

Romans 2:17-29: What to Avoid

Speaking as God's Ambassador Demands Holiness not Hypocrisy

- I can remember when the issue of homosexuality and the church came to the forefront of my Christian conscience. It was the fall of 2006, I was a junior in college. Tedd Haggard, the pastor of a mega church in Colorado Springs and president of the National Association of Evangelicals, was dismissed from these roles because of sexual misconduct. He confessed to sexual misconduct and deceit. His accuser was a homosexual male who said he spoke up because he could not allow Haggard to opening oppose homosexual union but engage in homosexual activity.
- I can remember the articles coming out about homosexuality, forgiveness and other topics. I also remember the disdain and sadness of another prominent Christian falling into sin.
- And not just any sin, but the very sin he was preaching and lobbying against.
- There was such a disconnect between what he said he stood for and what his actions revealed.

- We have all felt the disconnect caused by saying one thing, but knowingly doing the exact opposite.
- Perhaps it is a work place rule or standard you know is ridiculous, no one keeps it, but it must be proclaimed or posted around the work place.
- Maybe you have felt the disconnect as you tried to discipline one of your children because you saw your sinful attitude in your child.
- This same disconnect can grow within individual believers and thus within the body of Christ
- I often feel this type of disconnect as I preach and teach.
- It is much easier to preach about forgiveness then to forgive someone who has slandered you
- I can remember a student who talked with me about how often the speakers at purity rallies have had sex before marriage. This student felt the disconnect.
- This disconnect often makes is near impossible for people to hear the truth of the message because of the hypocrisy of the messenger.
- This past month we have looked at what Scripture reveals about homosexuality. As believers we want to be able to dialogue with people on this subject in accordance with God's understanding & wisdom.
- This week we want to ask the question what to avoid? What must we guard against if we want people to truly hear and regard what we are saying?
- I believe we find insight into how to avoid the disconnect caused by hypocrisy in Romans 2.

- Background—Paul explaining that wrath of God is impartial. Jews who live in disobedience to God will be judged just like all other people. Those who live in obedience to God will through faith, will prevail.
- Romans 2:17-29
- Paul confronts Jews about the disconnect between what they teach and what they do. If you are to stand on the OT laws and teach them to others, then listen to your own teaching. What is paramount before God is not that you have the Law, but that from your heart you obey it through faith.
- We should heed this warning if we desire to be a guide to the blind and light in the midst of darkness.
- **Speaking as God's Ambassador demands Holiness not Hypocrisy!**
- If we desire to speak as God's ambassador then we must live as God's ambassador

- This morning I want us to see what Paul says about Holiness and Hypocrisy, and then specifically how this impacts our ability to dialogue with others about homosexuality
- **Holiness comes through inward renewal not outward rituals**
 - Paul challenges the Jews because they were relying on the law, knowledge of God and ability to instruct others as basis for holiness or standing before God.
 - Paul asks them what good is knowledge of the law if you blatantly disobey it!
 - He goes so far to say that God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of their disobedience.
 - Paul goes on to claim that what marks us as children of God is inward renewal and obedience to God's word, not outward rituals.
 - This is what verses 25-29 are all about. Jews believed they were children of God because they had received the mark of circumcision.
 - **Paul proclaims that being a child of God is not about an outward sign, but an inward transformation brought about by the Spirit of God.**
 - This sentiment was not original to Paul, but Jesus also confronted Jews who would claim a relationship with God through outward rituals or signs.
 - **Matthew 23:25-26 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.**
 - Jesus solution is again inward renewal and transformation.
 - **Therefore, to speak as God's ambassador we must pursue holiness through inward renewal.**
 - As we speak with God's authority, we should seek to live a life of increasing transformation.
 - **Likewise, we must direct sinners to transformation through faith in Jesus not just prohibitions against sinful behavior**
 - If we understand holiness comes through inward renewal then we must first point people to Jesus Christ.
 - There will be no change in behavior without a change of heart and there will be no change of heart without the power of God that comes through a relationship with Jesus Christ.
 - Often we see behavior first, so we address behavior first. Yet there will be no lasting change without Christ.
 - If we want people to be free from the power of sexual sins: homosexuality, adultery, pornography, and lust; then we must lead people to the power of the cross.
 - You can teach your children why pornography is dangerous and put all the filters possible on your computer and smart phones, but without Christ the child has no power to fight this desire
 - The first thing we can do to speak as God's ambassador is to pursue holiness, the next is to avoid hypocrisy.
- **Hypocrisy is a pattern of sinfulness along with knowledge of God's Word**
 - Hypocrisy is knowing the good you should do, but refusing to do it
 - **Hypocrisy is knowing the sin in your life, but refusing to confess it or battle against it**
 - **We will sin, we will fail, but we should never stop battling sin.**
 - We should never stop confessing our sins before God. We should never stop seeking accountability and assistance in fighting sin.
 - Hypocrisy is not a single instance of me being frustrating with my wife and speaking harshly with her. That is a sin and must be confessed before God and seek forgiveness from my wife.

- Hypocrisy would be failing to confess sin, failing to seek forgiveness and continuing to treat my wife in an ungodly manner. While knowing it is wrong. While making myself appear to be a godly husband.
- Paul confronts Jews boldly in this passage because they have the laws of God before them, yet refuse to obey them. They are teaching against the very things they are doing. Thus they need strong rebuke.
- This is also why Jesus was so harsh on the Pharisees. The Pharisees knew God's word and refused to obey it from their heart. They had a pattern of sinfulness in their life they would not change.
- If we are not willing to confess and own up to our sins completely, then hypocrisy will grow in our life.
- **If we allow hypocrisy to grow in our life, then we will forfeit our ability to speak as God's ambassador.**
- In fact, we will destroy God's name instead of honoring it. Even when our message is true.
- This brings me to an implication of this passage I want us to look at as we think about how we are to dialogue with others about homosexuality. This implication is...
- **The manner in which we speak is just as important as the message**
 - Last week we looked at what to speak. This week we can learn how to speak to others.
 - **To speak as God's ambassador demands holiness in our actions and in our words.**
 - Our look at holiness and hypocrisy make it clear that our actions and behavior should demonstrate a growing faithfulness to God demonstrated through holiness.
 - While hypocrisy in our actions will undercut our ability to speak God's truth, so too how we speak will impact our hearers ability to listen.
 - According to Scripture we should learn to speak the truth in love.
 - **Ephesians 4:15, Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,**
 - Speaking the truth in love means our demeanor should be appropriate for the group we are speaking to
 - *Kevin DeYoung, The Church and Homosexuality: Ten Commitments*
 - **If we are speaking to cultural elites who despise us and our beliefs, we want to be bold and courageous**
 - **If we are speaking to strugglers who fight against same sex attraction, we want to be patient and sympathetic.**
 - **If we are speaking to sufferers who have been mistreated by the church, we want to be apologetic and humble**
 - **If we are speaking to shaky Christians who seem ready to compromise the faith for society's approval, we want to be persuasive and persistent.**
 - **If we are speaking to liberal Christians who have deviated from the truth once delivered for the saints, we want to be serious and hortatory.**
 - **If we are speaking to gays and lesbians who live as the Scriptures would not have them live, we want to be winsome and straightforward.**
 - **If we are speaking to belligerent Christians who hate or fear homosexuals, we want to be upset and disappointed.**
 - We should understand our audience so as to know how to best communicate the message. Coming across as rude, hateful or demeaning will destroy our ability to be heard or have a dialogue.

- *Albert Mohler, No Truth Without Love, No Love Without Truth*
 - **True compassion demands speaking the truth in love—and there is the problem. Far too often, our courage is more evident than our compassion. In far too many cases, the options seem reduced to these—liberal churches preaching love without truth, and conservative churches preaching truth without love.**
- May this not be true of us. May we struggle and fight to speak the truth with love. May we show Christ like compassion and love and grace, even as we speak unpopular truth.
- May the manner in which we speak be just as important as the message that we speak.
- So now I want you to consider some questions in response to what we see in God’s word today.

- **Are you avoiding hypocrisy and pursuing holiness?**

- As believers are their clear sins within our life we refuse to confess and battle against?
- Are our behaviors, attitudes and words displaying a life under the authority of God? Or are we dishonoring God’s name by claiming a relationship with Him but living without Him?
- I invite us this morning to search your heart, to be honest with God. To own your sins, confess them before God and seek godly help in battling against them.
- Seek God’s grace. Stop ignoring the lust, greed, hatred, bitterness, or hopelessness that enslaves you.
- Perhaps God has used this message to make you aware of an area of hypocrisy in your life.
- **What is one area of sin that is crippling your ability to speak God’s truth into others’ lives?**
- Remember if you want to treat the behavior you have to deal with the heart. Allow God to get at the root of your sin issue. Allow God to identify the idols within your heart that lead to sins.
- You will never be able to battle against sin without a relationship with God in Christ. Maybe this morning your hypocrisy was claiming a relationship with God. Maybe it is based more on outward rituals than inward transformation. If so, there is hope today. Today you can find inward renewal through Jesus Christ.
- And as we pursue holiness and forsake hypocrisy—look forward to how God can use us to speak his truth into others’ life.

- We can speak with love, truth, boldness and grace on the subject of homosexuality. And our life and character can reveal the power of God’s Word. The manner in which we speak and our character can help disarm people so they will listen to our message.
- **How powerful would it be for our culture to see God’s grace on full display as people are willing to face scorn for speaking the truth, all the while displaying holiness and love to the very ones who scorn them?**
- *Albert Mohler, No Truth Without Love, No Love Without Truth*
 - **The genuine Body of Christ will reveal itself by courageous compassion, and compassionate courage. We will see this realized only when men and women freed by God’s grace from bondage to homosexuality feel free to stand up in our churches and declare their testimony—and when we are ready to welcome them as fellow disciples. Millions of hurting people are waiting to see if we mean what we preach.**
- What glory God will receive as his people stand united in truth, grace and in forgiveness in Christ. What glory God will receive when we speak as God’s ambassador with holiness not hypocrisy.