



SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

LGBTQIA+

Is Homosexuality a Sin? Can You Be a Gay Christian?

The gospel is for all people. Scripture presents homosexuality as sin, and every sin is dealt with the same way: by grace through faith in the finished work and lordship of Jesus Christ. So LGBT people are welcome here, and the church walks with every believer through the long process of becoming like Jesus.

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SERIES

We're Honoring to All People, Week 2 of 5

MAIN TEXT

Romans 1:26-27

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Sermon Transcript

Well, I'll invite you this morning, go ahead and join me in your Bible in Romans chapter 1. Romans chapter 1, and we'll come back there in a little while. Many years ago we were at a church in Michigan. We were there for several years, and it was a larger church. We had a lot of people on staff, and we had one gentleman who was — I thought he was just one of the most fantastic preachers we had at the church. He was our care ministries pastor, and he was an older gentleman, and his name is Ron Sparks. Just a precious man. He loved people, people loved him. And sometimes I think people loved Jesus because Jesus loved them, and sometimes I think people loved Jesus because Ron Sparks loved them. He was just a great man.

And so when he would get up and preach — boy, he could break the pulpit — he'd get up and preach, and he would always just point to the love of God for people and how wonderful and majestic the Lord was. And so he was preaching one night, man. Message is going great, typical Ron Sparks fashion. This thing was full of hope and joy and encouragement. And then he gets about halfway through his sermon, and all of a sudden he goes, "Now, let's talk about the gays." The whole room came to a screeching halt. The best way to describe it, operation shock and awe, it was. And everybody was worried, and then this shows up on the screen that says, "Let's talk about the gaze." We thought he was saying let's talk about gay people. He scared us to death.

And so this morning, what I do want to do in the spirit of Ron Sparks: let's talk about the gays. This week we're going to talk about an issue that affects many intersections of our lives and our culture. And I just want to start here from the onset. That's the first thing I want to say, the first thing I want you to hear today: that the gospel is for all people. I thought I had a church that had been taught better than that. The gospel is for all people. Amen, the gospel's for all people.

Now, to deliver the information I want to deliver to you today is a little bit of a challenge, because getting a cohesive flow for this message is just difficult, because I don't really know where to start. You know, if I start in one place, a certain group of people are going to tune me out immediately. If I start in another place, another group of people are going to tune me out immediately. And so I run the risk today, as I preach, of being misheard, misunderstood, worst of all unintentionally misrepresenting the Bible's intentions concerning LGBT people. And so here's what I want to do.

Here's how I'm going to approach the message. I'm going to start with what the Bible says. It's a good place to start. Following that, I'm going to share some things that I want our church to know, our church family to know. And then I'm going to end by addressing the community of people who are outside of our church family, and I'm going to just talk straight to the camera towards the end of this message. Now, what I'm going to ask you to do is, if you've gotten this far with me, you haven't checked out on me already, if you haven't turned the video off, if you're with me, I want you to just do me this favor.

I want you to give me the opportunity to get to the end. Just give me the opportunity to get to the end. I believe today's message is going to be insightful. Some things that might help just with my communication and delivery, just for you to hear what I'm saying: I want to just say that when I use the phrase homosexuality, I'm using that as a blanket term that covers all issues with LGBT people. Granted, those issues are varying and diverse, but I'm going to use those as a blanket, maybe more of it as a root term. And again, there's certainly — we can't get into all the depths of everything

that goes on with everybody, but I can't do that with any other group of people on a Sunday either. So if I say homosexuality, I'm talking about everything. There ain't going to be a gay section and a lesbian section and a bisexual section and a transgender section.

And probably a good time for me to say we have a great kids ministry here at the church. Kids could go — you go up from here. Amen.

And so, as I said last week in the introduction to this series, my goal today is not to hurt anybody. It's not to offend anybody. But like Brene Brown, who we mentioned last week, I believe clear is kind, and so my primary intention today is just to be clear. Just to be clear. It seems like the issue of homosexuality has one common conversation around it. There's one common conversation that kind of summed up in a single question.

This is it: all roads involving the church and the faith and homosexuality — all roads lead to this question. Is homosexuality a sin? And I have watched that question posed on TV panels over the years. I've watched Joel Osteen, John MacArthur, I've watched Rick Warren all sit down with people like Larry King or Anderson Cooper and be asked that question: is homosexuality a sin? And the Bible has a direct answer to the face-value version of that question. If we do the face-value version of that question, the answer — is homosexuality a sin? The answer is yes. The answer is yes.

Now, we're going to look at Romans 1 here in a moment, but I just want to mention this, because you hear a lot around this one. When people talk about what the Bible says on this issue, you hear a lot about people who cherry-pick things from the Bible. And I just want to let you know, you take a snapshot of this, you do whatever you want if you want to have these references, but there are only five other places outside of Romans 1 — six total — where the topic of homosexuality is mentioned in the Bible.

It only happens in six places. I want to own that. In six places the Bible says this. That would be Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, and then in Jude 7.

LEVITICUS 18:22 ESV

²² You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

LEVITICUS 20:13 ESV

¹³ If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10 ESV

⁹ Or 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.

1 TIMOTHY 1:9-10 ESV

⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers,¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

JUDE 7 ESV

⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

And then we're also going to look at Romans 1 here in a moment. Those are all of the areas where this comes up in the Bible. So if you want a definitive understanding of what the Bible says about this stuff, there it is. You can go spend three and a half minutes and have a full education on what the Bible says about the issue of homosexuality.

ROMANS 1:26-27 ESV

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Romans chapter 1, verse 26. Let's start there. It says this: "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those who — I'm sorry — that are contrary to nature, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and deceiving — or, I'm sorry, receiving — in themselves the due penalty for that error."

Now, Romans 1 is helpful in answering this question of is homosexuality a sin for a few reasons. This is why it's helpful for this. The first reason is, there's a lot of conversation right now about the word homosexual not showing up in the Bible until 1946. If you get on the internet, get on TikTok, start looking around, you'll see this: the word homosexual didn't show up until 1946. Well, the nice thing about Romans 1 is it doesn't use the word homosexual. Romans 1 paints the picture of what it is. Doesn't say homosexual. It gives you a description of a homosexual relationship or lifestyle. Okay, so that's helpful.

And let me just say this in terms of the word homosexual not showing up in the Bible until 1946. First thing I want you to know is that is true. That is not some false conspiracy that goes around, people say. But there is a reason for that, and it's because the word homosexual did not enter the English lexicon until 1892. Considering that they got it from entering the English language — we're talking first thing printed in publications, in medical journals — all the way to getting it into a version of the Bible with no computers in 50 years, I'd say that's pretty good, and it's pretty understandable. The reason that we have a lot of Bible versions, or they do updates to Bible versions, is because the understanding of the English vernacular changes over time. Also, by the way, some words become more appropriate. And I know this will shock y'all, to think that there were probably times when people said, "Well, this will be a good translation for the word in the Bible, but I don't know how I feel about printing it in there." I'm going to take — y'all

making me nervous as all get out. I'm going to list my favorite words out of the King James and get y'all livened up here. Amen. Hallelujah.

So in 50 years for it to show up, that's great. That's great. Furthermore, you need to know this about the word homosexual not being used in Romans 1 and why that's helpful: any load-bearing scripture on the issue of homosexuality does not use the word homosexual. Leviticus and Romans 1 both spell out the relationship. They define it. They do not use a term. So there is no Greek or Hebrew mistranslation around this word. You can't mistranslate the description of it. Y'all hear what I'm saying?

Okay. Number two on Romans 1 being helpful to us: it shows us the root of homosexuality's sinfulness. This is important to know. We need to know the root of the sinfulness. The law of Moses has many laws that might seem silly. There are a handful of laws in the law of Moses that don't make a lot of sense, and they don't make a lot of sense to us because we're us and they were them. That's why they don't make sense. But God was preparing a people through the law of Moses to exit out of slavery and enter into a full social governmental system that he had to set them down in the middle of and protect them in the midst of. They were going into a thing called the promised land, and the promised land had been designed in a way that it was going to be built for them. They were going to walk in and inherit the lands, the crops, the houses, the whole kit and caboodle.

But the problem was, you get into one of them houses that is part of the promise that God's giving you, and there might be a little false idol down there sitting on the ground when you walk in. And the next thing you know it, without having some instruction on how to deal with that stuff, Israel's down on the ground worshipping a little three-foot statue in the master bedroom of the house, because there was no preparation for them to handle going from slavery to the promised land. Have y'all ever seen somebody get a raise and not know how to behave? You know, you get a \$5,000 a year raise and all of a sudden you got a \$80,000 more expensive car that you're driving. Okay, imagine that jump from a socio-economic — you're a slave going to the promised land. That's a big jump.

So the law serves to help with those things, really to guard them against idols, but also with some of the social dynamics. So a lot of times people want to bring up, "Well, if you can't be gay, can you not mix fabrics?"

LEVITICUS 19:19 ESV

¹⁹ "You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material.

Okay, that's a real nice thing for you to just pull out there, but it basically lists off every sexual relationship you should beware of in Leviticus chapter 18. It also has stuff in there like don't sleep with your mother.

LEVITICUS 18:7 ESV

⁷ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness.

But I don't see anybody going out here and going, "Well, I can't be gay. Can I not sleep with my mother either?" Nobody's yelling and screaming over that stuff. Do y'all hear me?

Romans 1 lets us know that not only is homosexuality a violation of God's law, the law that he gave to Moses, but it's also designed out of the law of nature. This actually brings us to the third thing that Romans 1 helps us with. So, because one

of the arguments that comes up is people say, “What, Jesus never said anything about homosexuality.” Which, by the way, we won’t talk about the things Jesus never said that are mentioned in other parts of the Bible. That list starts getting pretty long pretty quick. You have a very small snapshot of the things that Jesus said on earth. The Apostle John said that all the things that he said and he did could not be contained in all of the books that the world has if they were written down, and yet every one of you’s got a book in your hand that basically tells the same stories in four versions over and over again.

JOHN 21:25 ESV

²⁵ Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

It would stand to reason that he said more than the stuff in red. So there’s a lot of stuff that we don’t have written down that Jesus probably talked about.

But Jesus does affirm the base scripture that Paul uses as an argument or a defense in Romans chapter 1 about homosexuality. Jesus mentioned this.

MATTHEW 19:4-6 ESV

⁴ He answered, “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.”

He said in Matthew chapter 9 — or 19 — verse 4, he says, “He answered, ‘Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 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”? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.’” Well, this is what Jesus says when he’s asked about divorce. Now listen to this: Paul uses the same logic, the same scripture, to say that it’s a violation of nature.

GENESIS 1:27 ESV

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

GENESIS 2:24 ESV

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Are you hearing me this morning?

So Jesus did talk about this. By the way, I do want to give you some scripture that Jesus did talk directly about homosexuality that people seem to have missed. Because people say Jesus never talked about homosexuality. Jesus did. I gave you some verses earlier: Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 1 Timothy 1:9-10, Jude 7, Romans 1:26-27. “So what, Jesus isn’t speaking in any of those?” No, that’s not true. 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16 says that all scripture is God-breathed and given and is profitable for teaching, reproof, instruction.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16 ESV

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

No, Jesus didn't say the words that are in red, my friend. Jesus said the words that are in print. This is his word. This is him talking. So Jesus did address this directly.

I also don't know how we can be caught between a conversation on how the scripture apparently isn't infallible and we can't trust it, but yet somehow they put some stuff in red print and we know that's what Jesus meant. That's the argument being made. Some of this I'll get irritated as a Bible scholar — it has nothing to do with any people, I just can't handle that.

So back to the question: is homosexuality a sin? Now, that question again at face value — the face-value answer, is homosexuality a sin? It's yes. The answer is yes. But here's kind of a sticky wicket, if you will, of that question, and it's that the question is not the entirety of what people are asking. When people ask the question, is homosexuality a sin, there usually is some more loaded background in that question. So there's a word in the question that actually complicates the question, and that word can undermine the face value of the question and the answer. The word introduces so much complication to the question that two people can think they're communicating with each other but actually are engaged in two entirely different conversations. And that word is sin.

Sin. You might not know this, but there's a whole theology around the concept of sin. Do you know that there's a theology of sin? It has a name. It's called hamartiology. There's a whole theology around sin. And so sin, if it has a theology, that would tell us this: it requires a handful of things to get a solid definition. One is, what is sin? Another question will be, what is the source of sin? What's the result of sin? What's the consequence of sin? What's the resolution for sin? What levels are there to sin?

And if that doesn't demonstrate the complexity of the topic of sin, then riddle me this, Batman. If someone were to lie — which is a sin — to tell a lie, and that lie is intended to and successfully accomplishes providing safety from danger for another human being, is it still sin? And that, my friends, is how complicated sin is. See, in that question alone, we're looking at the ethical, ontological, anthropological, the theological convergence of sin. I mean, we're talking about where like some major questions come up at that point. In fact, if you were to sin to save another human being, another question would be, would it be a sin not to lie?

So you may say, "Preacher, what does that have to do with anything?" Well, it simply just means that while it may be plain and simple, it is far from plain and simple. It's more complicated than we like to think it is. "Well, the Bible says..." I'll take any of you up on that any day of the week. I am not afraid of that conversation. "What the Bible says." Okie-dokie. Well, when you roll up in here and your daughter or your son has got this thing going on, you're going to want me to address it with more than "the Bible says." You're going to want me to have a little bit of nuance. You might be thankful for some theology on that day.

And so when people ask, is homosexuality a sin, they are usually asking something more like, if someone is gay, does that mean that God hates them and sends them to hell without any further context or consideration? Well, that's a much bigger question than is homosexuality a sin, and typically that's what people are asking. And that is also an entirely different question.

So let me quickly highlight the most important things you need to know about sin that are written in the Bible. We got to understand sin to understand the question. We got to know what the Bible says about homosexuality, but we also got to know what the Bible says about sin.

ROMANS 6:23 ESV

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So Romans chapter 6, verse 23 says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

ROMANS 3:21-26 ESV

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Romans chapter 3, verse 21 says, “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction” — listen to this — “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and” — everybody say “and” — “are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

So all of that is to say that sin, apart from and including homosexuality, is only dealt with by the grace through faith in the work and lordship of Jesus Christ. I don’t care if you lie or if you’re a man with a man or a woman with a woman, the solution is the solution is the solution. There are not multiple paths. There are not multiple ways. Jesus Christ is enough for everyone. You ought to give him praise.

Romans 5 goes on to tell us that sin was remedied by Jesus Christ, and it wasn’t just the sin that you do.

ROMANS 5:12-19 ESV

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

It was the sin that was down in your very nature, embedded in our person, passed down through the lineage of Adam and Eve.

GENESIS 3:1-7 ESV

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

So homosexuality is a sin, and how do you deal with sin? By placing your faith in Jesus Christ.

So if homosexuality is a sin, and sin's remedied by Jesus Christ's finished work only, and if we assume that you can put your faith in Jesus Christ and be saved while you are presently a sinner — which would be a good assumption, since the Bible says that he died for us while we were yet sinners — and you can come to Christianity, you can become a Christian, you can come to faith, you can be a part of the church through the blood of Christ prior to changing your behavior, which by the way is how all y'all did it — so a new question comes up now.

ROMANS 5:8 ESV

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We're just going through the theology framework here. New question comes up: can you be a gay Christian?

I would say, outside of "is homosexuality a sin," this is question number two today. This has risen up to top of the list on questions people ask: can you be a gay Christian? And to answer this, we do have to introduce a new set of doctrines to

answer it. So stuff isn't as simple as we like to make it, folks. We have to look at a new set of doctrines. Those doctrines would be justification, sanctification and glorification. These are all doctrines pertaining to how Jesus Christ atones for your sin, you become a Christian, and you get to heaven. This is all about how your sin is dealt with and how you are disciplined and built, and this is key to understanding this question: can you be a gay Christian?

And let me just explain this real quick. And if we can, let's put that back up and just keep it up while I talk about it, the justification, sanctification. So it'll probably try to turn off again in a minute, so y'all just click it about every 10 seconds. So here's what I want you to understand. When you are justified, this is the moment that you become a Christian. When you call upon the name of the Lord, put your faith in Jesus Christ, you are immediately justified. It happens in an instant. At that moment you become a Christian, born again, blood bought. You become a Christian right at that moment. It is instant.

When Jesus returns and resurrects the dead in Christ, they will be glorified, meaning that they'll have perfect bodies, they'll be in perfect health and will operate in perfect behavior. You will be glorified. That is instant. Between those two instants there is a not-so-instant, and that process is called sanctification. And sanctification is what happens between the moment you become a Christian and the moment that you will ultimately receive the full and complete reward promised to your faith. Hebrews chapter 10 says that he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified, meaning that while you are in the process of being sanctified, you have received a full stamp of God's approval and yet you are still working through a process of becoming more like Christ.

HEBREWS 10:14 ESV

¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

You're in a process of becoming who God intends and desires you to be. You're growing in holiness, you're obeying God more, you're becoming more like Jesus, etc. You talk about how good your pastor looks. And essential things to the Christian faith, amen.

But nevertheless, it is a process. It's a process. So how long is the process? How long is the process? I'm going to give you a Bible answer for that. Let me just talk to you as a person for a moment. I found that generally, when we're talking about how long is the process for me, we want it to be a long time. When we talk about how long the process is for another person, we want it to be — I heard someone say the other day, they said mercy for me and justice for others never works. And that's how we view the work of Christ in most people's lives. It's mercy for me and justice for you. God understands what I'm going through, but you need to get your mess together. Do you hear me?

The Bible talks about this process in kind of a concealed way, and I want to show it to you this morning. I've taught on this before, but

JAMES 2:17-24 ESV

¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

James chapter 2, verse 17 says this — this will be a verse you’re familiar with: “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.” So a lot of us end with the verse, but it says more. It says, “But someone will say, ‘You have faith and I have works.’ Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe, and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness,’ and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is not justified by works” — or, is justified by works — “and not by faith alone.”

When James tells us this, that faith without works is dead, he’s also giving us a glimpse at the process of sanctification. And in the glimpse is this: Abraham was declared righteous by God, which the scripture mentions right here, James says it. He is declared righteous by God in Genesis chapter 15.

GENESIS 15:6 ESV

⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

In Genesis 22 Abraham offers Isaac on the altar — of course, the Lord stops him, as a picture that Jesus Christ is going to step in so that you don’t have to pay the price for your own righteousness.

GENESIS 22:9-12 ESV

⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” ¹² He said, “Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me.”

But that happens in Genesis 22. That is 40 years apart. Forty years. So by James’s own logic, Abraham was justified by his works and proved that his faith was working, because he got it right 40 years later.

Then it goes on and it says he’s called a friend of God. You know that never actually happened? That was what Isaiah said. Isaiah called him a friend of God.

ISAIAH 41:8 ESV

⁸ But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

That wasn't in the text. That's not in Genesis. We never see that happen. That was Isaiah said that. That's an event that's not even connected to Abraham's life. It's a long process. I just want to tell you right now, when it comes to people getting saved and how long they've got to get it right, I just want to say a long time. A long time.

"Well, preacher, I read in Hebrews that it says if you sin after you know better there ain't no sacrifice for sin."

HEBREWS 10:26 ESV

²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

Well, one, we need to address your theology. But two, you're going to hell. Y'all hear what I'm saying? Y'all quiet on me, and it's making me ugly this morning. I'll be resentful with you if I have to in a minute. I'm telling you, if that's true, you're going to hell. Because you've done stuff when you knew you shouldn't have done it. You did stuff while you knew you shouldn't have done it. You were doing it and knowing it at the same time. So you can't hold that. It can't be mercy for me, justice for them.

So there's a long process with sanctification. So let's go back to this question, the question being, can you be a gay Christian? My answer would be no. After all of that, my answer to that question is no, and it's simply because of the way the phrase is laid out. "Can you be a gay Christian" asks a question that sounds like, is homosexuality and Christianity — are they congruent with one another? Does homosexuality and Christianity — is there an agreement between the two of them? And the answer is no. A homosexual lifestyle and Christianity do not walk in agreement with one another, and we'll be very clear on that.

But there is — and I hope everybody's here, y'all hearing what I'm saying — because God knows I'm about to get 45 messages on the internet today going, "So you don't think being gay is a sin?" No, I think you're deaf. And so if we take that question, can you be a gay Christian, and we just change that question a little bit to say, can you be a Christian while you are yet presently gay, I would say yes.

I know that bothers some of y'all, but we just walked through the theology. It's there. It's there. So can you be a Christian and yet be in some type of practicing homosexuality? And this is where a lot of preachers take the easy road out, and I'm not one of them. I'm not going to do that, because we're casting a whole group of people to the side that we actually have to be able to reach. And we're getting into a season in the church, by the way, that we're rewarding people standing up and preachers getting in the pulpit, and Gen Z is really obsessed with preachers who get up and are obnoxiously bold and hard on issues. And I think we need some people who get up and stand and say some things straight. I think I've said it as straight as I can: homosexuality is a sin. At the same time, we have to be able to deal with the theology in a way that we can walk people through it, because the goal isn't to get you to not be saved, believe it or not. The goal is not to keep the kingdom small. It's to help people get through a process. It's to help people.

I know five of you are struggling with me. That's all right. You'll come around. Amen. We'll have popsicles for you next week and you'll forget all about it. Amen. And so, can you be a Christian while you're dealing with the issue? I'd say yes. And I know that we hear a lot of supernatural testimonies of people who got saved and then they never had those

temptations again, they never had those desires again. We hear that about homosexuals, we hear that about drug addicts, we hear that about everybody. People got saved and they're just, "I never picked up a cigarette again."

In my experience, that is the exception to the rule, and praise God when it happens. But the average, normative Christian experience is you get saved and you go into the car after church the same person you came in, with a supernatural difference on you. But that's not showing up in many places, and you work your way through it over time. This is a time game. The faith is about consistency. It's about showing up for the Lord. It's about getting in his presence and seeing things happen in your life. It's a time game.

And so while we see a lot of people who say it's always instant, it changed and it never happened again, and then they want to try to apply that to every homosexual or whatever else it is — that is not the way it typically happens. So most likely, if a gay person comes into the church and they get saved — I need y'all to hear me. I need you to hear me out there. If this is you, this is what I expect to happen in that situation. If someone comes into the church and they're gay and they give their life to Jesus Christ, they're probably walking out of here gay. That's probably how it's going to go down, and we're going to walk with them and we're going to help them and we're going to be there for them as a church, and we're going to see things change. And it may take a long time. Okay, good, praise the Lord. If you're willing to hang in the process, and it's tough — that's a win in my book, folks. That's a win in my book.

And by the way, I do just want to say that there are going to be some people online who are going to struggle with what I'm saying, and they're going to try to hit me real hard, because I'm not taking the position that a lot of people take. Because it's easy to take the easy position and to argue with each other on Facebook. My job as a preacher is not just to say what the Bible says. That's not my only job. My job is actually to cook with the book. My job is to take this and to get into it and to figure out how all the things connect, because if the Bible says it, at some point there ought to be an intersection with life and with faith and with the cross and with the power of the Holy Ghost and with real-life experiences. There are intersections there. And so that's my job. My job is not to just get up and say, "Here, it says it," and go to hell. That's not my job. My job is to cook with the book.

The Bible says in Psalm 119, verse 160 — it is the chief-most hermeneutical rule that I use — it says the sum of your word is truth.

PSALM 119:160 ESV

¹⁶⁰ The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

I got to look at the whole thing and figure out how it all works together. We got enough people running around quoting one little verse and saying, "Well, it says it right here." Okay, well, how does it flesh out? We've got that going on right now — wasn't going to say this, I'm not going to do it — in my stuff with the Southern Baptists right now, a big thing on women can't preach, because they've got a verse. The problem is most of the Bible is in opposition of the verse. So at some point you have to go, wait a minute, maybe it says that for a reason. Do y'all hear what I'm saying? Maybe it says it for a reason.

So the next step of your faith when you give your life to Jesus Christ, and let the sanctification process start doing its thing in your life — I would love to be able to just say, "Hey, stop being gay," but I don't think that's going to help anybody. I don't think that's the best instruction. I think any moment that any person gives their life to Jesus Christ, they have to let Jesus do a work on them. And so I would encourage every person that's dealing with these issues, or

another issue, in this church, out of this church, to put your faith in Jesus Christ and let him do a work. Do you believe that this morning?

I want to take a minute. I want to do two more things and then I'm going to get us out of here. But the next thing I want to do is, I just want to talk to you guys as the church, and I want to tell you kind of what my expectations are in this area. And then when I'm done, I'm going to talk to the community for a moment, and I'm going to be very candid.

I need you to have a clear understanding where we are on this issue. I hope that you do. Go back and listen to the message three times. If you don't, set an appointment up with me, we'll clear it up if we have to. But I hope that we're clear on this. As I have stated this morning, homosexuality is a Bible-defined sin. And I also just want to point out that some of the stuff that a lot of you do in this room is sin. Look at your neighbor and say, "You need to stop messing around." Amen.

So LGBT people, they are welcome in this church. I want to be clear: LGBT people are welcome. The Bible says in Romans chapter 10 that whosoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, and I'll tell you, I'm pretty sure that LGBT people are a whosoever.

ROMANS 10:13 ESV

¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

And so just like anyone else, you're welcome. I shared this very early on in my ministry here at the church, that statistically most people who give their life to Jesus Christ do it in a local church. Somewhere between 40 and 50 percent of people who are believers did so in a local church. They became a believer in a local church. So yeah, our doors are open.

And our only exclusion — and I'm saying this to you, I want you to know that I've actively acted on this as your pastor, so this is not just something I say, and I will continue to do so — but our only exclusion for people who are welcome in our church is people who would endanger children. That's the only thing we don't do. And so if there's an issue where I think a child is in danger, I'm all in. Now, that is not open to your interpretation. Okay? We're going to handle that with some guidelines and from a leadership position. But if we see an issue and we go, this person could potentially endanger a child, they're out of here, Jack. And you can be another pastor's problem. Amen.

Okay, so we're going to let that be that way. But I do need you to know this. You're going to see people at times who you're not going to know what to do with. Somebody's going to walk in here doing something, saying something, dressing some way, talking some way, looking some way, and somebody else isn't going to know what to do with it. And so when that happens, this is the expectation. The expectation is that you are loving, caring, considerate, respectful, friendly — and if none of those work, quiet. Your job is not to tell anybody off in the foyer. Yeah, roll up on people and tell them, "I can't believe you came to church looking this way, acting this way." We're not going to receive any positive fruit from that kind of behavior. That's just not going to work.

And so if you see something, you have an issue, bring it to our attention. Come talk to us. And I'll toss in one more freebie of instruction: if you want to get the best results, the best results happen with a conversation with me and not with the guy who left the church who don't like me. You're not going to get what you think you're going to get from that phone call. Okay? Just come talk to me. By the way, I'm also the last person to find stuff out. Something's going on in the church, I find out about it last. I know y'all think I know things first. I know about it last. Things don't get to me until

it's been happening a while. Something's brewing, you know, and I find out — so, seven weeks ago. Okay, that's good to finally hear about.

So come talk to me. Everybody clear? Okay, look at your neighbor and say, "You can do it." Okay. I want to take a minute now and I want to talk to some people who are not in our church, and I'm just going to talk to you for a minute.

As the pastor of this church, I want you to know that you are welcome here. We want you in this church. We want you to come sit under the ministry of the pulpit. We want you to worship the Lord. We want you to experience the power of God here in this house. We believe that that can make a significant difference in your life, regardless of what you do or don't do. Okay? So we want you here. And on behalf of this church, on behalf of this congregation, I'm saying to you, if you are in an LGBT — whatever — lifestyle, you are welcome to attend church services here. We want you here. Come in. I'd encourage you to sing the songs when they're on the screen, lift your hand, engage. I'll take amens from anybody — these people let me down today. So we need you to come and give me some amens. Amen. But we want to have you here in the church.

Now, I want to take off the pastor hat, and I'm not going to speak on behalf of the church anymore. I want to talk to you just me and you, Jason Mayfield. There is a reality in what I do. I'm not just the pastor here. Now, I would love for what I do to be all spiritual and all fuzzy and feeling and all of that stuff, but that's not all I do here as the pastor. I am a leader of an organization. I have a lot of responsibilities. We have big bills from Alabama Power. I have a significant amount of deferred maintenance on this building that I deal with any given day. I deal with a lot of people's opinions — of me, of the church. I have a lot going on. And on top of that, I'm singing, preaching, tap-dancing, I'm doing all of it, man. I'm busy. I have a lot happening.

You are welcome here. Just talking to you — this is me, I'm not the pastor. You know, if you roll up in here and you do something that's going to cost me ten meetings this week, I don't have time for that. I cannot stop my whole schedule to have meetings with my church people because you came in here and put on a show and caused problems. So I just want to tell you, you are in south Alabama. You know how to behave in a room. You are smart. If you come in here and do something, I know and you know — you know what you're doing. If you come in here and you intentionally cause me problems, the pastor loves you, the church loves you, Jason Mayfield and you will have a problem, and I will not appreciate it. Because right now, if you put me in a situation where I got to have four or five meetings with people who are going, "Well, they were holding hands and kissing in the foyer" — and I know you know better, but you've got a friend that doesn't know better that come in here and pull some stunts — I'm not going to be okay with that.

I do want to just say something to our transgender friends. And look, I just don't know any other way to say it: just use the bathroom before you come. Just use the bathroom at home. Don't come in here — you know it's going to cause a problem. You know, I got 30 people in here who are going to lose their ever-living mind if you roll up in the women's bathroom. Just don't make it an issue. Help me help you. I'm going to be here for you. I'm going to help you. I want to see Jesus Christ do a great work in your life. I cannot minister to you, and I cannot minister to these people, and I cannot minister to people who are hurting in our community, and I cannot minister to the people God is giving this church, if I'm running around putting fires out all day long.

I need you to hear me. I'm taking the risk. I'm putting myself out there, and I want to be clear. I've seen their faces while I've been preaching. I got a handful of people in here who could take it or leave it. They're indifferent on whether you show up or not, but they're willing to do it because they're trusting me. They're putting their trust in their pastor. Do not

come in here and dishonor that trust, or we will have a problem, and I will choose them over you. We love you. But if you're going to come to church, you know what you're doing. Please come and behave yourself. Amen.

Now, let me put the pastor hat back on real quick. We love you and we want you to come to church here. Amen. I'm for real when I say that, folks. I'm mindful of the whole thing, but at some point people have to matter most. Everybody okay? Everybody take your arms like this. Put your arms up and shake them real quick. Okay. All right, you're going to be fine. Now, I am mad at y'all. Y'all did not help me preach that message hardly at all. I was going to give everybody \$100 next week and I'm not doing it anymore. I'm not. I'm putting my foot down. Y'all all right? Everybody good?

I love you. I hope you understand what I've said. I mean what I've said. I don't get up here and say stuff other than what I mean, so I hope you're good. If you're not good, you know where we stand. And by the way, if you're watching and you have a problem with the fact that I just kind of told you how it was going to be here, and you want to come in here and make a show — I'm sorry if you feel that way, but I have heard that Pastor Rodney at Fountain of Life would love to have you come over there to his church. Amen. We're growing the kingdom, not just the church. Amen. We'll send them anywhere. I'm just playing. He'll call me Tuesday and say that was funny. That's all right.

Let's do this. I don't normally end this way, but let's just lift our hands to heaven for a moment. Lord, we thank you for the harvest. We thank you for what you're doing in our city. God, we ask you that you'd move in this place greatly, Father. We invite people who do not look like us, who do not act like us. We just ask you to give us a great harvest of people who otherwise wouldn't belong in another church. God, give us a sensibility to help people by walking with them in their life, in the transformation and the change, but God, letting them go through the pathway of your presence and your love, your forgiveness, your Holy Spirit, the power of God — not just a demand to quit. God, give us a grace to minister to people. Father, I asked you to give us that grace for people outside of this community, anybody who might be one that you would give to us

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This is the second message in a series on the value **we're honoring of all people**. The week before turned the examination on the church: undiagnosed pride, willful ignorance and immovable expression. This week takes up the question the church is asked most often on this subject.

Building a cohesive flow is hard. Start in one place and one group tunes you out; start in another and a different group does. The real risk is being misheard, misunderstood or, worst of all, unintentionally misrepresenting what the Bible intends concerning LGBT people. So say up front how the message is built, and ask people to stay to the end:

- First, what the Bible says.
- Second, what the church family needs to know.
- Third, a direct word to the community outside the church, spoken to the camera.

A note on terms: in this message, **homosexuality** is used as a blanket term for the whole range of LGBT issues. They are varied and diverse, but there will not be a separate section for each.

Two cautions. Be as clear about the welcome as about the conviction; both are part of the message. And keep the tone of honor from the week before. Clear is kind, but clear is not harsh.

Introduction

Turn to Romans 1.

Illustration: “Let’s talk about the gaze.” Years ago, at a large church in Michigan, the care ministries pastor, an older man named Ron Sparks, was one of the finest preachers on staff. People loved him, and sometimes people loved Jesus because Ron Sparks loved them. One night, halfway through a message full of hope and joy, he said, “Now, let’s talk about the gays.” The room came to a screeching halt. Then the slide came up on the screen: “Let’s Talk About the Gaze.” So today, in the spirit of Ron Sparks: let’s talk about the gays.

This is an issue that touches many intersections of our lives and our culture. Start here, and make it the first thing everyone hears:

The gospel is for all people.

As we said last week, the goal is not to hurt or offend anyone. Like Brené Brown, I believe **clear is kind**, and the primary intention today is to be clear.

1. Is Homosexuality a Sin?

Every conversation about the church, the faith and homosexuality seems to come down to one question: **Is homosexuality a sin?** Well-known pastors like Joel Osteen, John MacArthur and Rick Warren have all been asked it on television.

The Bible gives a direct answer to the face-value version of that question. **Is homosexuality a sin? Yes.**

People often accuse Christians of cherry-picking verses on this subject. So name every passage openly. Besides Romans 1, homosexuality is mentioned in five other places in the Bible, six in all:

- Leviticus 18:22
- Leviticus 20:13
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10
- 1 Timothy 1:9-10
- Jude 7
- Romans 1:26-27

Let the congregation take a picture of the list. In about three and a half minutes, anyone can read everything the Bible says directly on this subject.

ROMANS 1:26-27 ESV

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

Romans 1 is helpful in answering this question for three reasons.

FIRST, ROMANS 1 DOES NOT USE THE WORD “HOMOSEXUAL”

You will hear that the word *homosexual* did not appear in an English Bible until 1946, when the Revised Standard Version translated 1 Corinthians 6:9 differently than it had been translated before. That is true. It is not a conspiracy theory. But it does not mean much. The word *homosexual* did not enter the English language until 1892. Getting a new word from its first appearance in print to a Bible translation in about fifty years, without computers, is understandable. Bible versions are updated precisely because English changes over time.

More importantly, **no load-bearing passage on this issue uses the word homosexual.** Leviticus and Romans 1 both spell out the relationship. They describe it rather than naming it with a single term. There is no lone Greek or Hebrew word to mistranslate; you cannot mistranslate a description.

SECOND, ROMANS 1 SHOWS THE ROOT OF ITS SINFULNESS

The law of Moses contains laws that seem strange to us, and some of them get pulled out to dismiss Leviticus 18 and 20. “If you can’t be gay, can you not mix fabrics?” (see Leviticus 19:19). Those laws seem strange because we are us and they were them. God was preparing a people to go from slavery into the promised land, to inherit houses, fields and crops they did not build, and to be protected there. Without instruction, Israel would walk into a house in Canaan and end up bowing to the idol in the master bedroom.

Illustration: the raise. Ever seen somebody get a \$5,000 raise and buy a car that costs \$80,000 more? Now imagine the jump from slavery to the promised land. The law served to guard Israel against idols and to order its life together.

Leviticus 18 lists many sexual relationships to avoid, including sleeping with your mother (Leviticus 18:7). Nobody is arguing about that one.

But Romans 1 tells us that homosexual behavior is not only a violation of the law God gave Moses. **It is a departure from God’s created design, the order of nature.**

THIRD, JESUS AFFIRMED THE SAME DESIGN

“Jesus never said anything about homosexuality.” We only have a small snapshot of what Jesus said on earth. John says that if everything Jesus did were written down, “the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25). It stands to reason He said more than the words printed in red.

But Jesus did affirm the very Scripture Paul argues from in Romans 1. When He was asked about divorce, He answered from creation:

MATTHEW 19:4-6 ESV

⁴ He answered, “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.”

Paul uses the same logic and the same Scripture (Genesis 1:27; 2:24) to say that homosexual behavior is a violation of nature.

And Jesus did address it directly, because “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus did not only say the words in red. He said the words in print. It makes no sense to argue that Scripture cannot be trusted and then claim certainty about what the red letters mean.

2. The Word “Sin”

So, is homosexuality a sin? At face value, yes. But here is the sticky wicket: the question is not the whole of what people are asking.

One word in that question complicates everything, so much that two people can think they are talking to each other while having two entirely different conversations. **That word is sin.**

There is a whole theology of sin. It has a name: **hamartiology**. A solid definition of sin has to answer:

- What is sin?
- What is the source of sin?
- What is the result of sin?
- What is the consequence of sin?
- What is the resolution for sin?
- What levels are there to sin?

Riddle me this: if someone tells a lie, which is a sin, and the lie is meant to and does protect another person from danger, is it still sin? Would it be a sin *not* to lie? In that one question you have the ethical, ontological, anthropological and theological meeting of sin. It is plain and simple, and it is far from plain and simple.

“Well, the Bible says...” Yes, and we are not afraid of that conversation. But the day your son or daughter walks in with this, you will want more than “the Bible says.” You will be thankful for some theology.

When people ask, “Is homosexuality a sin?” they are usually asking something bigger: **“If someone is gay, does God hate them and send them to hell without any further context or consideration?”** That is an entirely different question.

3. How Sin Is Dealt With

To understand the question, we have to understand what the Bible says about sin.

ROMANS 6:23 ESV

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 3:21-26 ESV

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Sin, apart from and including homosexuality, is only dealt with by grace through faith in the work and lordship of Jesus Christ. Whether you lie, or you are a man with a man or a woman with a woman, the solution is the solution. There are not multiple paths. Jesus Christ is enough for everyone.

Romans 5 goes on to say that what Jesus remedied is not only the sin you do but the sin embedded in your very nature, passed down from Adam (Romans 5:12-19).

So follow the logic:

- Homosexuality is a sin.
- Sin is remedied only by the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- You can put your faith in Jesus and be saved while you are still a sinner, because “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).
- You can become a Christian through the blood of Christ before your behavior changes. That is how every one of us came.

Which opens a second question.

4. Can You Be a Gay Christian?

This has risen to the top of the questions people ask. To answer it, we need three doctrines about how Jesus deals with sin, how we are disciplined, and how we get to heaven. Keep these on the screen while you teach them.

- **Justification** is the moment you become a Christian. When you call on the name of the Lord and put your faith in Jesus, you are justified, born again and blood-bought. It is **instant**.
- **Glorification** happens when Jesus returns and raises the dead in Christ: perfect bodies, perfect health, perfect behavior. It is also **instant**.
- **Sanctification** is the not-so-instant process between those two instants. You are growing in holiness, obeying God more, becoming more like Jesus, becoming who God intends you to be.

“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14). While you are in the process, you already carry the full stamp of God's approval.

HOW LONG IS THE PROCESS?

When it is our process, we want it to take a long time. When it is someone else's, we want it done by Tuesday. Someone said that **mercy for me and justice for others never works**. But that is how we often see the work of Christ: God understands what I am going through, but you need to get your mess together.

The Bible shows the length of the process in a concealed way.

JAMES 2:17-24 ESV

¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

James says faith without works is dead, but he also gives a glimpse of sanctification. Abraham was declared righteous in Genesis 15 (Genesis 15:6). He offered Isaac on the altar in Genesis 22, and the Lord stopped him, a picture of Jesus stepping in so that we do not pay the price for our own righteousness (Genesis 22:9-12). Those events are decades apart. By James's own logic, Abraham's faith was shown to be working when he got it right many years later.

And Abraham being called the friend of God is not in Genesis at all. God calls him "Abraham, my friend" through Isaiah, long after Abraham's lifetime (Isaiah 41:8; see also 2 Chronicles 20:7). Sanctification is a long process. When it comes to how long people have to get it right: a long time.

"But Hebrews says if you sin after you know better, there is no sacrifice left" (see Hebrews 10:26). First, that calls for a closer look at your theology. Second, if that is what it means, every one of us is lost, because all of us have sinned while knowing better. It cannot be mercy for me and justice for them.

THE ANSWER

So, can you be a gay Christian? **No**, because of the way the phrase is put. It asks whether homosexuality and Christianity are congruent, whether they agree with each other. They do not. **A homosexual lifestyle and Christianity do not walk in agreement with one another**, and we will be very clear on that.

But change the question slightly: **Can you be a Christian while you are yet presently gay? Yes.**

"So you don't think being gay is a sin?" That is not what was said. Both answers stand together, and the theology is there.

So can someone be a Christian and still be in some type of practicing homosexuality? The original notes put it this way: you will likely become a Christian and continue to deal with it, maybe even to the point of engaging in it,

but you are saved. This is where many preachers take the easy road and cast a whole group of people aside, a group we have to be able to reach. There is a place for preachers who stand up and say things straight, and it has been said as straight as it can be: homosexuality is a sin. At the same time, we have to handle the theology in a way that lets us walk people through it. **The goal is not to keep the kingdom small. The goal is to help people get through a process.**

There are wonderful testimonies of people who were saved and never had those desires again. We hear them about homosexuality, about drug addiction, about cigarettes. Praise God when that happens. But in Pastor Jason's experience, it is the exception to the rule. The normal Christian experience is that you walk to the car after church the same person you came in, with a supernatural difference on you, and you work your way through over time. **The Christian life is a time game.** It is about consistency, showing up for the Lord and getting in His presence.

So most likely, **if someone who is gay comes into this church and gives their life to Jesus Christ, they will probably walk out of here gay.** And we are going to walk with them, help them and be there for them as a church, and we are going to see things change. It may take a long time. If they are willing to stay in the process, that is a win.

Some people online will hit hard for this, because it is not the easy position. But a preacher's job is not just to read a verse and say "go to hell." **The job is to cook with the Book:** to dig in and find where what the Bible says intersects with life, with faith, with the cross, with the power of the Holy Spirit and with real experience.

"The sum of your word is truth" (Psalm 119:160). That is Pastor Jason's chief rule for reading the Bible: look at the whole thing and work out how it fits together, rather than quoting one verse and saying, "It says it right here."

The next step for anyone who gives their life to Jesus is to let sanctification do its work. "Stop being gay" is not a helpful instruction. Anyone who comes to Christ has to let Jesus do the work. So to every person dealing with this or any other issue, in this church or outside it: **put your faith in Jesus Christ and let Him do a work in you.**

5. To the Church Family

Church, you need a clear understanding of where we are on this issue. If it is not clear, set up an appointment and we will clear it up.

Homosexuality is a Bible-defined sin. And a lot of what many of us do is also sin.

LGBT people are welcome in this church. The Bible says "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13). LGBT people are a "whosoever," just like anyone else. Pastor Jason cited a figure that somewhere between 40 and 50 percent of believers came to faith in a local church. So, yes, our doors are open.

Our only exclusion is anyone who would endanger children. This is not just something we say; it has already been acted on, and it will continue to be. That is not open to individual interpretation. It is handled by leadership under clear guidelines. If someone could endanger a child, they will not be part of this church.

Here is the expectation for the church family. You are going to see people at times you do not know what to do with: the way they dress, talk, look or act. When that happens, **be loving, caring, considerate, respectful and friendly. And if none of those work, be quiet.** Your job is not to tell anybody off in the foyer. No positive fruit comes from that.

If you see something and you are struggling with it, bring it to the pastoral team. Come talk with the pastor directly.

6. To the Community

Speak to the camera.

As pastor, on behalf of the church: you are welcome here. If you are in an LGBT lifestyle, you are welcome to attend our services. Come sit under the ministry of the Word. Worship the Lord. Sing the songs, lift your hands, engage, and experience the power of God in this house. We believe it can make a significant difference in your life, regardless of what you do or don't do. We want you here.

Then take off the pastor hat and speak personally. Pastor Jason explained that leading a church is not all spiritual: there are power bills, deferred maintenance on the building, many people's opinions, and a Sunday service he was largely carrying himself. If someone comes in and deliberately puts on a show, it costs him a week of meetings. "You are in south Alabama. You know how to behave in a room." If someone comes in to intentionally cause problems, the pastor loves them and the church loves them, but Jason Mayfield will have a problem with it.

To transgender friends, he asked plainly that they not make the restroom an issue: use the restroom before you come. *(The original notes also offer the church's single-person restrooms.)*

He named the reason directly: some people in the room are indifferent about whether LGBT people come, but they are choosing to trust their pastor on this. **Do not dishonor that trust.** If someone does, he will choose the people who trusted him. "We love you. But if you're going to come to church, please come and behave yourself."

Then put the pastor hat back on: we love you, and we want you to come to church here. At some point, people have to matter most.

(Pastor Jason closed this section with a joke that anyone who wants to come and make a scene could try another church in town. Keep or cut at the preacher's discretion.)

Conclusion

Lift your hands and pray for a harvest.

Lord, we thank You for what You are doing in our city. Give us a great harvest of people who do not look like us or act like us, people who otherwise would not belong in another church. Give us the sensitivity to help people by

walking with them through transformation and change, through the pathway of Your presence, Your love, Your forgiveness and the power of Your Holy Spirit, **not just a demand to quit**. Give us grace to minister to people.

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

ROMANS 1:26-27

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

MATTHEW 19:4-6

⁴ He answered, “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.”

ROMANS 6:23

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 3:21-26

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

JAMES 2:17-24

¹⁷ So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ¹⁹ You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ²⁰ Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? ²² You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

LEVITICUS 18:22

²² You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.

LEVITICUS 20:13

¹³ If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them.

1 CORINTHIANS
6:9-10

⁹ Or 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.

1 TIMOTHY 1:9-10

⁹ understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰ the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine,

JUDE 7

⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

ROMANS 5:12-19

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—¹³ for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. ¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶ And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. ¹⁷ For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

ROMANS 5:8

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

HEBREWS 10:14

¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

GENESIS 15:6

⁶ And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

GENESIS 22:9-12

⁹ When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

ISAIAH 41:8

⁸ But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;

HEBREWS 10:26

²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

PSALM 119:160

¹⁶⁰ The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.

ROMANS 10:13

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

LEVITICUS 19:19

¹⁹ “You shall keep my statutes. You shall not let your cattle breed with a different kind. You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor shall you wear a garment of cloth made of two kinds of material.

LEVITICUS 18:7

⁷ You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father, which is the nakedness of your mother; she is your mother, you shall not uncover her nakedness.

JOHN 21:25

²⁵ Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.

GENESIS 1:27

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

GENESIS 2:24

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

GENESIS 3:1-7

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

ABOUT THE PREACHER



Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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