**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

**5/7/2023**

**“I Am A Gay Man…Would I be Fully Accepted in the Church”**

Recently, I read where a preacher of a church received this statement and question, and I quote, “I believe church should be for all of God’s children. No exceptions. I am a gay man. My question is, would I be fully accepted with no judgment and fully welcomed and able to serve at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Church?” What if the elders of the St. James church of Christ in St. James where I am a member had received this question, how would we respond? This is what I want to talk about today on our program. We are glad you are with us.

How would we respond to a man who says he is a “gay man” and wants to know if we would fully accept him, with no judgment, into our fellowship?

First of all, I would ask him what he means when he says, “I am a gay man.” If he means that he is one who struggles with same-sex desires, but recognizes that any sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman is sinful, and that he desires to be a true disciple of Christ by obeying the gospel of Christ and walking in line with the doctrine of Christ as he struggles with this temptation, then we would rejoice at his honesty and his desire to please the Lord and would receive him gladly in the St. James church.

Of course, this is no different than a man who struggles with heterosexual sexually immoral desires, or a man who struggles with the desire to drink alcohol, or a man who struggles with controlling his temper, or any of the other many sinful desires we all struggle with as disciples of Christ. Temptation to commit sin is something that every Christian struggles with in different ways. And all of us in the St. James church of Christ battle with Satan and his wiles. Paul says in Ephesians 6:11-12 to the church in Ephesus, *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”*  Satan is out to devour us. Peter says in 1 Peter 5:8, *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”*

If you mean by “I am a gay man” that you struggle with same-sex desires, but are willing to put on the whole armor of God so you will be strong in the Lord’s might to fight the temptations, then you are becoming a part of a people that doing the very same thing. You will be no different than the rest of us who are battling with temptation and sin.

But, if by “I am a gay man” you mean that you are a practicing homosexual and that you embrace the homosexual lifestyle as good no matter what the Bible may say about it, and that you are looking for a church that will affirm homosexual activity and/or same-sex marriage, that would be a different matter entirely. We would call upon you to do what Jesus called upon people to do. In Matthew 4:17 it says, *“From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”* To repent means to change your heart, which results in a change of life. He said to the woman taken in adultery, *“go and sin no more.”* (John 8:11). Jesus called upon sinners to change their sinful way of life. He told His apostles when He sent them out on the great commission*, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”* (Luke 24:47) And that is exactly what the apostles did. They went out and preached repentance. Peter told the Jews who saw themselves as sinners and wanted to know what to do, *“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 2:38). Peter also said in Acts 3:19, *“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.”* The Bible is clear, there is no forgiveness of sins without repentance. And there is no repentance without a turning away from sin. John the Baptist taught repentance and he said to certain ones who came to his baptism, *“Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance…”* (Matt. 3:7-8). The fruits worthy of repentance are the changes one makes in his life by putting away his sinful practices. When Paul went out to preach after his conversion, he said that he preached *“that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”* (Acts 26:20)

And so if this man came embracing his homosexual lifestyle as good, refusing to change, we would call upon him to repent and turn to God, doing works befitting repentance.

And there is no uniqueness to homosexual sin in regard to this approach. The same would be true if a man came to us and said, “I am living with my girlfriend. We are not married. Would you accept us without judgment, fully welcoming us into the church?” We would call upon them to repent and do works befitting repentance. The same would be true if a man came to us and said, “I’m an alcoholic. I know I need to stop drinking, but I don’t plan to give it up. Would you accept me without judgment into the church?” Again we would call upon him to repent and strive to put away the sin.

Now, would he struggle with temptation? Sure he would. But repentance requires that he decide to put the sin away. When he does that, God will be with him and help him in his struggles. In turning to the Lord he will do what the Lord instructed in Ephesians 6:10-11, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* In verse 13, *“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”* And then he lists the armor of God in verses 14-18. By putting on the whole armor of God he has the power of the Lord to overcome his temptations and do what is right.

There is a world of difference between one repenting of his sin, struggling with the sin with God’s power, and one embracing the sin, refusing to give it up. One is forgiven of his sins and the other is not. It doesn’t matter what sins one is committing, what temptations one may be facing, if he is willing to repent of those sins and turn to Jesus Christ, the Lord will save him from his sins and will be with him as he struggles to overcome those sins in his life. The Lord loves us too much to leave us wallowing in our sins. He will work in our lives so we may be conformed into the image of His Son. Paul said to the saints in Philippi, *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”* (Phil. 2:12-13) When one repents and turns to God, God will be with him.

This man said he is a gay man, and he asked if he would “be accepted completely with no judgment and fully welcomed and able to serve at the St. James church.” If he means that he wants a church where any behavior he participated in would be affirmed and accepted in the membership of the church then the answer is “no.” The Lord has made it clear in His word that His churches are to strive to maintain purity among themselves. The Lord does not what His churches to allow persistent sinners, that is, those who continue in their sins without repentance, to remain in their fellowship. In 1 Corinthians chapter 5 we read that there was one among the church there who had committed fornication with his father’s wife. In verse 2 Paul said to them, *“And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.”* Look at verse 6 and 7, *“Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.”* The point is, if they allowed this unrepentant sinner to remain among them, the impact of his influence would affect the rest of the church, like leaven in a lump of doe. And so Paul says, *“purge out the old leaven.”*

Jesus said to the church in Thyatira, “Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.” (Rev. 2:20-21) Notice, the church there allowed the woman Jezebel to exert her evil influence in the church. The Lord says to them, “I have…[this] against you.” They should not have allowed her to be among them. The Lord expects His local churches to maintain their purity by not allowing persistent sinners to be a part of them and to remain among them.

Paul said to the church in Thessalonica, *“But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.”* (2 Thess. 3:6) Those who walk disorderly are those who continue in their disobedience. They refuse to repent. Paul instructs the church to withdraw from them. The Lord does not want His people to provide a fair haven for persistent sinners.

Paul said to the church in Corinth in 1 Cor. 6:9-11, *“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 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 and by the Spirit of our God.”* There were those in the church in Corinth who had been fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, etc. He says, *“such were some of you.”* What a beautiful picture of love and acceptance. When these sinners came to Christ in obedient faith, which includes repentance they were forgiven of their sins. They were washed, sanctified and justified. They were accepted into the fellowship of God’s family. But it is all because Paul could say, “such were some of you.” If we change his words to the present tense and say, “and such are some of you,” we are left with no one washed, nor one sanctified, and no one justified.

True love demands that we tell sinners the truth. True love demands that we tell sinners to repent. Jesus said to the lukewarm church in Laodicea, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”*

When a sinner, no matter what his sins may be, comes to Jesus Christ and renders obedience to His gospel, by repenting of his sins, committing his life to Christ, then he is forgiven. And yes, he will be accepted into the fellowship of the St. James church of Christ. And we will be there to assist him and help him as he struggles with his temptations, to help him put on that whole armor of God, that he might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. But if he refuses to repent, refuses to put away the sins of his life, then the Lord is telling us, do not accept him into the fellowship.

Our time is gone for today, and we thank you for listening.

We invite you to check out our website. On this website you are able to hear sermons on a variety of Bible topics and you are also able to hear previous Bible Talk radio broadcasts, as well as download transcripts of our Bible Talk programs. That web address is sjchurchofchrist.com. That’s sjchurchofchrist.com

If you have a Bible question, and would like to talk with us, we would like to talk with you. Just give us a call at 573-263-4690. Or you may send in your questions by email. Our email address is sjchurch@sjchurchofchrist.com.