

Lives worth Changing - The Homosexual Issue

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 04 October 1998

Preacher: Paul Barker

[0 : 00] This is the AM service on October the 4th 1998. The preacher is Paul Barker.

His sermon is entitled Lives Worth Changing The Homosexual Issue and is from 1 Corinthians 6 9-11 Imagine if you had a friend or family member with a condition that made the following things likely.

They had a condition that meant that they had a significantly decreased likelihood of a successful marriage. That they had an expectation of life expectancy five to ten years less than the normal. That they had a very high rate of chance of contracting hepatitis or a fatal liver disease or pneumonia or internal bleeding.

That their likelihood of serious mental instability was much higher than normal in society. That their expectation of committing suicide was much more than the normal rate.

[1 : 27] That their condition had less than a 30% success rate of being treated or changed or cured, although a higher rate if there was more personal motivation.

This is a condition that is influenced by genetics but is basically about behaviour. People in this condition often continue the behaviour even knowing that it is destructive.

They find the behaviour compulsive and addictive. Some of those people with that condition see a problem. Many of them refuse to acknowledge the problem and refuse help.

And those with that condition tend to socialise together. How would you respond if your friend, your family member, had that condition?

You'd want to help. You'd want to love. You'd want to exercise compassion. You'd want to find some treatment. You'd want to encourage them. No matter what the cost. Because it would be worth changing a life that faces those sorts of symptoms.

[2 : 41] What am I talking about? I'm talking about alcoholism. Our society takes efforts to stop it, change it, prevent it, cure it, treat it and help those who suffer from it.

Our society spends a lot of time and effort and money treating and helping alcoholics. What if your friend or family member is gay and is sexually active?

They face a significantly decreased likelihood of a successful marriage. Their life expectancy is decreased not by 5 to 10 years but by 25 to 30 years below what is normal.

Their chances of hepatitis, fatal liver disease, liver cancer, are very high, much higher than normal. They face an almost inevitable fatal immune deficiency disease and associated cancers.

Frequently they face fatal rectal cancer, bowel diseases and a much higher rate of suicide than our society has. yet their chance of successful treatment is up to 50% and much higher if there is more personal motivation.

[4 : 16] Like alcoholism, this is a condition that is influenced by genetics but is basically rooted in behaviour and such people and such people continue behaviour knowing it's destructive again because there is a compulsive addictive side of it.

Some with this condition see a problem, many don't and refuse help or even to acknowledge there is a problem and those with this condition tend to socialise together.

If you had a friend or family member with such a condition you'd want to help, you'd want to see change, compassion, love, treatment, cure, you'd be prepared to spend energy or effort to change that.

People with alcoholism need our love and help. People who are homosexuals do as well. But our society responds to the two conditions vastly differently.

It seeks to change and help and prevent and cure alcoholism but it stands by and applauds homosexual activity. Our society is deceived into thinking that all is happy and gay in the homosexual world.

[5 : 38] The gay political propaganda has been overwhelmingly successful in the last 25 years. We are led to believe that people who are homosexually active are innocent victims who deserve our protection and they deserve rights.

We've been led to believe that homosexuality is a credible alternative lifestyle. That it offers a viable alternative to heterosexual marriage and parenting and family life.

We've been led to believe that the issue is an issue of anti-discrimination and human rights rather than an issue of dangerous practice. we've been led to believe that it is an issue of identity rather than an issue of behaviour.

And so we are compelled to exercise compassion not condemnation and to allow freedom and ignore sin. and this has been a hugely successful political agenda and strategy.

Deliberate in the western world and successful because not only has society acknowledged the viability and acceptance of homosexual practice politics but so too in many places does the church.

[7 : 09] And we know the furore caused by the conservative Lambeth bishops vote last month or in August and how the liberal wing of the Anglican church is absolutely furious about this.

We can see it in the Melbourne Anglican which arrives today with various alternative views and letters about the issue and last month's Melbourne Anglican the same and it will go on and on and on because the agenda is seeking to change society and the church because the church is seen to be a bastion of condemnation.

This is a very topical issue. The Melbourne Synod meets next week. It is likely to be on the agenda somewhere in the Synod and in the addresses that are made.

It's an issue that probably confronts many of us. Many of us know people who are gay, friends, family members, have had some contact with people in the past.

How do we respond as Christians and so on? This is an issue of some importance in our society as well as being topical. The homosexual political agenda is dangerous, deceitful, unbiblical and in the end it is sad, not gay.

[8 : 33] Firstly, it is dangerous. It is dangerous because it tells us there is safe homosexual sex but there's no such thing. Safer, but all that is relative.

Condoms aren't perfect prevention of the possibility of illness or disease and so it's dangerous because we are duped into thinking it is safe and young, confused people are led into what they think are safe practices but are not and therefore become highly exposed to dangerous practices, illness, depression, even in the end death.

There is danger too in the issues of paedophilia, not that all paedophilia is homosexual, the majority is not but proportionately there are more homosexual paedophiles than heterosexual paedophiles apparently.

The gay community is keen to drop the age of consent lower and lower forcing more and more young and vulnerable people into dangerous places and practices.

Thirdly, it's also dangerous because it deprives children of the possibility of having a heterosexually married parents.

[9 : 52] Part of the gay agenda is to have freedom to adopt children by gay couples. They say that it's their right to have children but where is the child's right to have a heterosexually married mother and father.

Damn the children, we'll do what we want is their agenda. That is dangerous for children who are deprived of that right. Firstly, it's dangerous.

Secondly, their agenda is deceitful. It's deceitful because it seeks to portray a high likelihood and success rate of long-term, lifelong, monogamous, homosexual relationships that are stable and good for each other and children and society.

But the reality is far from that. There are very, very, very, very few faithful, monogamous homosexual relationships.

apparently homosexually active people have many, many dozens and dozens more sexual partners in life on average than heterosexual people do.

[11 : 10] the portrayal of a homosexual married couple who are lifelong faithful and monogamous is an illusion almost.

It almost never happens. And so the portrayal in the agenda is deceitful. It offers more than it gives.

Secondly, it's deceitful because it's dissatisfying. the incidence of drink, drugs, depression and suicide in the homosexual community is vastly higher than in the rest of society.

It promises great happiness but it doesn't deliver. It's deceitful in its agenda. There are many, many homosexual people who go through long periods of their life wishing that they weren't, wishing that they were heterosexual, happily married with kids and so on.

Theirs is a deceitful agenda. Deliberately they strategise not to talk about the bad things of homosexual life, its dangers or its practices but to seek about identity and love and freedom.

[12:28] Thirdly, it's deceitful because it denies the possibility of change. One of the things the gay agenda in the Western world is desperate to show is that there is no chance of change, that people are born like that, they must live like that and therefore to be true to themselves they must practice like that.

They are desperate to find a gay gene, to show that people are born homosexual. It's an extraordinary quest because even though, because the media portrays the success of it from time to time and yet statistically and scientifically it's far from the truth.

There may be some contribution of genetic or biological factors in determining homosexuality but it's far from saying it is a primary cause.

What they try to show sometimes is a bit like saying oh somebody's born to be a basketball player because he's tall but the height determines the basketball rather than the other way round in a sense.

There's no sort of basketball gene that somebody has that determines they're going to be tall. It's the reverse and often that's the case in these scientific things as well.

[13:42] One of the reasons why they're so desperate to show there is no choice and one would think that that would actually be pro choice but no is because if there's no choice then they say there can't be any sin.

If there's no choice they are victims. They need our protection. It's a strange sort of argument really because logic tells us there can't be such a thing as a gay gene that determines homosexuality because it would have died out centuries ago.

How does it get reproduced generation by generation when mainly homosexual people tend not to have children, some do. In the end one would think it must die out but no they say there must be some gay gene.

It seems that the primary cause of homosexuality is environmental. And the psychological evidence seems to be that something in children in the response to their family life has triggered a homosexual inclination that may be very early and they may not even be able to detect any time that they weren't inclined homosexually.

But all of that leads us to think that there must be great possibilities of change. change. If there's some emotional deficiency somehow in early childhood or even earlier than that that has triggered a homosexual inclination then there is great possibilities of change.

[15:06] But the gay agenda refuses to heed that. They've actually prohibited anybody counselling as part of a psychological association in America to change any homosexual even if the homosexual wants change.

The thing is that there is evidence to show that there is successful change not only in Christian counselling associated with prayer but even in secular counselling successful change from homosexual to heterosexual inclination.

That seems to be the possibility raised in the reading from 1 Corinthians as well. Paul speaks of all sorts of sinners including homosexual offenders both active and passive probably in those verses. And he says and that's what some of you were but now you're changed, you're washed and justified by the blood of Christ. Now he may not have every category somebody in change in Corinth but the possibilities at knowledge there.

That through Christian faith and God's spirit working inside somebody there can be change. And I know of people who've been homosexually active and through Christian counselling or Christian conversion have found their inclination changed and are now heterosexual and some of whom are happily married and with children.

[16:33] Having said all that it's fair to say that homosexual behaviour has an element of no choice. People often can't by themselves break out of those patterns or inclinations or desires.

There is an element of addictive compulsiveness in the behaviour like for an alcoholic. These are people who can't just suddenly stop and change behaviour. They are people who need help, who need counselling, who need prayer, who need God and who need love.

While their agenda is dangerous and deceitful, it is also unbiblical. The Bible's prohibitions of homosexual practice are quite clear.

Leviticus 18 we read, Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6 and a number of other places. There are many people in the church and outside it who seek to produce a revisionist reading of the Bible, who say that what the Bible prohibits is religious homosexual practice.

That is, when a person would go up to the temple, a shrine to pagan gods and they would engage in homosexuality as part of their religious devotion in order to win the favour of the gods.

[17 : 52] The Bible does prohibit that practice, cultic prostitution. But it doesn't only condemn that. It condemns homosexual practice per se. And yet it's true that in, say, Sodom in Genesis, the Bible could be really prohibiting violent gang homosexual rape rather than homosexual practice per se.

But elsewhere in the Bible the prohibition of homosexual practice per se is clear. Some say that the absence of Jesus making a comment about homosexuality is very strong and we should therefore water down the other prohibitions because Jesus didn't say anything about it.

Well, there are lots of things Jesus didn't say about because he didn't need to. The whole presupposition of his theology, the Old Testament theology and the rest of the New Testament theology is that sexual activity ought to happen within heterosexual marriage.

Why comment on something that's very clear? He didn't need to. Part of the problem of revisionist readings or part of their danger is because in our day and age in a postmodern world there is quite a strong threat not only in the issue of homosexuality but just generally to revise all sorts of readings to say that things don't mean what they seem to mean.

It's a dangerous practice. It's also unbiblical because the standard in the Bible is heterosexual marriage. It's there in Genesis 2 with Adam and Eve in the garden.

[19 : 23] It's assumed throughout the Bible. Not because that's the world view that it comes from but because it's God's standard. God's standard is a monogamous heterosexual marriage.

That's into a world which was polygamous and where homosexual practice was acknowledged and accepted in society. It's not the Bible's world view that's out of date.

The Bible's critiquing its own world as well as our own. Thirdly, it's unbiblical, the agenda of the gay political agenda because it claims that in effect sex is everybody's right.

But it's not. I don't have a right to sexual activity because I'm single. Those of you who are widows or widowers or are single or divorced, you don't have a right to sexual activity because you're not married.

Heterosexual marriage. And none of us has a right to sexual activity with anyone outside of our marriage if we're married. Sex is not a right. It is a privilege given by God to those who are married in a heterosexual marriage.

[20 : 37] And that is the only place where the Bible acknowledges its goodness and rightness. So, don't be duped by thinking that sex is our right, that we need sexual activity to find personal fulfilment.

That's what our world keeps saying. That's what half the advertisements on TV keep saying. But it's wrong. It's unbiblical. We mustn't also get confused about thinking that love equals sexual activity. We are called as Christian people to love each other, everybody, without exception. That certainly doesn't mean that we go around having sex with each other. Love and sex are very different things. also at an experiential level it seems to me that the gay agenda is unbiblical. I remember a chap who was a friend in a church years ago.

He was a very unsettled sort of person but was faithful in church and Bible study group and so on. I met him at a funeral many years later and he'd come out.

[21 : 50] He was practising homosexuality. I think he was living with a partner. But the saddest thing of all was that he drifted so far from God.

He wasn't active in church or Bible study or prayer anymore. And that seems to be the case with every single person I've met who is practising homosexual.

They've drifted from God. If homosexuality were okay by God, why does that happen? This person I met still claimed to be a Christian but you could see that it was a struggle.

You could see that he couldn't really reconcile it in the end. Because the only way of reconciling it is to toss down many of the other things in the Bible and so much goes that there's not much left in the end.

The gay agenda is dangerous, deceitful, unbiblical and sad. Sad because of all these things. There's a terrible irony in the name gay that used to mean being happy and joyful.

[23 : 01] It's a misnomer because the majority of people, not everybody certainly, but the majority seem to be lost and lonely, desperate, despairing, confused and sad.

And that's perhaps the saddest thing of all. They are people desperately looking for love but looking in the wrong place and thinking they'll find it in sexual activity.

It's worth taking a step back, I think, as we consider this gay agenda and what it's duping us into thinking. It is part of a wider worldview.

It's part of a wider worldview that is anti-family, anti-marriage, that is hedonistic and selfish. There was an article in The Age just a couple of weeks ago about a person who lived with his heterosexual partner, was not married and was writing that marriage is an outdated institution and should be abolished because he was happily in a relationship with his partner but they could have sex with whomever they wished.

They didn't keep a restriction within their marriage and if in some time to come they would find some other partner, well, that would be alright. For the time being they were happily together.

[24 : 19] That was their agenda and there are many in our society like that who have an anti-marriage, anti-family agenda. That is a pagan worldview.

It is a worldview that is full of phallic idolatry, the idolatry of sexual expression. And gay liberation is part of that worldview.

It is part of a growingly immoral culture and pagan culture, one that is abandoning God but more sadly is gradually being abandoned by God to their own devices.

And the rise of homosexuality is just one feature in that wider picture, a picture of anti-family, weak family, poor families and so on.

Now I think the extraordinary thing in countering this is to see that far from being irrelevant and outdated and old-fashioned, the Bible is becoming more and more relevant because our worldview, our world, our pagan world is becoming more and more like the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament.

[25 : 34] That's the irony. That's the thing I think that they're so stupid about, these liberals who think, oh, the Bible's outdated because it comes from this old worldview. The thing is that our world is just going back to what the Greco-Roman world was like.

Nero was one of the famous Roman emperors in the 60s AD, a homosexual. He married a man who dressed as a woman. He got rid of him after a while and married another man.

But he had many other young men, young boys that he engaged in sexual pleasures with. But Nero wasn't the only one. It was common in his world. It was acceptable. Some say that 14 out of the first 15 Roman emperors engaged in homosexual activity.

And that wasn't a religious thing. It was for their pleasure. So those who think that the Bible is countering religious homosexual activity have got their worldviews wrong because the Greco-Roman worldview is becoming, well, is much like what we're becoming.

It was full of phallic idolatry and statues, the idolatry of physical perfection. And eroticism. And our TVs and magazines are full of that, aren't they?

[26 : 43] So when the Bible critiques homosexuality, its practice, it's not outdated. It is critiquing its own world and ours.

So there's nothing about keeping up with the times here, about getting modern and putting the Bible to one side and accepting what our society says.

That's throwing the baby out with the bathwater. The Bible is very clear about the world in which it lived and indeed the world in which we live and encounter to them both the world which God commands us to live.

That's the argument of Romans 1, I think, as well. That in Romans 1 we see a sequence of decline in society, degradation of heterosexuality, promotion and practice of homosexuality, and in the end a society that begins to disintegrate.

And that is where ours is going if the anti-family, anti-marriage, pro-homosexuality agenda continues to gain weight. Our problem is that no longer is the church effectively critiquing society, rather society is changing the church too quickly.

[28 : 10] How do we as Christians respond to all of this? I want to make four comments. Firstly, we must always remember that homosexuality is not the only sin.

In the passage that was read from 1 Corinthians 6, there are thieves and revilers and drunkards who also, along with homosexual practices or practicers, will not inherit the kingdom of God. It's not the only sin. It's not the only unforgivable sin either. And yet sometimes the church's statements seem to suggest that it is the most serious sin. It's not. It is one of many. Indeed, as we think of this issue, it ought to be a challenge to all of us to think about our own sexual purity, not only in activity, but in thought as well. To make sure that we are pure and not entertaining lusts in our minds, as well as illicit ungodly practices.

Self-righteousness is as serious a sin. And sometimes the church seems to portray itself as being morally self-righteous in its condemnation of homosexual people, which verges on the edge of hypocrisy.

[29 : 31] We live in a fallen world in which all of us are sinners. We who are Christians are forgiven for our sin because we repent of it and seek to live godly lives.

But it doesn't mean that we're perfect. It doesn't mean that we're free from sin now. Rather, as Paul says, we ought to be groaning inwardly in this fallen world, looking forward to the time when we will be made perfect in body and mind, in God's perfect kingdom.

Secondly, our Christian response ought to recognise the validity and indeed honour in singleness and celibacy. For too long, I think, the church by and large has been to family.

I see that because I'm single and over the years I get the feeling that people think, well, it's incomplete, should be married. But the Bible's recognition is that singleness is just as honourable and just as valid for Christian people as is marriage.

Marriage is not the ideal. It's not where you find fulfilment. God is where we find fulfilment, whether single or married. So this debate ought to make us remember the importance of celibate singleness.

[30 : 53] Not because singles are called to be celibate, but if you're single, then you must be celibate. There's nothing bad about that. Nothing inferior about that.

Sex is not a right unless we're in homosexual marriage. We ought to encourage those who are single for whatever reason of whatever age.

Singleness in our day and age is not an easy thing to practise as Christian people. Thirdly, we ought to distinguish always between inclination and activity.

I know a couple of people who are homosexual by inclination, but are celibate in activity. They struggle and they feel greatly betrayed by the church that seems to applaud homosexual activity because they believe that in following God, they ought to not practise inclination and resist temptation and they are right.

And it is a great betrayal for them to see the church capitulating to this post-modern agenda. Inclination may be, homosexual inclination may be a sign of a fallen world, but in itself, if it's not entertained, then it's not sin.

[32 : 20] Fourthly, we must remember that our response must be a people-focused response.

The issue of homosexuality is not an abstract issue out there. Many of us know homosexual people. It is people that we're talking about. People whom God loves, whom his son died for.

So in our own response to this issue, we must be people-focused. How can we help homosexual people? Not with fierce condemnation at the one end, but not with open acceptance and tolerance and even applause at the other.

Jesus' way is a godly love way. Jesus' way is to meet sinners where they are, but not to leave them where they are. For Jesus' love, godly love, is transforming love, changing love, that seeks the best for people.

And the best for people is to follow the maker's instructions, to live and practice sexual activity within the boundaries that God prescribes. Heterosexual monogamous marriage.

[33 : 38] So the best love that we can exercise for people, the best pastoral care that we can exercise for people who are homosexually inclined or active, is to meet them where they are, but introduce them to the love of Jesus that transforms.

Christian love cannot condone sin. Christian love seeks God's standards. I think the gay agenda has been very clever in the last 25 years.

It's been very clever because it's established itself at the level of identity as a person rather than at the issue of practice. And when they focus on the issue of identity of a person, it becomes very hard to reject people.

The people seem to be victims, seem to be a minority needing protection and rights and support. And that agenda has won many friends because none of us want to undermine what is somebody's identity.

But it's a flawed agenda for the reasons I've shown. It's a flawed agenda because somebody's identity is not actually carried by their sexuality. Their identity fundamentally is established by their relationship or lack of relationship with God.

[35 : 11] People's identity is much bigger than their sexuality. So we must be careful to recognise what the agenda has done and why it's successful but to recognise, not be duped by it and to respond as we ought.

The real issue in the end is behaviour. Behaviour that is dangerous. And we wouldn't want anybody that we know to practise dangerous behaviour.

We stop people from running across the road in front of cars. We ought to be loving in the same way for people who are engaged in homosexual activity that's so dangerous. We also ought to remember the nature of love.

So often the agenda seems to say within the church, Jesus meets sinners where they are. Yes, he does. But he doesn't stop there. He seeks to transform them by his love.

Like all of us, homosexual people are craving for love. That's the thing that drives them.

[36 : 20] The sadness is they often don't find it and they certainly won't find it in sexual activity. But what they're craving for, namely love, provides Christians with the greatest of opportunities because the very thing that we have is the greatest love of all, the love of Jesus Christ.

We have exactly what they need. We have exactly what this whole world needs, whether it's homosexual or heterosexual. The love of Jesus Christ. The love of God himself.

Demonstrated in the death of Jesus on a cross. A love that meets them where they are but doesn't leave them there but takes them to the best place of all, to God's kingdom of perfect love and perfect relationships and perfect satisfaction and perfect fulfilment and perfect joy and in the old sense of the word, perfect gaiety.

Of all people in the world, we Christians are the ones who have what they need. We mustn't be people of primary condemnation and rejection but primarily people of offering the love of Jesus Christ to transform them, satisfy them, fulfil them.

In our society, the price of being happy and gay is astronomical. The price of health, the price of stability mentally and emotionally, the price of life often for people who in the end die from their practices.

[38 : 03] The price of being happy in Christ is free and it's not a futile quest but a quest that's guaranteed to find fulfilment and satisfaction and love for eternity.

What gay people need is not a same-sex partner to be with them for life. What they need ultimately is Jesus Christ and so do we all.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Our God, we thank you for your amazing love to us that meets us where we are as sinful people, redeems us, forgives us, justifies us, washes us, cleanses us, sanctifies us, glorifies us ultimately in heaven with your son.

May we be faithful in offering that love to others in our world that is in such desperate need of love. Amen.