



"Let him who is without sin cast the First Stone"

And Jesus also said, "Go and sin no more." John 8

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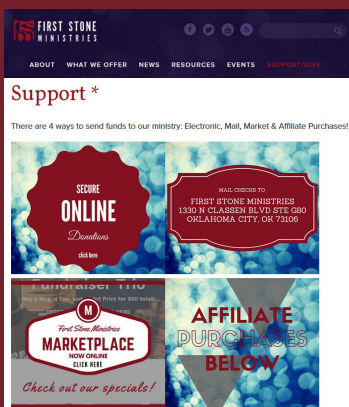
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The Power of Humility and Confession: Characteristics of Freedom Realized

by Stephen Black, Executive Director

Freedom realized is not merely the title of my book;⁽¹⁾ freedom realized is a concept of sincere Christianity found in realizing God's grace to walk in lasting freedom from all forms of sexual sin and relational idolatry. Humility and confession are two of several characteristics necessary in knowing consistent freedom and growth in Christ as His disciple – a sincere believer, which is a real Christian.

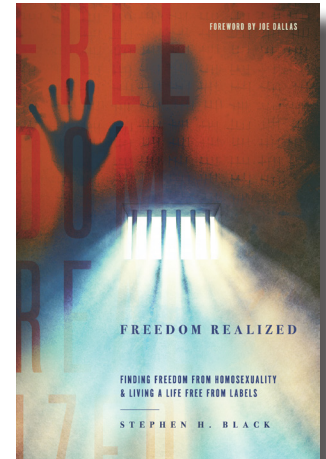
A Required Prerequisite to Knowing and Experiencing God – Humility

There is a prerequisite to experiencing the power of God in our lives. The power of God is made manifest by the Holy Spirit of Grace Who comes to enthrone Himself in the heart of a sincere, surrendered believer. The scripture is very clear; one receives this Holy Spirit power by humbling oneself. God gives His grace, which is His power in the Holy Spirit, to the humble. (James 4:6-10 & 1 Peter 5:5-6) Cultivating humility is an absolute necessity in growing in the grace/power of God and in knowing and experiencing the Holy Spirit. I want everyone I know to read Andrew Murray's book, "Humility," and for a wonderful free introduction, I want to encourage everyone to read Laura Leigh Stanlake's compilation of thoughts about humility.⁽²⁾



Contrition / Brokenness / A Sorrow that leads to Repentance

We are living in a 'post-Christian' culture in the United States, where we find many who have little understanding of the beauty of contrition and brokenness over sin. There are many false converts abiding in the evangelical church today. How do I know that they are false converts? They have not



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THIS PUBLICATION

This publication is produced by First Stone Ministries (FSM). Since its founding in 1976, FSM has been an independent nondenominational, Christ-centered, para-church organization. We are a full-time ministry with ordained ministers and discipleship staff and are governed by a Board of Directors to ensure financial and ethical operations. We are also accountable to an advisory board.

Our primary purpose is to lead the sexually and relationally broken into a liberating relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Discipleship and restoration in every area of one's life is stressed; however, there is detailed emphasis on overcoming all forms of sexual brokenness including homosexuality, sexual abuse and addiction to pornography.

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embraced repentance and a sorrow over sin that causes souls to draw closer to Jesus as Lord and to community producing a confessing life. Confession is the beginning, but it is also the continuation of the life of the humble, surrendered, sincere Christian believer.

The Benefits of Confession Are Eternal

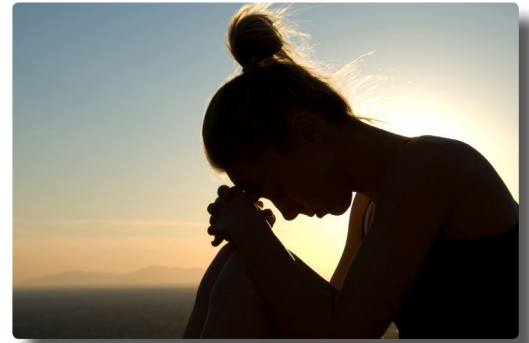
The devoted follower of Jesus keeps an eternal perspective by having a watchful eye and a soul waiting for the return of Jesus Christ—the longing for intimate connection finally realized in the coming of our Savior. First-century Christians lived with an eternal perspective and were ready to die at any moment and to face the judgment seat of Jesus Christ. We should be ready as well. Keeping ourselves in a humble attitude of confession, living the confessing life, and walking out genuine repentance are the marks of a true believer. We must have community to walk out a sincere lifestyle of Christianity.

“He who covers his transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes his sins will obtain mercy. Blessed (happy, fortunate, and to be envied) is the man who reverently and worshipfully fears [the Lord] at all times [regardless of circumstances], but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” Proverbs 28:13-14 AMPC [emphasis mine]

“Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray for one another, that you may be healed and restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working].” James 5:16 AMPC

Confessing Jesus as Lord

The Bible is clear on experiencing real deliverance. Freedom or deliverance comes with the confession of Jesus as Lord. The promise is that you will be saved, you will be delivered, and



ultimately, it does mean that you will receive eternal life. This promise is for those who believe until the end. What does it really mean to have a “confession” or a “confessing life,” leading to saving faith? A Christian that is sincere and real is a human being surrendered to the will of God with a consistency of devotion. This sincere devotion is having a heart that is motivated to find what is pleasing to God, to the Holy Spirit of God, in putting self-will under the Lordship of Jesus Christ—that is, under the authority and mastering of Jesus over the soul of man. A human soul that has saving faith, secure for an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, is a soul that is living a life of confessing Jesus Christ as Lord without shame. This confessing life is a manifestation of the character of freedom realized, confessing Jesus Christ as Lord in word, thought and deed each day.

“... If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” Romans 10:9-11 [emphasis mine]

Believing in Jesus or believing on Him is not merely a mental assent to the historical facts of Jesus’ existence and His amazing sacrifice for the sins of the world. A saving faith with a confessing life is one that brings about a changed, “repentant” life. Those who live this life of humility, in confession and

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repentance, are conforming into the image of Jesus Christ.

"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Romans 8:29 [emphasis mine]

And in 2 Peter 1:2-11 he makes the confessing of Jesus Christ as Lord very clear:

*"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, (knowing Jesus as Lord) as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For **IF** these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for **IF** you **do** these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:2-11 [emphasis mine]*

Sincere Commitment to Community is necessary

for the growth of humility in keeping confession consistent, so the soul has a clear conscience to find freedom realized. When a true believer is in subjection to others on a weekly basis, freedom is cultivated by living in the light of transparency and in Biblical authenticity. A Biblical authenticity can only be achieved by living honestly in community!

Authenticity is not a call to be true to the sinful nature.

Confession with other believers dispels sinful lust. Biblical authenticity calls for a life lived in the light. True authenticity in God's economy produces humility, which in turn produces transformation. Authenticity does not leave a soul in bondage to a same-sex attraction as an identity or to same-sex lust, or any lust. True authenticity, born of faith in God, produces a new lifestyle of repentance and love.

There must be weekly, if not daily, confession of sin. This includes confession of vulnerabilities to sin so as to keep the devil and his temptations eradicated from further attack in the mind as we realize our great need to take every thought captive in obedience to Christ. This is true authenticity.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. (We are not warring according to our own strength). For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. 10:3-5.

The only way we can truly be free is to expose the unfruitful deeds of darkness in our own souls.

"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." Eph. 5:8-11 [emphasis mine]

We can only accomplish living this passage out while living in community with other believers. The author of Hebrews makes this very clear:

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:23-25. [emphasis mine]

This is the promise we have in living in the light, in confession, in community, and in confession of our sins to Christ; He will forgive us and cleanse us of ALL sin.

*"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light [true authenticity in community], we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **IF** we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:7-9 [emphasis mine]*

Coram Deo Allows for the Experience of Freedom Realized

I have found that the only way we can live the confessing life as a truly devoted follower of Jesus

Christ as Lord is by living in *Coram Deo*. What is *Coram Deo*? *Coram Deo* is a Latin phrase translated as “in the presence of God.” In historic church theology, *Coram Deo* communicates the truth of Christians living in the presence of, under the authority of, and to the honor and glory of God at all times.

Coram Deo is living in a cognizant state of being before the face of God. To live in the presence of God is to understand that whatever we do and wherever we do it, we are before the gaze of Almighty God. God is omnipresent; therefore, there is no place that we can escape His penetrating gaze. *HE sees!* *Coram Deo* is to live with a conscious state of awareness of His sovereignty. We enjoy His terrible awesomeness



and fear God when we encounter this relationship as a fountain of life to us as we read in Proverbs 14:27: “*The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.*”

Coram Deo also means to be overwhelmed by God’s love, to be in awe of Him because He is so forgiving and merciful. Only those who are truly born of the Holy Spirit can understand this dual awesomeness! God is terrible, fearful, and full of awe! As C.S. Lewis revealed in his writing, God is NOT tame, and He is certainly NOT safe, but He is oh so very good!⁽³⁾ Oh, so holy, oh, so merciful, and oh, so very loving. Without understanding the duality of holy severity and the unfathomable kindness of God, we cannot grow into true Christian maturity, nor will we realize the depths of freedom available to us in His presence.

Coram Deo living is wrapped-up in the *fear* of God, and the *fear* of God is *not* mere reverential trust. One merely need ask those who have truly received a glimpse of God or peer into the Holy Scriptures and read about those who have encountered God in His glory (Rev. 1:12-17). They fall in awe, in terrible fear—*trembling* before the Almighty! God has transformed my life through *Coram Deo*. I pray that you will embrace *Coram Deo* yourself to experience that great freedom He has for those who love Him! Living in the full awareness and knowledge of *Coram Deo* ensures a victorious life that is free from sin’s bondage. You can see this in a study of the promises

found in Scriptures in endnote (4) of this article. Holy prophets are rarely embraced or accepted during their office in this life. Real prophets live in *Coram Deo*. It is why they communicate very stark, specific, and distinctly bold pronouncements against sin as they warn of the soul’s destruction. Today, most of the church would not welcome such holy prophets of old, believing themselves smarter, more sophisticated, and more refined in the modern messages of civility and so-called kindness. Indeed, they are more refined—so refined most of the time as to passively empower sin to remain in the hearts of people through poor theological offerings and passionless preaching.

Living in the Light – A.B.S. in Community

Living in the light, in sincere Christianity, is living out this easy-to-remember acronym of **A.B.S.** **A** is for accountability; **B** is for boundaries; and **S** is for a spiritually devoted life, practicing spiritual warfare!

A—Accountability. Accountability is a core strength, essential to lasting, and consistent freedom. Accountability is found as we live in community with other believers and enjoy life together. This provides the natural process to confess our sins to each other and receive healing prayer. If we confess and forsake our sin, we find great mercy. Godly accountability is more than a dreaded confession session; it is life in a community where accountability becomes natural in a safe environment of holy, healthy relating. *Coram Deo* actually provides a means of grace to be accountable. Healthy accountability becomes a haven of comfort and safety and not of condemnation. (Please refer to James 5:16 and Prov. 28:13). This is true accountability, and it must be demonstrated by leaders before their disciples.

B—Boundaries. We all need boundaries set in place to separate us from temptation. We must appropriately distance ourselves from people, places, things, and activities that draw us into sin. Anything that draws our hearts away into temptation must have boundaries. If we view boundaries as restrictions rather than protections, we already enter a state of defeat. When a boundary is considered a restriction, we enter into immature and unwise thinking. A wise person, who has embraced *Coram Deo*, understands one’s own areas of weakness. Weakness does not reflect a defect of character. Weakness merely reveals a place of vulnerability. If we truly want freedom, we must view boundaries as protection, as safety, and embrace them as comforting. We all need boundaries in the “nouns” of our lives. We must have boundaries in all persons, places, and things. We certainly need accountability on our computers and from all bad influences in order to walk in integrity. No one is immune in this day. We must protect our own souls and those of our loved

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ones. Truly, as a foundation for freedom, a person must establish boundaries in every area of life that is a place of potential temptation.

S—Spiritually-Devoted Life, Practicing Spiritual Warfare. We must practice spiritual warfare as a core principle of freedom, in the beginning of wisdom, in the fear of God. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but we are in a spiritual battle. God is in control. He will allow these demonic entities to bring chastisement. God is holy and wholly in control. We truly wrestle against Satan and his hordes of demonic hosts. Sometimes we are in the wrestle because of our own unconfessed sin or pride. Ephesians chapter 6, verse 12, is a passage that must be believed. One should review this verse in several translations. However, here is a look at it in *The Living Bible*, which is a paraphrased version:

“For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies—the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.” Eph. 6:12 LB

The Preaching of the Cross and Confession to pave the road to a life of freedom realized – a life of sincere repentance.

“The Cross of Jesus Christ destroys all pride. We cannot find the Cross of Jesus if we shrink from going to the place where it is to be found, namely, the public death of the sinner. And we refuse to bear the cross when we are ashamed to take upon ourselves the shameful death of the sinner in confession.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

I have never known anyone to find lasting freedom—a true “freedom realized”—without a pure and holy devotion to Jesus and embracing in great delight His sacrifice on the cross. Those who find lasting freedom always have a devoted love and respect for Jesus Christ as Lord and worship Him because of the meditation of the passion of his suffering. The preaching of the cross seems foolish as it is a symbol of death and of nothingness to the world; however, to those who are living in freedom and have experienced His presence for a “freedom realized,” it is the power of God for salvation, a true deliverance.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.’” 1 Cor. 1:18-19 [emphasis mine]

I use Craig Lockwood’s book, Falling Forward: The Pursuit of Sexual Purity,⁽⁵⁾ in our New Man Support Group each year. There are several points Lockwood makes in chapter 7, “Confession Discovering the Cross in Community. I have adapted these points from his book below.

Confession:



- heals our isolation and loneliness.
- of sin crucifies the old man and the flesh.
- dismantles false images and fig leaves.
- makes us die to the “social saint” mentality.
- acknowledges God’s power over our sin.
- makes the truth of the Gospel concrete in our souls.
- gives us the pathway to live in peace, serenity, and humility.
- purifies our inner lives—our thoughts.
- brings about a healing in the body of Christ and true unity in the church.
- clears impaired thinking and restores clarity in the brain.⁽⁵⁾

“In confession, a man breaks through to certainty. Why is it that it is often easier for us to confess our sins to God than to a brother? God is holy and sinless; He is a just judge of evil and the enemy of all disobedience. But a brother is sinful as we are. He knows from his own experience the dark night of secret sin. Why should we not find it easier to go to a brother than to the holy God? ... We must ask ourselves whether we have not often been deceiving ourselves with our confession to God, whether we have not rather been confessing our sins to ourselves and also granting ourselves absolution.

Who can give us the certainty that, in the confession and forgiveness of our sins, we are not dealing with ourselves, but with the living God? God gives us this certainty through our brother. Our brother breaks

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the circle of self-deception. A man who confesses his sin in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer ⁽⁹⁾

The need to have lasting freedom, “freedom realized,” is to confess every slip-up and fall, especially when it comes to sexual lust or fantasy. But, is also true for all sins that easily beset us. Until the Cross of Christ causes you to be utterly humbled in the fascination of the extreme love of God to the point of taking your breath away, you have not yet experienced all HE has for you.

There is only one way to enter into Heaven before Almighty God. There are no other ways, no other coverings, no other fig leaves of our works. It is wholly through the holy blood of Jesus Christ as a complete covering, the propitiation of God through faith in Christ’s sacrifice. Jesus’ love and sacrifice is the only adequate substitution; the complete covering for our sins. This new life of “freedom realized” can only come through a new lifestyle of confession, of humility that produces turning from sin, and of turning to Him in a wholly devoted relationship that continues to the day you die.

“Your mercy, O LORD, IS IN THE HEAVENS; YOUR FAITHFULNESS REACHES TO THE CLOUDS. Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are a great deep; O LORD, YOU PRESERVE MAN AND BEAST. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore, the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.” (Psalm 36:5)

I close with a few thoughts from Andrew Murray on Humility:

- “Humility is the beauty of holiness.”
- “Humility, the place of entire dependence on God, is, from the very nature of things, the first duty and the highest virtue of the creature, and the root of every virtue.”
- “...it is not sin that humbles us most, but grace.”

- “It is the sinner dwelling in the full light of God’s holy, redeeming love, in the experience of that full indwelling of divine love, which comes through Christ and the Holy Spirit, who cannot but be humble. Not to be occupied with your sin, but to be occupied with God, brings deliverance from self.”
- “Our measure of humility is not how humble we are before God, but is actually measured by our humility before man...” ⁽²⁾

Will you embrace humility and confession today, tomorrow, next week and the rest of your days? Freedom realized is for every soul who embraces humility and consistent confession as a new lifestyle. May God grace your life with humility, confession for freedom realized.

End Notes:

- (1) Freedom Realized – Finding Freedom from Homosexuality & Living A Life Free from Labels ISBN 13: 9781683144939 (www.freedomrealized.org)
- (2) Andrew Murray’s book on “Humility” ISBN-13: 978-1514695418 and Laura Leigh Stanlake’s compilation on humility, “Mediations on Humility” see the First Stone website:
<https://www.firststone.org/articles/post/meditations-on-humility:-humility-and-confession>
- (3) C.S. Lewis answers this in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* when Mr. Beaver tells Susan that Aslan (the ruler of Narnia) is a great lion. Susan is surprised since she assumed Aslan was a man. She then tells Mr. Beaver, “I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion.” She asks Mr. Beaver if Aslan is safe, to which Mr. Beaver replies, “Safe? Who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King.”
- (4) Read the “Terrors of Hell” by William C. Nichols (<https://www.firststone.org/articles/post/the-terrors-of-hell>)
- (5) Lockwood, Craig. *Falling Forward: The Pursuit of Sexual Purity*. ISBN 1-930159-05-6





FSM Staff Travels to the AACC

Laura Leigh Stanlake

In October, our staff drove out to Nashville, TN, to attend the American Association of Christian Counselors Conference. The drive out and back was smooth, and the staff interacted well. The conference was at the beautiful and vast, Gaylord



We enjoyed a very robust time of ministry at the FSM Booth. Pastor Jerry Bryant, a friend of our ministry, stopped by for fellowship.

Opryland Hotel and Conference Center. Wow! What a venue! We walked our legs off! We went primarily as exhibitors and spent the week doing what we do all the time—we offered literature, shook hands, listened to people's heartaches, fielded tough opinions, answered people's questions, and prayed for so many. At times, the traffic in the exhibition hall was heavy, and our table was very busy. When it wasn't so busy, we frequently had visitors who lingered longer and shared more of their own questions and needs. Although it is a Christian event, we found that our table and literature provoked some deeper thinking for our visitors about what God can do in souls. Not everyone believes that God transforms lives in the area of sexual identity. We



Jim Farrington praying for a mom. This is one of many encounters of prayer and encouragement at the FSM booth.

brought literature that answered doctrinal and cultural questions, as well as testimonies and articles that enrich and equip. It was a full week of ministry and very fruitful. Our staff also had opportunity to attend

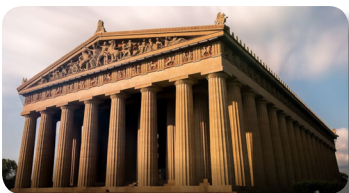
plenary sessions and workshops. Some of these were very encouraging. We especially enjoyed Jonathan Cahn, who challenged us to consider whether this is the end of the age as he offered thoughts about God's hand in the timing and aligning of world leaders. It left us very thoughtful.



Staff at Nashville Parthenon

On our drive home, we stopped to visit a beautiful couple who each had received ministry with us before they married a few years ago. They have recently relocated out of state, and they were along our route home. So, with a minor detour, we spent a wonderful evening at their table, eating and visiting and enjoying the company of these precious ones. It is a wonderful thing to get to witness the lives of those who are going on with God.

These events are just one part of the works of FSM. The education arm of our activities works to provide resources by providing literature that equips people for the larger cultural, ethical, moral, and spiritual questions. At these events, people scoop up the literature by handfuls. It's really something to see—people approach the table and begin to read titles and scan the graphics. Slowly, they begin to take articles and to ask questions. The table of literature is one way we spread our message of hope to wider audiences. These articles often become part of a person's personal files and resources. Of course, each article provides full contact information and a link to our website. We were so glad to arrive home with just a few items left. The donations received at the ministry are what provides this amazing variety of resources to the public. The donations received at the ministry are how we were able to serve so many at this event. Thank you for your prayers and support as we traveled to the AACC.



Nashville Parthenon



Our last night in Nashville having dinner with dear friends, Brad and Darcy Young.



First Stone Staff is Going on a MEXICO MISSION!

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FSM has accepted an invitation to go to Mexico City to serve in Exodus Latin America's "Truly Set Free Conference!" Stephen Black and Laura Leigh Stanlake will be keynote speakers for several sessions. In addition to Stephen and Laura, Joseph Thiessen, Jim Farrington, and our new staff member, Laura Perry, will be traveling February 5 through the 12, 2020. Our staff will serve in many ministry situations throughout the trip. Stephen will also be speaking at a large church, which is the home of a network of churches, in Mexico on Sunday morning, February 9, 2020. Please pray for this trip, for our safety, and for HIS Kingdom to be advanced in our words and offerings. Our staff raises financial support for these mission trips, and Jim, Laura Leigh and Joseph still need several more hundred dollars each to be fully funded for this trip. Please consider giving today.

God's Voice Conference



GOD'S VOICE

A Biblical Response to LGBTQ+ Tyranny

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Registration Begins: January 7, 2020

www.GodsVoice.us



“If all sins are equal, then why is being gay such a big deal? How can you say that some sins are worse than others? Or, asked another way, “If homosexuality is sin, why is it more deserving of hell than lying or any other sin?”

We have put these two questions together for a reason. First, let's take the “all sins are equal” part of the question. Are all sins equal according to scripture? There are two parts to consider here. We can say clearly that ALL sin brings about death and separation from God. ALL sin falls short of His intent. (Romans 3:23; Isaiah 59:2; Genesis 3:22-24; Romans 5:11-12; Galatians 5:17)

So, ALL sin brings about separation from God and the penalty of death; however, are ALL sins equal before His eyes? The scriptures do not teach that. In fact, not only are there degrees of sin and resulting consequences both in community and to the sinner, idolatry is one of those sins that is given as a “great sin” or more severe sin. In the incident of the golden calf of Exodus 32, the people rejected God's leadership and instruction and demanded that a golden calf be made for them to worship. This was a “great sin” in God's eyes (Exodus 32:21, 30-31). Clearly, this was a violation of the 1st and 2nd of the ten commandments. Murder of a person has great social consequence, but it also brought the death penalty, and it still does in most cultures. Killing someone's animal brought the command to make restitution. Homosexuality is one sin inside of a category of sin called “sexual immorality” that includes fornication, adultery, prostitution, rape, bestiality, and incest. The Old Testament speaks strongly about the sins of sexual immorality and does not put any of these in the same category of, say, eating shellfish. We want to concentrate on the New Testament teaching about this sin, in particular. In every application, the sin of sexual immorality received specific instruction. “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the



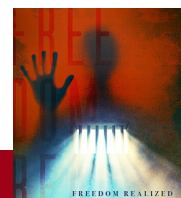
Lord is *the* avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned *you*. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity but in sanctification. So, he who rejects *this* is not rejecting man but **God**, who gives His Holy Spirit to you.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 *emphasis ours*) Not only does this state that it is the *will of God*, but it states that to reject this instruction is to **reject God**. It doesn't stop there, however. It has stated that it is transgressing and defrauding others. 1 Corinthians 6 shares something similar and provides a simple teaching regarding sexual impurity. “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? **For He says, ‘The two shall become one flesh.’ But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.** [This scripture then adds this emphatic statement] **‘Flee immorality.’** Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know

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that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body.” This is an interesting teaching comparing the “one flesh” human union first mentioned in Genesis 2:24, to a person’s relationship to God. (Eph 5:31-32) This portion of 1 Corinthians takes it further by exhorting the believer to honor his own body because it is a *temple of the Holy Spirit*. We are exhorted to **FLEE sexual immorality** for that reason. We are **not our own**, for we have changed our allegiance to a holy God and His holy ways. This is what saving faith is! For that reason, we heed this warning because it is a narrow way that leads to eternal life. We’ve been bought with a price. There is one other factor included in this passage as it states that “the immoral man sins against his own body.” What is that body? It is a temple, an abode, a habitation, a dwelling place of the living God.

Yes, there are different consequences for sin, just as there are different consequences of the violation of any law. Jesus made the qualification to inspect our own our hearts by preaching the following words:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his

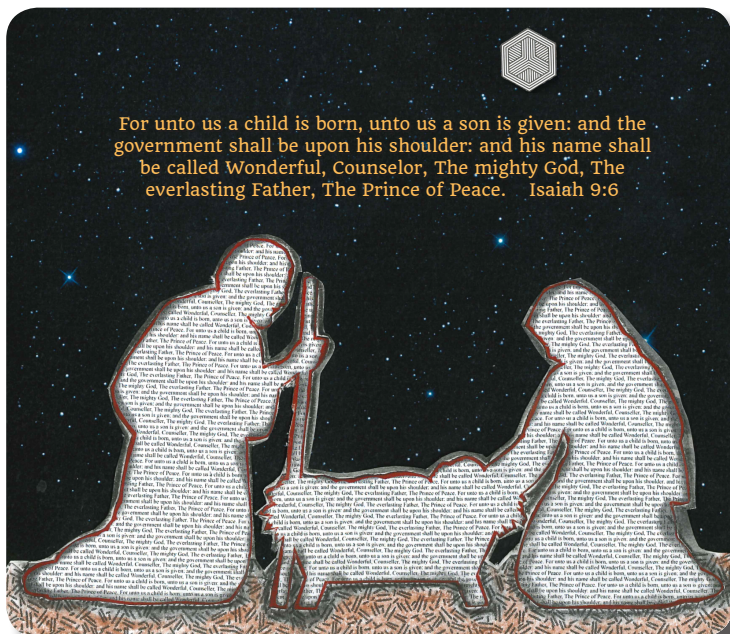
heart. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.” (Matthew 5:27-30)

Jesus Christ, our Lord and King, is very interested in the motivation(s) of our hearts concerning sin. We cannot side-step the issue of sin in any form; however, sexual immorality of any kind is a true danger to the eternal soul of man. If anyone is trying to get by while living in persistent sin or in the least amount of submission to Jesus, that one needs to make certain that they really belong to Jesus at all. Jesus said, “he who loves me will keep my commandments.” Because of this, we do need to examine ourselves. (2 Cor. 13:5)

'Flee immorality.' Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body.

1 Corinthians 6:18

For additional reading in answering this very relevant and yet polarizing question, we highly recommend Dr. Robert Gagnon’s article online, “Is Homosexual Practice No Worse Than Any Other Sin?” dated January 7, 2015. http://www.robagnon.net/articles/is_homosexual_practice_no_worse.htm



Art by Joseph Thiessen



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Staff



We want to welcome Laura Perry and Aaron Girod to the First Stone Staff for 2020!

From Left: Laura Perry - Women's Minister - Intern; Aaron Girod - Men's Minister - Intern; Laura Leigh Stanlake - Dir of Women's Ministries; Joseph Thiessen - Office Admin; Stephen Black - Executive Dir; and Jim Farrington - Men's Minister



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