

Current Events - We should not be surprised - Part 2

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] The passage is just read, there is a great deal of the subject of the glory of God and glorifying God and what that means. And it ought to be patently obvious that only those who are in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ are in a position to glorify God.

Now what I have for you this morning is actually part two of what we began last week. We should not be surprised. And the title simply refers to the idea that in a fallen world that is deliberately shaking its fist at the creator God, we ought not to be surprised at virtually any kind of behavior that a fallen world comes up with.

And yet, along with you, I still find myself being shocked by this, by that, by another. Remember, it wasn't probably more than a decade ago when some of the latest findings were quoting those of the homosexual community that said, surveys have demonstrated that 10% of males are homosexual. I thought, wow, where in the world did they get that? I frankly find that hard to believe. Well, lo and behold, it was later discovered that the article was published by a pro-homosexual group, and it was just nothing more than a matter of positive publicity for them.

And when the real research was conducted, it turned up to be something like between 1% and 3% are homosexual. So this is something that our culture is becoming more and more accustomed to.

[1 : 44] And, you know, there isn't anything new about this. Some of Rome's most well-known emperors were famous for their homosexuality and for their preference for young boys as lovers as opposed to women.

So this thing goes back a long, long ways. And if you look at the account in Genesis, in Sodom and Gomorrah, in chapter 19, I believe it is, it is found as far back as that.

And that's really not terribly far removed from creation. So in connection with what we're talking about and the glory of God, I think the whole concept of homosexuality and same-sex marriage is in reality nothing more than trying to deal a severe blow to the very order that God has established. It is as much an in-your-face thing as anything humanity has ever done. And what I want to share with you now is going to be moving very rapidly.

I have written this out. I'm just going to read it. I'm going to resist the temptation to stop and elaborate on these points, although I will be greatly tempted to do so, because I want to get to a conclusion and still have some time for Q&A; at the end and let you out when I am committed to letting you out.

[3 : 19] So, are you ready for this? Okay, here we go. Westminster Shorter Catechism says, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

What does it mean to glorify God, and why should we? If God is God, and if the Bible is true, then glorifying God is man's noblest objective.

There is no higher goal. And by glorifying God, all we mean is giving God the honor, the recognition, the praise that is due his name simply because of who he is and what he has done. It means giving God the credit for being the creator and sustainer of the universe. It means putting God in his rightful place in your life.

That's glorifying God. It is exalting him, acknowledging him, recognizing him. And how best can human beings do that? Nothing glorifies or pleases God more than for those whom he has created to fulfill the purpose for which he created them.

[4 : 36] Simple as that. We are to be what he has created us to be. We saw in our last session that due to the introduction of sin, the actions and attitudes contrary to God's will, the earth and all of creation experienced a fall.

This was a radical departure or turning away from what God intended for his creation. God gave our first parents and all their descendants volition, a will, a capacity to voluntarily obey or disobey him. Our original parents exercised their volition negatively by deliberately disobeying God. This moral, spiritual infection the Bible calls sin.

Connection with God was severed between the creator and the creatures. Man's turning away from God meant he turned from the creator to the creature himself.

This meant that the human self became the object of human efforts and glorification. This self-centeredness with which we are all infected is the built-in cause and major obstacle for the failure of all relationships.

[6 : 02] Self-centeredness of individuals destroys everything, including harmony between husbands and wives to man's relationship with God.

This reality of self-centeredness should not surprise us in what it produces. It is the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5 and in Romans 1.

We spent some time on those passages last time. We'll not go there again. Particularly Galatians 5.19 begins it. But none of these behavioral characteristics should surprise us.

In fact, we should even anticipate them because this is all that fallen man can produce. This is all he's capable of. We saw in Romans 8, they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

They are not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. It isn't a matter of telling these, straighten up and fly right.

[7 : 09] They don't have the ability to do that. They don't have the desire, and even if they had the desire, they wouldn't have the ability. Because that's what moral fallenness does to the human psyche.

Man is literally locked in to the behavior that displeases God and cannot in his flesh produce anything God will accept. There is no way out of this pit that produces a gross self-centeredness unless one is exposed to the gospel, which alone can save him and set him free.

Only in recognizing one's sin, repentance of his sin, and embracing God's only remedy for sin, namely his son Jesus Christ, can we ever become pleasing to God and able to glorify God.

And this is why we have a good news gospel to preach. This message, this message, and it alone, is the only antidote, the only panacea.

This is God's silver bullet, if you will. That's what the gospel is, and it's the only one there is. The subject of same-sex marriage has become a front-burner topic.

[8 : 29] It represents the most bizarre form of human behavior to date. But even this, as bizarre as it is, should not surprise us.

Fallen humans are given to this kind of utter perverted nonsense, and they are quite in step with it. I believe much of this began back in the 60s in connection with all of the turmoil that was taking place with the Vietnam War, with the civil rights movement, and then the gay agenda came front and center in connection with that, along with radical feminism.

All of these things were broiling at the same time. And one of the big contentions of radical feminism was the denial of essential differences between the sexes.

This is called gender blending. And it became very popular to deny and to even insist that there was really no essential difference between male and female other than their genitalia.

And that's it. They are constructed differently insofar as sexual organs are concerned. But apart from that, there's no real difference between maleness and femaleness.

[9 : 56] You would be surprised how many people bought into that. And this, of course, provided the basis for equality on all levels. Now, I don't want to get bogged down here, and I've determined to try to stick to my script and not stray.

But the equality thing is valid. There is every reason to support and insist on the equality of the sexes.

I'm all in favor of that. If a man does a job and a woman does a job and they both do the same job, what she does is worth paying as much money as what he does.

He should not receive more money just because he's a man. Equality of sexes is valid, and I am confident the scriptures teach it. But that is a far cry from the sameness of the sexes.

There is a uniqueness to femininity and masculinity, and ne'er the twain shall meet. There is a lot more to being a woman than just your sexual organs.

[11 : 02] There is a lot more to being male than just your sexual organs. There is an essential difference that is imbued within each by the creator.

There is very definitely, what man would not agree with this? There is a special female way of thinking. And we are convinced that there are times when it really doesn't make much sense. But you know what? Their response sometimes to our demonstration of male thinking is men. And they're both right because they are distinctly different. God made them to be different. And when you try to blend these genders into some kind of sameness, you end up with a catastrophe. Now we've got a moral catastrophe that we're trying to deal with, and it isn't easy. Earlier we spoke of glorifying God by what God created in fulfilling the purposes for which he created them.

[12 : 14] And when something intended for a given purpose is utilized in an exactly opposite way, we call it a perversion, an abnormality.

The original intent, the norm, if you will, the divine standard is for a man and woman to be joined together in a union, not to be divided by another person.

And this goes back as far as Genesis, where it appears God performed the first marriage ceremony. And for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife, and they twain shall become one flesh.

And Christ reiterated in the Gospels his support of that when he said, Have you not read that he which made them in the beginning made them male and female?

And there was never any intent for a gender blending, but each contributes to the other in a way that completes the other. We get the impression that maleness is not complete in and of itself.

[13 : 17] And that's why God said it is not good for a man to be alone. And he created an helper who was appropriate for him.

And he gave him Eve, and Eve completed Adam. And without her, he was incomplete.

An Adam could not be completed with another male. That is completely contrary to the original intent.

A perversion is for two men or two women to be so joined. The exact opposite of the divine plan. It is an abnormality.

Normal. Normal. Normal. For a thing to be considered normal, the existence of a standard, a pattern, a model, must be in place against which the thing can be evaluated to determine whether or not it complies.

[14 : 25] When that standard is overthrown and replaced with an opposite, it is a perversion of the original. Normal. So, what can those of the same-sex marriage group do?

They can do one of two things. And they do both. They redefine the normal as not really being a standard at all.

So, they feel free to define standard according to their own values. And this, of course, means they can acknowledge the traditional standard as being such, but thumb their nose at it.

There are those who are in favor and insist upon the same-sex marriage, and they travel in two different paths. And the first one is the one that I mentioned.

They just don't see a norm even existing. The normal is what you want to make it. And they believe the individual has the freedom to determine their own normal.

[15 : 39] One of the most quoted lines of Dostoevsky in the Brothers Karamazov is, if there is no God, everything is permitted.

And that's true. If there is no God, there is no divine standard. There is no original intent.

It's what you want to make it. And if you want to marry someone of the same sex for you, that's your standard. And nobody has the right to tell you you are wrong.

They may acknowledge the existence of a standard, being even only one man and one woman, constituting marriage, but they simply thumb their nose at it.

And I did a little word study that I thought was quite fascinating. I heard an expression used a number of times ago, a number of years ago in a Bible conference, and the speaker was talking about sinning with a high hand.

[16 : 49] And the expression stuck with me, but I never was able to figure out exactly what it meant, and I never could come up with a definition of it. And I got curious about it in connection with this study, and I went to my concordance, my trusty old Strong's concordance, and looked up the word high.

And it took me to a passage in Exodus in connection with the children of Israel coming out of the land of Israel, I mean coming out of the land of Egypt under Moses' leadership. And it's repeated again in Numbers 33.3, and it said the children of Israel came out of Egypt with a high hand. And I looked up that word in the Hebrew to see what does that mean, a high hand, and it gave several expressions.

One was haughty, haughty. Another was triumphantly. You know what we would call this today? We would call a high hand in your face. Have you ever seen, I'm sure you have, probably more than you wanted to, pictures of angry mobs, especially in Middle Eastern countries, where there may be thousands of people gathered around the town square, and they're chanting something, and it usually has something to do against the USA, and they're giving it this business with their fist, the fist pumping.

[18 : 24] High hand. That's a high hand. The children of Israel came out of Egypt not as slaves, even though they had been, but they came out with a high hand.

That means they were flaunting their liberty. They were thumbing their noses at the Egyptians as they left. Ha, ha, ha. You couldn't hold us.

We're going. We're leaving. And they took an enormous amount of treasure with them, much of which the Egyptians gave them voluntarily, and much of which they took.

And you can look upon that as nothing more than payment of back wages. They've been serving in Egypt as slaves for 40 years without any pay. But when they came out of Egypt, they came out with a high hand.

And that's exactly what is happening today in the homosexual community and the same-sex marriage element. These have gained so much acceptance and so much ground and so much footage and so much approval.

[19 : 29] As I mentioned last week, it is absolutely stunning the incredible job they have done in marketing and information and convincing the public of something that the public would never have bought a generation ago.

But now more and more people are accepting it. More and more people are even affirming it. Not only homosexuality, but same-sex marriage.

The same-sex marriage crowd often accuses Christians as being judgmental for refusing to legitimize same-sex marriage or give it recognition.

They say they only want to live and let live. They argue that since they don't try to tell heterosexuals who they can or cannot marry of the opposite sex, we should not try to tell them they cannot marry of the same sex.

And then if we do, we are being judgmental. We are not. Someone reminded me of this last week, and it should have been a part of last week's message.

[20 : 46] We are not being judgmental at all because we are not the ones who established the standard. One man marrying one woman.

God established the standard, and Christians are merely informing the world that this is what God said he established as the norm. The opposite of that norm is abnormal.

And the fact that two people of the same sex may care about each other, may love each other, may want to spend the rest of their life with each other, it does admittedly create enormous emotional pain and difficulties.

But there is no way in the world that it can be legitimized. It is a perversion. There will probably be a time coming when someone may be able to go to jail for calling it that.

But that's exactly what it is. We must agree with God or with the gays and the lesbians. We are persuaded it is far better and wiser to agree with God rather than man.

[21 : 54] After all, who has the most impressive track record historically? And I want you to turn, if you would please, to John chapter 3, very familiar passage.

One that we've all visited many times. John chapter 3. Let's start reading with verse 14.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that, or so that, whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

I really want you to key on verse 17. God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him.

You really need to understand the dynamics of this. It is true that God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. And the reason he didn't is because the world was already under judgment.

[23 : 28] That's why he came. He came to deliver the world out from under God's judgment, which had already been pronounced upon it.

All the way back in Genesis 3, when this thing of fallenness occurred, the whole of creation came crashing down as a result of man's rebellion against God.

Because man was the figurehead, man was the responsibility, the federal head of all of creation and was put in charge of everything.

And when the head fell, everything under the head fell. So the world is already under condemnation. That's the whole rationale for Christ coming. It's because the world was condemned. And he came to deliver the world, bring it out from under that sphere. That's the meaning of Galatians and the meaning of 2 Corinthians 5, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

[24 : 31] That's what the cross is all about. That's what this passage is all about. He did not send the son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him.

He who believes in him is not judged, but he who does not believe has been judged already. And that's the status under which they are living, whether they know it or not, whether they believe it or not.

That's their status. And once the world has been reconciled to God, that opens the way for man to approach God a way that never existed before.

And the way man approaches God now is by embracing that reconciliation of the world in personalizing it, and we personalize it when we exercise our confidence, our faith, our trust in Jesus Christ as the one God provided to bring us out from under that.

So there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus. What about those who aren't in Christ Jesus? They remain under that mode of condemnation.

[25 : 44] That's the whole reason for Christ coming. And not only is same-sex marriage, homosexuality, under the judgment of God, so is lying, so is murder, so is adultery, so is rape.

No one is taking these individuals who are utilizing the body and its implications for opposite purposes that God intended.

Nobody is singling them out and saying they are especially wicked, evil people. What we are saying is they are part of the mass, and there is no escaping it.

On the other hand, consider this. There isn't any sin that is expressed so openly, so vividly, so pointedly as a denial or repudiation of the very nature and way that God created.

This is a real blow to the very reality of human personhood. And when you consider that according to the scriptures, we have every reason to believe that man, and I'm talking about mankind, mankind represents the highest, noblest, if I may say, effort of God's creative ability.

[27 : 18] It appears as though, it appears as though humanity is the icing on the cake of what God created. It is only the human being that is said to bear the likeness and image of God.

In other words, what I'm saying is God's highest, noblest achievement in his creative work is the bringing of a human being into existence.

That is God's finest act, if you will, of his creation. And the blow is being struck at that very thing. What we have here in the same-sex marriage thing, whether you realize it or not, is a real blow against human personhood and what it is all about and what it means.

This is the core, the very essence of creation. This human being in which the image and likeness of God is placed, the only being in which the image and likeness of God is placed is turned on its head and denied its original legitimacy.

[28 : 38] legitimacy. This is sinning with a high hand. This is thumbing your nose at God. That's precisely what we're dealing with.

This is an expression that goes beyond. You see, the self-centeredness that we spoke of at the beginning is at the core of all of this. Lurking within the heart and mind of every one of us, every human being, fallen and unfallen, is an intense desire to please oneself, to have your own way about whatever.

That's just part of the human condition. That's part of our fallenness. We are not naturally generous. We may be generous, but we're not naturally generous.

We're naturally selfish. And it is selfishness on every plane and self-centeredness on every plane that is the most disruptive thing of all relationships, between marriages and individuals and between nations.

How many times do we say things like foreign policy, Egypt, Syria, whatever? And what is that with which we always gauge everything in our efforts and activities and our foreign aid to all of these countries?

[29 : 56] It always boils down to the same thing. Always. It's whatever is in the best interests of the USA. Do we really care about Egypt?

Nah, not that much. Except as it affects us. Do we really care about Iran or Iraq? Not all that much. Except as it affects us.

The oil thing. And you know, this is just part of the human condition. We are that way nationally and we are that way individually. And when it comes to an expression of personhood as God intended in male and female, this whole effort of same-sex marriage, the legitimizing of it, the acceptance of it, is just turning the whole thing on its head.

It is literally thumbing our noses at God. So, this passage in John 3 goes on to say in verse 19, and this is the judgment that light has come into the world and men love the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil.

For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. He who practices the truth comes to the light that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

[31 : 28] So, bear in mind, apart from the hue and cry of the gay community and the same-sex marriage advocates, we are not singling out same-sex marriage apart from other sins.

It is just that this is a principal moral issue. It is front and center for our day, and we have never had a cultural phenomenon come on the scene that has threatened the entire stability of Western civilization as we know it, like this movement.

And I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I really hope I am wrong about this, but it does not appear to be wrong so far, and that is these causes, these really bizarre, aberrant causes that have for thousands of years been rejected out of hand by the population in general have gained an acceptance, an affirmation, an approval from numbers in the public arena that are absolutely astounding.

I gave them credit last week. I will do so again. I do not think there has been any cause, I don't care what it is, there has not been any cause come on the scene that has been so successful in absolutely reversing public opinion and turning it on its head from revulsion, disgust, disapproval to, ah, whatever, acceptance, legitimizing, and in many cases today, even actually admiring. You have to give them credit. They've succeeded in doing that. and let me say this, they most definitely have the momentum.

[33 : 57] Forces attempting to stop it do not. And all of this goes in with the same package. Whether you realize it or not, this is all part of the abortion package too.

All of this goes together and it has to do with self-centeredness. Why is it that people want an abortion? Because they don't want a baby.

They don't want a baby. Isn't that supposed to be a plus thing? Well, it might be a plus thing for a lot of people, but in my case, it would be a minus. So, what I need and what I want, never mind that this is an innocent little life that didn't ask to be conceived, it does not have a right to live over my convenience and my desires.

So, I eliminate it. The essence of abortion is self-centeredness. The essence of homosexuality is self-centeredness.

The essence of same-sex marriage is self-centeredness. The basis for lying is self-centeredness.

[35 : 11] The basis for stealing is self-centeredness. The basis for murder is self-centeredness. The basis for adultery is self-centeredness. It all focuses upon the self and away from God.

This is where we are. This is the way things are headed. Apart from a heaven-sent revival, it's not going to change. You're going to see more and more things happening that I trust you will remember as you shake your head with sadness.

I trust you will remember well. We shouldn't be surprised. We shouldn't be surprised. What's left? What remains in our standard culture that is yet subject to being turned on its head and reversed? I can't think of anything, but do you know something?

Fallen man can be pretty creative. He can come up with something. Apart from a real revival, and I'm talking about the kind of revival that has never existed in my lifetime, I don't see any hope for this country.

[36 : 25] And I think believers simply ought to fortify and prepare themselves, and we need to exercise all we can to be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks us a reason for the hope that is within us, because there's going to be more and more occasion to use that.

So, this sounds like a pretty pessimistic message, doesn't it? Well, I'll tell you something. My, Paul Weiland, who was my history teacher at Cedarville University years ago, asked how he saw history, and he says, I am an optimistic pessimist.

He said, what is that? And he said, well, I am pessimistic insofar as man is concerned and ever being able to correct the problems that beset him, but I'm optimistic in that there is a God in heaven who takes all this into consideration, and in the final analysis, he will have his way, and God will be glorified.

So, that's the thing that we really need to keep in mind. Meanwhile, it's a struggle. It's a struggle living in this kind of, you know, the world, the scriptures talk about Lot being in Sodom.

Remember, Lot was Abraham's nephew, and he was in Sodom, and the text says, Hebrews says that Lot's righteous soul was vexed by the Sodomites.

[37 : 55] He was brokenhearted by what he saw there. He was upset by what he saw there. And if we stop being concerned or upset, then the edge has been taken off of our caring.

And we need to realize, let me emphasize this again, as I said last week, don't look upon these people, same-sex marriage, and homosexuals, and lesbians. Don't look upon them as the enemy. They are not the enemy. They regard us as the enemy, but they are not the enemy. They are captive. They are prisoners of the enemy, and so are you, and so was I.

But for the grace of God, there go you and me. So, we don't have time for Q&A;, but I'm going to take it anyway, because I don't want to revisit this subject next week.

comments or questions? Byron, let's get the microphone up here. Byron, right there.

[39 : 13] There's been a long comment that's said over many years that we're about 50 years behind Europe, and that's true in many ways, but also this issue of homosexuality and the abortion issue.

Of course, homosexuals don't have kids. Young people living singly together don't have kids. So many abortions going on, the population is shrinking in many Western European countries.

The birth rate's shrinking. And the only way that the governments are able to maintain a safe level of population is through immigration. And so Europe is being overrun with immigrants, which is not a bad thing because I'm one.

But the issue is that they're primarily Islamic, coming from Africa or the so-called Middle East. So in about 50 years or less, even my wife and I might see it before we pass away, this country will be in a large way probably Muslim.

Well, that's the trend. And they, like I said, they have the momentum even in this immigration thing. And you know, this is really stunning, and I don't want to wax political here because it doesn't make any difference about what your party is.

[40 : 26] I've come to a conclusion that any nation, any nation, including USA, that is not willing to sanctify its borders and the ballot box, if you don't have the will or the ability to protect the sanctity of your borders and of your ballot box, you don't deserve the freedom that you have.

I'm absolutely appalled, I am stunned that we have people in high public office that simply refuse they refuse to.

Well, you know, the laws are there, and if a nation engages in the selective enforcement of their laws, they're in big, big trouble.

If a law is not worth enforcing, get it off the books. Don't make it illegal anymore. Get rid of it. But if it is a law and it's on the books, God help you if you are elected and you take an oath and you refuse, you refuse to implement that law.

You refuse to, folks, we've never been here before. We have never been here before. This is a whole new situation. Our president says he chooses not to enforce or not to, what was it, DOMA, chooses not to defend DOMA.

[42 : 26] What makes him think he ever even had the choice? When you swear to uphold the law, obey the law, execute the law, you don't have an option of saying, well, I'm not going to support this

law.

That's unheard of. And I never heard a peep out of Congress. I never heard anybody say anything about it. And one of the big reasons is we've got so many people who are scared to death of saying anything in opposition to our president because the comeback will be, oh, you just can't stand having a black man in the White House.

You're just prejudiced. And they have got a ready-made answer for every criticism that comes down the pike. And this is one of the things that so silences the opposition.

It's because they don't want to be branded as racist. And racism need have and shouldn't have anything to do with it. You should not vote for a man just because he's white.

And you shouldn't vote against a man just because he's black. You vote for the man based on the positions that he holds, not the color of his skin.

[43 : 44] But that's the accusation. And people don't want to be called a racist even though they know it isn't true. They don't want anybody calling that even though they know it isn't true. It's just bad press.

And I'll tell you what else it is. It's a lack of guts where we really need some. Way in the back. Terry, let's take her first. Lois first and then Terry.

She's close. I'd like to ask Leonardo if this is a problem down in South America.

Yes, it is. It's about the same. Hang on. Hold on. As a matter of fact, in Brazil, they are coming up with the idea of taking away the titles, Mr. and Mrs. and whatever have to do with gender from their identity or something like that.

This is something that's going on in Brazil big time. Okay, our last comment will have to be way in the back, Terry. I don't know why you people position yourselves so far apart.

[44 : 58] We're going to have to get roller blades for get Scott a pair of roller blades. as much as we may abhor gay and lesbianism, please speak a moment about salvation among that group.

Yeah. Well, salvation is the only answer. As I said, the gospel is the only silver bullet, and it's the only one that God's provided, and it's the only one that's needed.

Our problem is we are tepid, we are lukewarm about getting that message out, and I'm not at all convinced that we are doing a very good job, starting with me and my church.

I'm not at all convinced that we're doing a job worthy of the gospel, and we need to take a hard look inwardly, because lesbians, homosexuals, are all people for whom Christ died, and God loves them.

And when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he gave that long list of people, will not inherit the kingdom of God, and then he said, and such were some of you, but you are washed, you are cleansed, you are delivered from that, and deliverance is available, and we need to make that message clearer than we have, and more available than we have.

[46 : 31] Our work is cut out for us, folks. The adversary is out there. We're told that Satan is as a roaring lion walking about seeking whom he may devour, and he is a lion with a rapacious appetite, and he wants to engulf as many as he can.

we are called upon with the gospel to snatch men and women as brands from the burning, because that's the only salvation and the only savior that there is.

Would you stand with me, please? Father, all the things we've been talking about simply emphasizes all the more the need for the gospel of the grace of God, God, how that you could transfer human sin and all of its guilt to the person of an utterly, holy, righteous person?

We don't know. But we are so thankful that you did, because it was Christ bearing our sin for us that provides our only way of escape.

And we are so glad that we've entered in. And these dear people, and they are dear people because Jesus died for them, these dear people that see believers as enemies of their cause, as people who want to deny them their freedoms and their so-called rights, we want to be able to communicate not only the truth to them, but as Paul said, to speak the truth in love.

[48 : 19] Because no matter how much truth we have, if it comes out of an angry spirit, vindictive, critical spirit, it will avail nothing.

The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts that we might take that love and spread it to others. So we pray for a spirit of understanding and compassion, while at the same time, we will not be dissuaded that there is a norm, there is a standard, and you have established it.

And you've done so for the benefit and welfare of the entire human race. We want to acknowledge that again, and we thank you for having established it. Dismiss us, we pray, with a burden on our hearts to be more alert, to be more willing to share, to be more caring. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.