



Trends

There are many who believe homosexuals are "born gay." Studies with identical twins do indicate there is a genetic "component" to homosexuality. Studies show about 20% of the time, if an identical twin is gay, so will his/her identical sibling. That the relationship is not 100% proves genetics is not deterministic. In this case, and the case of many human behaviors (e.g., depression, alcoholism, drug addiction, 4gambling, adultery, criminal behavior, etc.), genes play a role. BUT biology is not destiny! As Dr. Joseph Davis says, "Anybody who tells you that we have found a gene that creates homosexuality has not read the reports, does not know what they are talking about, and is illiterate on the topic."

—via my own research

I Corinthians 6:9-11: "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 homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 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..."



News & Notes

- Please pray for those mentioned in the announcements after services and others listed on the bulletin board in the foyer of the church building.
- Pray for all the members at Westside! Please pray for Susan Ferrell and her family as she continues to recover from a brain tumor. Please pray for her and her family.
- Please pray for Alan Jones. He underwent deep brain stimulation to hopefully relieve severe facial pain. Alan held a gospel meeting for us in October 2014. He's been unable to preach for several months due to his affliction. Pray for him and his family.
- Sister Virginia Brown's hip replacement surgery was a success! Pray for a fast and complete recovery!
- Pray for Larry Halley as he recovers from major surgery to replace a heart valve.
- Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many temptations in today's school environment.
- Please keep sister Wilma in your prayers! She gives all of us so much encouragement! God bless her and Virginia! Remember both of them in your prayers.
- There are many needy saints! Can you help?! Let me know.
- If you know of any in need of our prayers please let us know!



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Words of Life

Westside church of Christ



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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68

"Redemption Point"

Craig Thomas

I'm an avid collector of quotations. The really good ones always make me say, "Why didn't I think of that?" I recently found one of those while reading the book *Fire In My Heart*, when Connie Adams described much modern preaching as being a lot...

"Like grapenuts, it is neither grapes nor nuts. It is heavy on Luca-do, Swindoll, McGregor, Baxter, and the like, but light on the prophets, Jesus, Peter, Paul, James, and John." (*Changing Attitudes*, p. 23)

He went on rightly describing such preaching as nothing more than "spiritual pep talks" that result in the hearers knowing "little basic truth." He also pointed out a prime fallacy of this "watered-down preaching" being its dedication to the mindset that we "accentuate the positive" and eliminate the negative from our preaching.

Brother Adam's thoughts really struck me as I recently prepared for a class on Ezekiel chapters 8 and 9. But first, perhaps a bit of historical background is in order. Those chapters were written after the first and second captives had been taken from Judah to Babylon in 605 and 597 B.C. In fact, Ezekiel was one of the many taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. (2 Kgs. 24:14; Ezek. 1:1-2) Judah and Jerusalem had been repeatedly told by God to repent or face the coming doom (e.g., Jeremiah's 40+ year's of preaching). These people should have known better since they had seen their northern brethren carried away as punishment for similar transgressions by the Assyrians over a century earlier (Jer. 3:6-10). God's next move was to send the Babylonians against them for a third and final time with a horrific siege. In fact, the Bible records a nearly two year siege that culminated in 586 B.C. (2 Kgs. 25) The gravity and extent of the siege can be seen as the people of Jerusalem even resorted to cannibalism (Lam. 2:20; 4:10; Ezek. 5:10).

The really sad part is that all of this destruction, devastation, and degradation was avoidable. Time and time again, even unto the eleventh hour, God called these people to repentance through the preaching of the prophets (e.g., Jer.

22:1-9). Furthermore, the message of the prophets was not new, for God had warned of such potential punishments from the nation's very beginning (e.g., Deut. 28). But all of God's words and all the preaching was to no avail as the people hardened their hearts, stopped their ears, and seared their consciences (Ezek. 3:7; 1 Tim. 4:2). As a result God's patience ran out. There would be no more calls to repentance. No more divine hand extended in tender mercy. No more prophets sent preaching either the thunderous message of doom or the compassionate message of potential forgiveness. Instead, God said, *"Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them."* (Ezek. 8:18) As Jim McGuiggan said, "Judah had passed 'Redemption Point.'" (Ezekiel, p. 10) What a situation of utter hopelessness! (Cf. Matt. 13:42; 24:51; 25:30)

No doubt God gave these people their just deserts. However, Ezekiel was still bowed down with grief as the slaughter even extended to the women and children (Ezek. 9:6). The text tells us Ezekiel fell on his face *"and cried out, and said, 'Ah, Lord GOD! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?'"* (Ezek. 9:8) I believe Ezekiel reacted as any true and tenderhearted man or woman of God would react. Jeremiah expressed this attitude when he said, *"My eyes overflow with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people."* (Lam. 3:48) Even God, who sends such judgments, takes *"no pleasure in the death of the wicked"* (Ezek. 33:11).

There are so many lessons we can learn from this passage. And, certainly the Lord expects us to learn something from it! *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."* (Rom. 15:4) *"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."* (1 Cor. 10:11)

One important thing I learn is that brother Adams was right: much preaching is "neither grapes nor nuts"! Any man who would call himself a gospel preacher or an evangelist and would not—OFTEN—include the message of doom God promises sinners (Matt. 7:13-14; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:15; 21:8) should quit preaching...immediately! Men, women, boys, and girls need a frequent and clarion wake-up call to the ultimate reality that *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5:10). Sooner, rather than later, we all may pass beyond our own personal "Redemption Point." A point beyond which we find only troubled waters and treacherous shoals; a point beyond which there is no mercy but only *"a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries"* (Heb. 10:27). The deceitfulness of sin can easily lead us to sear our conscience and steer our spiritual ship beyond that fateful point!

Any gospel preacher worth his salt will remind us often and vividly of this unsavory, but profoundly important fact. We need preachers brave and faithful enough to keep this aspect of God's character and our relationship with Him ever fresh in our minds. To ever remind us that *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* (Heb. 10:31) So fresh in our

minds that each time we are tempted to sin we recall such passages as Ezekiel 8 and 9. So fresh in our minds that anytime we are enticed to indulge the lusts of the flesh, forsake the assembly, or disobey in anyway; we instead fall on our faces and pray for that precious *"way of escape"* and the courage to take it (1 Cor. 10:13). So fresh in our minds we can't wait to teach God's truth to our children, to our family, to our friends, to our neighbors, and, yea, to anyone who will listen.

I thank God for those faithful few gospel preachers willing to ignore the popular trend to "accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative." I love a "positive" message as well as the next man, but I don't find such in the *"smooth words and flattering speech"* offered by the many (Rom. 16:18). Instead, I find it a much more "positive" message when I'm reminded I have my own personal "Redemption Point" beyond which I dare not pass. Bless those who warn me to steer clear.

The Master's Mission

Larry Ray Hafley

Why did Jesus come to earth and dwell among men? Let Him tell us: (1) *"I came...to call...sinners to repentance"* (Mk. 2:17); (2) *"For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost"* (Matt. 18:11); (3) *"For God sent...His Son into the world...that the world through Him might be saved"* (Jn. 3:17).

Could language be plainer? Jesus knew why He came. The apostles also understood the purpose of His coming. *"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world"* (1 Jn. 4:14).

"But, Larry, why are you writing about such an obvious fact? Everyone knows why Jesus came to earth!" That is a fair question, and here is my response: If we all know these things, why has the "social gospel" made such inroads among us? The gospel of regeneration has been replaced by the gospel of recreation. The name of Christ has been set aside for the games of life. Emphasis has been transferred from the spirit of man to the sports of men. There is a focus on youth rather than truth. "Church" parties and picnics are more popular than prayer and preaching.

The Lord's "fellowship hall" is the church. In the church, we are *"fellowheirs, and of the same body,"* *"and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 3:6). Christians as *"living stones are built up a spiritual house...to offer up spiritual sacrifices"* (1 Pet. 2:5). Christ constructed His church (Matt. 16:18). He built a *"spiritual house"* for spiritual purposes, not a physical house for social events.

If we truly recognize why Christ came to earth, why do we see churches appealing to physical senses rather than to penitent spirits? If Jesus came to provide reconciliation *"in one body,"* the church, why do men provide recreation for the human body in the "church building"? The gospel is *"the power of God unto salvation"* (Rom. 1:16). Christ died to be *"the propitiation for our sins,"* not for the recreation of our senses (1 Jn. 2:2). Accordingly, we should point men to His atonement and not to our entertainment. Now, do you see why this article began with the Savior's statements about His mission on earth?