

**Marc Roby:** We are resuming our study of systematic theology today by continuing to examine biblical anthropology. In our last session we noted that God determines what is and is not sin. He is the ultimate authority. But we also noted that he commands us to obey all legitimate delegated authorities so long as they do not tell us to sin or overstep the bounds of their delegated authority.

**Now, Dr. Spencer,** you mentioned last time that the laws and rules of different countries, states, churches and families can change, and yet still be proper. What about God's laws? Do they ever change?

**Dr. Spencer:** Well, they have changed, so the answer is yes. The clearest example of that is the ceremonial laws given to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. They were, for example, commanded to perform a number of different animal sacrifices, but all of those sacrifices and ceremonial laws were abrogated when Christ came.

In Hebrews 7:11-12 we are told that "If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come—one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law."<sup>1</sup>

**Marc Roby:** And for those listeners who may not know, the Levitical priesthood was responsible for performing the sacrifices and other aspects of the ceremonial law in the Old Testament and the priest who is in the order of Melchizedek refers to Jesus Christ.

**Dr. Spencer:** That's right. And in the book of Hebrews we are told that the purpose of the Old Testament ceremonial laws was to point toward the ultimate sacrifice, Jesus Christ. Once he came, the animal sacrifices served no further purpose. As a result, they are not only not required anymore, but it would be sinful to offer an animal sacrifice now. But, and this is a critically important point, in changing those laws, God did not change.

**Marc Roby:** I suspect some of our listeners may have a hard time understanding how you can say that God didn't change when he changed his laws.

**Dr. Spencer:** Let me give an earthly example. When my children were young, they had to go to bed at a certain time. But when they got older, that rule changed. By the time they graduated from high school it was pretty much up to them what time they went to bed. I didn't change over those years – at least not in reference to this rule – but they certainly did. When they were young the rule served to teach them authority and to teach them the need for a disciplined life. And, of course, young children need more sleep as well. But, by the time they were graduating from high school, they understood the tradeoffs. They knew that if they stayed up late studying it would

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reach a point of diminishing returns and they would be more tired in the morning, so they had to decide for themselves when to stop.

**Marc Roby: That's an interesting example since the apostle Paul also uses the analogy of a child growing up and coming out from under the rule of a guardian in Galatians 3 and 4.**

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that's an important point. We discussed that passage very briefly in Session 91. And I still don't want to go into it in detail because it isn't of critical importance to anthropology. But what is critically important, is that God has not changed. He does not change. He did change some of the laws given to his people as our circumstances changed, most notably with the first coming of Jesus Christ, but the laws that are based on his nature, as summarized in the Ten Commandments, will never change. So, for example, it will always be wrong to commit murder, or adultery or to lie or steal.

**Marc Roby: Now, what about homosexuality? That is a very divisive topic today, even among many professing Christians.**

Dr. Spencer: And I think the answer to that question is absolutely clear. In Leviticus 18:22 God commands, "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." This doesn't have anything to do with the ceremonial law, or with the laws of a particular government, this is a statement about morality. God says that homosexuality is detestable to him. It is completely wrong to think that God has changed his view in any way on this topic.

**Marc Roby: I know that there are professing Christians who will say that command is a part of the Old Testament and that if you say we have to obey that, you must also want us to obey laws like Deuteronomy 21:21, which says that a stubborn and rebellious son should be stoned to death.**

Dr. Spencer: I've heard comments like that, and to be honest they are just ridiculous. First of all, in Deuteronomy 21 Moses was speaking to the people to remind them of the laws of God and prepare them for the difficult task of crossing the Jordan and conquering the promised land. This particular command dealt with a son who had a long-standing pattern of rebellious behavior – he is clearly an adult and is described as a profligate and a drunkard. So, we first have to realize this isn't speaking about a little disobedience. This is speaking about a young man who is habitually disobedient and unrepentant, a disgrace to his family and a burden to his community. Such behavior is still deplorable and is clearly serious sin.

God hated this behavior then and he hates it now, he has not changed. The punishment was appropriate at that time, in those extreme circumstances and in that theocratic society. Such behavior could simply not be tolerated. But there is nothing in the Bible that would indicate the punishment specified is part of a perpetually applicable legal standard. So, the prescribed punishment changed, but God did not change, nor did he change his mind about what is sin.

**Marc Roby: And, at the risk of straying further off topic, it is worth noting that this is not the only instance where the punishment for a crime has changed.**

Dr. Spencer: No, it definitely is not. In the Old Testament, the punishment for adultery is death. But in Matthew 5:32 Christ changed that law. He said, “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.” John Murray pointed out that this verse implicitly reduced the penalty for adultery, it is no longer to be punished by death, although it does make divorce an allowable option for the offended spouse.<sup>2</sup>

**Marc Roby: That also clearly illustrates the authority of Jesus Christ! But getting back to the topic of homosexuality, the New Testament is just as clear that this behavior is sinful.**

Dr. Spencer: It absolutely is. In Chapter One of the book of Romans, the apostle Paul tells us that everyone really knows that God exists. He has made himself known through creation so that people are without excuse, but people suppress this truth. And he then tells us in Verse 24, that because of this, “God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.”

And he goes on, in Verses 26-27, to say that “Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”

**Marc Roby: Yes, that is pretty clear. And Paul also condemns homosexuality elsewhere. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 he wrote that “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”**

Dr. Spencer: And in 1 Timothy 1:9-10 we read that “the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine”. And I have quoted from the ESV because it is a more literal translation of the passage.

**Marc Roby: Yes, and that is, again, quite clear. But I know that there are some pastors and theologians who try to defend the idea that it is acceptable to be a Christian and a homosexual at the same time. How would you respond to them?**

Dr. Spencer: I wouldn't. There really is no rational way that a person can believe the Bible to be the infallible word of God and still believe that homosexuality is not a sin. I've read some of the arguments and they are so bad that you don't have to be a theologian to see that they blatantly distort or dismiss the word of God.

If any of our listeners are unsure about the biblical stance on this issue, I would challenge them to first decide whether or not they think the Bible is truly the infallible word of God. If they don't

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<sup>2</sup> John Murray, *The Principles of Conduct*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957, pg.119

believe that, then none of my arguments would carry weight anyway, and I would seriously challenge them to make their calling and election sure. If they do believe the Bible to be the infallible word of God, then they should read the passages we've just quoted and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide their thinking. It is not a difficult issue, although I understand it can be an emotional issue if it involves someone you love, or if you yourself struggle with same-sex attraction yourself.

**Marc Roby: What would you say to any listeners for whom this is a personal issue?**

Dr. Spencer: I would say that if it is serious struggle, you should get counsel from a godly Bible-believing church. Don't try to find one that says it is OK – you can easily find such a place, but it is neither godly nor Bible-believing, and it can't help you. And then pray for the Holy Spirit to give you the power to conquer this sin. Reject the nonsense that is put forward by the proponents of the LGBTQ agenda.

**Marc Roby: Such as?**

Dr. Spencer: Such as the idea that homosexuality is not a choice. The idea that homosexual behavior is entirely determined by genetics is patently absurd. The same groups say that your gender identity is *not* set by your genetics, but then on the other hand they try to say that homosexuals are simply made that way. Those ideas are not only contradictory, they are both nonsense.

If being homosexual was entirely determined by genetics, then there wouldn't be any examples of people who were able to leave homosexuality and enter into normal heterosexual lifestyles. But there are many such examples. I think there is some similarity here to alcoholism.

**Marc Roby: That doesn't seem obvious at first thought, what similarity are you referring to?**

Dr. Spencer: Well, it is often stated that there is a genetic predisposition for people to become alcoholics. Now I don't know if that is true, but let's assume – for the sake of argument – that it is. It would not logically follow that being an alcoholic is a good thing. I can't imagine anyone saying to an alcoholic, "Don't worry about it, that's just how God made you, so go ahead and drink yourself to death."

**Marc Roby: I can't imagine anyone saying that either.**

Dr. Spencer: So, my point is that even if there is some genetic predisposition to a certain behavior, that in no way means that behavior is healthy or good. And, as I noted before, it is completely unreasonable to believe that sexual behavior, or alcoholism for that matter, is *entirely* determined by genetics.

**Marc Roby: The LGBTQ community has rather successfully been able to claim this is a civil rights issue, similar to granting blacks the right to vote, or to sit anywhere on a city bus.**

Dr. Spencer: That is very unfortunate and we should oppose that notion at every possible turn. Back in 2008, when California was getting ready to vote on Proposition 208, which banned same-sex marriage, I remember a black pastor from Southern California speaking about the idea

that homosexuality was the same kind of civil rights issue that blacks faced in the south in the 1950's. His comment was wonderful. He simply said, "I have a number of former homosexuals in my congregation, I don't have a single former black person."

**Marc Roby: Yes, that statement makes an important point very clearly.**

Dr. Spencer: I think it is very important for Christians to take a stand on this issue, but I also don't want to make it out to be more important than it really is. Homosexuality isn't the worst possible sin; it is just one sin among many. In fact, without a doubt, heterosexual sin is far more common. So, as Christians we don't single out homosexual sin for special condemnation.

I think the only reason homosexuality has become such a hot-button issue is that there is a small segment of our society pushing very hard to normalize this behavior. We have gay pride days, gay pride month and so on. If we had adultery pride days, or thieves pride days, those sins would be talked about more too.

**Marc Roby: And, of course, many people, including many professing Christians, support this push.**

Dr. Spencer: I think there are a number of reasons why they support it, so it worth taking a few minutes to discuss this in the hopes that we can call a Christian brother or sister back to obedience to the word of God.

The first reason some people support this agenda is that they have believed the lies about homosexuality being genetically determined. But as we've noted, those really don't make sense. And I think a second major reason people support it, if only passively, is simple fear of being attacked. The LGBTQ community has become so rabid in their attacks that to oppose them publicly is to open yourself to really vicious opposition. We saw that in California after Proposition 8 passed. If you are any kind of a public personality, they will accuse you of being filled with hate, of being stupid and ignorant and will shout you down at every opportunity. And if you run a business, they will do everything in their power to shut you down.

**Marc Roby: We have certainly seen that in the recent case of Jack Phillips<sup>3</sup> and many others.**

Dr. Spencer: Yes, we have. Christians are no longer treated as citizens deserving of equal protection under the law in this country, which is astounding. A homosexual who runs a print shop can refuse to print flyers for a church function that he disagrees with, but a Christian print shop, florist or baker cannot refuse to do special work for an event he disagrees with. That is an amazing and very troubling turn of events in this country.

**Marc Roby: And the judgments against these people usually include some kind of so-called "sensitivity training".**

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<sup>3</sup> For a brief synopsis, see *The Ongoing Persecution of a Christian Baker*, By the editors of the Wall Street Journal, June 12, 2019 (<https://www.nationalreview.com/2019/06/masterpiece-cakeshops-jack-phillips-persecution/>)

Dr. Spencer: And that trend is truly amazing and disturbing to me. We aren't sending people away to prison camps for years, but this is, nonetheless, a very mild form of a re-education camp. It is a government-sponsored attempt to force us to think the same way. To force a particular ideology on all people. That is downright Orwellian and about as un-American as anything I can think of, and yet we see it happening all over.

But, getting back to homosexuality, I don't want to spend more time on it. Far from being a sign of hate or homophobia, the truth is that telling any sinner, whether homosexual or otherwise, about the forgiveness available in Jesus Christ is the most loving thing you can do for him or her.

**Marc Roby: And that forgiveness requires that the person be told their behavior is a violation of God's law and the he or she must repent of it, forsake it, and then trust in Christ for salvation.**

Dr. Spencer: That is the only hope for anyone. God provides grace to his children to overcome their sins.

The real issue, no matter what sin we talk about, is rebellion. People rebel against the God-given norms of conduct. That is the real issue and homosexuality is just one manifestation of that rebellion. At its core, all sin is prideful rebellion against God. He created us and he has told us how we should live. That includes the functional roles assigned to men and women, husbands and wives, parents and children, citizens and the state and so on.

**Marc Roby: Very well, are we done then with defining sin?**

Dr. Spencer: We are, and so we are ready to get back to talking about total depravity again, which I put off last time.

**Marc Roby: And I look forward to that, but it will have to wait until next time. For now, let me remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to [info@whatdoesthewordsay.org](mailto:info@whatdoesthewordsay.org), and we'll do our best to answer.**