

God Reigns

Romans 1:18-32

On January 7, 2022 Bill C-4 became law in Canada. This bill prohibits “conversion therapy”, which sounds like a coercive treatment designed to force heterosexuality upon someone. But it defines conversion therapy as any “practice, treatment or service” that would help or challenge homosexuality or transgenderism. The language is so broad that it effectively criminalizes any speech or action that goes against these forms of sexual immorality with the penalty of up to five years in jail for “Everyone who knowingly causes another person to undergo conversion therapy” and up to two years for “Everyone who knowingly promotes or advertises conversion therapy.” In solidarity with our Canadian brothers and sisters, and driven by love for God and man, we join pulpits across the continent today for Biblical Sexuality Sunday.

Overview of the Text

God’s reveals His righteousness in the gospel as the just live by faith, but He also reveals His wrath against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth (vv. 17-18). There are no true agnostics because God reveals Himself, even His eternal power and divinity, by the things He has made (vv. 19-20). This leaves mankind without excuse; we know God but do not glorify Him as God nor give Him thanks (v. 21). The assumption here is that life is a gift which we must be grateful for, and that we were made to thank and glorify God. As a result of not doing this, men became futile in their thinking and conversation (*dialogismois*), and their foolish hearts were darkened (v. 21). Poor thinking and evil hearts resulted from refusing to worship, but still they called themselves wise and ascribed the glory of the immortal God to images of mortal man, birds, beasts, and creeping things (vv. 22-23). God therefore also gave them over to the uncleanness which came from the desires in their hearts; He let them do what they wanted, which is to dishonor their bodies among themselves (v. 24). This immorality is a religious act, exchanging the truth of God for the lie, worshiping and serving the creature instead of the Creator. Paul can’t help but break out into praise. The Lord made our bodies for His glory and our enjoyment, and regardless of whether we receive or reject His gifts, He is blessed forever, Amen (v. 25). God gives idolaters over to their dishonorable passions, which even extend to their women to do what is against nature (v. 26). Notice Paul’s use of “their women.” Men were made to lead loving and sacrificially. It’s not a question of whether they will lead, but how. Men will either honor and protect women, or they will abuse and dominate them, as they are now, pretending to be women and dominating women’s sports. Similarly, Paul says, the men abandoned natural relations with women to lust after one another, doing what is shameful and receiving their due reward (v. 27). They wanted to forget God, so He gave them over to do more things which are *unfitting* (vv. 28-31). As far gone as rebellious man might be, he still knows that the righteous judgement of God means the wages of sin is death, and yet he praises those who sin (v. 32). Like misery, wickedness loves company.

Our Problem

Compare Paul’s tone and clarity in Romans 1 to the stuttering of so-called Christian leaders today. He is not harsh, but neither is he craven or apologetic. The job of ministers is to minister what God says, not what they wish He said. When this subject is addressed at all, it’s usually talked about in terms of homophobia, a term created to label and shame those who think sodomy is an unnatural sin as clinically irrational, similar to people afraid those afraid of water, crowds or spiders. While Christians sin in every

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way, animosity to people practicing homosexuality is not a central problem, at least among conservative, Bible-believing Christians. This doesn't mean that people who have been disciplined by unbelievers don't think it's a central problem, but think about it. How many people do you know who are like the Westboro Baptists? We are blessed to have repentant homosexuals like Rosaria Butterfield writing excellent books and speaking regularly on the evangelical conference circuit. The church of Jesus Christ is full of delivered sinners: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor men-who-lie-with-men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:9-11). The word effeminate (*malakoi*) in verse 9 means "soft" and refers to unmasculine men. This word is rarely translated correctly or at all, and right now conservative Presbyterians have embraced this sin, refusing to discipline ministers who identify as homosexuals so long as they're not practicing it. There are conferences promoting it. Very few pastors today would even identify effeminacy as a sin, largely because they would need to repent and be willing to call their colleagues to do the same. If we are ashamed of what Jesus teaches, why would we expect the world to care? If we pick and choose, why can't they?

The Bill & Where It's Going

Preamble: "Whereas conversion therapy causes harm to society because, among other things, it is based on and propagates myths and stereotypes about sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, including the myth that heterosexuality, cisgender gender identity, and gender expression that conforms to the sex assigned to a person at birth are to be preferred over other sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions; And whereas, in light of those harms, it is important to discourage and denounce the provision of conversion therapy in order to protect the human dignity and equality of all Canadians." **Definition:** "conversion therapy means a practice, treatment or service designed to (a) change a person's sexual orientation to heterosexual; (b) change a person's gender identity to cisgender; (c) change a person's gender expression so that it conforms to the sex assigned to the person at birth; (d) repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour; (e) repress a person's non-cisgender gender identity; or (f) repress or reduce a person's gender expression that does not conform to the sex assigned to the person at birth. For greater certainty, this definition does not include a practice, treatment or service that relates to the exploration or development of an integrated personal identity — such as a practice, treatment or service that relates to a person's gender transition — and that is not based on an assumption that a particular sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is to be preferred over another." Nothing in the bill limits the application to therapists, and nothing in it rules out protecting a pedophile, polygamous, or other "orientation."

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God is not at loss at what to do. Romans 1 describes how He deals with rebellion, which is what's happening right now, giving our society over to its lusts. Paul identifies the problem with broken humanity as unwillingness to glorify God as God and thank Him. That's a good summary of worship, which is what we are doing. This is the way out: confessing our sins honestly (sexual and otherwise), honoring the Father, Son, and Spirit, and giving Him thanks for everything given to us through Christ. This is our joy anyway, but He also promises to advance His kingdom and bless the world through it.