

# How Can Defenders of Homosexuality Call Themselves “Christians”?

By Jason Patrick Hilburn

It seems more and more common to hear people who call themselves Christians defending the sin of homosexuality or “gay marriage.” One wonders how anyone could possibly hold two such contradictory positions! Perhaps the answer is found within common doctrinal errors of denominations.

## “Faith Only” Salvation Can Lead to Such Error

Many so-called “Christians” seem to justify homosexuality on the misconception that belief alone is enough to save. If that were the case, then a person who simply believed that Jesus is the Son of God could live in homosexuality and still be saved. Such a conclusion reveals the absurdity of the “faith alone” doctrine. The Bible makes it clear that one must die to sins like homosexuality to go to Heaven (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31; Rom. 1:18-32; 6:1-18; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Jude 7). If belief alone saves, the believer does not have to repent or be Scripturally baptized for the washing away of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21); assemble regularly to worship with other Christians (Heb. 10:23-31; John 4:23-24; Col. 3:16-17); study the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15); pray (1 Thess. 5:17); evangelize (Matt. 28:18-20); or anything else God commands!

The deadly doctrine of belief alone is contrary to the Bible, yet it is a prominent doctrine in many denominations. The Bible says faith and obedience to God's Word are required to be right with God (Matt. 7:21-24; Luke 6:46; Rom. 6:16-18; 1 Pet. 1:22; Heb. 5:9; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:3, etc.). “*Faith only*” is found once in the Bible, but it is preceded by “*not by*”: “*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*” (James 2:24; cf. 2:14-26). Some people think this contradicts some of Paul's statements about works and grace, but Paul was speaking against works of the Law of Moses (Gal. 2:14-16). Ephesians 2:8-19 is in the context of Jews and Gentiles being made one without the works of the Law of Moses (compare “work” in Acts 10:34-35; Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 1:3, etc.). Regarding Ephesians 2:8-ff, one can see how the Ephesians themselves were “saved by grace” through the command of water baptism in Acts 19:1-5 (cf. 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). If belief alone saves, why are there accounts of some who believed in Jesus, but were still lost? (John 8:30-44; 12:42-43). The word “believe” in the Bible is often used as a synecdoche. This means it symbolizes much more than a mere mental belief (including obedience; cf. Num. 20:8-12; Acts 10:35, 43, 48; 11:18; 19:2, etc.).

### **“Grace Only” Salvation Can Lead to Such Error**

Along with faith only, some have a warped view of God's grace, claiming that homosexuals can be saved by God's grace, even if they do not repent. However, God says that His grace teaches people to live obedient lives: *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world"* (Titus 2:11-12; cf. Acts 17:30-31). God's grace has appeared unto all men, yet the Bible says that only a minority will be saved (Matt. 7:13-14). Why is this the case? God's grace is only available to those who believe and obey, living righteously in this present world (Titus 2:11-12; Heb. 5:9). Most will not choose to deny their selfish desires to submit to God's will (Luke 9:23; Rom. 8:1, 13; Col. 3:5). There are also those who obey and then turn away from God. Thus they fall from grace, like the Galatians did when they went back to the Law of Moses instead of the Law of Christ: *"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace"* (Gal. 5:4; cf. 5:6; 6:2; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). Paul told the Corinthians not to receive God's grace in vain, which implies they could still become lost after they were initially saved: *"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain"* (2 Cor. 6:1).

### **A Warped View of Jesus Can Lead to Such Error**

Some boldly claim that Jesus never condemned homosexuality. They seem to ignore the fact that Christians must live by what Jesus authorized – not by everything He did not explicitly condemn (Col. 3:17). Jesus authorized and taught the one rightful relationship within which sexual intimacy should occur – *"And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"* (Matt. 19:4-5).

These in error also seem to miss the fact that God gave Jesus Words, and Jesus gave His disciples those Words: *"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them..."* (John 17:8). The Holy Spirit guided the Apostles to remember all that Jesus had said; and through the Spirit, inspired men could preach and record the Word of God in the New Testament Scriptures (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). That is why Paul could write these inspired Words: *"If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant"* (1 Cor. 14:37-38; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). In the same epistle, Paul had condemned homosexuality by the commandment of the Lord! (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Every word of the Bible is from God and has the authority of Jesus behind it – not just the red-lettered words.

## Conclusion

None of us deserve salvation, and nobody can earn salvation, but Christianity is more than belief and grace. Jesus has given commands that must be obeyed to get to Heaven, and we show our love by obeying Him (John 14:15; 15:14; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:3). When we faithfully obey those commands, we show that we truly believe (Num. 20:8-12). It is by this faithful obedience that Christians truly come to know God, knowing also that we are truly recipients of His wonderful grace and mercy (Jude 21; 1 John 2:3-6). Loving, faithful obedience to God in no way negates man's faith or God's grace! In fact, Paul wrote that a loving, working faith is the only kind that avails anything (Gal. 5:6; cf. Acts 10:35).

One may allow his compassion for homosexuals to cause him to justify their actions and give them a false hope while they live in sin (cf. 1 Cor. 15:33; James 1:22). However, Jesus would not do such. He would say, *"Go, and sin no more"* (John 8:11). True, godly love will encourage repentance and warn others of God's punishment for those who rebel against His Word (Ezek. 3:17-ff; John 12:48; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; Gal. 4:16; Col. 1:28). True Christians, like God, desire *"...all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9-10). However, true Christians understand that the Truth commands every man to present his body as *"a living sacrifice"* and become holy in God's sight (Rom. 12:1-2; Luke 9:23; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Gal. 2:20; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). This requires burying the penitent, former homosexual in water to contact the blood of Christ, with a new man being raised up as a new creature in Christ (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-18; Col. 2:11-13). With the true repentance and conversion of former homosexuals, it can rightfully be said that *"such were some of you"* (past tense), as it was said of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

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