

## **The Church and the Homosexual Introduction**

One need not go very far within the American cultural landscape before being confronted with homosexuality. Homosexuality is manifest in the media, entertainment, political, and ecclesiastical realms. All one has to do is open a magazine and to find articles promoting the homosexual lifestyle. Turn on the television or go to the movies and one is confronted with storylines that feature homosexual characters when such characters are not essential to the plot. Or, who but the proverbial ostrich with his head in the sand is not aware of the political football of gay marriage. Homosexuality has even found its way into the Church. In the Episcopal Church, an openly gay minister was appointed as a bishop, and in the Presbyterian Church (USA), the issue of the ordination of homosexual ministers is constantly before their general assembly. Wherever one turns, homosexuality is present. Many groups have opposed societal acceptance of homosexuality; chief among them has been the evangelical Church, especially many within the reformed community. Some within the Church who have sought the solution to the homosexual problem through political activism. They believe the battle against gay marriage, for example, will be won or lost in the courts. Who appoints judges? Politicians. Therefore, the Church must see to the election of conservative judges who will uphold Christian values, especially as it pertains to marriage. Others have taken up the public battle against homosexuality by means of protest. For example, one presbytery from a conservative reformed denomination wrote a letter of petition to its local civil authorities spelling out the wickedness of homosexuality and the need for the magistrate to uphold God's law, especially as it concerns marriage. It might surprise some, but political activism and protest are unbiblical responses to homosexuality. What, then, is a proper biblical response?

### **What the Bible says**

The proper response to homosexuality is one that begins with the Word of God. One must first acknowledge the veracity and inerrancy of the Scriptures and its authority. This means that when we consider the teaching of Scripture concerning homosexuality, we must accept its judgment regarding the sinfulness of such behavior. The apostle Paul, for example, is quite clear that homosexuality is not only sinful but is a form of divine judgment: "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> 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" (Rom 1.26-27). So, one must first accept the truth and inerrant nature of Paul's statement. But, second, one must recognize that Paul's statement is not simply private opinion. Paul was not a homophobe. Rather, Paul, as an apostle commissioned by Christ himself, wrote the authoritative revelation of God (Rom 1.1; cf. Tit 1.1-3). This means that the condemnation of homosexuality is authoritative because the source of the condemnation is ultimately God himself. Now, this first step, namely recognizing the sinfulness of homosexuality, is important and determinative for one's response to the sin of homosexuality.

We in the Church must realize that since homosexuality is a matter of sin, no

amount of political activism or protesting will effectively deal with homosexuality. Perhaps the Church can rally enough support for a preferred political candidate who, when elected to office, would then appoint conservative judges, who would then ban same-sex marriage. Would this be reason to rejoice? Not really. While the laws of the land might reflect something of God's intended order for marriage, the hearts of the citizens of this land would still be in sin. Gay couples would continue to engage in their sinful behavior. What about protesting? Again, all of the protesting in the world will not change the heart of a sinner. Moreover, when the Church engages in political protest of homosexuality, it smacks of hypocrisy. How so? Is not the Church upholding the authoritative teaching of Scripture when it protests homosexuality? Yes and no. Yes, the Scriptures condemn homosexuality. But political protest is not how the Church is to respond to homosexuality, or any other sin. Does the Church protest with as much fervor and dedication the sin of drunkenness? How about the sins of adultery or divorce? While the Bible is clear in its condemnation of homosexuality, it seems that it has equally harsh words for divorce: "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel" (Mal 2.16; NIV). Why does the Church so vehemently protest homosexuality but when it comes to divorce, there is a deafening silence?

Why do we not protest the liberal divorce laws in our country? Why are there not Christian political activists dedicated to the election of candidates that will do something to make the divorce laws of our country more strict? Why does the Church not also write letters to the civil magistrate requesting that the government uphold God's law concerning marriage and divorce? While it may not be the intent of those within the Church, to protest and oppose homosexuality while remaining silent regarding divorce, or any other sin for that matter, is hypocritical. It is also legalistic because, like the Pharisees, we seek to remove the speck from our brother's eye while ignoring the log in our own. So how is the Church to avoid hypocrisy in its battle against homosexuality?

## **CONCLUSION**

We must recognize that the only biblical response to homosexuality is the message of the gospel. We must have our doctrine move from theory to practice. Why do we acknowledge that homosexuality is a sin and then respond with something less than the power of God? Political activism or protest will never change the heart of a sinner. Only the power of the gospel can do that, whether it be through preaching, teaching, or one-on-one evangelism. Moreover, the gospel is the universal answer to sin. No matter the sin-ailment, the gospel is the answer. When we focus on the propagation of the gospel as the Church's response to homosexuality, we bring the power of God to bear against sin. Also, as we propagate the gospel, we are reminded of our own redeemed condition, namely that we have been the unworthy recipients of God's grace and that Christ has redeemed us from the power of sin, whether it be idolatry, thievery, adultery, or deceit. It is by the propagation of the gospel that the Church protests all forms of sin, homosexuality included. The proper biblical response to homosexuality, therefore, is to spread the gospel.