

Christ and Homosexuality

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[0 : 00] Well, I'm going to give you a bit of a head start this morning. We are going to start our study today in the book of Ezekiel, chapter 16. And as I know, that's probably not an oft-visited book of the Bible.

I want you to start flipping now to get to Ezekiel, chapter 16. As I remind you that this summer we've been doing a little mini-sermon series called Christ and Culture. And we've been discussing together how it is as Christians we should engage culture for the gospel.

Because we can't avoid it. Many people think that they can. They can just exclude themselves from culture altogether. And by so doing, in fact, create their own subculture.

We will, in fact, have to participate in culture in one way or another. And the question for us is how is it that we do so as Christ would to advance the kingdom of God?

And kind of our theme scripture for this series has been 1 Corinthians, chapter 9, 22 and 23. Paul writes, To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak.

[1 : 07] I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.

We find in the previous chapters that Paul is talking about being set free from the law in Christ. And as such, he has the ability to live his life as he pleases.

However, he would rather trade the liberties bought for him in Christ for the sake of the gospel and the greater joy of advancing the kingdom.

So we've been talking about various topics and we're this morning going to discuss the issue of Christ and homosexuality.

Kind of a hot topic these days, right? I'm told I should say something to get your attention and I think I already did. I don't think I really have to say too much more.

[2 : 06] There's certainly much heat about this topic right now. President Obama has recently come out and supported gay marriage. If you pay attention at all to blogs, you know that the president of Chick-fil-A made an anti-gay marriage statement, a stance for the company, which got way more publicity than I think it deserved.

There are many laws in effect, and the repeal of laws, the most famous of which is the Defense of Marriage Act, passed in 1996, which defined marriage as the union between one man and one woman.

In fact, this issue is much larger than it really should be in reality. A Gallup poll conducted in May of 2011 found that American adults think that 25% of the American population is lesbian, gay, bisexual.

American adults believe that 25% of the population practices this lifestyle, when in fact the estimate is more like 3.5%.

However, we can't discuss just how it is that we ought to interact with the homosexual community, but how it is that we should interact with the community at large around this topic.

[3 : 26] Because it's become such a big issue, and because so many Christians have dealt with this issue poorly, there's a magnifying lens on the church, the American church, and certainly on ours.

And because this has become such a large issue, we have to be so careful how we walk around it. Now let me say something political, just to get it out of my system, so I can talk about the real issue. And let me say that this is my opinion, I believe it's an opinion based in fact, however it is my opinion. If you value liberty, you appreciate the freedoms that you have, and you hold to them, if you begin to loosen your grip on your liberty, the government will take it from you.

Now I don't know what that means, case by case in every situation, but we have to think as we enter into political realms that are not what the government was designed to do.

The government shouldn't be defining what marriage is for us. As we venture into that world, we have to really carefully think about how we get involved.

[4 : 50] If you think that it's the government's job to define marriage for you, you are sorely wrong. The church, under the Holy Scripture, defines what marriage is.

If you think that your marriage or your future marriage will be in any way affected by how our government defines marriage, then your marriage has so many issues, I couldn't possibly address them in a summer of preaching on the topic.

You depending on God to fulfill your God-given role to your spouse, that forms a healthy marriage, not what somebody else says it is or says that it isn't.

That's out of my system. Let's move on. Before we talk about homosexuality, though, we need to talk about sexuality just generally. Certainly God created us as sexual beings with sexual desire.

What is sex ultimately for? There's purposes, and there's the great purpose. There's purposes being procreation, the companionship, but the great purpose is to serve as a shadow of what will someday become.

[6 : 08] So we see that to be the case of marriage. Marriage is meant to represent the beautiful union between Christ and the church. We know that our marriages as Christians are supposed to show the world this process that God is in of buying the church.

And sex within the confines of marriage is meant to show the surpassing eternal joy we will one day have. Now, I'm not saying that we will have a sexual relationship with God.

We won't. But it's a picture of the joy that will one day be. Let me show you that in the scripture.

Let me start reading in Ezekiel chapter 16, verse 4. I want you to see the language used here. And I hope this makes none of you uncomfortable.

This is God speaking through Ezekiel to Israel, to his bride. And as for your birth, on the day you were born, your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling clothes.

[7 : 19] No, I pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you, but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred on the day that you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you in your blood, Live.

I said to you in your blood, Live. I made you flourish like a plant of the field, and you grew up and became tall and arrived at full adornment. Your breasts were formed and your hair had grown, yet you were naked and bare.

When I passed by you again and saw you, behold, you were at the age for love, and I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your nakedness. I made my vow to you and entered into a covenant with you, declared the Lord God, and you became mine.

Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from me and anointed you with oil. Let's skip down to verse 15. But you trusted in your beauty and played the whore because of your renown and lavished your whorings on any passerby.

Your beauty became his. You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful shrines, and on them played the whore. The light has never been nor ever shall be.

[8 : 31] You also took your beautiful jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself images of men, and with them played the whore. You see the sexual language here, that God came along to his people and married her.

Yet, people betrayed him. Played the whore. Not my language. The language of Scripture. Became an adulterer. We see it in the book of Hosea.

Hosea was commanded by God to take a life of whoredom. His life was meant to be a picture of what Israel was doing as they betrayed God.

His wife, Gomer, never named their daughters with this name, ran around on him as a picture. And praise God, in chapter 3, toward the end, we see Hosea go to the marketplace and buy his wife out of slavery.

It's a great picture of the gospel. You see the language. Song of Solomon, chapter 4. I'm going to read to you verses 9 and 10, because it's the only thing out of chapter 4 I can read without blushing.

[9 : 41] Song of Solomon being a great allegory of Christ's love for the church. Verse 9. You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride. You have captivated my heart with one glance of your

eyes, with one jewel of your necklace.

How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride. How much better is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your oils, than any spice. So, sex within the confines of marriage, as it was designed to be, is meant to be a shadow of what's to come.

John Piper said, God made us powerfully sexual, so that he would be more deeply knowable. We were given the power to know each other sexually, so that we might have some hint of what it would be like to know Christ supremely.

So that's what it's made for, chiefly. Obviously there are other purposes. But chiefly, for that reason. Therefore, all misuses of our sexuality.

All of them. Not just homosexuality. But all misuses. Adultery. Sex outside of the bounds of marriage. Illicit fantasies. Self-gratification.

[10:53] Pornography. Homosexuality. Rape. Bestiality. Exhibition. On and on and on. I don't even know. I'm glad I don't even know all the things that could be in a list like that.

All of these things distort the true knowledge of God. God means for human sexual life to be a pointer and a foretaste of our relationship with Him. So if not done properly, all of these misuses, all of these things, are perversions of what should be.

So now our main text for today. Titus chapter 3. Please turn that with me. Titus chapter 3. I hope that I've drawn your mind to the sexual misconduct of our culture.

Which we are a part of as a church. Very few of us are free of not in some way misusing our sexuality. On a grand scale, look at the great controversies, the great scandals in the church. As I did some research this week, I came across five prominent pastors who were very anti-gay. Who were in fact participating in homosexual relationships.

[12:20] I think all of you could probably think right now of some pastor along the way that's been accused of sexual misconduct. Stepped down from the pulpit. Or possibly not as a result.

The statistics, which I didn't bring today, but the statistics are staggering how many pastors have pornography infections. This is not an issue removed from the church, although it should be.

Let's read, starting in verse 1. Titus chapter 3. Paul writing to Titus says, Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities. To be obedient. To be ready for every good work.

To speak evil of no one. To avoid quarreling. To be gentle. And to show perfect courtesy toward all people. For we ourselves are once foolish. Disobedient.

Led astray. Slaves to various passions and pleasures. Passing our days in malice and envy. Hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared.

[13:24] He saved us. Not because of works done by us in righteousness. But according to his own mercy. By the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. We need poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

So that being justified by his grace. We might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The saying is trustworthy. And I want you to insist on these things. So that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works.

These things are excellent and profitable for people. The theme of Titus is the inseparable link between faith and practice. Between belief and behavior.

The encouragement of Paul to Titus is to begin to work out some erroneous teaching that had worked its way in to the church. We don't know exactly what that was. But we know of lots of varying erroneous teaching.

He mentions in chapter 1 verse 10. The circumcision party. The Judaizers. Those who had claimed to believe in Christ. Yet said you still had to keep the Old Testament law.

[14:28] I hope that seems familiar to you as you think about American Christianity. Most people who would claim to be Christians in this country are really moralists.

And they have added to that. They've said, yeah, I am Christ. I think that's probably the way. I think probably I'm going to place my faith in him so that I can one day be assured of heaven.

And his teaching seems to line up with what I think is good. The really moralists, which is what the Judaizers were. They said, yeah, the law of God, we agree with that.

That's good. And this Christ thing seems also attractive. But let's not ignore these things still. And they don't believe they actually have been liberated by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Actually set free from the law. So the circumcision party, I think, is who is primarily being addressed as Paul writes to Titus.

[15 : 25] And he focuses us in on good works. If we believe what we say we believe, we're going to be motivated to live it out in this world.

And in what way are we going to do that? In verse 1 he says, be ready for every good work. We ought to have the knowledge necessary to be every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.

All includes everyone, right? To all people. Other translations might say mankind or all men. It's a general thing we should do as Christians.

And he roots the reason for that, the motivation, the fuel we need to live that way in verse 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

The gospel. Remembering and knowing who we are. We were once foolish, disobedient, led astray.

[16 : 36] What were we after that? Slaves. In bondage to various passions and pleasures. The sexual misconduct would be included in this.

Passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. One of the most precious words to me in English translation, verse 4, But when.

But when. The goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared when Christ came and saved us. Not because of our works. Not because of our works.

You can do nothing righteous on your own. Sin has utterly spoiled humanity. Humanity. And it's in Christ that we're liberated, that we're set free and able to live again for Him.

We didn't have the ability to do good things to earn salvation. It was according to His mercy. By the regeneration, He made us new.

[17 : 42] He took parts of stone and put in us parts of flesh. By the work of the Holy Spirit. The gospel. Remembering who we were and now who we are because of the work of Christ.

Is what motivates proper interaction with the world. Particularly today, around the topic of homosexuality.

Do you love people? The quick and easy answer is, sure.

Do you love people? Do you? Do you love people who throw things in your face? Do you love people who have varying opinions than you do? Do you love people who seem to reject all the things you hold valuable?

I hope you do. Paul did. Paul was willing to become all things to all people. That he might share with them in the blessing of coming to know Christ.

[18 : 48] And if we are to properly devote ourselves to good works, we can see the promise of Scripture that these things are excellent and profitable for people.

Now is homosexuality sin? It absolutely is. There's no doubt about it. If I've left any room in your mind to think I think otherwise, I'm setting it straight now.

Homosexuality is absolutely a sin. It's a perversion of what God meant to be, along with all the other perversions of that. Ultimately, though, it's an issue of our heart.

It's not an issue of the activity. It's an issue of our heart. A heart that worships the created and not the creator. It's called an abomination in Scripture. You hear that quite often.

Leviticus 18.22. God commands you shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination. Abomination is just something that's hated, something that's abhorred. Let's not ignore that other places in Scripture are the same language as used.

[19 : 54] Proverbs 6. I want you to turn to this. Proverbs 6. You should see the words for yourself. Proverbs 6.16-19.

We're all guilty of abominations.

Proverbs 6.16-19. Proverbs 6.16-19. If you don't think so, you're guilty of the first one. Pride. And if you told yourself that you're not guilty of them, you're guilty of the second, which is lying.

Your heart is absolutely wicked. Your feet run to evil. We're through the fourth one now. You haven't committed murder yet at this point. You've lied against me because you're lying against my own nature.

And you're creating disunity because you're breaking the narrative, the meta-narrative of this world. Right? We're all guilty of abominations.

[21 : 18] Every one of us. And the problem is that as Christians, it becomes easier to point at the sinfulness of other people than to admit our own sinfulness. It's so easy to point at things that we

know everyone's going to agree with.

It's so simple to go, well, at least I'm not gay. Set up strong. We make suits of figlies for ourselves to put off the blame of who we are.

Praise God we're set free in Christ. We've been made perfect, but we're still being made perfect. I haven't arrived there yet. I can't say to the world, you should look like me. How dare I?

You shouldn't look like me. You should look like Christ. He's the great high example. He's the pole position. That's what we're trying to be like.

I think our culture has kind of lost idealism. I get blamed for being idealistic all the time. Talking about the Christian life all the time, people accuse me of being idealistic.

[22 : 29] And I say, we're trying to be like God. He's the ideal. If we set up any other example for ourselves, we're going to fall drastically short.

You shouldn't tell people to look like us. You should tell people they should look like Christ. They'll fail. They'll know they're failing. Let me just share the gospel with them.

If we tell people that they should look like us, we're like some characters in the Bible, aren't we? A group of guys called the Pharisees, and Jesus speaks pretty bluntly to them.

So, I hope he'll speak bluntly to us this morning as well. Luke chapter 18, verses 9 through 14. He, being Jesus, also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

[23 : 39] We can throw in the homosexuals. That category for us. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get. But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted. And what Jesus is teaching us is that the one who has placed their faith in Christ, the one who knows who they have been, foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves who buried his passions and pleasures, the one who has placed their faith in Christ because of who they were, will be humbled.

We will approach God and the world in that way. And that's what the homosexual community needs to see, and that's what those surrounding that issue in favor of need to see.

They need to see humility in the church. They need to see a broken people, the great Savior. We don't need to pretend like we have it all put together.

Listen to what else Jesus said to the Pharisees, Matthew 23, 26, and 28. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

[25 : 05] Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

For you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. And I don't really know how well the Pharisees were pulling this off.

Jesus said that they were, that they appeared righteous on the outside. But I can tell you in our world, if this is us, people see straight through us. The world knows how terribly flawed we are.

Why don't we? Here's the narrative going on, the cultural trend about the issue of homosexuality. A confession, if you will, a cultural confession about homosexuality. Number one, God made me this way. Number two, he wouldn't deny me my natural desires.

[26 : 07] And number three, I don't have to explain myself to anyone. That's what we're dealing with. So how does everything I've said apply to this cultural confession about homosexuality?

How do we respond to this type of narrative in our culture? Number one, God made me this way. Well, in a sense, yes, he has, is what I would say to a homosexual person.

We have been corrupted by sin. You were born in sinfulness. Validate people's desire. But recognize, show them that it's sin and it's corrupted what we were intended to be.

And as you do so, repent of your own self-righteousness. Apologize for the church. Kristen, did you know that you get lumped in with everybody else?

That happens automatically to you, whether or not you agree with what some people may say. You get lumped in with them. Apologize for the church. We see humility in verse 3, Titus chapter 3.

[27 : 22] He wouldn't deny me my natural desires. God call us to be holy. He would, in fact, ask us not to sin against Him.

He would want us to live holy as He is holy. And if I'm to obey my natural desires, I would look the opposite of what God wants me to look like.

Think about that for a moment. If God's not the standard, the holiness of God is no longer the standard for you, and you did whatever you wanted. What would your life look like?

I would be cheap and smug and selfish. I would always be self-serving and prideful.

I would amass things for myself and not give them away. I would be a pill. I would always want to be right. And I would fight you tooth and nail to prove it to you.

[28 : 28] If God weren't the standard, and my natural desires took me where they would, I would look nothing like God created me to look.

I would not bear His image, as I should. So we should turn to God and Christ as the great giver of mercy.

The world needs to hear us say that that's true. That my natural desires incline me towards evil. That I am corrupt apart from Christ. But He is the great giver of mercy. He has delivered me from me. Verses 4-7.

This beautiful summary of the gospel. But when the goodness and love and kindness of God our Savior appears, the simplest way I can present the gospel to you is that I was a slave to sin.

[29 : 33] I was dead, and I was miserable. But because of Christ, my faith in Him, I have been set free, and I now have life and joy. The world needs to hear that.

They won't always want to hear it. We won't always be popular saying those things. I'm not suggesting that the lesbian, gay, bisexual community is going to embrace us as the church, as we hold up God as the standard.

And some people fall so short, they won't want to hear that. But I believe many will come to Him if we do so. We cannot mandate morality.

Are you aware of that? We cannot mandate morality. Since the definition of marriage, the Defensive Marriage Act was passed in 1996, I'm going to go out on a limb here.

But I'm pretty confident, safely say, that families have not gotten stronger because of the Defensive Marriage Act, that marriages aren't thriving because of a piece of legislation.

[30 : 40] I can spare confidence say that the homosexuality community, that community is not decreasing because of a piece of legislation. That community, the lost and dying world needs to see Christians living properly, putting away our sin, picking up holiness, having strong, healthy marriages that have vital sexual relationships that are done properly.

The third one, I don't have to explain myself to anyone. One day, we will all answer to the highest authority.

The world needs to know that. They won't want to hear it, but the world needs to know that. I, in younger, fitter days, did a lot of whitewater kayaking.

And when you begin to paddle class four and five rapids, typically you get into areas that are what we call drop-in pools. So there will be a waterfall, then a pool of water to recover in, then another waterfall.

And it's often at the bottom of the waterfall where the water gets bubbly and kind of aerated that things tend to happen that you don't want to happen. That's where you tend to get flipped over, and it can sometimes be hard to roll the kayak back up.

[32 : 02] But when you get into class four and five whitewater, it's really not a good thing to swim out of your boat. Your boat is big and buoyant. It's full of air. It kind of protects you in the water. Try really hard not to swim out of your boat.

When you do, you're always trying to think about, where do I go? Where do I get to that's safe? What side of the river is going to be the best? Because oftentimes it's not really safe anywhere.

There's undercut rocks and sieves, places that you can get pushed through and stuck and drowned. There's all kinds of dangers in water like this. So you're thinking about, where do I go? And so as soon as you come out of a boat, you begin to swim upstream. Because it slows you down a little bit. It slows your progress towards the next hazard you're going to be at. You swim upstream. And boy, you swim hard.

I'm not a really hard swimmer, but I've done some hard swimming when I've come out of my boat on a river. You're wearing your little booties that slow you down. You kick them off and you just start

going because you're trying to figure out where you need to go.

[33 : 03] We're all doing that. We don't know Christ, who's our safety, our safety line, our raft, the one who's going to pull us to the bank.

This world is swimming desperately upstream. But they will go to their destruction. So imagine swimming above Niagara. You are going to get tired one day.

You're going to answer the ultimate and highest authority. The world needs to hear that. Pray that they respond. And we should be then image bearers, pointing people to their great need of a great Savior.

Do you believe this morning that your Savior is great? If your sin isn't great, your Savior will not be great.

You may not have been delivered from a homosexual lifestyle, but you certainly have committed many abominations. You certainly were an idolater.

[34 : 09] You worshipped yourself. At very least, you worshipped yourself. You're not the most idolater. Has your Savior delivered you? When you read with me Titus chapter 3, verses 1 through 8, do you feel the weight of the glory contained within?

Do you see your own deliverance from who you once were? I pray that you do. If you do, that will motivate a love for all people.

Don't shoot the hostage. Are you with me? Let us love people for an advancement of the kingdom. In the glory of God. Let's pray together. Let us pray together. Thank you.