

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Why Homosexuality is Not Like Other Sins

Homosexuality is not the only sin mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10.

"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, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

It's not the only sin mentioned, but it is different from all the rest, at least right now.

At this moment in history, contrary to the other sins listed here, homosexuality is celebrated by our larger society with pioneering excitement. It's seen as a good thing, as the new hallmark of progress.

To be sure, the masses increasingly make no bones about sin in general. Innumerable people are idolaters, not to mention those who are sexually immoral, or who commit adultery, or who steal and are greedy and get wasted and revile neighbors and swindle others. It happens all the time. And each of these unrepentant sins are the same in the sense of God's judgment. They all deserve his wrath. And we're constantly reminded that "such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Concerning Popular Opinion

But as far as I know, none of those sins are applauded so aggressively by whole groups of people who advocate for their normalcy. Sexual immorality is no longer the tip of the spear for the progressive push. Adultery is still frowned upon by many. Accusations of greed will still smear a candidate's political campaign. Thievery is still not openly embraced, and there are no official initiatives saying it's OK to go steal things that don't belong to you. There's no such thing as a drunk agenda yet. Most aren't proud to choose a beverage over stability, and there aren't any petitions that the government should abolish the driving restrictions of inebriated individuals. Reviling others still isn't seen as the best way to win friends and influence people. Swindling, especially on a corporate

level, usually gets someone thrown into jail. In fact, the infrastructure of the American economy depends upon, in some measure, our shared disdain for conniving scammers. Perhaps excepting fornication, these sins are still seen in a pretty negative light.

But not homosexual practice, not by those who are now speaking loudest and holding positions of prominence. According to the emerging consensus, homosexuality is different.

As Christians, we believe with deepest sincerity that the embrace of homosexual practice, along with other sins, keeps people out of the kingdom of God. And if our society celebrates it, we can't both be caring and not say anything. Too much is at stake.

This means it is an oversimplification to say that Christians—or conservative evangelicals—are simply against homosexuality. We are against any sin that restrains people from everlasting joy in God, and homosexual practice just gets all the press because, at this cultural moment, it's the main sin that is so freshly endorsed in our context by the powers that be.

Let's hope that if there's some new cultural agenda promoting thievery—one that says it's now our right to take whatever we want from others by whatever means—that Christians will speak out against it.

The issue is sin. That's what we're against. And that's what should make our voice so unique when we speak into this debate. Some would like to see this whole issue of homosexuality divided into two camps: those who celebrate it and those who hate it. Both of these groups exist in our society. There are the growing numbers, under great societal pressure, who praise homosexuality. We might call them the left. And there are people who hate homosexuality, with the most bigoted rationale and apart from any Christian concern. We might call them the right.

Those Glorious Words

The current debate is plagued by this binary lens. Those on the left try to lump everyone who disagrees with them into that right side. If you don't support, you hate. Meanwhile, those on the right see compromise and spinelessness in anyone who doesn't get red-faced and militant. If you don't hate, you support. But true followers of Christ will walk neither path. We have something to say that no one else is saying, or can say. Distancing ourselves from both the left and the right, we don't celebrate homosexual practice, we acknowledge God's clear revealed word that it is sin; and we don't hate those who embrace homosexuality, we love them enough to not just collapse under the societal pressure.

We speak the truth in love into this confusion, saying, simultaneously, “That’s wrong,” and, “I love you.” We’re not the left; we say, this is wrong. And we’re not the right; we say, you’re loved. We speak good news, with those sweetest, deepest, most glorious words of the cross—the same words that God spoke to us—“You’re wrong, and you’re loved.”

God tells us we’re wrong, that the wages of sin is death, that unrepentant rebellion means judgment, that our rescue required the cursed death of his Son (Romans 1:18-32; Romans 3:23; John 3:36; Galatians 3:13). And God tells us we’re loved, that even while we were sinners, Jesus died for us, that while we were unrighteous, Jesus suffered in our place, that though we were destined for wrath, Jesus welcomes us into glory (Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:1–7).

Where the Gospel Shines

You’re wrong and you’re loved—that’s the unique voice of the Christian. That’s what we say, speaking from our own experience. We’re far worse than we ever imagined, and far more loved than we could ever dream.

That’s our message in this debate, when society’s elites despise us, when pop songs vilify us, when no one else has the resources to say anything outside of two extremes, we have this incomparable opportunity to let the gospel shine, to reach out in grace: You’re wrong and you’re loved. We get to say this.

That’s why homosexuality is not like other sins.

- Keith Stonehart

Working to Rule

The term Work to Rule is familiar to most people living in England. It means to work according to predefined minimum requirements for a given job. Thus, the worker will work no weekends, no overtime, and no relief. He will make no effort to make up the time following a breakdown or delay. He may refuse to use equipment provided to increase efficiency. Realizing the paralyzing effect of such minimum effort, labor leaders use such action as an alternative to a strike.

Working to Rule is common in the church. Many establish what appears to them to be a reasonable set of minimum requirements for staying out of hell and then live accordingly. Usually it involves attending Sunday for "breaking of bread" (unless on holidays), giving a certain percentage of their income, perhaps "saying a little prayer" before retiring, and avoiding the grosser forms of immorality. They do not advertise or attend gospel

meetings. They seldom attend Bible classes or Sunday evening services. "These are not required," they explain. If all the members of a given congregation were Work to Rule people the church would be no more effective than an industry by such action.

The Lord has never stated any minimum requirements. He speaks only in terms of total commitment, of seeking first the kingdom, of giving our bodies a living sacrifice.

The church in Ephesus, once a very zealous church fired by love for God, left their first love and settled down to Work to Rule. They maintained a minimum program of work and remained sound in teaching. But the Lord said, "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the first works, or else I come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent" (Rev. 2:5).

We wonder how many churches may have had their candlesticks removed, and how many Christians have had their names blotted out of the book of life, not because they were on strike, but because they were working to some rule of their own devising.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

- Sewell Hall

What Must I Do to Keep Saved?

The above question can only apply to one who is a Christian - one in a saved condition. It also implies the possibility of one being lost after having been saved from his sins. The Word of God clearly teaches that some will depart from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1). One cannot depart from that which he does not have. We are warned to take heed that we do not depart from God (Hebrews 3:12). There is something one must do to keep in a saved condition once he has obtained the forgiveness of sins.

If you are a faithful Christian - one who is living in hope of eternal life, you **MUST**:

1. **HEED** the warnings of God. (Hebrews 3:12; 1 Corinthians 10:12).
2. **STUDY** the word of God. (2 Timothy 2:15; Hosea 4:6).
3. **ABSTAIN** from fleshly lusts. (Titus 2:11-13; Galatians 5:19-24; James 1:27),
4. **WORSHIP** regularly. (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:25; Matthews 18:20).

5. GROW in Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-9; 3:18).

6. BE FAITHFUL to the end of life. (Revelation 2:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Galatians 6:9).

If you are a member of the church who has just moved here, even for a short time, you should identify yourself with the church here. (Acts 9:26). We will welcome you with us.

- Arthur W. Atkinson

> "The child who is too knowing to be taught and too self-important to be corrected at 18 is always a fool at 40, and if he is a fool at that age he never becomes anything else!"

> "People who expect salvation at the eleventh hour often die at ten-thirty!"

> "Acting without thinking is like shooting without aiming!"

> "The man who fiddles around seldom gets to lead the orchestra!"

> "The great use of life is to spend it for something that outlasts it!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Building to Withstand the Storms!*" (Text: Matt. 7:24-27); Sunday evening: "*The Bread of Life!*" (John 6:30-40).