

Psalm 12

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Preacher: Chris Trousdale

- [0 : 0 0] If you have your Bibles with you, and I hope that you do, open up to the book of Psalms. We are spending our summer, most of our summer at least, in the Psalms. We've taken a break from the book of Romans, which we've been in for a long time, and we're spending some time here in the Psalms.
- And this week, we're going to be in Psalm 12. If you're using one of the Bibles that are in the chairs around you, then it's simply on page 452. You can find it there, Psalm 12.
- And as you turn there, I want to ask you guys to stand to your feet in honor of God's Word, and we'll read Psalm 12 together. Psalm 12, to the choir master, according to the Shemene, a psalm of David.
- Save, O Lord, for the godly one is gone, for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man. Everyone utters lies to his neighbor.
- [1 : 0 6] With flattering lips and a double heart they speak. May the Lord cut off all flattering lips, the tongue that makes great boasts. Those who say, with our tongue we will prevail.
- Our lips are with us. Who is master over us? Because the poor are plundered. Because the needy groan, I will now arise, says the Lord.
- I will place him in the safety for which he longs. The words of the Lord are pure words. Like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.
- You, O Lord, will keep them. You will guard us from this generation forever. On every side, the wicked prowls, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.
- Father, we are thankful that your Spirit inspired David to write this psalm. And that as David penned his thoughts and his reaction to the circumstances around him, we too can take this psalm and see in it at times a reflection of our own feelings.
- [2 : 1 3] And see in an example of how we ought to respond to those feelings. So help us this morning to glean from your word and to come to a clear understanding of the power and truthfulness and certainty of your word.
- We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You guys take a seat. Well, if social media is any sort of judge, this week has been sort of a crazy week.
- I mean, it's hard to keep up with things that people post online, things that people say online, all sorts of things. It's hard to keep up with the news that it comes one day after another and everybody and their dog has an opinion about it and wants to comment on everything that's going on.
- And you can't possibly keep up with everything that everybody says. And as a pastor, one of the things that you're keeping an eye on at all times is what is going on in people's lives.
- What are people engaging with during the week? What are people thinking about during the week? What's happening? What's on the forefront of people's minds? And so you're thinking that on the one hand, and then you're also always looking ahead to the next text, the next passage on the other hand.

[3 : 19] At least if you preach the way that we preach here, where we typically just walk through the Bible verse by verse, and we're always looking to see what text is next. And so this week, I feel like by God's providence, there was a coming together of major streams of thought and major conversations in the culture, and then the next passage that we have before us, which is Psalm 12 this morning.

And so I want us this morning to, yes, go through Psalm 12. It's actually a fairly simple psalm. The main point that Psalm 12 makes is fairly easy to see, as we'll see in a moment.

It's right there on the surface. It's not complicated. And then I want us to think in light of things that are happening in the culture, but also in light of who we are and how we think and feel about things on a regular basis.

I want us to think very clearly about how this passage might impact the way that we approach things that are happening around us. So let's take a look at the psalm itself, though, because it arises out of a situation of despair.

We've seen that now for a few psalms in a row. We know that several of these psalms, and even the next couple of psalms that we're going to see, arise out of a crisis in David's life. They're written at different times in his life, and most of the time we don't know what particular crisis led to the writing of these different psalms.

[4 : 37] Only occasionally are we given any sort of real, concrete, historical background. Only occasionally do we know the circumstances, but we know that many of these psalms are written in the midst of personal struggles and turmoils for David, and also struggles and turmoils for the nation of Israel itself.

And that's the case here. You can see it in the first few words of the psalm where David cries out, Save, O Lord! So David is crying out for God to deliver, for God to do what God does, for God to come and to rescue His people.

But the circumstances under which David writes are interesting. He cries out to God for deliverance, he says, because the godly one is gone. The faithful have vanished from among the children of man.

So David looks around him and he sees a situation in which at least he feels as if the godly people that he would like to surround him are missing.

They vanished. He cannot find them. Those who are faithful to the Lord, those who remain faithful to Him, he cannot seem to find them. They're gone from him. He feels as if he's surrounded by another kind of people.

[5 : 47] And the way that David describes these ungodly, these unfaithful people sets up a contrast in this psalm. Notice how he describes them.

He says in verse 2 that everyone utters lies to his neighbor with flattering lips and a double heart they speak. And then if you move down you can see the contrast in verse 6.

The words of the Lord are pure words like silver refined in a furnace on the ground purified seven times. And so the contrast of this psalm is on the one hand the flattering lips and the lying mouths of those who are not faithful to the Lord.

And then on the other hand the pure, firm, sure, trustworthy words of the Lord. And so there is a strong contrast in this psalm between what we hear coming from the world around us, whether that be people close to us or whether that be people far from us or in our day and age, whether it be the news that we watch or whether it be social media that we're reading, whatever we might hear in the world, there is a contrast between the words of the world and the words of God.

The words that come to us from the world oftentimes come to us with untruth. They come to us as lies. And yet they are not on the surface always identifiable as lies.

[7 : 12] They come, as David says here, flattering. They come saying things that seem on the surface to be nice, to be something that you might want to hear.

And yet beneath the flattering there are lies. And David says that in contrast to that, what we need, what David needs and what David clings to are the words of God.

Where do you turn when you're hearing various opinions in the world? Where do you turn? How can you be certain of what is true and right when you're hearing different things from different people in the world?

You turn to God's word. Notice how strong the contrast is. I just want you to see this this morning real quickly. Verse 2, everyone utters lies to his neighbor.

And then verse 6, the words of the Lord are pure words. So the contrast is between lies and purity. God's words, he says, are so pure that he describes them as silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times.

[8 : 18] Of course, you all probably are familiar with this imagery that if you want to have any sort of pure metals, the way to do that is to melt them down and remove all of the impurities. And David says that God's words are so pure, it's as if silver has been melted down seven times, and each time any remaining impurities have been removed.

And of course, we know that the number seven in Scripture often symbolizes perfection or completion. And so David's point here is that God's words are completely devoid of impurities.

God's words are absolutely trustworthy. There isn't a hint of lies in God's words. There's not a hint of flattery with something else hidden beneath it in God's words.

It's entirely true, entirely trustworthy. Now, whether or not you believe that about God's word is going to determine the ways in which you deal with the words that you hear coming from the world around you.

Because if you are convinced that the Bible is in some sense God's word in the sense that it contains very helpful, universally true spiritual truths, and yet the Bible at the same time is riddled with all sorts of historical errors, or the Bible is riddled with old-fashioned ways of thinking that are simply outmoded and we cannot apply today, then you're not going to have a whole lot of confidence when God's word clashes with the words of the world.

[9 : 43] If you don't believe that God's word is completely pure, utterly trustworthy, without any sense of error, if you're not convinced of that the way that David is, then you're going to begin to question God's word when his word stands in contrast, as it does here in this psalm, with what the world happens to say.

Now, for David, the specific issue here is the oppression of the poor. Notice what he says in verse 5 as he quotes God's words. It's in quotation marks in most of your translations because God begins to speak in verse 5.

Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise, says the Lord. I will place him, that's the needy, the poor, I will place him in the safety for which he longs.

And in verse 7, God will keep his words and he will guard us, or he will guard the poor from this generation forever. So David has a concern here.

David looks at the world around him and he sees a world that's full of people that are downtrodden, people that are poor, people that are suffering. And yet David sees that the world is not helping them.

[10 : 57] They're flattering them and telling them lies and further oppressing them, and they're not helping them. And in the midst of that, God begins to speak. God's words stand in stark contrast to the words of the world.

The words of the world are in verse 4. With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us. Who is master over us? In other words, the world views their own words as having the power to do things.

That we will be the masters of our own fate. And yet in the midst of that, the world is oppressing people. The world is holding people down. The world is sinning against their neighbor.

And David says, but God will arise now. There is a concern. David has a concern. And David says that God has a concern for what happens in the world around them. God is not merely concerned with the spiritual salvation of people.

God actually does care about what happens to people in the physical world. It matters to Him. Yes, ultimately what matters is our eternal destiny. But God has a care.

[12 : 03] God has a concern for what happens in this world. If that were not the case, then God would not say, I'm going to arise to help the cause of the poor and the needy. God cares.

Now the language that we often throw around for this kind of stuff is social justice. And among conservative circles, those who are both, many people who are religiously conservative and those who are politically conservative, they don't always overlap, although they often do.

In conservative circles, social justice is almost a curse word a lot of times. In religious circles, it's thought that, well, our focus should be upon preaching the gospel and we shouldn't be concerned about those issues out there.

We should need to concern ourselves with people's eternal destiny and not worry about what's happening in the world. We just need to make sure people get saved and then the rest will just sort of play itself out.

And then sort of in the politically conservative realm, the language always takes on the tone of, well, they're responsible. Let them handle their own lives. Let them dig themselves out.

[13 : 06] I've done this for myself. I've achieved these things for myself. So leave them to deal with their own problems in their own way. I don't have a responsibility to help out those who are poor.

They're poor because of their poor decisions. And there may be some truth in those things. But God has a care. God has a concern. I think oftentimes Christians are afraid that we will trade in this idea of social justice and actually helping those in the world who need help.

We will aim at that and we will arrive at something that historically has been called the social gospel. I don't know if you're familiar with this kind of language. I don't know if you're familiar with this terminology.

You're probably not. But the social gospel is something that arose out of theological liberalism, really in the late 1800s and on through the first half of the 20th century.

It was a big deal among liberal theologians. And there was this push to sort of set aside the ideas of spiritual salvation and really hone in, focus on social justice so that social justice for many churches became the primary goal.

[14 : 19] And in fact, social justice became the social gospel because the good news became the good news that God has come to save you from poverty and He's going to use the church to do it.

Or God has come to save you from a lack of education. He's going to use the church to do that. So the gospel, the good news of Christ crucified for sinners was replaced with the social gospel.

And those churches that are faithful to the word will never make that substitution. Those churches that actually believe in all of God's word will never make that substitution. We will not accept the social gospel in place of the real gospel.

We will not replace gospel preaching with good works in the world. However, our fear of doing that oftentimes drives us to disengage from the world, to be disconnected from the world, in fact, so that while God cares and is concerned about things that happen in the world, sometimes we can get in our own Christian bubbles and we're only concerned with making sure that, well, I share the gospel with my neighbor, I don't need to be worried about his car being broken down.

But a heart that's been transformed by the gospel is a heart that longs to love their neighbor in every way possible.

[15 : 41] So that you cannot in reality separate the biblical gospel from what we often, sometimes demeaningly call social justice. Those who've trusted in Christ ought to love others who are created in God's image.

And yes, long for those people to be saved by the gospel, but on the way there, there are other needs that we can attend to. There are other problems that we can deal with.

You see, there are temptations for, I think, everyone regardless of their theological and political leanings. For those who label themselves as conservative, the temptation, at least in the realm of social justice, is to minimize or ignore social justice and only focus on what we would term as the spiritual aspect or the spiritual side of our message.

And that would be, I think, deadly to the church. Jesus says that we should let our light shine before men. Jesus says that we should not only not hide the gospel, but we should not hide our good works that we do before men because people will see our good works and give glory to God.

Paul says that we've been created in Christ Jesus for good works. Those good works, most of the time, aim at other people and doing good to other people. And so when David looks at the world around him and he sees a world that is filled with lies, one of the repercussions of that is that the poor are being downtrodden.

[17 : 08] And David says that God responds to that by saying, I will arise because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise.

And I think that if we ignore our responsibility in the world to respond as God responds to pain and heartache and needs in the world around us, then we will oftentimes lose our voice.

We will become disconnected from God's concerns. And if we become disconnected from God's concerns, we really have nothing of value to offer to the world anymore.

The world will not hear a message about salvation beyond this life if they do not see us doing things to help others in this life. And I think that that's an important component that we need to recognize.

I think that as we think as Christians, as we think through our engagement in the world, the first thing we need to think about is what good might we do for others in the world around us?

[18 : 14] And that will turn expectations on their head. Because the world doesn't expect us to do all that much. The world has an idea of Christians as hypocrites. The world views those who actually believe in this book.

The world thinks of us as merely hypocrites who only talk about good things on Sunday and don't do anything good on Monday. And we can turn that on its head if we will simply respond to needs in the world with the heart that God responds.

The world would flatter. The world would claim to help other people. And the world does claim all the time.

There are all sorts of organizations that are out there that make a claim to be doing something for people. They have flattering lips. We will help you. We will do this for you. But beneath that oftentimes are lies.

And the church ought to be the opposite. The church ought to be a people who not only says, we can help you, but actually helps.

[19 : 16] You see, when God says, I will arise, that means he will arise. David says he looks around at the world around him and he hears them saying nice things. They flatter with their lips. He hears them saying nice things, but they're all lies.

God says, I will arise, but God's words are pure. Therefore, God will arise and God will do something. And we need to have the same kind of approach to the culture around us.

When we look at the culture and we see deep hurt and deep needs, we need to be willing, we need to be able to not only say, we can do something about it, but then we actually need to begin to do something about it.

And that doesn't necessarily mean that we have to create all kinds of programs. That's not always terrible. That's not bad to have programs that run and help people do things. But it doesn't necessarily mean that.

It means that you personally, on a daily basis, need to begin by looking for ways to actually help people, ways to actually get involved in people's lives and make some sort of a difference.

[20 : 17] It means that we don't drive past every person holding a sign, asking for money, and make the assumption that they're a swindler. Okay, maybe they are, maybe they aren't. I would rather, when I stand before God, have to say, you know, I gave to swindlers a couple of times, sorry about that, I didn't even know who they were, than to say, well, I didn't give to all those people because I just assumed they were swindlers.

What would you rather say before Him? God is a God who sees the needs and hurting of the poor and says, I will arise. And the church ought to be a kind of people that sees hurts around them and says, I will arise.

The world will claim all the time that it's going to help, but rarely does it actually help. Why? Because the world's words are filled with lies, whereas God's words are utterly, absolutely true and dependable.

But there are applications for this contrast beyond just this one context that David indicates. Yeah, David has his eyes set on the social injustices that surround him, and David is concerned about those, but he doesn't mention them often.

In fact, at the very beginning of the psalm, David doesn't mention them at all, and it's only God that mentions the actual problems because I think there was probably more happening for David. And I think David actually has many things in mind, or David probably sees many ways in which the world around him is lying, and he needs something sure and steady to hold on to.

[21 : 48] Not just lying in regards to maybe saying they'll help people when they don't help people, or saying they're going to do good for people when they intend to do harm to people. Not just lies in that sense, but David sees an utter contrast between God's words, which are absolutely pure, and the lies that are present all around him.

And we see the same kinds of things in our world. And this week we're able to see really clearly culture clashes. Really clearly in the news and in social media, massive culture clash.

What do we do with the issue of homosexuality? What do we do with that? It's right in front of our faces. You cannot avoid it. You can't get away from it.

There's no way in the world that I could stand up here and preach this morning without at least mentioning it, because all of you would be sitting and thinking, when's he going to get around to what we're all thinking about here? When's he going to say it? He's going to say something? He's going to say anything about that? Because everybody has that on their mind as they go through the week, and I'm aware of that.

God's word is aware of that. God is aware of that. God's word addresses those issues. I think one of the things that's often misleading is I've seen the question asked so many times by non-Christians, why do you care about this?

[23 : 02] Why is this such a big deal to you? Why does this issue matter to you more than all other issues? And I think if we were to look throughout Christian history, and even if we were to look throughout the Scriptures itself, we would see that other issues are addressed far, far more often throughout Christian history and even in the Bible itself, although the Bible has plenty to say on the issue.

But the Bible speaks much more often about, for instance, the poverty, about the poor and the needy than it does about the issue of homosexuality. The Bible speaks much more often about our needs in a broad, general sense to love each other than it does about the specific sin of homosexuality.

In fact, there are a number of sins that you could find in the Bible that are mentioned more often than homosexuality. And if you look throughout Christian history, Christians are actually historically not obsessed with this.

So when people say to me, why do Christians seem to be obsessed with this issue? Why do they seem to keep talking about this issue? My answer is, we're not. You just keep asking us about it. You just keep putting it right in front of us so that we have to say something.

We can't just pretend as if the Bible doesn't say anything about it. We can't pretend as if we don't care at all. We don't wake up in the morning thinking, hmm, how can I find a way to engage in a conversation so that I can tell people everything I believe about homosexuality.

[24 : 28] I don't know anybody who wakes up thinking that way. But I also don't know very many people who go through their day without seeing it directly in front of them.

The news or social media or coworkers or family members or neighbors or whatever may be the case. It's not that Christians are riveted on this issue.

It's that the culture is riveted on this issue. And just as we have to be focused on things like poverty in the culture, so we also have to be focused on any issues that arise to this level in the culture that are being talked about all the time.

We have to say what God says about things. So if God says, help the needy, then we have to say, we're going to help the needy and follow through. And if God has a word to say about a major issue in our day of homosexuality, then we have to say what God says.

We simply have to say it. Because God's words are sure. They are true. They are trustworthy. They are pure. And the only way to know whether or not what we believe is true is to test what our beliefs and to test what our culture is telling us in the light of God's word.

[25 : 39] And so that's how my mind sort of works. My mind's always cycling through passages of scripture versus contrasting things with things I hear on the news or things that I read. I read constantly.

I'm always reading things, all right? And so as I was reading things this week, I'm cycling through what does God say about this issue. And sometimes whatever I'm reading may line up with what God says. Other times whatever I'm reading stands in opposition to what God says.

And so I thought, as David contrasts the lies of the world in his time with the pure truth of God's word, what contrast am I seeing at the forefront right now?

What lies am I seeing the culture around us and even many Christians around us embracing that stand out in stark contrast to God's word?

Because if God's word is in fact like silver purified seven times, and if God will indeed keep his word, then we need to know what his word says about every issue that confronts us.

[26 : 43] And since this just happens to be this week the issue in front of us, we will talk about that issue. So I ask a quick question just in terms of application here.

I want to ask a question. What are the most prominent lies that are being spoken about the issue of homosexuality, and where do we see the scriptures correcting those lies?

Now we could, honestly, you could do a sermon series on this. You could do a whole series on this. And if you really want to get detailed, if you really want to look and see what do I think about homosexuality, what do the scriptures say, what does the church believe, then you can track back through our series in Romans.

Last summer at some point in time we were in Romans chapter 1, and we covered Romans chapter 1 verses 26-27. We covered them in some detail. And you can go back and you can listen to that.

There's a whole sermon devoted to just that issue in that passage, and you can go back to it and listen to it in detail. My task this morning is not to rehash everything I said in that sermon, although I'll repeat some of them for just a few moments here.

[27 : 52] But I encourage you to go back and listen to that. So you can see with some clarity, and you can see it in the context of the entire book of Romans in the midst of that series, what does God have to say about homosexuality?

What I want to do this morning though, and still primarily using Romans 1 and a couple of other passages, is I want to ask the question, what seem to be the most foundational lies that we are hearing around us?

What lies give rise to other misunderstandings and other false conceptions about how we ought to think about this issue? What are the base lies that we're seeing, and what does the Scripture say about those things?

So let me just read to you a couple of things that I noticed this week. And I'm reading to you here from actually the opinion of the court this week, from Justice Kennedy.

And it's a fairly long document. I do encourage you to go read it. If you're going to talk about stuff in the culture, you ought to at least know what's happening. And so that's one of the reasons I read so much. But I want to sort of get at the root here and the core of things.

[28 : 59] And just listen carefully to this, and then we'll turn to Romans 1 and see what God's Word says. It says, He says, Far from seeking to devalue marriage, the petitioners seek it for themselves because of their respect and need for its privileges and responsibilities.

And their immutable nature dictates that same-sex marriage is their only real path to this profound commitment. Now, I want you to underscore that in your mind.

Listen, I'm going to read this again. Their immutable, that word means unchangeable, their immutable nature dictates that same-sex marriage is their only real path to this profound commitment.

Further down in the opinion, he writes this, For much of the 20th century, homosexuality was treated as an illness. When the American Psychiatric Association published the first Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1952, homosexuality was classified as a mental disorder, a position adhered to until 1973.

Only in more recent years have psychiatrists and others recognized that sexual orientation is both a normal expression of human sexuality and, here's the word again, immutable.

[30 : 17] And so I want us to zero in on this idea of, is it an immutable nature? In other words, is a person's sexual orientation, is it first of all a part of their nature, a part of makes them at the core of who they are, who they are, and then again, is it unchangeable?

Is it, in fact, immutable? Because the argument of the core and the argument of our society at large is this. It's fairly simple. It's not complicated. There are a lot of other rabbit trails you could chase, but it's fairly simple.

If this is who a person is to the core of their being, if this is definitive of a person and they cannot change who they are, who are we to come in and put strictures on them expressing the core of who they are?

That's the basic argument of the court. That's the basic argument of society around us. So let's look to see whether or not that turns out to line up with God's word or stand in contrast to God's word.

Turn over to Romans chapter 1 quickly. As I said, I want you to go back and listen to the sermon from Romans chapter 1 because we're not going to walk through all the verses here. But I want to ask this question. The first thing that I want to ask is, is a person's sexual orientation, does it lie at the core of who they are?

[31 : 45] Is it definitive of human nature? Is it? Or there's another way to ask this question. Because if you're saying it's definitive of their nature, it's who they are, then you're saying it's a part of God's original design.

You're saying it's built into them by God himself. And you're saying that you cannot separate a person from their desires. That's the argument. So another way to ask this question is, is it simply an expression of who someone is to the core of their being?

Or is it a sinful action? Is it sinful behavior? Does the Bible look at our activities and say, if they grow out of what we feel is our nature, they're okay?

Or does the Bible say, no, certain things regardless of your feelings are simply wrong? Take a look at Romans chapter 1. The context of Romans chapter 1 is Paul's laying the groundwork to proclaim the gospel.

But to proclaim the good news that Christ has died for sinners, first he has to establish that we are in fact sinners, and we're in need of redemption, we're in need of salvation. So he says in Romans chapter 1 verse 18, that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

[33 : 05] So here's a connection between Psalm 12 and Romans 1. Psalm 12, David says, people are lying. Romans 1, Paul says, people suppress the truth. They do.

That's what happens. Move down further in the passage. Down to verse 26, where we get one out of many examples of unrighteousness in Romans chapter 1.

Verse 26, for this reason, because of their suppression of the truth and their refusing to worship God, for this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

That word passion simply means desires. So there can be desires that are classified as dishonorable. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.

Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. So Paul classifies homosexual activity as unnatural.

[34 : 10] It goes against nature. He says that it is contrary to nature. What does he mean by that? He means that it's not a part of God's original design.

That God's original design is seen clearly in the Garden of Eden as he fashions Adam first, and then he fashions Eve, and then he says that because these two come together and they are complementary partners.

Therefore, man shall leave his father and mother, be joined, be united to his wife, and the two become one flesh. That's God's plan. Complementary, separate sexual identities, gender.

They're separate and they're different, and yet they come together as God intended them to be. That's God's original design for the created order and for man and woman. That's as God intended it.

So anything other than that, Paul labels as contrary to nature, which means that human nature at its base does not include what is contrary to God's design, does not include homosexual behavior.

[35 : 19] It doesn't include that. Human nature does naturally include a distinction between the two sexes. Human nature does naturally include, most of the time, many times, those two coming together and becoming one flesh, being united.

But it's not at the core of what it means to be human, to express human sexuality in ways that are contrary to God's original design. But I would, in light of our culture's arguments, I might say it like this.

I might say it a little bit differently. I might say that I don't believe that your inclinations in this area of your life define who you are.

You see that? See, the court looks at this as, and our culture looks at it as, your sexual longing, your desires, they define who you are as a person.

So if you have desires that point in that direction, that's who you are. Whereas Paul says, if you have desires in that direction, those are unnatural desires.

[36 : 31] They don't define you. You're a person created in the image of God. Fallen? Yes. And because we're fallen, our sinful natures are going to take us all in different sinful trajectories.

But if you have a natural inclination within yourself, if your body has a desire for alcoholic beverages that exceeds normal desire, in other words, if you just find yourself drawn to excessive drinking all the time, that does not necessarily mean that that defines who you are.

That means that something contrary to God's design is happening within you because you're fallen. But if you define yourself by that and say, well, because that's who I am, therefore who is anyone to deny me the right to indulge in that, then you've arrived at the place where our culture has landed on the issue of homosexuality.

Our culture says that your sexual desires define who you are as a person. God's word says my design for humanity defines who you are as a person.

They're in utter contrast to one another. We are fallen people. We are sinful. And so all of us have various sinful proclivities. All of us are going to tend in one direction or another.

[37 : 52] But if we begin to say that our desires, no matter how deeply they are embedded within us, if we begin to say that our desires define who we are, then we're in a whole lot of trouble.

But if, on the other hand, we say God's word defines who I am, then we have a sure footing. We have a solid foundation upon which to stand.

And God's word says we're created, first of all, in the image of God, which means that we're created for the glory of God. And God says in terms of sexual identity and behavior, we're created male and female, and that has a purpose for man and woman coming together in the covenant of marriage and becoming one flesh.

That's God's purpose for it. And any other use for God's created design stands outside of what Paul would consider to be natural, that is, in line with God's creative will.

It's contrary to nature. And so the very assumption of our culture, the very assumption of the court here, that our nature is determined by our desires, is fundamentally flawed.

[39 : 05] Your nature is determined by who God says you are in His word. And desires that you have might actually go against your nature. You might actually have desires within you that contradict who you are as a person created in God's image.

Your desires don't define who you are. God defines who you are. And so the very, I think, foundation upon which our culture builds its view of homosexuality, and then by extension you would want to say by which the court came to their decision, is flawed to its core.

Because in no other area of life, in no other place do we allow desires to determine identity but in this one area.

Why? Why do we do that? I think the reason is because there is, according to Romans 1, there is an innate knowledge that these things are not right.

And not just this. Paul lists other things. Take a look down. Verse 28. Since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They are filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.

[40 : 25] They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Paul is not riveted on one sin. He is not focused on one thing. He has got a whole list of things here. And all of these things are things that we might be able to say, but that is my desire.

I am by nature an envious person, so if that is who I am by nature, isn't that okay for me to fulfill that desire? I am by nature a person filled with malice, so isn't it okay for me to be angry all the time with people?

That's who I am by nature, we would say. Paul says, no, no. These are various manifestations of the unrighteousness and ungodliness that God himself opposes.

And we would never make the argument on any of these other things. We would never make the argument that if that's what you deep down desire, if that's what you feel, then that defines who you are, and therefore you can do it.

[41 : 28] So it's not that Christians are honing in on this one issue and saying, we want to hammer this. In fact, that's not the case at all. It's that the world itself is singling out this one particular sinful desire that we know by nature is wrong.

Notice what he goes on to say, verse 32. Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, that is to come under God's judgment, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

So we have an innate knowledge that all of these sorts of things are wrong. We have an innate knowledge of that, but we rebel against that innate knowledge. And for whatever reason, at this point in history, the culture has decided to rebel against the innate knowledge that we all have of this one particular issue.

Not all the others that Paul lists. I mean, I could foresee a day and we could probably find cultures at different points in history when some of these other sins that are listed were actually upheld as virtues.

You can imagine a culture in which slander is thought of as a virtue, slandering others. If you can win the slander war, you're virtuous.

[42 : 44] You can imagine a culture in which disobedience to parents is lauded and exalted. That's just kids expressing their freedom. That's them expressing their individuality. Whatever the case may be, you can, for some of these things, imagine a situation in which these things that Paul calls unrighteous would be elevated to the status of virtue simply because they say, but that's who they are.

They have a strong desire to do that. And if they're naturally rebellious to their parents, if they're naturally, they wouldn't say it that way, if they are naturally inclined to want to do their own thing, make their own decisions, be independent of their parents, then we ought to let them do that.

But buried beneath that, there would be an innate understanding that it's not right. Four-year-olds should sit down when they're told to sit down, and when they don't, it's okay for parents to punish them.

It's okay, right? Because we all know innately that that's wrong. But we also, Paul says, innately, we all, as fallen, sinful people, we suppress the truth.

And as I said, at times we'll suppress the truth about one particular area of unrighteousness, and other times another area. And where the culture is, is suppressing the truth of what God says about human sexuality.

[44 : 00] That's not, the church has not chosen this as a banner issue. Culture has chosen this as a banner issue. And so we just stand and say, well, but here's what God says, and here's what you know innately if you weren't suppressing the truth.

So, the idea that because my sexual desires define who I am, I ought to be able to go out and fulfill those desires, and nothing should prevent me from fully expressing those desires in my life, that idea is fundamentally flawed and at odds with God's word.

But what about the second part of that statement? What about that word that we saw occur two times? What about that word immutable? Unchangeable. Because the argument says, if I can't change my desires, then who are you to tell me to suppress those desires?

If I cannot get rid of those desires, then you are in fact oppressing me if you want me to suppress those desires. That's not right, the culture says.

There's two things I would say to that. On the one hand, I would say that I don't believe that in every case sexual orientation is unchangeable and immutable.

[45 : 22] The court cited, they cited the American Psychiatric Association. Because in 1973, they changed their guidelines and said it was no longer a mental illness, but it was a part of normal, normal behavior, just normal range of acceptable behavior.

And because the American Psychiatric Association changed their definition of things, therefore, we need to accept it as just unchangeable. It's just who people are. But, but I look in God's word and I see that there are indications that these things can change.

Sometimes. Not every time. And I look in the world around me and I see actual verifiable evidence. You can talk to people who say, I once had these desires, I repented and through a long process of repentance, God began to change those desires and I no longer have those desires.

That's entirely possible. So not in every case is someone's orientation immutable, unchangeable. But of course, perhaps it could be at times.

Because do we not also know Christians? People who've been saved, people who genuinely trust in Christ, who still struggle with what the Bible would call unnatural sexual desires, whether they're this particular issue or some other issue.

[46 : 49] Don't we know people that still continue to struggle with that? Yeah, I think we do. I think we do. So, I would say that sometimes those desires God changes and sometimes God does not change those desires but He leaves us to fight and struggle against sin.

But never does God say because you have a desire for something, therefore you don't have to repent of it. In fact, I want you to turn quickly to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. The last passage we'll look at this morning so that we can contrast what God's Word says with what the world says here on this particular issue.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6 verse 9, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Now, in the middle of this list of sins just like we see in Romans 1, we have homosexuality listed. In fact, there are two different words in the original Greek that are both rendered in the ESV as homosexuality.

And they're very specific words, very detailed words. Verse 11 though, Such were some of you. You were that. That's who you were. Such were some of you.

[48 : 10] But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. You were that, but that's not who you are anymore.

You were an adulterer. You were a homosexual. You were a thief. You were greedy, but that's not who you are anymore. And that might happen in one of two ways.

God might supernaturally remove all of those desires from you and we can hear testimony of that from people. Or, God might not remove the desire, but strengthen you through the process of sanctification so that you're able to resist the desire.

I mean, my goodness, all of us have desires that could, if left unchecked, lead us into sin. But the desires themselves are not automatically sin.

Right? Only if desires are allowed to create sinful thoughts or sinful actions do they become sin. And that's just reality.

[49 : 15] That's just true. We see that. We all know that. It doesn't matter your orientation on these things. You see that and you know that. Everybody knows that they have desires that they need to make sure do not lead them into sin.

Whether they're sexual desires or desires to abuse alcohol or drugs or desires to overeat or eat improperly. We all have all kinds of desires that could lead us into sin.

And sometimes God transforms us in such a way that He removes those desires. Other times He just gives us the strength to resist those desires when they crop up.

So, is it immutable? Is it unchangeable? It's not unchangeable. Does God always immediately change it when He saves somebody? No. But God provides a way of escape when we face temptation and He provides strength even for those who would testify and say, I did not find release from these desires.

God strengthens. So, the very foundations I think that underlie our culture's view on this are flawed because our desires don't define who we are and our desires can be changed by God and even when they are not He can give us more powerful desires to govern those desires.

[50 : 36] a desire for godliness, a desire to glorify God in every area of your life, overcoming those sinful desires that still remain, that are still present, that are still latent, that are still there at times.

The very foundation, I think, that underlies what we see happening in our culture on this issue cannot stand up to scrutiny next to God's Word.

David in Psalm 12 looks at the world around him and he sees a world that is on the one hand full of lies and then on the other hand coats those lies with language that makes them seem like they are good things.

We see the same thing. Whether it has to do with social justice as David indicates here, we sometimes hear those who would refuse to engage in seeking to help other people, we see them cloak that in language that sounds good.

I just want them to have some personal responsibility, therefore I will not help them in their poverty. Well, that sounds good on the surface, except that God commands us to help those who are in need.

[51 : 47] And we see the same thing happening on the issue that's at the forefront of our culture. We see Christians oftentimes saying things like, well, I think that for me that's wrong, but if that's what they want to do, if that's an expression of love for them, then let them go ahead and move in that direction.

And yet, just as it remains true that God calls us to help the needy, it also remains true that God says it's contrary to God's design and it's contrary to nature and it falls under the category of unrighteousness.

You can call it what you want. You can use whatever terminology you want to try to pave over the reality of sin, but sin stands defined by God's Word, not by the culture, not by political leanings, whether right or left.

Sin is not defined by what we would like it to be. Sin is not defined by what makes our personal relationships with other people easier to navigate. Sin is defined by God's Word.

We can't rely on the world as a sure guide for this because the world utters lies to its neighbor, speak with flattering lips, and a double heart.

[53 : 05] But the words of the Lord are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times. And the good news is that God says that He will keep them.

Psalm 12, verse 7, And you, O Lord, will keep them Your words, and You will guard us from this generation forever. The good news of the Gospel is that God keeps His Word.

He says that He can redeem people out of every form of sin that we see in the world around us, and He can. He says that He can rescue those who are in need, and He can.

He says that His Son came to pay the penalty and to pay the price for my sins, for the sins of all those who trust in them, regardless of who they once were.

They can be new and transformed and redeemed. And our role in the world as Christians is not to hide silently, is not to pretend that we don't have an opinion about these things, or not to pretend that God's Word doesn't say anything.

[54 : 12] We have a very, very clear mandate. We say what God says, and we say it in love. Or, to put it another way, we preach the Gospel.

Christ crucified for sinners. But you can't preach a Gospel of Christ crucified for sinners if you don't acknowledge that there are sinners around you. Let's pray.

I'll continue this