the Supreme Court to the legislature to everybody that is involved, all of it is going to be shown that they were acting without authority and it will all be exposed one day in the end and there will be an accounting to those who have separated what God commanded not to be separated. It's frightful.

Now, stepping another degree into marriage here. We have said that marriage is a permanent union between a man and a woman. It's an exclusive union. Point number 3 here and we're just going to touch on this because it's an important aspect of marriage but it's not really necessary to the theme of the conference and point number 3 is this: marriage is an intimate union. It is an intimate union. Scripture in what it has said has made it plain that the sexual union must not be shared outside of marriage. That sexual expression outside of marriage is sinful whether it is by way of pornography or fornication or homosexuality or any other manner of sexual sin. Sexual expression by God's design is limited to within the confines of marriage. Everything else outside of that is sinful and I realize that the clarity of that is shocking to the modern era but do you know what? I don't care. We just want to be faithful to Scripture here.

Now, with that said about marriage, what we need to understand is that within the marriage relationship, that intimacy God commands to be shared. Look at 1 Corinthians 7. God intends the marriage relationship to be one of physical intimacy between a man and a woman and Paul speaks in the restrained tones of the Holy Spirit so contrary to the profane spirit of our age. Without going into the full context of this passage, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:3, "The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." Clearly speaking about sexual intimacy especially in the context of the prior 2 verses and look at what he says, verse 5, he says, "Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer." He says, "Don't deprive one another of your physical intimacy. Oh, I'll make a little exception if you're going to set aside some time for prayer but once you have done that, you come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." So we see that within the marriage union, God commands that that intimacy be expressed and it is not appropriate for one spouse to withhold intimacy from the other. When you got married, you gave your body over to your spouse and vice versa and your spouse has a right to intimacy, a biblical right to intimacy and vice versa. That's probably all we need to say about that but it's worth seeing that God's intention was for marriage to be intimate and that even in the New Testament, that intimacy is commanded as a part of marriage.

So we start to see the wonder of it all. We start to see the exalted nature of this institution that God has ordained, that tracing all the way back to creation before the fall of man into

sin, God established this relationship between a man and a woman that would address their feelings of isolation and would be a support to the man that God appointed over the head of creation and that there would be this wonderful union of coming together that would drive a man and a woman to leave their father and mother and come together and form their own unit together and that they would be exclusively devoted to one another, not just physically but emotionally as well. And within that relationship of covenant promise established by God in the security of the permanence of that relationship, that there would be a free and loving expression of that in intimacy as well. What a beautiful institution God has made.

And that's not all that makes this institution so sweet and sacred, something worth protecting. We come to point number 4: marriage is a loving union. It is a loving union. Marriage, Scripture teaches us, pictures the love that Christ has for his own people. Look over at Ephesians 5. Really as we're answering the question, "Why is homosexuality wrong?" really what you see is that question is answered by a proper theology of marriage. That's all we're doing here. In Ephesians 5, I'm going to read this long familiar passage. Ephesians 5:22-33, "Wives," his women, female members of the marriage relationship. It's stunning that you have to be that specific in our day and age but, you know, whatever it takes to be faithful to God's word we'll do it. "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything." Let's stop there for a moment. Paul is instructing people on how to conduct themselves in the marriage relationship based on a broader principle of what Christ and the church, how they relate together. Notice this, beloved, notice that what we're doing here this morning is consistent with the biblical pattern. Paul takes the immediate problem of conflict within the marriage and places it in a bigger spiritual context, a bigger theological context and connects it to transcendent issues rather than isolating it simply to the human issue at hand. That's how we must respond to homosexuality. It cannot be discussed apart from God's plan for marriage in the same way that marital conflict could not be separated from the way that Christ relates to his own church. We must learn to connect things in our thinking and connect individual issues to the greater context in which they occur.

Verse 25, Paul says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church." Drop down to verse 32, no, I don't want to skip it. Verse 30, "because we are members of His body." Verse 31, he appeals to Genesis just like we have done here today. I want you to see that what we are doing here is simply biblical. Paul appeals to that creation ordinance. Jesus appealed to the creation ordinance. Apparently it is defining in its impact. Verse 31, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband."

So in this passage which we'll look at more in the course of our exposition of Ephesian in several weeks, in this passage, Paul points to marriage as a picture of the love that Christ has to his church. The care that Christ has for his church. The sacrificial love by which he laid down his life at the cross for sinners so that they would be reconciled to him. To put their interests ahead of his own. To make sure that their needs were satisfied, cared for. That they were protected. That no harm would come to them. That they would be conformed to the image of God. That is an expression of the love that Christ has for the church and Paul takes that and says, "That's a picture of the way that your marriage is supposed to be. Husbands, love your wives this way. Love them with a sacrificial, self-denying love. Love them like you love your own body. Wives, you respect your husbands just like believers respect and honor Christ."

Well, that has implications. Listen, in creation, marriage had a highly exalted place in God's order. In the New Testament, Jesus affirmed that place in its order. And then in the progressive revealing of God's word when Paul wrote Ephesians later on, we see that marriage pictures another wonderful reality, the relationship of a saving Lord to his people. The primacy, the importance that God places on marriage in his acts and in his words is surpassing. It is sacred. It is holy. Men should be approaching it with a sense of reverence, taking their shoes off because as we deal with marriage we are on holy ground and we are on ground that belongs to God alone. And as in the second century A.D., men brought pigs into the temple area in Jerusalem, men have brought the pigs of defilement into God's holy institution of marriage. I'm using that metaphor but I'm not calling men by the name of pigs, it's important to understand that. It's a metaphor that I am using. Men have trampled in and said, "This is mine to rearrange the way that I want." That's not true. It's a lesser violation if a criminal breaks into your house and takes things that belong to you than what has happened to the institution of marriage over these past 10 or 15 years. Men have broken into that which does not belong to them and rearranged and taken it and misappropriated it to their own use, to their own desires, that which was never to belong to them. It is shameful. It is wrong. It is sinful. It is criminal. It is treasonous. It's ransacking the picture of Christ and the church. It's assaulting the created order.

And beloved, I hang my head in shame at what people in the name of Christ are doing: the church is gladly hopping on the bandwagon to go along with it. What is that? How much are men at the center of their own worldview even in the church? We see what the world is doing. God's design for marriage from Genesis, "I'll set it aside as long as these people like me. Christ in the church, you know, that's negotiable. Of course that's negotiable. What if these people don't like us? What if they won't come and listen to my insipid sermons in my mainline denomination?" It's with a righteous anger, beloved, that we reject that and condemn it. Someone, the true Christians, need to speak on behalf of God and give voice to what his word says. Haven't we heard enough from men on this issue? Haven't the courts had their say? Well, isn't it time for God's word to be given voice? That's why we're doing this and it should offend you even if you don't express

your passions in the same way that I do. It should offend your sensibilities. You should be shocked and outraged at what has happened to the institution of marriage in light of who it belongs to and the good that he had designed in it and what it says about the picture of Christ and the church. No, no, beloved, beloved, we've got to think. We have to connect this to what we are. We belong to Christ. We are not our own. We were bought with a price by the precious blood of Christ and therefore his affections are our affections. We derive what makes us passionate from that which he assigns importance to and he assigns great importance to these things.

Now, enter homosexuality: man with man, woman with woman in a promiscuous, violent, drunken culture and calling that marriage. What a corruption of the purity of what God established, of the clean, honorable nature of what God has done according to and for his own good pleasure. Picture it, I didn't plan this metaphor but it is helpful to me: the violation of that, picture it, some of you have had this happen to you, someone breaking into your house and vandalizing it randomly, wantonly. Totally disrespecting everything that you have worked for and treasured. You say, "That's not right. This isn't yours to do this to and you scandalize that which belongs to me." You would be outraged. Well, where is the sense of outrage of what's happened to what belongs to God and God alone? God gave complementary genders to humanity for their good and as the means of divine companionship. He wove monogamous, heterosexual marriage into creation to ultimately picture the relationship between Christ, his Son and the church.

Beloved, when you understand things from this perspective, you are far down the road to understanding why homosexuality is wrong. Homosexuality rebels against God's design. It violates everything that God established for the blessing of man and to express his glory, to express that which is good in the church. God, as it were, said, "It's not good for man to be alone," and, as it were, he stretched out his hand and gave the gift of a companion, and gave the gift of marriage and said, "Do it this way." Homosexuality looks at that outstretched hand and slaps it away violently and says, "We will not do it that way. We reject the creative hand. We will assert our own authority," over something that never was theirs to begin with and pursues its own fulfillment. It perverts the created order. It perverts the picture of Christ redeeming his church. Why is homosexuality wrong? Start there. What does God think of it all? That's for the next session.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Our Father, we thank you for your wisdom and your grace and your goodness which established marriage in such a way. That which belongs to you, yours to define, yours to make what you wanted it to be. Ours to be the grateful recipient and to respond in glad gratitude and obedience. And Father, it has all been perverted in our lifetime, not just in homosexuality, Father, but even by our own sexual sins of one degree or another. There's not a man or a woman in this room that somehow hasn't violated your commands against lust or exclusive affection to their mate. So Father, we start with ourselves and we confess our own sins and our own shortcomings. We thank you that in the Lord Jesus Christ we have a Savior who shed his blood to wash away our sins and we rest in him even as we confess our sins.

Father, as we look at the broader issues outside the walls of the church and outside the walls of our own heart, Lord, we are as I believe it was Daniel said in his prayer, "I was appalled." Maybe it was Nehemiah thinking about the walls of Jerusalem but we are appalled, Lord, at what we see around us. We see what our fellow man has done in corrupting that which belongs to you alone and we look to you, Father, for the solution which is found only in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, found only in you bringing order one eschatological day out of that which man has made into chaos. You will vindicate your word, Father. While you are withholding your judgment for a time, we ask you to show grace to those who have rebelled, save some sinners. Save those who have participated in this outrage, Father, just as freely and graciously as you saved some who participated in the crucifixion of your own Son. We don't understand the marvels of your holiness or the marvels of your grace. Father, in our own impetuous ways, we probably would have judged everything already but you manifest your patience that still a few more might enter into your kingdom and escape the wrath that is to come. What a marvelous God you are, holy, wise, gracious and good and, Lord, it's for your honor and for the sake of your great name that we have said these things here today. We pray that you would take them and cause your word to run and bear fruit in our lives and in the lives of others as well. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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