

Grace Community Church

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The Stages of Gentile Unbelief: Being Given Over Even to Homosexuality

These Expository Notes are devotional in nature and represent the pulpit ministry at Grace Community Church, instead of more polished detailed exposition.

It is *sobering* to consider that there is coming a moment in history, when the pent up *wrath of God* will express itself in full fury against sinful men and women. The Bible says...

...we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth...[and those who remain hardhearted and impenitent] treasure up unto [themselves] wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds...to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek. (cf. Rom. 2:5-9)

No one will be exempt as this pent up wrath of the sin hating God blazes out in retribution! But the *wrath of God*, the Bible says, is also presently being “revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” (cf. Rom. 1:18) And as we looked at the following passages in Romans chapter one, *we discovered*, that as men rejected God as revealed by the evidence of the created world about them, suppressing or holding back the thought of God’s glorious attributes (vs. 18), they then “became fools” substituting, the glorious God for idols “made like corruptible man, and birds, and four-footed beasts and creeping things.” (vs. 23)

It’s because of this, *we also discovered*, that God “gave them up to uncleanness...to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.” That is, God expressed His wrath in a judicial

sentence, delivering sinful men and women to the binding wickedness of their own sins! Further, as we discovered, men and women “exchanged the truth of God for the lie” (cf. 1:25), which refers to a deliberate philosophical shift of thinking and behavior. Now instead of simply “suppressing the truth” (vs. 18), they actually discard it and exchange for it, the lie of creature autonomy, i.e., “I am the captain of my own soul; I can determine my own course in life; I can act independent of God.”

We come now to the last part of this chapter with a sense of trepidation. As Donald Grey Barnhouse mentions...

The last nine verses in the first chapter of Romans are the most terrible in the Bible. This is the description of mankind abandoned by God and the scene is a frightful one. The cause of the abandonment was the successive departure from God by the human soul in the successive steps of desertion that began with a failure to acknowledge God in worship and thanksgiving, and continued through the various stages of the deification of human reason to ultimate folly of man in the most corrupt form of idolatrous practices. Having departed from God man made a god in his own image.

Now today, we want to look at the *second stage* of God’s judicial expression of wrath, where God gives people over to further sin. And this stage of God’s wrath is especially *relevant* and *controversial* to the times in which we live. The Bible says...

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women [or better, “females”] did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature; and likewise also the men [or “males”], leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting. (cf. Rom. 1:26-27)

Obviously, we’ve moved into *controversial* ground, as we consider that the *second stage* of God’s wrath, involves a judicial sentence, where people are given up to the wickedness of sexual *perversion* leading to homosexuality. Idolatry as it downgrades the nature of God, leads to abandonment of one’s moral life to forms of fornication or immorality. The deterrent of the fear of God is gone; sexual immorality rushes to fill the vacuum.

As the extra Biblical book *The Wisdom of Solomon* states, “the idea of making idols was the beginning of fornication and the invention of them the corruption of life.” (14:12) And this fornication even finds expression in the abomination of homosexual perversion: women “exchange the natural use” to become sexual partners with women; and “also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman,” sexually turn toward men. But *controversial* or not, this is what the Bible teaches! Let’s break this passage down and consider *some of the particulars*, before we focus on the *general lesson*.

Notice *first* of all, that God “gave them up unto vile affections,” or dishonorable sexual passions. Some suggest this word means “passions that bring dishonor.” These are sexual passions either heterosexual immorality such as adultery or homosexual immorality. Proverbs 6 warns...

...whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding; he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and *dishonor* shall he get and *his reproach shall not be wiped away*. (vss. 32-33)

The Bible actually condemns 13 different sexual practices, either by direct statement or implication. It condemns: sex outside of marriage; sexual worship or spiritual prostitution; economic prostitution; homosexuality as mentioned here; sex with animals; incest; pedophilia; sexual violence; mental lust; gender confusion; sex while a woman is having her period; divorce; spiritually mixed marriages; indecent exposure or immodesty; polygamy. In addition, the Bible commands we are to have no fellowship with a professing believer who does these 13 practices. All of these are under the broad category of “vile affections.”

One author muses on our contemporary American culture this way:

Americans are facing a moral-spiritual crisis as catastrophic as thermonuclear war, and of the challenges we face, none is more consequential or demanding than the moral conflict over sex. [then when describing the changing views liberating sex in our culture, he writes...] There is indeed a dark new spiritual presence in the culture that, like a black hole is bending morality in a new direction and pulling everything close into the orbit. (Daniel Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*, pp. 19, 34)

The author is likening the contemporary change in sexual practices to the new situational ethics of immorality, to a “black hole” that is pulling all moral and ethical issues into its compromise. This is true and very observant in diagnosis of today’s post-modern collapse of ethical integrity. Basically, because sexual standards have been swept away, other moral standards shrink also. We are going to see the truth of this when considering our next passage.

Rom 1:28-32. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy,

murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

This was illustrated to me on Thursday (October 6, 2011) when I received the latest Albert Mohler blog on the CNN Piers Morgan interview with Joel Osteen and his wife Victoria Tuesday night. Osteen is pastor of the largest church in America but notorious for being theologically ambiguous and a promoter of the prosperity gospel. In the interview Osteen said the Bible calls homosexuality of sin but admitted “many homosexuals attend his church and some are friends of ours.” When Piers Morgan asked if he would attend a wedding ceremony of a homosexual couple, Osteen said he would. Morgan wisely commented: ”You cannot celebrate what you say you know to be sin.” Al Mohler called Osteen’s statement “theological nonsense” and “ministerial malpractice,” which it is. A pastor must affirm clearly the Bible calls sodomy an abomination, rebuke it clearly to those who try to attend our churches but practice that and shun them in every social occasion possible, especially if they call themselves “Christians.” Joel Osteen, wants relationships to be smooth, cordial and without offence even when they sodomite is an abomination to God.

By the way it was interesting that by the end of the interview Piers Morgan asked...

...shouldn't the scripture be dragged kicking and screaming into the modern age?...doesn't it have to move with the times and isn't it down again to people like you [speaking to Joel Osteen] to interpret it in a way that evolves when you're known as a very progressive preacher?

This is the so-called New Hermeneutic, which claims the Bible is to be considered on two

points, i.e., what it originally meant and what it today means. Sexual teaching can then simply be swept away in the evolution of cultural changes. This is the twisting of today's post-modern or sometimes call “deconstruction” of ancient communication, like the Bible. “They became fools!” No, the Bible shouldn't be dragged kicking and screaming into the modern age” but the modern age should be dragged kicking and screaming into the demands of the Bible, into the fear of God, who governs His universe.

By the way, yesterday (October 8, 2011) in the Tulsa World there appeared an AP article, “Presbyterian Church Will Ordain First Gay Minister,” recording the sad Presbyterian USA compromise that happened evidently last night. The end of the article reads like the moral obituary of our society...

Several reasons have been cited for the loosened restrictions: the trend in broader American society toward accepting same-sex relationships, decreased interest in continuing the debate, and the departure of some conservative churches from the presbyteries, which changed the balance of votes in some regions.

No, cultural compromises shouldn't adjust our thinking on sexual morals but we should drag our culture and personal thinking kicking and screaming into the Bible's clear commands for purity and holiness!

But the passage in Romans, illustrates the extent of sexual immorality by lesbian and gay perversion or homosexuality. Paul uses the Greek words for “females” (Greek, theleiai) and “males” (Greek, arrhenes) instead of “women” (Greek, guna) and “men,”(Greek, aner) to specifically draw attention to the kind of immoral act. Donald Grey Barnhouse draws attention to Paul's selection of these terms.

The Greek is even more brutal than English, for the words used for “men” and “women” are not the noble words that speak of the high dignity of the human race in its position as heads of the earthly creation. The Greek words are those used

to denote nothing more than sex in animals. Even if we translated it to render the thought that the males left the natural use of the females, it would not reach the degradation of the meaning that is conveyed in the original language. (p. 276, vol. 1)

This is, says Paul, “against nature,” or contrary to the intention of the Creator. Having previously left the Creator they now reject the created order and pervert their actions, expressing their sexual passions “against nature.” This is why God says, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination.” (cf. Lev. 18:22)

If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. (cf. Lev. 20:13)

Now let’s focus on the general lesson: substituting the true God for idols, leads to God’s wrath being expressed in handling you over to sexual fornication or dishonorable sexual passions. Remember how the nation of Israel influenced Aaron to make the golden calf, in Exodus 32, which idolatry led to verse 6, where the people “sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” As verse 25 comments, “Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies.” Idolatry led to immorality! As Sandy and Headlam summarize in their *International Critical Commentary* on Romans, “The lawless fancies of men invented their own divinities. Such gods as these left them free to follow their own unbridled passions.” Yes, idolatry leads to immorality and what we do with God has much to do with our character and life style!

And I’d remind you that sexual perversion, either fornication like adultery or fornication like homosexuality, leads to eternal damnation. Elsewhere Paul reminded...

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators [this refers to general sexual perversion], nor idolaters, nor adulterers [this

refers to sex with another partner when married], nor effeminate [the Greek word is malakos, referring to passive homosexuals], nor abusers of themselves with mankind [the Greek word is arsenokoitas, referring to homosexual prostitutes], nor thieves, nor covetous [those who practice mental lust and sexual fantasy; viewers of pornography], nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionist, shall inherit the kingdom of God. (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10)

These sins are abominable to God and should be considered by us, as what they are, i.e., worthy of the judgment of eternal flames! We can’t simply consider these as “alternative lifestyles” or moral weaknesses. They are the result of the Lord’s wrath for previous rejection of God. Again the Apostle wrote to the Ephesian believers and repeated warning on this...

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints...For this ye know, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man (who is an idolater) hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. [and then as if Paul anticipated some in the congregation would challenge his teaching about the eternal consequences of fornication, adultery, and coveting, he adds...] Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience! (cf. Eph. 5:1-6)

Rejecting the evidence of God by holding back the truth of His existence, His power and His divine attributes as revealed in nature, man receives the punishment of God’s present *active wrath* and is *turned over* first to uncleanness resulting further in a philosophical shift (i.e., the exchanging of the truth for the lie) and then secondly to being turned over to vile affections, where perversion is cultivated like a cancer. Listen carefully...

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know

how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of sensuality, even as the Gentiles who know not God...For God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness. (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3-7)

Turning away from the true God will result in a vain formulating or inventing a god into your own liking, which ends in the wrath of God giving you over to immoral perversion! Not wanting to submit to the true God who is holy, men and women speculate a god who tolerates their indulgences. And make no mistake, God “is not mocked; for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap; for he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption” and God has clearly and repeatedly gone on record in His book about the eternal consequences of sexual immorality.