

The Relentless Attack on Biblical Marriage: Response by a Local Presbyterian Congregation

Our hearts are saddened by another Presbyterian denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), which has bent the knee before the world, with the decision its leaders made at their June 2014 meeting of their General Assembly, as reported by the Greeneville Sun on July 4, 2014. Although the Bible speaks clearly on marriage as being an institution of God between one man and one woman, the Presbyterian Church (USA) has decided to reject the Bible's clear teaching, change the definition of marriage, and allow clergy to officiate same-sex weddings in states where same-sex marriage is legal. Unfortunately, this decision by the Presbyterian Church (USA) is not unexpected, as the denomination has been internally debating this issue for several decades. In 2011, the denomination voted to allow the ordination of gay and lesbian clergy. Some conservative members of the Presbyterian Church (USA) believe that the loss in denominational membership over the last 10+ years is related to the church's continuing, three-decades long, discussion and ultimate rejection of the Bible's teaching regarding homosexuality, ordination of homosexuals, and same-sex marriage.

There is some confusion in our community about the differences between Presbyterian denominations, especially given the similarity in names. Therefore, we view it necessary to provide some clarification on the differences in beliefs, especially given the recent actions of the Presbyterian Church (USA). It is important to note that there are a number of Presbyterian denominations and not all of them hold to the Presbyterian Church (USA) view regarding homosexuality. As a member church of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the congregation of Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church (Greenville, TN) is humbled and thankful for the grace of God as He has sustained and led the PCA to uphold Biblical truth as it relates to this issue.

The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) is the second largest Presbyterian denomination in the country. The PCA separated from the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1973 in opposition to the growing liberalism within the denomination. The PCA has and continues to uphold the Word of God as infallible, inerrant and authoritative for all of faith and life. Accordingly, the PCA denomination is staunchly pro-life and actively promotes a Biblical view of marriage. We in the PCA believe that the scriptures clearly teach that God has ordained the institution of marriage as between one man and one woman. Over the last four decades, the PCA has held to a consistently biblical position on homosexuality.

In 1977 the General Assembly of the PCA declared the following: 1) The act of homosexuality is a sin according to God's Word; 2) Churches should actively seek to lead the homosexual person to confession and repentance that he might find justification and sanctification in Jesus Christ, according to I Corinthians 6:11; and 3) In light of the biblical view of its sinfulness, a practicing homosexual continuing in this sin would not be a fit candidate for ordination or membership in the PCA.

In 1993, the 21st General Assembly of the PCA adopted a Declaration of Conscience that was sent to the President of the United States of America, with copies to the leadership of the United States House of Representatives and Senate and to the governors of the several states. The Declaration read in part: *"Mr. President, in this Declaration the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America humbly declares its conscience concerning the moral legitimacy of homosexuality. God has spoken without equivocation through his Word declaring homosexuality to be a perversion of his created order, his moral law, and the foundations of society..."*

In 1996, in an action entitled "In Opposition to Disney's Promotion of Homosexual Lifestyle," the PCA General Assembly said, "We abhor what Disney and other corporations do to promote the homosexual lifestyle." In 1997, the General Assembly took the following position regarding the boycott of Disney: "In response to the boycott of Disney enterprises by Christian groups including the Southern Baptist Convention, the Presbyterian Church in America reiterated its position on homosexual issues adopted in 1996".

In 2014, amid mounting cultural pressure toward Biblical compromise, the PCA made the following declaration at the meeting of the General Assembly: "the Presbyterian Church in America expresses its gratitude to the Lord for sustaining, by His grace, ministers of the gospel, chaplains, and Christians serving in the public sphere who are experiencing ostracism, penalties and persecution for taking a Biblically faithful stand for the sanctity of human life and declining to participate in the cultural redefinition of marriage". We in the PCA affirm the Bible's teaching that promotion of homosexual conduct and relationships, by any society, including action by the governments to sanction and legitimize homosexual relationships by the legalization of homosexual marriages, is an abominable sin calling for God's judgment upon any such society (Leviticus 18:22 and Romans 1:18-32). We also affirm our belief in the transforming power of God's grace and our commitment to "speaking the truth in love" to those in the homosexual community.

In condemning homosexuality, we claim no self-righteousness! The Bible teaches that we are all rebellious sinners by nature and we all fall short of the Glory of God. We are humbled and amazed, by God's grace, through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, that He would save anyone. The Apostle Paul reminds the Corinthian believers, "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 Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). Our hearts go out to many of our friends and fellow believers who are members of the Presbyterian Church (USA). God has revealed His perfect revealed will to us in the Scriptures! The Bible is our only source of truth. We encourage Christians to reject human philosophies and submit to God's revealed truth in the scriptures.

Remember the words of Paul to Timothy, "preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths" (2 Tim.4:2-4).

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