

Twisting Scripture, Pastor Insists Gays Worthy of Death

Late last year, it was reported that a pastor who introduced Ted Cruz at a rally quoted parts of Romans 1 regarding homosexuality and said that the Bible says they are worthy of death. Then he went on to say he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

To quote his words, “yes, Leviticus 20:13 calls for the death penalty for homosexuals,” Pastor Kevin Swanson said.

“Yes, Romans chapter one verse 32, the apostle Paul does say that homosexuals are worthy of death. His words, not mine. And I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I am not ashamed of the Word of God. And I am willing to go to jail for standing on the truth of the word of God.”

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This blew me away for several reasons.

Theologically, I have given my life the last 38 years to studying the Scriptures, and I have written books (*Kingdom Awakening* and *Kingdom Revolution*) dealing with the application of biblical law to culture.

It amazes me that this pastor singles out homosexuals as being worthy of death in Romans (1:32) when the context of this chapter also says that idolaters, the boastful, gossipers, the envious, the faithless, those disobedient to parents are also on the list that deserve death, hence most people in the world deserve to die!

Then he equates this with the gospel when, in essence, the whole book of Romans, in context, states the opposite. Paul says later on in Romans 3:23 that all of us have sinned and

fallen short of the glory of God; then in 6:23 he says, that the penalty of sin is death. Thus, the point of this book is that the gospel of Christ saves all sinners by faith. It is not about instituting a civil death penalty. Furthermore, this passage actually shows the opposite of what he claims. He said they are worthy of death (like all of us sinners), but he never calls on the Roman government or the church to execute anyone.

In another passage when dealing with homosexuality, 1 Corinthians 6: 9-11, Paul also lists idolaters, adulterers, the greedy, drunkards and revilers; hence, he did not view that sin as greater than the sins most people in the world practice (including many in the church!)

What was Paul's point in this passage? It was that everyone in the church once lived in some of these sins listed; however, he never called for the death penalty because in the New Covenant there is hope that we can be saved, sanctified and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. This is the gospel Paul preached, not calling for the death penalty. Furthermore, in chapter 5, Paul never called for the execution of a man who had sex with his father's wife (in violation of Leviticus 18) but that he is to be temporarily disfellowshipped.

Also, Paul puts this grievous form of sexual activity (possibly incest) in the same category as greed, idolatry, being a drunkard and swindling (1 Cor. 5:12). In the next chapter when calling for a Christian Adjudication process, Paul had a perfect opportunity to call for the execution of the immoral person mentioned, but he did not even mention his case; instead, he called for an end to lawsuits between believers.

Quoting Leviticus to call for the execution of gays seems to be convenient for this pastor (who is probably living in a homogeneous cultural bubble). However, the Old Testament also called for the death penalty for adulterers, rebellious

children, idolaters, those practicing witchcraft, those worshipping other gods and those who blaspheme and take the name of the Lord in vain—quite a list! According to this list, hardly anyone living in today's world would be left to be saved by Christ if they were given capital punishment!

What this pastor doesn't understand is that the New Testament clearly modified the application of the moral and civil law regarding sanctions and punishments. Jesus made this clear when He did not call for the woman caught in adultery to be stoned to death (John 8:1-8)

Although Jesus did not change the ethical standards of the Mosaic Law, He did not apply the punishment for adultery even though He was without sin and could have cast the first stone! By this one action, He clearly revised the application of the law for punishment when He inaugurated the new epoch of the gospel.

The New Testament modified the penalty, but not the ethical standards, for sexual sins, idolatry, rebellion and other sins that previously, in theocratic Israel, would have resulted in the death penalty. The reasons for this are numerous; however, one clear reason is because the post-resurrection world can now have regenerated humans who are transformed from within while the pre-Jesus world God had to strictly protect and insulate the Jewish people so they could be preserved as the nation/progenitor who would give birth (through Mary) to the promised Messiah. Fortunately, since the advent of the Holy Spirit, there is now hope for all of us, irrespective of our past, to be saved and sanctified.

On the other hand, one can possibly make a case for capital punishment regarding murder since Genesis 9:5-6 (which first instituted civil government during the post-flood Noahic age) was pre-Moses and pre-law and seemed to be the most fundamental and embryonic expression of human government rooted in natural law. However, the New Testament also put

murder under the rubric of hating a brother in your heart (Matt. 5:22; 1 John 3:15), which should extend our definition of murder, albeit Genesis 9:5-6 deals with the civil application of a serious crime and Jesus and John the apostle were most likely referring to a sin of the heart that only God can bring to light on the Day of Judgment (2 Cor. 5:10).

So in conclusion, it takes great skill and study to rightly divide the Word. Thus Scripture cannot be merely interpreted by perfunctory reading and proof texting. It is my prayer that the reader of this article will not be quick to come to conclusions by isolating passages and taking them out of context. My prayer is that we will uncover the whole council of God and reflect His heart to this world.