

“HOW GOD HATES SIN AND LOVES SINNERS, II.”

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Scripture Texts: I Corinthians 6:9-11

Introduction.

It's Lent, a season in the church calendar when we focus on the cross of Christ. The cross is the boldest statement of the truth and the boldest statement of love ever heard or witnessed. The cross is the clearest statement of God's hatred of sin and of God's love for sinners.

Last week we talked about sin and sinners and what God thinks about both. Sin is the most serious crime against the most supreme being in the universe. For a creature to rise up in rebellion against his maker is unfathomable and unconscionable. A great judgment is reserved for all sin.

And this is where we see the love of God that in His mercy He shows the greatest love to the least deserving objects by removing this judgment on the cross.

My reason for considering more deeply with you this season how God hates sin and loves sinners is a question one of you submitted last November when I asked for questions that I might answer in a couple of sermons. One of you wrote:

What about the sin of homosexuality.

“There has been a lot of talk on hating the sin of homosexuality and loving the sinner. How do we love the homosexual?”

I put off answering then because I felt it was an important question we all need to understand better. And now as it turns out it's more timely than ever with the recent decisions of our state government.

Is it possible to say that homosexual behavior is a sin and at the same time say we love the person struggling in the bondage of such sin? It's a big question and a very challenging one. It's one that's dividing our country and dividing Christians and churches and denominations.

We are in a new day in America. Sin has always been with us, and people celebrating sin has always been with us. What's new is government institutionalizing sin, legalizing sin and protecting it. What's new is saying not only is this not sin, but this is normal, just as normal as what everyone else does.

The homosexual issue has gone public and is being forced on us all. This is obvious here in Washington State where our governor has just signed legislation legalizing so called “gay marriage.”

This means that in addressing this sin we find us selves dealing with two different types of individuals. There are the vocal advocates and strong defenders and then there are those who are in bondage to sin and need help getting out and even want help to get out. There are hard hearts

and there are soft hearts on this issue. This morning I want to address two things concerning each type of individual.

For the hard-hearted advocates of gay rights I want to address how we as Christians respond to gay marriage and gay orientation. Then for the soft hearts I want to address how we hate sin and love the sinner. The first has to do with how we think about the public debate and the second how we conduct ourselves in personal relationships.

Let me begin by addressing gay marriage and gay orientation. These are matters we need to be informed on because Christians are increasingly getting confused about the issues and facts.

Please remember that if someone accuses you of hate, remind them that to differ is not to hate. We want to discuss and defend Scripture, but in so doing we will be labeled as bigots, intolerant, hatemongers or homophobic.

First, let me be as clear as I can be about so called “gay marriage.” “Gay marriage” is a fallacy, no matter what state laws may say. God created and defined sexuality and marriage in Genesis 1 and Jesus repeated it in Matthew 19:

Matthew 19:4-6 “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, [5] and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? [6] So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (ESV)

Marriage is one man and one woman (no homosexuality, no polygamy, no bestiality) in a life-long committed and faithful relationship (no fornication, adultery, porn, wife-swapping, living together).

Notice that sex is always in the context of marriage. Sex is always connected to marriage. It belongs only in marriage and is protected by marriage. All sexual activity outside of a marriage covenant between a husband and a wife is sin, it’s wrong. All sexual activity, not just certain activity, but all sexual activity outside of a marriage between a husband and a wife is sin.

Sex outside of marriage is arrogance of the highest order, it’s defiantly saying that we know better than God what’s good or best. It’s setting our will above His will.

There’s a deeper reason why there can never even be such a thing as a homosexual marriage. It cannot ever be a marriage in God’s eyes because a homosexual relationship isn’t like Christ and the church in any way.

We learn in the NT that from the very beginning God created and defined marriage to be a picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church. Marriage isn’t about us, it’s about God.

The tension we face in our culture is that our world sees marriage as a social arrangement and we see it as a God-ordained, Christ-exalting institution designed to glorify God. That the words “homosexual marriage” can be put together shows how far we have fallen and how deep is the crisis facing us.

Second, let me give some clarification on the issue of gay orientation. The popular pop singer Lady Gaga has made quite a hit with her recent song, “Born This Way.”

What does orientation mean? Orientation is a term meant to obscure or excuse. Since they were born that way they can’t help it. Or even, God made them that way.

We are being asked today to put homosexual sin in a separate category from other sins, in a special category with special status.

Scripture is clear, we are all born this way. We are all conceived in sin, our hearts are full of sin and we are all slaves to sin apart from God’s deliverance. Our sin is genetic and we are all oriented toward sin. I could say that’s how God has made us ever since Adam.

My sin is also generational, passed on from my grandparents and my parents by their words and actions, by what they did and by what they didn’t do. I learned them and picked them up and made them my own. And then, of course, I passed them on to my children.

The issue isn’t how I got this way, the issue is what am I doing about it. The issue is sin, am I defending it or repenting of it. We either love it and live in it, or we hate it and we fight against it. I am a broken sinner, but I don’t let my sin define me, I don’t call myself by my sin, rather I turn from it and toward Christ. My identity is not in my sin but in my Savior from sin.

A Christian is a person who is fighting against his orientation all day long. We must fight against temptations toward hatred, anger, lust, adultery, fornication, greed, pride, every kind of idolatry. We are not called to peacefully co-exist with our temptations, we are called by Christ to flee every temptation and even the appearance of them.

We should have great sympathy and empathy for anyone struggling with sexual sin. We should all be able to relate to what it’s like to struggle with constant temptation. We all have sins we struggle with and fail in resisting.

So when we as Christians pray and vote and oppose so called “gay marriage” are we imposing our worldview on others? Friends, every single law on the books is someone imposing a worldview on someone else. The only question is by what authority, by what constitution, by what creed. We stand where we stand on the true and eternal Word of God knowing that it’s God’s truth for all people in all times. That which honors God will result in the most blessing and benefit to all the people of the earth.

Let’s turn now from the public debate to the personal relationships and how God wants us to relate with those caught in this particular sin or any other sin for that matter.

How does God hate the sin of homosexuality and love the homosexual?

I Corinthians 6:9-11 is a strong word that shows both sides.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11] And such were some of you. 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. (ESV)

First, God speaks the truth clearly and warns us what's right and wrong, what's good and evil. This is after all the most loving thing a loving Father can do. He tells us everything up front.

No one can honestly say that homosexuality is compatible with Judaism or Christianity. The only honest thing one can say is that "the Bible consistently and completely condemns homosexuality and I believe the Bible is wrong." That's honest.

The **second** thing God does is show His love by making a way out of this sin. Our text ends with the grandest theme of Scripture, the forgiveness of sin.

1 Corinthians 6:11 [11] And such were some of you. 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.

This is astonishing love and grace and mercy and hope and help. The only victory in our battle against sin is found in the name of Jesus Christ and in the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Christ died for the ungodly, Christ came for the sick and sinful. The prayer God hears and answers is, "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner."

Jesus shows incredible mercy for the worst of sinners, corrupt tax collectors, embezzlers, prostitutes, a woman caught in adultery. He talked to them, He ate with them, He touched them, and He loved them. And when they spent time with Him they knew the truth and either embraced it like Zacchaeus or they walked away from it like the Rich Young Ruler.

This is truth and love. Truth says there must be a serious change, and love says there's power and help available to make the change. There's a serious problem and there's a sufficient solution.

And such were some of you. Do you know what true Holy Spirit lead revival will look like in our day? It will look like our churches filling up with repentant, cleansed, forgiven, adulterers, homosexuals, prostitutes, crooks, embezzlers, coveters, drunkards, and all manner of other kinds of sinners.

Jesus died on the cross for His enemies. The least we can do is love our enemies.

How do we hate the sin and love the sinner?

If I am in a conversation with a person who is struggling with homosexual sin, I wouldn't start talking about "gay marriage" or "gay orientation" or any of the other surface issues.

First, I would start with the heart, best place of all, with my heart. I would talk about my brokenness and my battle with sin, maybe even get personal and talk about my anger issues or impatience or fears that stem from unbelief or my sins against my family.

If we are going to help sinners, as I said last week, we must first see our own sin and hate our sin and pray against our own sin. We must kill all pride and superiority and self-righteousness that

we are better. We are sinners saved only by God's grace, and but for the grace of God we would go the way of the worst sinner. I just one beggar telling another beggar where I found bread.

Our issue is not just with homosexuality, it's with all sin. We call sin sin. And our only fear is the fear of the judgment that awaits those who remain in their sin and reject the free offer of forgiveness made by Jesus.

Second, I would talk about the truth in the most loving manner I can. This is what God did to me and it's what I can do for others. Since we are all made in the image of God and since God is true and Christianity is the truth there's a seed of truth in every person. We never know when the truth will resonate, when there will be a crack in the door just enough to let some light in.

A simple conversation might go like this, "God's good and best and perfect will for us is that sexuality be protected by abstinence until marriage and then only in the context of lifelong, faithful heterosexual marriage. That's what glorifies God and builds the healthiest families and nations and civilizations. Gay morality is contrary to how God made the universe. It's harmful and destructive. I urge you to think about this and reconsider your views. I am not saying this out of fear or hate, but because I care and love you and want the best for you. All that's good for us comes from God. I urge you to give Him and His ways more serious consideration. You won't be disappointed."

Charles Spurgeon once said it this way, "Hard words if they be true, are better than soft words, if they be false."

The most hateful thing one can do to anyone engaged in sin is deny sin's reality and say nothing. To tell someone his sin is not sin at all is to rob that person of his ability to know forgiveness and love the Forgiver.

The greatest act of love one person can do for another is to lead another person to love Jesus. We don't know when the Holy Spirit will use His Word to cut to the depths, to the joints and marrow, and when He will use His Word to convict some one of their unrighteousness.

That burden is not mine. All I have to do is love and be salt and light and hold out the truth and forgiveness and represent Jesus as best as I can and pray and pray and pray.

Parents and grandparents, if you have children or grandchildren who have acknowledged homosexual desires, love them by praying for them and speaking as much truth as you can at times when they might best hear it. Keep communicating with them letting them know you care and want God's very best for them. Seek wisdom and counsel from God's Word and from other resources available to families in these situations. Check out Exodus International.

If your children are young, realize that healthy sexuality depends on healthy attention, touch, teaching and love, and especially when it comes from dad. Scripture and social studies agree, the role of the father is fundamental for normal sexual development.

Conclusion.

Scripture calls us to weep over our sins, not celebrate them or have parades for them. We must weep for our sins and the sins of our nation and cry out to God for mercy before judgment comes.

Christians above all people should weep and pray the most. We know what's coming. We know that people reap what they sow. We know that God's judgment hangs over nations that openly rebel against Him and call good evil and evil good.

We should be pleading with Jesus who alone "delivers us from the wrath to come" (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Pray, speak the truth in love, hold out the forgiveness of Jesus and entrust your efforts to God. Jesus is a Redeemer and He came to redeem sinners. Glory to God for this gift and hope.

Prayer:

Hebrews 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. [16] Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (ESV)