

The attack on the authority of Scripture through the same-sex marriage debate

There is a huge and widespread battle going on in the western church at present, which, if we are not careful, will undermine our trust in God's Word and our trust in prayer, including for revival. Many conservative Christians, including evangelicals and others who have a very high regard for Scripture, are being challenged to take a liberal approach to Scripture in order to justify same-sex marriage. Liberalism isn't only about doubting prophecy or miracles, for example. It also undermines our trust in God's promises.

The pattern of this spiritual attack follows the old principles conveyed by the story of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3).

Firstly, the devil said: *"Did God really say you must not....?"* (v 1). That is the main question posed in this modern debate amongst Christians about homosexual practice – "Did God really say homosexual practice is wrong?" The arguments that he didn't are superficial but many are being caused to doubt God's Word through them.

Secondly, the devil says that to go against God's Word will be beneficial: *"You will not certainly die,... For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."* (vv 4-5). So today people think that to accept homosexual practice is a really good and positive thing, even though God's Word says it isn't. The Lord had in mind not only the welfare of the individual but also our corporate life.

Thirdly, Eve saw the fruit was pleasing: *"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it."* (v 6). Many people really desire to justify homosexual practice from Scripture so they make every effort to do so, even though it doesn't justify it.

Fourthly, the result was disaster. I believe there will be a vast increase in psychological problems, particularly over gender issues and increasing chaos in the way society is ordered.

The main aim of the current spiritual attack on the church through the whole homosexuality/gay marriage issue and also over the matter of gender confusion, is to use the illegitimate arguments that Scripture approves such things to undermine the authority of God's Word in general (not just over the homosexual issue). It is a *spiritual attack* to hinder Christians going deeper in faith and commitment as true disciples. The aim of this spiritual attack is to prevent revival happening, which is more important than the sexuality issue itself.

In order to be effective in intercession for revival (and other subjects) we need to pray not on the basis of human experience and human logic – some prayers are answered, others are not – but on the basis of faith in what God has promised in his Word – God has **promised** to answer prayer and he is **faithful**. In other words, we should not be hindered by the fact that, in human experience, some prayers are answered, others are not. No, we need to rely absolutely on God's amazing promises to answer prayer. The liberal rationalist will say that is naïve (because he has unwittingly listened to the devil). But it isn't. It is ensuring that our faith "might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power" (1 Cor 2:5). This is the opposite of liberalism. It is, as the old song puts it, "standing on the promises of God", standing on the words of Scripture.

Jesus said "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Mt 4:4). He criticises the Pharisees, telling them: "you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition" (Mt 15:6). Part of his basic teaching is that we should recognise and obey God's Word to us in Scripture. He said "Blessed ... are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Lk 11:28)

In summary, it is clear from various New Testament passages (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16; Heb 4:12; Jas 1:22-25 and 1 Jn 2:3-5) that undermining the authority of Scripture in our lives will to some degree hinder God's work of sanctification in us. It will mean we are less equipped for every good work and training in righteousness **including praying and preparing in faith for revival**. It will undermine our trust in God – his Word and his promises. This is a favourite deceit of the devil, and currently he is using the widespread pressure to "reinterpret" Scripture in order to justify same-sex relationships which leads to many Christians embracing a liberal view of Scripture - and conservative Christians, including evangelicals, have done so. (Obviously spiritual attacks to undermine allegiance to God's word don't only come through sexual debate but that is a prominent method at present).

[In passing, let me be clear, homosexuals, as people, should be treated with the same Christian love and respect as heterosexuals. There is no justification for any other attitude. What we are talking about is behaviour, not people.]

Undermining Scripture

Basically, the current defence of the idea that Scripture approves of same-sex marriage will encourage the following mistaken attitudes (which I can only refer to very briefly here).

- “The Bible was written by people living long ago who didn’t have the scientific knowledge about sexuality we have.”

My comment: Obviously it is not a scientific text book. But Scripture is not governed by human weakness and error. It is “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). The writers “though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21).

- “The Bible was written by people who didn’t know about *faithful, loving* same-sex relationships.”

My comment: This wrongly implies the New Testament writers were not aware of such relationships (as history disproves) and, more important, that God failed in the area of revelation over important matters of ethics and theology.

- “The New Testament is all about loving each other, not rules and regulations about sexual behaviour.”

My comment: God definitely calls us to love our neighbour, including our homosexual neighbour, but loving the person does not mean accepting their behaviour. God loves us but he certainly doesn’t love all our behaviour. Love should work out only in living according to God’s Word.

- “The Bible passages about same sex relationships are in the context of idolatry and ancient ceremonials.”

My comment: Not true. In the NT the contexts include lists of numerous other sins Rom 1:28-32; 1Cor 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:9-10).

- The Bible passages about same sex relationships don’t mean what people have long thought they do because we don’t want them to mean that!

My comment: That may sound cynical but, it is an influence within liberalism.

(To see an example of the church de facto encouraging such thoughts see my papers [Critique of Methodist report on homosexual relationships](#) (a longer, more detailed paper) at XXXX and “Methodist Study Guide on gay marriage” (a shorter paper) at [Critique of Methodist study guide on same sex-marriage report](#))

All of these points are either somewhat or wholly inaccurate and if we accept them, the seed will be sown in our minds to think the Bible is to some extent out of date and irrelevant. This is the aim of the spiritual attack.

As these thoughts sink in through the pro-homosexual propaganda they will start to spread to other subjects. “Maybe we cannot trust God’s promises about salvation.” “Maybe the amazing New Testament promises that God will answer prayer are from a different age and are simplistic.” “Maybe the people who say that God won’t bring revival are right.” “Maybe we can also dismiss Jesus reported teaching about judgment and hell – an important motive for prayer for revival - as out of date, now we know better ... etc.”

Put another way, using the same old method, this spiritual attack is seeking to transform fairly conservative evangelical Christians into somewhat liberal Christians through the powerful propaganda of the Christian (including evangelical) pro-homosexual practice/pro-gay marriage lobby. Making them liberal in their approach to Scripture is far more important than making them pro-gay. But the homosexual issue is an excellent catalyst for achieving this main aim. It includes undermining the very important need to pray and prepare for revival but it will also undermine other important aspects of Christian life and service.

It reduces the depth of spirituality. Paul writes “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16). A high view of Scripture is essential to true spirituality. So to undermine Scripture is to be less equipped for every good work and training in righteousness. The person involved will probably be unaware that his spirituality is being undermined.

Conclusion

We need to recognise the current spiritual attack and firmly resist the illegitimate liberal arguments in favour of homosexual practice/gay marriage and the more recent debate on transgender issues. We need to encourage others to open their eyes and we might even seek to encourage those who are accepting or have accepted the liberal view to reconsider. But the New Testament says we should separate ourselves from those in the church who *persist* in serious error. Paul wrote “you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people” (1 Cor 5:9-11). If Scripture condemns homosexual behaviour (as well as other sexual sins) we cannot just happily and meekly remain united with those who defend such behaviour.

We must separate ourselves. That may mean a congregation taking a stand against denominational compromise, or an individual ceasing to be a full member if their local church compromises. It doesn't necessarily mean departing from a congregation or a denomination. I seriously considered leaving the Church of England many years ago but the Lord made it quite clear he was saying “Stay put, but don't stay quiet.” I didn't stay quiet.

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APPENDIX: Why is prayer sometimes 'not answered'?

It can be that:

1. We are failing in one or more of the biblical conditions
 - Lack of faith.
 - Lack of perseverance.
 - Lack of united prayer.
 - Weakness in 'pleading prayer' – pleading the name of Jesus, the blood of Jesus, the promises of God, etc
 - Not abiding in Christ and allowing his Word to abide in us (so we lack spiritual discernment over what we ask for in prayer).
2. In God's eyes it is not yet the time for an answer.
3. God may have some unexpected way of responding.

If none of these seem to apply we need to pray: “My Father, I do not understand you, but I trust you.” In other words, we respond not in rationalism but in trust.