

Mat Roberts Identity Issues 20170614c

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[0 : 00] Thank you.

Aaron was into aliens like no one else I have ever met. Aaron knew everything there was to know about aliens. And indeed, Aaron was absolutely convinced of the truth, the reality of aliens. It was a time the X-Files was on TV, if any of you are old enough to remember that. And he believed that it was a documentary. This absurd program on TV was describing the truth of these creatures coming from outer space.

Now, you don't need me to tell you that Aaron's very strongly held beliefs had no relation whatsoever to reality. As Aaron ran through in his mind these creatures hurtling through outer space in order to come and steal our brains or whatever it was, the creatures did not exist. And what's more, when he started to believe in them, they did not begin to exist, for obvious reasons. Now, why am I saying this? The strongly held beliefs of one 14-year-old boy have, obviously, absolutely zero significance for what reality actually is.

[1 : 43] And yet, here we are, we find ourselves in a situation, as a nation, where we find that people believe that the reality of who they are is determined by nothing other than strongly held beliefs or feelings.

Which is a rather extraordinary situation to have got ourselves in. And that means two things. Firstly, I think we do need to try and understand, how has our culture got to the situation where we think that reality itself is determined by psychology?

That beliefs determine who I am? How have we got to that situation? And also, I want to, I hope, convince us that we should not fear this issue.

As if we as Christians are on weak ground on the whole question of LGBT and all the related things. Sin in the Bible is lunacy.

And this issue puts its lunacy on display in glorious technicolor. Now, that doesn't mean that those around us see its lunacy. But it does mean that it is our job to point it out.

[2 : 57] And what's more, it is our wonderful, glorious privilege to have been given by the one true God a solid basis for knowing what reality is.

Including knowing who we are. So please don't be afraid of this. I'm going to have to move fairly quickly to get through my material. Paul has kept on shortening how long I've got.

First it was an hour and a half, then it was an hour. Then last night it was 50 minutes, and then this evening it's gone down to 45. So, I will do my best to get through this as quickly as I can.

So what I want to do is I want to start off by looking at male and female in the Bible and the way that relates to the image of God. So you have a handout, which do follow with me, and I'm going to have some things on the screen behind me as well.

So firstly, let's think about the image of God in male and female. We are, as we all know, I hope we have... Oh, that's not very good. That's gone to the end of this might show. That's a shame because you're going to see everything before it comes up.

[3 : 54] It's just going to spoil everything. So, there we go. Someone who's going to put their hand... Put your hand over the lens, so I can do this without a spoil it. There we go. Thank you. Okay. Take away your hand.

Thank you. All right. So, here we go. Well, that means focusing as well. You're not the focus. Do you want me to give a bit of twiddle? There we go. Okay. So, pretty basic, isn't it?

That everything in the world is created. Genesis 1, verse 1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Which straight away means that we are created beings. We are creatures. Creatures, rightly understood, doesn't mean little creepy, crawly things. It means anything that has been created by God. And we are creatures. Creatures. Now, at the heart of being a creature is to

know that reality is not defined by us.

Our identity, what we are, is not up to us. We have zero input into what we are.

[4 : 55] To be a creature is to have had our nature, our existence, decided for us by the living God. It doesn't get more basic than that in terms of the worldview of the Bible.

That we have been created. But, of course, the Bible says more than that. That is true of everything. That's true of the stones and the earthworms and the stars and the galaxies. They're all true of all of them. Their reality is defined for them by God.

But we are more than just those things. We are God's images. Genesis 1, 26. Foundational verse in the Bible tells us that God created man in his image.

God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness. And verse 27. God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Which means that everything I've said already about our reality is true.

We do not get to define what we are. But more than that, that we are made in order to be something in particular that is defined by the God whose image we are.

[6 : 06] And I'm not going to go into great detail about what it means to be God's images tonight. Although I have to say some things about it. But that is constitutive of what it means to be human in every way.

There are various things that we do need to say about that. What it means is that that applies to both our body and soul. In the Bible we are body and soul. We are not a soul who inhabits a body. We are bodies as much as we are souls. We are both. That is very important as we shall see. Now part of being God's image is what we are created for.

Which is fundamentally to worship God. I hope that red is showing up well enough. Can you see that at the back? Good. We are made to worship God.

Now the short of catechism helps to expand that. It's telling us that the chief end of man is to glorify him and enjoy him forever. Now being sum all that up, the worship of God is the thing that we are made for.

[7 : 06] And we can say that because we know that the worship of God principally of course means what we do when we are gathered as God's people. But it is something that actually ripples out into and defines the whole of the rest of our lives.

We worship God by love expressed in obedience. We worship God by keeping his laws. And God's laws begin with the way that we relate to him.

And God's laws continue to define the whole of the rest of human life. And of course the Ten Commandments are the place where that is summed up for us most clearly. But the whole of the Bible is showing us, among other things, what we are made for.

We are made to be God's images who worship him. We are made to be worshipping creatures. Creatures who give our God the honour which he is due. And to express that honour by serving him with our whole hearts.

Loving him with heart, soul, mind and strength. And because we love him, loving our neighbour as ourself. The two great commandments as our Lord taught us. Now, I hope you have a Bible.

[8 : 14] If you have a Bible, do open it with me to Genesis 1 and verse 27. Because no sooner are we told that we are created as God's images, in his image, than we are told that God has made us to be male and female.

Genesis 1, 27. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them.

Now, see the parallelism in that verse? Very clearly, the image of God is inseparable from the fact that we are male and female. Male and female are not things that are added onto the image of God. We image God either as men or women, boys or girls. Male or female. That is at the heart of what it means.

No, sorry, not at the heart, but it is integral to what it means to be the image of God. There are no it's in humanity. There are no human beings who are not male or female.

[9 : 35] Now, I know that will immediately raise some questions from some of you. Do bring those up later on if you want to. But we do need to say that to be gender neutral is to be subhuman. Slugs and stones are gender neutral.

Human beings never are. Now, why is man and female in the image of God? Why is that part of the image of God? We're treading on very holy ground when we're talking about what it means to be

God's image.

I'm not at all claiming to give an exhaustive view of this. But there's some things that you can see here. Firstly, we've seen, if we've read through Genesis 1, there's been a pattern already of God forming and filling the world.

So, he has formed the world by dividing light from darkness, the waters from the waters, the waters above and the waters beneath, the dry land from the sea, and then he fills those spheres of reality with things, the sun and the moon and the fish and the birds and then all the creatures that live on the land.

Forming and filling is there. And then you see those things in the image in verses 26 and 28. Verse 26 we're told that man, who is in God's image, will have dominion. Over all the other creatures, the fish of the sea, the birds, the heavens, the livestock, etc.

[10:51] Keeping things. There will be a ruling function. Then we're told, verse 27 in the middle, God created man in his image, male and female. Then verse 28, God blesses them and says, Be fruitful and multiply.

Which means that there seems to be this pattern of forming and filling that God has done is part of what is imaged in man. We form the world by having dominion over it and we are to fill it.

And given that in the middle of that we see male and female, there's at least a strongish hint that part of the distinction between male and female is to do with forming and filling the world.

It is something like this, that men are to grow the crops and women will actually make the food worth eating.

Men will build the houses and women will make them worth living in. Men will build the bridges and women will give you a reason to want to drive over them. Something like that. Now please don't think that I'm trying to be exhaustive here, but I think the pattern there of forming and filling is something which you can see is present there.

[12:00] Now something else in verse 27 that we need to see, which is, this is the foundational verse of what male and female mean in the Bible. And do you notice that four times, no, three times, God is referred to as he.

So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them.

Now that means something which we should not miss at this stage. That, it's perfectly clear, there is not some other female deity out there. So why are we told that God, why is God referred to as masculine?

We have to say something like this. That masculinity is God-like. And femininity is man-like.

What do I mean by that? What I mean is that there is something about the distinction between God and his creation which is reflected in male and female.

[13:16] Someone else is trying to preach it as well. That's very exciting. And we are in Genesis 1. Did it just work that out? Your phone has very clever AI and identified verses by speaking.

Okay. There's something about the distinction between God and his creation that is reflected in male and female. And that, of course, becomes much clearer when we get into Genesis chapter 2. Because when we get to Genesis chapter 2, we meet the first man and the first woman in more detail. And we are straight away told, well, what are we told?

About why there are two. Genesis 2 verse 18. The Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.

And the helper cannot be one of the animals. That is not the issue. The issue is not that he needs, you know, a shy horse to pull a plow or a dog to fetch things for him or whatever.

[14:14] Nor does he need another man because there's just too much work to do. He needs a helper who is fit for him. Who is different to him and makes up for what he cannot do on his own.

And of course, you know the story. God causes a deep sleep to fall upon the man while he's slept at one of his ribs, so he's placed with flesh and the rib the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman.

And the man said, this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. And then verse 24, critically, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

Marriage is what male and female are designed for. So we need to be clear about this. That God has designed humanity, that he made the man and from the man's side he made a woman.

And the intention is that the two should come together in union. In permanent, fruitful union. So there are two unavoidably and inherently different sexes who are destined for ultimate, fruitful union.

[15 : 27] We have different duties to God as men and women as part of one worship of God as his image is. That is what marriage is designed for. It's what men and female are designed for.

Now why is this? Again, I'm going very quickly, but I hope you know that as the Bible goes on we discover that the reason God designed male and female like this is ultimately and fundamentally because all of creation is about a wedding.

It is all about the wedding. It is about the wedding between Christ and his church. We don't have time to look at it now and I've felt that the verse in your handout but Ephesians chapter 5 verses 22 to the end describe how the marriage of man and woman and their relationship in marriage is an image of what God designs for all of his creation to lead to.

That there will be a man, not the first man, the second man, Adam, the last Adam, who will fall into a deep sleep and out of his side which is torn by the soldier's spear is taken his bride, the church and they will be united in a permanent fruitful union.

That, friends, is the gospel, isn't it? We are the church, we are the bride of Christ and God has made all of reality so that we have presented before our eyes every moment of our lives with the reality of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[17 : 05] The two sexes, male and female, are about the nature of reality. If you are male, your maleness is designed by God to teach you something about God's intention to save his church through his son.

If you are a woman, you are a female, God has designed you and your body so that something about your reality and nature teaches you and all those around you of something about the way God has intended his church to respond to Christ in love and that the two are to be united.

The two sexes are about the nature of reality, God and creation are different, and marriage is about the destiny of reality, that God will send his son to be incarnate and that he will win his church for himself and in the new creation we will feast to the marriage supper of the land as the bride of Christ.

Men and women are created differently to image the gospel. what that means is that throughout the Bible there are various ways in which the difference between men and women is expanded and we'll just go very quickly run through these I'm trying to expand on them but you can ask about them.

It is an image of God and mankind the difference between God and his creation God and mankind is imaged in men and female because it leads to Christ and his church where the two will be united and that means there are all sorts of different ways in which there are distinctions in the way that men and women are supposed to be and I've been through some of these already forming the world filling the world the worker and his helper remember that doesn't mean the worker is greater than the helper Adam can't do his work without his helper they're supposed to be fathers and mothers the fruitfulness of their union is intended he is supposed to lead as Christ leads his church she's supposed to submit to him as the church submits to Christ but that is because he protects and provides for her and she is to nurture the children that their union produces he is to sacrifice himself for her and for their children and she is to receive that sacrificial love and to love in return that is something of the pattern of the difference between men and women now why am I going through all of this in this kind of detail because you see we do need to realise that the difference between us as men and women is a glorious indelible part of our reality and it is something which is bound up with the duties that we have to God what it means to live in a godly way is substantially the same for men and women ten commandments apply to all of us but it does apply in distinct ways particularly within marriage but in other ways as well and we have lived in a culture now for a long time where we have led to feel embarrassed about thinking that men and women are different but the difference between men and women boys and girls is a glorious illustration of the gospel which we are spaced to see before our eyes and delight in now what I want to do now is to move on say okay that is the way that we're designed but how does that all get affected by sin now there's far more here than I can say but I want to try and just explain the basic outline of this here is where we started that we are designed created in God's image intended to worship him as you know

[20 : 45] Genesis chapter 3 the first man and the woman rebel against God and in Genesis 3 verse 5 is where that happens what is the temptation that the snake lays before the woman for God

knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing good and evil now the attraction of the sin to Eve and then to Adam the woman and the man is an attraction of freedom from God's commands that is the whole thrust of what the snake is saying you don't have to accept that God is God you can deny if you choose that you are God's image instead you can try to be God yourself and you can refuse to give him the worship that is his due by obeying his commands because you can do your own thing you can choose for yourself what you want and that is what the woman thinks verse 6 so when the woman saw the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and the tree was to be desired to make one wise she took of its fruit and ate and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate the attraction of sin is the attraction of being free from God's commands but of course the result of grasping at freedom from God is not freedom it is slavery and here is a dynamic that always applies to sin in the Bible sin is grasping at freedom and finding slavery thinking you have escaped from the control of God and discovering that you are in fact now under the control not of a loving father but of something far more malign now how does that work and I want to take us through this just turn over a couple of verses 2

Genesis 6 verse 5 the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually the effect of seeking freedom from God's commands is immediately that the desires of the man's heart sorry desires of man's heart men and women become corrupt only evil continually in these verses and that is a diagnosis of humanity that then runs constantly and indelibly through the whole of the rest of the Bible we could see it in dozens of places I put a list of verses on your handout I'm not going to look them all up now but let's look shall we at Ephesians chapter 2 just for a very clear example of this Ephesians chapter 2 all describes the Ephesian Christians before they became Christians and you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked following the course of this world following the prince of the power of the air the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all lived in the passions of our flesh carrying out the desires of the body and the mind and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind the effect of grasping at freedom from God is not that we are free now why is that we were designed I should have a later point if I don't have one we were designed to worship God as you see we were there that we were designed to have a heart that loves God desires were part of what we were made for to desire our creator but when we have tried to cut ourselves off from him and deny that we're his images those desires don't evaporate they twist and instead we find and mankind has always found from the Garden of Eden onwards that we now long to do evil we long to do evil in Paul's words we lived in the passions of our flesh we carried out the desires of the body and the mind the death as Paul calls it in Ephesians 2 verse 1 is a death in which we do exactly what we want the reason it is slavery is because it is what we want that is the problem our slave master is our hearts our desires now corrupt desires are then always from very early on in the Bible and all the way through it connected to idolatry turn back a few pages to

Romans chapter 1 if you have a Bible there Romans 1 verse 21 verse 24 first Romans 1 24 therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity the lusts of their hearts are there why verse 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator who is blessed forever now what is that referring to that verse verse 25 interestingly it could equally well refer to what happens in the garden of Eden they worshipped and served the snake a creature instead of the living gods but also it refers to what people now do everywhere verse 23 they exchange the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things you see the form which our corrupt desires take is idolatry the worship of idols now why is this there's a couple of reasons you can see this if you want to be free from God and decide for yourself what is good and evil you have a problem if I'm not going to accept God's definition of good and evil and I want to decide what's good and evil if I say this thing is good but it's just me that says it actually I've just downgraded it to the level of an opinion if I want to claim this thing is actually good I have to have an authority to hang that on and that is what an idol is it's a God whom I have created who will then dictate according to my instructions what is good and what is bad what is good and what is evil that's what idols are they're man made gods with the purpose of turning evil into good and good into evil that is what they're for but because we are made to worship we're made to worship the God whose image we are we cannot help worshipping the idols we make that is the mocking that Isaiah

gives towards idols Isaiah 44 look it up another time if you want to man makes something out of a block of wood he knows it's a block of wood because he used the other half of it to cook his dinner on but then he bows down to it and says you're my God but because we are inescapably creatures we are made to worship when we try to be God we have to invent gods and when we invent gods we cannot help worshipping them and that is part of why we are enslaved because we end up being devoted to the non-entities that we have ourselves decided our gods indeed given that we're supposed to worship the God who defines our true identity when we worship false gods and I hope that is too small for you to read it says we become defined by their image by false identity our idols come to define us and you find that all over the Bible

[29 : 31] Psalm 115 verses 4-8 it says they have eyes but they can't see they have ears but they can't hear they have feet but they can't walk and those who worship them will become like them actually comes twice in the Psalms that phrase or in Acts 19 when Paul's preaching in Ephesus leads to a riot what are the rioters who filled the theatre shout for two hours great is Artemis of the Ephesians why are they so passionate about the honour of their God whom they know that it's just silver because she defines them you insult our God you insult our city how dare you you see idolatry is a false view of reality and idolatry comes with a package of false histories the myths that tell the story of why our idols are worth worshipping false ideas the lies about who they are and what they can do and what we need to do in order to pacify them and a false language the words that are used to describe the entire worldview built around our idols and that is why attempting freedom from God sin leads to slavery it is a slavery that is all about the way we are bound to our idols now that is pretty terrifying isn't it but of course praise God the gospel is a gospel of how

Christ came to rescue us from the slavery of sin indeed Christ has come to save us from sin that's his name he's the one who will save his people from their sins and he saves us from the guilt of our sins we know that but he also saves us from the power of our sins he not only by his atoning blood takes away the stain and the guilt and the condemnation and the wrath of God for this disgusting exchange we have done in worshipping idols not the true God but also God breaks the power of sin this is the gospel isn't it this is what I'm supposed to be this is what I am on the right and on the left how does God save me by sending his son the Lord Jesus Christ to take on human flesh and as the second Adam to live a life as the perfect image of God Colossians 1:15 the image of the invisible God who worships

God perfectly fulfilling all of his laws without failure all of his life that is who Christ is he is the true man as the God man he lives a life of what humanity is supposed to be he is the second Adam the last Adam meanwhile we are on the right worshipping our idols but the gospel is of course that God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit delivers us from worshipping our idols in order to bring us to be the bride of Christ his church so that just as when a bride marries her husband all of his goods become hers so when we the lost sinners that we were have been freed from our idols we are united to Christ so that we are restored to be his images and that idea comes up numerous times you'll find it in Ephesians and in Colossians and indeed you'll find it in many of the ways of the language of the book of Revelation we are made to be restored to be God's images and this is I hope not very new to you this is the gospel that God delivers us from our sinful desires and from the guilt of our sin that attends those things that is what Christ achieved at the cross it is what is applied to us by the Holy Spirit that is it that's everything isn't it the Lord Jesus Christ is our deliverance now let me then introduce to you the the great controversy in the church in the 5th century between Augustine and Pelagius because it is all about this here is the issue the issue is does Christ forgive us or does he forgive us and save us from the power of sin or let's put it more sharply the issue is what is our problem what do we need delivering from Pelagius says basically we we just need an example so we know how to be good but we are born innocent and Augustine says no let me just show you read you some quotes so you can see it this is very very important so bear with me

Pelagius he was Welsh by the way we think evil is not born with us and we are procreated without fault and the only thing in men at their birth is what God has formed can you get that at your birth the only things in you were what God had put there there was nothing wrong with you at your birth here it is again Christ first of all remits all sins in baptism who those who believe in him and then urges them by an imitation of himself in perfect holiness so Pelagius says God forgives you you have sinned probably so God forgives you by by Jesus' death applied in baptism and then he set an example for you to follow that's what you need you need to follow Jesus' example to be good that's

the only help you need because there was no evil born near you you were born innocent good capable of being of doing right now let's hear

[35 : 25] Augustine instead Augustine of Hippo in order indeed that we might receive that love whereby we might love we were loved while as yet we had no love ourselves do you hear what he's saying we had no love for God and we never could have done because of the corruption of our nature and so God loved us in Christ so that we might start to love him and you see how profoundly different that is to Pelagius or this by such grace it is effective not only that we discover what ought to be done but also that we do what we have discovered not only that we believe what ought to be loved but also that we love what we believe you have to kind of think about what he's saying but basically he's saying this God's grace in Christ is not to just tell you how to live God's grace in Christ is to save you so that you can start to do what you never could have done before to deliver you from the sin that lay in your heart from the moment of your conception now what you have here is two totally different understandings of what Christianity is

Pelagius' version of Christianity is this it's a program of moral self-improvement God will give you the tick list you go and tick it Augustine says you haven't got the first base in understanding what the gospel is the gospel is you are a deeply corrupt sinner your heart is enslaved to sin you were born longing for all the wrong things because of everything that we've seen and God sent his son to free you from the passions and lusts that lie deep in your hearts and have been there from the moment you were conceived now I hope you can see how important that is this is an issue about what is the gospel what is the very nature of Christianity well why does this matter let's then go on you might be thinking we're going for a while and we haven't got to the LGBT stuff yet this is what we're supposed to be about look this is a particularly clear example the LGBT phenomenon which is around us everywhere we go now a particularly clear example of what we have just been seeing what simple men and women always do turn with me if you would to 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 14 as obedient children do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance but as he who called you is holy you also be holy in all your conduct since it's written you shall be holy for I am holy what non

Christians do what we did before we were Christians or our forefathers did if we've been privileged to be born into the life of the church is we were conformed to the passions of our former ignorance the description of lost mankind is being shaped by the desires of your heart that is what sin is like now when we are looking at the whole issue of LGBT that is just what it is what do those letters stand for they stand for different versions of being conformed to your passions lesbian gay bisexual transgender and then all the other letters that sometimes get added to them are descriptions of what you find in your heart which you then live by that is what the whole movement is all about now I've described sin as being all about idolatry on the rights how does this work we don't have our idols in our society do we well it's pretty common to hear Christians say well yes people idolise money or people idolise their career well yes I'm sure those things are true but there's a much bigger idol which is worshipped universally in the west and it is this it is the concept of freedom you only have to listen to any secular people talking about freedom to know that it is something they consider a god people talk about don't they fundamental freedoms fundamental what is fundamental the only fundamental thing in our world is god himself everything else is derivative of him and we live in a world which is built upon the enlightenment which was a whole movement of thought which was about our freedom from god being the most important thing that human beings can live by that's what the enlightenment philosophers were about and that is what all modern thought is based on the value that matters more than anything else is that we are free free to be what we want to be free from the coercion of anyone else the belief that drives everyone is that anyone who tries to stop me following my desires is someone who is trying to destroy my life that is what oppression is and therefore most of all if god or someone who is claimed to be god tells me i should not follow the desires of my heart then that is a terrible thing i must be free from him now if that is your god that the thing that you revere more than anything else is our freedom then how does this dynamic work remember we worship our idols and our idols define us because we're supposed to worship the living god who truly does define us well if our idols are simply if our idol is for us not artemis of the ephesians or molech or any of those other biblical idols if our idol is simply my freedom to fulfil my own desires then what we find simply is that my desires are the only thing left to define me they are the thing that make me who i am and that of course is the distinguishing feature of the whole gay pride movement as it has mushrooms and overtaken western society in the

last 50 years or so it is the belief that i am defined by the desires of my heart that i am gay let me tell you i don't have the book here but a very influential book by matthew vines is called god and the gay christian where he does this constantly from the very beginning the first opening chapter starts with him describing the day he realised he was gay and that's a in our culture it's a very common thing to think about people talk about that all the time but think what that phrase means what he actually what his actual thing he experienced was he discovered a certain desire in his heart but his assumption is that that desire defines him he didn't say i found that i was attracted to another man he says he was he is gay indeed he then goes on to say that he realised that since that was there a feeling that was naturally in his heart therefore god must have put it there

well who does that tell you he is believing that is sheer pelagianism isn't it pelagius says there is nothing in man's heart other than what god has put there that we are born innocent and good what is fascinating is that Matthew Bynes then describes his father's horror his father was a godly traditional presbyterian christian and he said his father was horrified because he says his father knew that the bible said sodomy was an abomination and therefore he knew that god couldn't have made anyone that way in other words his traditional biblical values upholding father was just as much a pelagian as he was and there you see the problem this is how this has dominated the church so badly is that we have forgotten that the gospel is about how we are freed from the slavery to our own passions our own desires and therefore we find natural things in our hearts all the time which are sinful they are the very thing that god sent his son to deliver us from and so now we can see how some of this thing works they don't have any more pictures

[45 : 04] I'm afraid that's all I have to show you there are false gods particularly the god of freedom I think equality functions as a kind of demigod alongside it a whole false view of reality is built up around that which includes the false myths that lie behind it the stories about which we are now told endlessly about how in the past people lived under the repression that they couldn't be their true selves and the whole of society was kind of against not only gay people basically about anyone loving who they want to but now we have been liberated into this glorious future of freedom to be who we really want to be you know that's what that story is in almost every movie that comes out that's what all of our non-Christian friends think is basically the story of the last hundred years or so that leads to the entire concept of identity being falsely defined by how

I feel even to the extent that whether I am male or female is not defined by my body but how I feel about my body which is where we started psychology is now the only ground left for reality and of course this false freedom leads to slavery it is something that traps and enslaves people and that brothers and sisters that is what the whole LGBT world is like it is a system of slavery people are enslaved by it I went along to the beginning last week of the York Gay Pride March and while I was there I saw various things and none of it was very pleasant but one of the things I saw and probably the least pleasant thing I saw was a man wandering through the crowd huge cheerful smiles on everyone's faces the place is full of school children who are treating it as a carnival that's what it's designed to be they're rainbows painted on their faces and this man wandering through the crowd walks up to a little gaggle of very clearly underage school girls who are giggling having lots of fun and hands out condoms to them one by one and cracks a joke a crude joke which I won't repeat and then walked away and the girls are left giggling and slightly blushing and putting their condoms in their pockets now what are you seeing there you are seeing slavery the slavery of sin enacted from one generation to another as people are told here is freedom take it put it in your pocket but what is that going to do to those girls lives well it is not going to be pretty in the long run as it will trap and enslave them and that is the way this thing works now praise the lord the gospel is about salvation isn't it the gospel is about how we are rescued from our slavery to sin

Ephesians chapter 4 verse 22 we were taught as the truth is in Christ to put off your old self which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds and to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness the gospel is exactly what our friends our family members our neighbours our classmates or workmates or whatever this is what they need to hear I think far too many Christians think that the whole gay phenomenon is this completely new thing that came out of nowhere and has felled us we don't have any idea what to do with it nothing like this has ever happened in the world before it is not so it's just enslaving idolatry just the same as every other enslaving idolatry has been all through history and that is exactly what

Christ came to save us from he came to save us by bringing people to encounter the true God in Christ in place of the false gods of limitless freedom particularly sexual freedom the gospel is how God calls us to discover and be restored to our true identity you are not defined by your idols whether that be Molech or the Ephesians you are not defined by the desires of your heart which you want to be free to fulfil they don't define you you are defined by the God whose image you are that is what we need to be saying to all of our friends of course we are freed from slavery to become a true image of God that the corruption of God's image in us that sin has brought about will be taken away and we will in Paul's words be enabled by the Holy Spirit to put on the new self created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness so what do we need to do well we need to repent and believe the good news

I want to start with us and talk about what we say to others and I know I'm already well I think Paul started late so I'm going to carry on we'll have time for some questions here we go the gospel is always repent and believe the good news the same gospel which has power to say firstly we need to repent of how easily we have believed the lies of this idolatry so firstly don't believe the lie of false freedom why do we feel so paralysed when we are speaking to people who identify as gay or lesbian or transgender or whatever it's because we feel like we've only got bad news for them what we say is in really bad news we say I'm going to tell you that Jesus wants to make your life miserable by telling you you've got to split up with your partner or you can't be this thing anymore and you're going to have to have a miserable life with no sex and it's going to be awful that is what we feel isn't it far too often that's because we are believing the lie that their freedom is good but freedom from God is never good it is always slavery what we are offering people in Christ is not something bad it is deliverance from something which has entrapped people don't believe in the false freedom don't believe in the false gods

[51 : 45] Christians are deeply implicated in thinking that freedom is somehow a fundamental value if I had a pound for every time I've had an email or seen a tweet or something which is saying join us in fighting for religious freedom or fundamental freedoms I would say we are going up a blind alley on that front as Christians we are not placed here by Christ to campaign for freedom we are placed here to proclaim the lordship of Christ and the sole deity of the living God Father Son and Holy Spirit that is what we must do and as Christians we need to break the habit of thinking that our task is to try and carve out a niche for ourselves in a pagan society by pleading that we'll be given the freedom to do our Christian thing in a corner that is not our task our task is to proclaim that Christ alone is lord if we get thrown to the lions for it so be it he's still lord let's proclaim it and we must do that don't believe in the false gods don't believe the false view of reality there are various aspects to this we mustn't accept that these false identities that these idols give are real we need to be saying to all of our non-Christian friends you are not what you think you are that's what the gospel always says to everyone you think that you are somehow some kind of independent thing although actually you define yourself by your idols but both of those things are false you are an image of the living god and he wants to call you back to know him to become what you are designed to be and if people find it more offensive when we tell them the gospel now than they did 30 years ago that's probably just because they're hearing the gospel more clearly from us than they heard it 30 years ago because actually they are hearing what we have to say we are saying that who you are needs to die as you regularly will hear people say that Christians are saying that LGBT people have to deny who they truly are and what our answer to that is well yes that's what

Christ says to everyone you must deny yourself and take up your cross and follow him that is what we are calling people to do so therefore we must never accept that the false identities are genuine identities and here I'd say is a first step we have to make whenever we meet people who identify as gay or trans or whatever the first thing we need to say to them is that part of our love to them is to say I don't think of you as that I don't categorise you as that now I think of you as an image of God very struck in our church a while ago when I was speaking on this and a girl came to see me in the office and said you need to know that I am bisexual and the first thing I said to her was thank you very much for telling me that but I need you to know that I don't and I never will think of you as that that's not what you are you are an image of God which is vastly more valuable than that and it was wonderful to see the look of surprise and I think a flicker of genuine excitement in her face she came to church pretty regularly the next couple of months we haven't seen her for a while now so do pray for her if you would like to do that if you think of yourself as being gay or bisexual or whatever or you are tempted to do that this is the most important thing you need to know it is not

who you are your desires do not define you your sexual desires no more than any other desires as a Christian you are still a sinner you are proud you are greedy you are no doubt unkind regularly you are selfish but in

Christ you are not defined by your sins you are tempted to worship all sorts of other things but in Christ you are not defined by those you are defined by him now all of the gay Christian if you can call it that it's an oxymoron all the literature does that as its starting point so that book I mentioned before God and the gay Christian well in the title of the book he gives away that he does not understand the gospel because he thinks that he is identified by his desires that he claims he was born with or maybe he was it makes no difference we were all born with simple desires and on that front I do want to raise an objection to something which has become pretty common in a lot of conservative Christian literature which is to use the phrase same-sex attracted as frankly a placeholder for the word gay I am an SSA Christian as some people say we've had students come up at our church in York and say yeah

I'm SSA and I want to say no that's just the same thing that is just identifying yourself by your desires and that is not what Christians do it makes no more sense in calling yourself a PTP Christian because you are prone to pride or a DGG Christian because you're doubting God's goodness Christian no no we all are a mass of corrupted desires in our hearts and the grace of our Lord Jesus is they no longer define us we are forgiven for their guilt and by his work of the Holy Spirit we are being delivered from them Amen absolutely that is where we are now so don't believe those identities the whole movement relies on propagating myths I have not seen this thing on TV at the moment the handmaid's tale maybe some of you have I guess lots of us have seen stuff about it but as far as I can tell it is a fictional story that is designed to reinforce the myth that Christianity in the past used to drive grind women into the dust I think maybe I'm wrong I haven't seen it but I've read some stuff about it and whether I'm right or wrong on that that is true everywhere pretty much every children's movie is all about the story of moving from being stopped from being who you really want to be in your heart to by the end of the movie you can really be who you want to be in your heart every Disney movie I think is a myth which supports the whole idolatrous idea that but sadly I think this is creeping into lots of Christian literature which is trying to be conservative trying to be faithful to the Bible but I think not very helpfully Ed Shaw's essay in the recent Primer book on the issue of transgender He says this Our legal system once used to persecute the gay community genuine homophobia was once all pervasive He even speaks of uses the phrase and uses it approvingly of our societal repentance because we no longer think badly of gay people and I want to say

[59 : 13] I'm not exactly angry about it I'm sad about it you've just swallowed the myth that actually is not what happened very common to hear very well meaning Christians say the first thing you've got to do is to repent for the way we've been cruel in the past and actually I'm sure there are cases of cruelty in the past but there's no evidence that I can see at all that that is how faithful orthodox Christians thought about those who were tempted to sexual sin in the past and you can find it you can find plenty of references in older pre-war Christian works and C.S. Lewis's book Mere Christianity has a very compassionate section talking about those who no who is saddled with some loathsome sexual perversion now he calls it loathsome David wouldn't hate that but do you see the compassion in that that actually I'm not so I quite agree with it but I do think I agree with the compassion I don't quite agree with the way you phrased it but there's no evidence at all that this is how Christians thought don't believe the myth don't accept or use the false language there is a whole vocabulary that has been built that has been developed here which is all about all about giving this false view of reality as you know the BBC has taken to regularly producing little articles on their websites promoting a transgender agenda and they they are exercises in false use of words using he to talk about girls or women or vice versa using names that are not names in all sorts of ways this comes up gender dysphoria phrase used all the time that phrase was only invented in 2013 to replace what was called gender identity disorder which itself replaced sexual identity disorder before that why the change well because you don't want to think it's a disorder anymore do we we change the language to change our understanding of reality we need to be careful not to buy into the whole idolatrous system and if we do that we are able to proclaim the gospel and believe it wonderfully and this is much easier than we think in one sense it's harder in another sense

I'll come to that but what is the gospel the gospel is there is one God revealing Jesus Christ that's the only gospel the gospel is not that freedom is good the gospel is that Jesus Christ is Lord and Jesus Christ makes us free he frees us from our own hearts our own desires that means that we are all his images and isn't that good we need to love our difference between being male and female don't flatten them the last time I was asked to speak on this subject at a church I arrived and said what version of the bible do you use and they said we use this one and it was a version of the bible which it was a new NIV which deliberately avoids using any gender specific pronouns anywhere in it which meant it was impossible to use it to make the point isn't that interesting as Christians we swallow so many of us have swallowed the idea that we should basically try and do as much as we can to avoid talking about how men and women are different let's do the very opposite let's delight in how God has made us as men and women and delight in that there is no grasping

Christian faith without grasping that who we are is either male or female and that is a glorious thing we need to believe and proclaim we have all sorts of sinful desires they enslave us and God sent his son to rescue us from them this issue is at bottom exactly the same one that Augustine faced with Pelagius in the 5th century and which the church the whole church saw was absolutely critical for understanding the gospel it is about is the gospel just we're good and God wants to show us a way to be better even better or is the gospel we are hopelessly enslaved by our hearts so let's proclaim the gospel let's not be ashamed to call out the nonsense that goes with this slavery of sin let's point out the way that LGBT lifestyles are enslaving ones there's no shortage actually of literature out there written by people in the community talking about how miserable it is it's very real let's talk about the absurdity of the idea that reality can be defined by psychology let's recognise that this basic dynamic of

I want to be free from God I'll define my good and evil for myself I've been an inventor God that will tell me what is good and even so I can do it that is exactly reflected in this I want to do this thing that defines my identity therefore you must give me the right to do it that argument justifies absolutely anything and it will which is why the list of letters in the acronym gets longer and longer and longer and it will just go on getting longer and longer and longer and it will include deeper and deeper perversions because there is no end to what you can justify by inventing an idol of freedom let's tell people that God sent his son to rescue them from the guilt and the power of our sin in other words don't believe the false stories tell people the true story that we are in a race enslaved to sin and Christ came to deliver us the history of the church shows that the Roman empire was a place of miserable sexual slavery and while the church has never of course been perfect never will be in this age there is a glorious salvation from the misery of sexual sin that the church has brought so when we speak to others have compassion on those enslaved by sin we have no business being angry or disgusted by people we may well be disgusted by their sins we should be actually that's right but we should be compassionate on those who have been trapped into an enslaving way of thinking to an enslaving worship of false gods don't believe there's any solution other than Christ there is no other solution than Christ no one else can set us free from the desires of our hearts and lastly don't fear men fear God that has two aspects the thing that's going to confront us all very quickly is the new thing with the transgender the T being added on the end is that it comes with a demand that we all join in the lie so we will all of us who are in workplaces or in schools will very quickly be confronted by saying this is this is

Sally last week he was George and actually everyone knows that he's really a boy but you're being told to call him she we as Christians have no liberty to lie we don't we are answerable to God and we mustn't fear men we must fear God and we are going to suffer for this maybe very very soon some of us perhaps within weeks but we have no liberty to break God's commandments and if we know the truth we are not at liberty to lie we cannot bear false witness don't fear men fear God and along with that the issue is not complex but we will suffer for it and we will only be able to face persecution if we fear God more than men let's pray for the boldness to do this I'll end where I began thinking about Aaron and his aliens this is a ludicrous version of reality we are being given and we need to call it out we have a glorious gospel people will be delighted many of them to discover who they really are

[67 : 08] I'm very confident we will see that if we're bold enough to proclaim Christ there will be many who will be saved from the slavery of this lifestyle praise God that may well include some of us who are here today praise God but so that's it let's do it let's preach the gospel I've finished thank you so if we get Chris and John G up straight away and I think we will take questions from the floor

we've got some questions Chris is one of our elders he is the Mona reason we just know him as Chris and John G was the minister of Christ Christ Derby and is now just running Christ central Leeds right in

Leeds great okay let me just start off Matthew that was really really helpful can I just ask you a screw thought isn't it that says that this subject is so hot to handle that we shouldn't deal with it publicly that we shouldn't deal with it in our church's public teacher that it should be kept under the radar because even to mention it means we lose a hearing do you want to speak to that yes that's what the gospel's like seriously that if we don't preach against the idols of our age we're not preaching the gospel and actually I think I do want to say that that's what's been said for several decades now by those Christians look where it's got us it hasn't helped at all and what's more we cloud the gospel here we have a wonderful opportunity here there is a whole generation of young people who are being deceived on a scale that we haven't seen really for millennia certainly hundreds of years in this country and look the gospel is powerful to say and if we proclaim Christ he will say and actually I do it's pretty clear there's no way that we get to reach the gospel without suffering for it over the next few years but that shouldn't put us on we've just got to be ready for that but if we preach the gospel people will be saved praise God and what's more if we preach to gospel then we suffer for it in God's providence usually the way that he works it out is that after a period of suffering however long that might be then there will be proof that come from it should a Christian go to a gay wedding it's going to happen more and more isn't it you almost certainly you will get an invite let me give a short answer and I'll try and explain no I don't think a Christian should go to a same sex marriage why not when you go to a wedding service you're doing at least two things one is you're recognising what's going on and second is you're celebrating what's going on so if you think of the wedding to minister will say we meet together in the presence of God and in front of this congregation there's a recognition that you are part of what's going on at some point in the service he will say will you the people of

God dot dot dot and I think by being a part of that service you are both acknowledging that you agree that what is going on is marriage when with as much grace and gentleness and love as possible you will need to be saying to your friend or your relative that this is not actually marriage but by tending you are giving tacit acknowledgement you think it is really marriage when it isn't and also you are celebrating explicit outright rebelling against God I've heard people come back and say Jesus hangs out with sinners he has dinner parties with sinful people and that's right and that does mean for example if your next door neighbours are a same sex couple and they think they're married you don't have to acknowledge that but if they invite you around for dinner go around for dinner be loving be kind but there's all sorts of sinners in the world and we don't maintain our own holiness by running away from sinners that's a nonsense way of living but Jesus doesn't go to false worship services he doesn't go to a

Samaritan worship service he doesn't go to a same sex marriage he doesn't go along if someone is sacrificing food he's not there commending what's going on in false worship service so I don't think we can go along I don't think if you're a florist or you bake cakes or you take photographs I don't think as Christians we can in any way say we recognise this as marriage or to celebrate but we do need to work really hard afterwards and before where possible are keeping the friendship I was just going to say I agree with all that I think generally you'd be asked if they're a close relative or friend and therefore they either should know you in the first place in which case you already got a context in which you can explain why you wouldn't want to join in if that isn't the case then it just means like you said prepare the ground before we have to be consistent all the way through it's up to us to make sure it's not a shock for people because then

[73 : 24] I think if we've gone along in their relationship without making too much of an issue and then suddenly it comes to marriage and then no I'm not going to come then that's probably going to be much more damaging to the relationship and whatever you can do afterwards and before so we need to be consistent and clear that's to say that's the first thing you say to people but I do think we need to prepare the ground before well yeah I remember talking to someone about this recently and part of their thinking was well I'm going to lose the friendship if I don't go so I think the answer is and this is a really godly girl who wants to win her friendship for Christ a really beautiful girl so I think we have to say your evangelistic effectiveness is not going to be improved by compromising on holiness so we think we need to tone back a little bit in order to win people but that is not empowering our evangelism it's depowering it so Jesus never toned down his hope to win people

he maintained burning purity whilst also being full of love they're not opposites

Chris you're the only one in a real job what advice would you give to a Christian work who's terrified that if he or she speaks up on this it could very easily go to HR which is a big issue for quite a number of our congregation remember to speak to the whole world not just Paul I think there will be as Matthew said there will be persecution more and more associated with this we're disagreeing with him I think people will find the persecution first will be people in public life some of you probably don't know but Tim Farron has resigned about two hours ago because he said that being a Christian a faithful Christian and being leader of the Liberal Democrats was increasingly incompatible for him which is you know quite I think some of us might have seen it coming and I don't think he covered himself in glory during the election in response to the questions that he was particularly pointedly put to him and he didn't handle it very well either but it is a very sad moment that somebody a leader of a major political party had to stand down because of their faith and that that's very worrying and I think the example of that's public life work as well of HR and all the rest of it I think that is where we're going to feel the tension and people can lose jobs people will probably not be able to take jobs say in the public sector fairly shortly I wouldn't have thought but what can we do now I mean I think we have to find I mean we have rights as Christians it's a question of whether we want to use those rights if we feel we're sort of prejudiced at work we are allowed to say what we think if people ask us it's not banned as yet but that may change talking of Tim Farron and his difficulties during the conference all of us I think have had these issues we I think I take your point absolutely we need to proclaim the gospel but we also need to find a language that we can talk in public life with people who say that's all very well the gospel but I don't believe in God so actually none of them makes any sense at all and therefore dismiss it and are actually out to pursue so I think we need to find a way of talking in a way that people can understand and that forms a link with them other than just religious language so that may sound controversial I think we need to use religious language in a setting like this or with an evangelistic event I don't think as I say that Tim Farron would have been benefited any more by simply stating the gospel in those interviews but there are ways he could have articulated things much better and I think I don't quite know exactly what that language will be

I have some ideas about what he could have said for example in those interviews I think we can point to the fact that it's not just evangelical Christians are at a mark here it's nearly always evangelical Christians who get accused of these sorts of things who get hammered on these sorts of things and what we can say is well let's take the gay sex is gay sex a sin well I can give you my view you probably know it already so I don't know why you're asking me the question why don't you go and ask the Archbishop of Canterbury first why don't you go and ask whoever's in charge of the Catholics in this country or the Orthodox while you're at it you can swing around the chief rabbi's house and ask him and why don't you ask some of the imams in this place and you'll find that actually there's quite a lot of people in this country religious and non religious who take a similar view they don't hate gay people but they take that view and we need to find ways of making sure window become the target that everybody is aiming at and we make sure people understand it's much more complicated than they are making it out in terms of rights and who's wrong and who's in and who's out and who should be sacked and who shouldn't be

[79 : 21] I don't know if you guys want to come back can you hear me with this the only thing I'll say is if you're in a workplace your duty is to do your job you're not there to be a preacher so there's no nothing I've said I hope that we should go into a workplace and immediately start announcing I know you wouldn't do that anyway start trying to be obnoxious that isn't the issue and it's absolutely fine to use appropriate wisdom to try and avoid confrontation whenever that's possible that's right what we never have liberty to do is to break God's laws because we are commanded to do so by someone so there's a very big difference between you're sitting next to someone who's licensed whatever you disagree you don't need to come out and tell them that but if your company requires your whole department to go and join the gay pride march then you do need to say I'm sorry I can't go I can't do that increasingly that may actually be a genuine thing that leads to discipline I think in workplaces so can I ask you is being gay a sin because that's the question that was asked well I just think that my five side mates have asked me that

I think it comes up to the best answer to give to that question is actually for a Christian that is a non-question we don't even we don't think of anyone as being gay that's the label you've invented not one that we is the Bible doesn't ever label anyone as gay it doesn't call people by by the things

that they find that they want to do sexual or otherwise it doesn't do that so if the question is bluntly is sodomy a sin yes very clearly as indeed are other all sorts of other immoral sexual actions but we don't see people defined by what they want to do now there's another question which you haven't asked which is are simple desires sinful which is the answer to that is well absolutely that's why we need rescue it from they're not asking that in the office much what do you think the advice basically says I think it's the same type of attraction but that's okay as long as I don't act on it as long as I don't do anything about it so you all get that so there's something that's quite low okay you weren't speaking so the question is let's say somebody says

I struggle with same type of attraction but as long as I don't do anything that's okay isn't it what do we what advice do we give to that so I hope the thing that's clear from what I said is there is no the Bible does not treat any sins as being in a class apart from any others there's variations in severity but also sin is something that starts with the simple desires of our hearts and is worked out in our actions so it is of course essential that as Christians we discipline ourselves not to follow the simple desires of our flesh on everything so if someone says I am tempted to homosexual things but I'm not doing anything about it I'm going to praise the Lord that's good that is right in the same way as if someone says I'm tempted to any other contention or indeed I'm tempted to steal but I'm not doing anything about it brilliant that's great don't think repentance means simply that you're managing not to do the things you want to do repentance has to go deeper into our hearts repentance is all about bringing the corruption of our hearts to the

Lord and laying it before him and saying Lord this is who I am I am a stinking mass of sin and you make me to be this and you call me in Christ to become your true image by your Holy Spirit cleanse me from my sin enable me to fight against it deliver me from this and enable me to put the sin to death Romans 6 man you're putting our sins to death so absolutely it is very good not to act on the temptations and desires of our hearts but that isn't enough for repentance one of the reasons why it's never healthy to say yeah it's that the same way to say well I haven't actually committed adultery so the fact that I am thinking lustful thoughts all the time doesn't matter at all no that's not what the reason says it of course it's good you haven't committed but you need to repent of your lustful heart two questions Marta do you have any ideas for speaking common ground with Christians about why freedom is always the best thing

I think I wouldn't have used the word freedom as the god of this age I think individual autonomy is probably a better idea so we tend to think in our day and age that the individual is the only unit a human being is an individual alone and they have autonomy over their body and their desires and all the rest of it I think we're the common ground so we don't believe that and this goes back actually to your point you were saying about the image of god being created in the image of god of course we're created in the image of a triune god so he is the one god but he is also three in one so there is unity in diversity there is dynamism within that and so too a human being so a human being isn't just somebody who stands alone and has total control over their lives and what is right and wrong in their lives or doesn't because somebody else prevents them from doing that a human being is an individual but a human being is also the corporate units that we make together as human beings primarily marriage but also church and other things like that and we completely have a very weak sense of our corporate identity as human beings is made up sorry our identity as human beings is made up of being an individual but also the things that we belong to that we are born into we're not born as individual units with rights we're born into a web of responsibilities and duties that we grow up with in the situation we grow up with so everybody actually most people live their lives like that their husbands or wives are the most important things their children are they having a sense of their family their local community their nation whatever it might be so that is really I think and we need to think more about this but that's really what

[86 : 24] Christians can say it's not one or the other in talking about you talking about the films and the message they give it's nearly always a corporate thing either a bad marriage or a bad family situation or a local village culture it's nearly a village for some reason or something horrible like that that prevents the individual from or the two individuals from running off into the sunset or whatever or realising their dreams actually the corporate things are part of human life they're part of what make us they're part of the wonderful thing about being human you know mankind is men and women we are compatible together and we create not just an agreement with two people we create something new that stands on a new unity which is marriage and I think we can point to most people in nearly everybody's life whether they're Christian or non-Christian things that they value that are like that but that our culture whether it talks about human rights which as far as

I can see essentially individual rights there aren't any corporate human rights so we're missing a whole half of it's 50% of what it means to be human and various other things that our culture does not talk about and actually sees us as a threat I think we will draw some brothers