

Is Ignorance Bliss?

by Tricia Berg

I would like to address some very disturbing things that have been said in the public forum by people claiming to know God. I'll take them in reverse chronological order—starting with the most recent. I know there are many, many shocking things being said every day, but for that very reason, I can't tackle them all. These few will give enough examples of where things are heading, and point out the reason we need to arm ourselves as Paul said:

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. **Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.** Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. Ephesians 6:10-20*

Notice that Paul wanted prayers for the right words and to declare them boldly. We're not to "put up and shut up" as the world would have us believe. We're to be lights in the darkness. In fact, this next passage is from the preceding two chapters to the one above:

*Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must **no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to***

your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. **But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible,** for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." **Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.** And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 4:17-5:21

For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:5-11

This first instance I want to talk about is from a segment on MSNBC where they were discussing how “hateful” it is for conservative parents to want to have some control over what schools are teaching their children. Naturally, it wasn’t framed that way—instead of protecting young children from indoctrination into an evil agenda, it was represented as an “attack on marginalized people” that will “harm children and others.” It reminded me of another time when some people claimed that securing the border would result in legally adopted children being deported. Excuse me? That was utterly false, emotional hype—just like this is. But never mind the actual children being harmed by traffickers bringing them into the country while claiming to be their “family.” Sadly, many very kind, caring people are being manipulated by underhanded tactics.

Back to the show, one of the guests was a man named Matthew Dowd, who says he was raised Catholic, and that:

“The faith has been captured by a small segment of society who try to define it in a way that Jesus never had defined it, in the actually opposite way of Jesus.” He continues, “The entire message of the gospels of the Easter holidays was ‘love one another’.”

I’m not picking at straws here when I point out that there is ONE Gospel. There are not multiple gospels, whether for different holidays or contained in different books of the Bible. Dowd seems to have confused what we call the four gospels with THE Gospel. The books written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are referred to as the gospels of each of those writers, but the entire books are not considered the Gospel, and there is not more than one Gospel. (Mark 16:15)

*I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a **different gospel—not that there is another one**, but there are some who trouble you and want to **distort the gospel of Christ.** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we*

have said before, so now I say again: **If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.** Galatians 1:6-9

What is a contrary Gospel? One example would be a "gospel" that approves of sin, and another would be a "gospel" that says we are still under the law, which was meant to restrain ungodly people from doing the sort of things that those who are indwelt by and walk in the Holy Spirit would never do or approve of others doing. (2 Peter 2:18-19, Romans 1:32)

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. 1 Timothy 1:8-11

If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs. 1 Timothy 6:3-10

*Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their **knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness**, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. Titus 1:1-4*

There is ONE Jesus, and He doesn't change. All things were made by Him, through Him and for Him, including sex and gender—He made man and woman to be fruitful and multiply. (Genesis 1:27-28, 2:24-25)

*Jesus Christ is the **same** yesterday and today and **forever**. Hebrews 13:8*

*He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his **beloved Son**, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. **For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.** And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister. Colossians 1:13-23*

*For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. **For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.** 2 Corinthians 11:2-4*

The Christian holiday we call Easter today began with the Jewish Passover (when Jesus was crucified), the Feast of Unleavened Bread (observing when the Israelites fled Egypt in a hurry without time to leaven their bread dough—these two feasts came to be referred to as “the Passover” since they are on consecutive days) and Firstfruits (when Jesus rose from the dead), which began the count to what we now call Pentecost (signifying 50, the day the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples), which is the Feast of Weeks (7 weeks from the day after the regular weekly Sabbath (so always starting and ending the count a Sunday), for a total of 50 days including the first and last day instead of just from one date to another. (Leviticus 23)

Jesus is our Passover Lamb in the New Testament, the fulfillment of the Old Testament Passover observance, which looked back upon the Hebrews being spared from the 10th plague in Egypt—the death of all of the firstborn males (both man and beast). In this age of grace, those with faith in Jesus will not be subjected to God’s wrath, because His blood was shed to cover them—just as the lamb’s blood on the doorposts protected the Hebrews on the original Passover. So the message of Easter is not actually “love one another,” but “escape the wrath of God by grace through faith in Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:8-10) Very importantly, we need to understand that Jesus’ resurrection proves that there is a resurrection of the dead, and that His offering of Himself on our behalf has been accepted by the Father. (Acts 17:30-31, 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Peter 1, Hebrews 9:24-28)

*As obedient children, **do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct**, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile*, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the **precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.** He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:14-25*

(*See Hebrews 11:13, Philippians 3:17-21 - we who are true believers are exiles on earth—our citizenship is in heaven.)

*Therefore, since we have been **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also **obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand**, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For*

one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Romans 5:1-11

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the **Lamb of God**, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. **For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.** Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone **who bears the name of brother** if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? **Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?** God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you." 1 Corinthians 5:6-13

We know from the above passage and many others that it is not "godly" to indulge in sexual immorality—remember, God doesn't change—what He hated in the Old Testament, He still hates. (Leviticus 18:22, Deuteronomy 22:5, Malachi 3:6) To word it another way, sexual immorality does not accord with the Gospel. (Hebrews 13:4) We also know this from the following lists of which personal behaviors are evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in a born again person, and which are of the natural flesh. (Also see Romans 6.)

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the **works of the flesh** are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like*

*these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that **those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** But the **fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;** against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:16-24*

Dowd goes on to say: "If Jesus Christ was alive today..."

I'm sorry, but we have to pause here again already—Jesus IS alive, or there is no Gospel! Who is there to intercede for us if Jesus stayed dead? (I'll give you a hint—it's not the Pope, it's not Mary, and it's not angels. 1Tim. 2:5-6, Heb. 1)

*We know that Christ, being **raised from the dead**, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Romans 6:9*

*If the Spirit of him who **raised Jesus from the dead** dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. Romans 8:11*

*Now if Christ is proclaimed as **raised from the dead**, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. **And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.** Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 1 Corinthians 15:12-20*

*The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office, but he holds his priesthood permanently, because **he continues forever.** Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he **always lives to make intercession for them.** Hebrews 7:23-25*

Continuing with Dowd's words:

"...he would be called a groomer, he would be called woke, and he would be called a Socialist..."

Stop. I understand that in the context of this segment, what he is probably trying to say (in a deliberately offensive, shocking way) by using the words "groomer" and "woke" is that Jesus didn't shun sinners. On the contrary, He sought them out, not being afraid of what people would think when He spoke and ate dinner with them. However, I don't think that Dowd would acknowledge that they actually ARE (or were at that time) sinners. Also, Dowd is missing the point of Jesus' ministry. He was here to gather the lost and heal the sick. He told them to "go and sin no more." (John 8:10-11, John 5:13-24, Luke 19:1-10, 7:47-50) They found in Him an opportunity to turn their lives around and get right with God. Needless to say, Dowd has this all wrong, and since his appeal is to other people who also do not know their Bibles, it all sounds great to them.

*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. Luke 15:1-7*

As the hymn goes, "Jesus is a friend of sinners" NOT because He's their "buddy" who affirms their sin, but because He saves them FROM their sin—He changes them from the inside out by His Holy Spirit IF they truly believe, IF they truly LOVE Him enough to desire to please Him. (John 14-15, 1John 1-3, Romans 6-8) God cannot be fooled—He sees right through false confessions of faith. (Matthew 12:33-37, Luke 6:43-49) Notice how the first line of this next passage is so often taken out of context, as is "judge not" - Matthew 7:1-5, which actually says not to be a hypocrite and judge others' tiny sins when yours are bigger, and Romans 2:1-11, which says not to judge others for the very same things you do yourself.

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but

*inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. **A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.** Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.' Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. Matthew 7:12-29*

People like to laser focus on what Jesus said about loving one another and helping the poor, etc. Those points are extremely important, but we shouldn't ignore the other things that Jesus said. He elaborated on the spirit of the law (which we are under today, by the power of the Holy Spirit - Romans 7:4-6 and all of Romans 6-8, Titus 2:11-3:8). God doesn't want us fixating on picky details like the Pharisees and scribes had imposed on the people. (Matthew 15:7-20, Matthew 23, Luke 11:37-54, Mark 7:1-23) He wants us to worship Him (which includes obeying Him) in truth and in spirit by His power in us. (John 4:19-26, Romans 15:13, Ephesians 3:14-21, 1 Thessalonians 1:2-7)

*"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 lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. **If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.** It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Matthew 5:27-32*

Remember, the above passage is not about physically harming ourselves, but rather, emphasizing the seriousness of sin. Forgiveness is available for ALL sins that we confess to God and repent of—but “walking in the Spirit” is not imaginary. You can’t see the Holy Spirit, but you can see the evidence of where He is or has been—the “fruits.” (John 3:3-8) We must examine ourselves to see if our faith is even real, judging by our fruits (thoughts, words and actions, Romans 16:18-19, Hebrews 6:4-12, 10:26-31, 12:14-17, 1 Peter 4:1-5)

*Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves to you? It is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ, and all for your upbuilding, beloved. For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be **quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder**. I fear that when I come again my God may humble me before you, and I may have to **mourn over many of those who sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and sensuality that they have practiced**. This is the third time I am coming to you. Every charge must be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. I warned those who sinned before and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again I will not spare them— since you seek proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful among you. For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God. **Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!** 2 Corinthians 12:19-13:5*

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice

these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. 2 Peter 1:3-15

As far as the comment on Jesus being [called] a Socialist, that is also inaccurate. Socialism involves redistributing wealth forcibly. In general we can observe that those who wish to be in charge of this kind of structure do not believe in God, but think that they would make good gods themselves. Those who are in favor of it on everyone else's behalf are what Marx called "useful idiots." This is NOT God's way. It is NOT what Jesus taught. God loves a cheerful giver. We are to willingly share with the needy. The point is to glorify God and encourage others to do the same when they see His goodness through our actions. Socialism demands thanks to the state, not God. Socialism is godless, as are Marxism and Communism. This is why those forms of government always result in so many deaths. Those in charge do not feel accountable TO God, they feel as if they ARE gods.

*So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready **as a willing gift, not as an exaction**. The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. **Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver**. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 2 Corinthians 9:5-12*

*Let the thief no longer steal, but rather **let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need**. Ephesians 4:28*

*By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. 1 John 3:16-18*

*Let the one who is taught the word **share** all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:6-10*

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.** Matthew 5:14-16*

More Dowd:

"...if he was speaking the message he spoke in the gospels today about treating everyone with dignity—Jesus hung out with prostitutes and tax collectors—he was nailed to a cross because he spoke on behalf of the most marginalized people in the Middle East..."

NO. Jesus was crucified because He rightly claimed to be the Son of God, which they considered to be blasphemous, since they did not believe Him. The reason God the Father allowed it is that Jesus' entire purpose was to lay down His life to save us from our sins. The leaders of the day recognized that He was a threat to their power because He spoke against their over-reaching control of the people and their hypocrisy. They continually looked for ways to entrap Him. (Luke 11:53-54) Does this sound familiar these days?

And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has

uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? **You have now heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?**” They answered, **“He deserves death.”** Matthew 26:62-66

When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.” The Jews answered him, **“We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God.”** When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?” Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.” Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.” John 19:6-11

*I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and **I lay down my life for the sheep.** And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because **I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.** This charge I have received from my Father.”* John 10:14-18

*“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But **for this purpose** I have come to this hour.”* John 12:27

Note that from the statements above, and also from Jesus’ entire ministry, there was absolutely no reason for anyone to ask Him if He was the Son of God or not, or to do a “sign” to prove it. He made it perfectly clear. They were only pretending not to know. (John 10:14-39, Matthew 12:39-42)

Getting back to Dowd’s comments, Jesus’ ministry was to the lost sheep of Israel, the Jews, not to “the Middle East.” We Gentiles (non-Jews) were foretold in the Old Testament to be future recipients of salvation, but not until after the Jews rejected Jesus. I find it interesting that “woke” so-called believers are generally against the Jews and take the other side in the dispute for the land that God gave to the House of Israel and no one else. (Joel 3:1-3, Ezekiel 47:13-23, Genesis 12:1-3)

He answered, "I was sent **only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**"
Matthew 15:24

And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was **sent for this purpose.**" And he was preaching in the **synagogues of Judea.** Luke 4:42-44

And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him—for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength—he says: "**It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**" Isaiah 49:5-6

For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a **light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.**" Acts 13:47

When they had appointed a day for him [Paul], they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: "Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive." For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' Therefore let it be known to you that **this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.**" Acts 28:23-28

What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day." And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever." So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather **through their trespass salvation has come to**

the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree. Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: **a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.** And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob"; "and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins." As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all. Romans 11:7-32

Dowd goes on:

"...and the idea that a certain segment of our population is trying to capture the faith and corrupt a message that I may have been a follower of since I was baptized and was confirmed and served on the altar, in the course of this is something that all of us, not just people of faith, but all of us whether you're Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, whatever you happen to be or don't have

any faith at all, the message that love conquers hate is a message all of us, all of us should be pushing, but especially the Christians in our country who cannot stand what has happened to our faith."

I think that the saying "same word, different dictionary" applies here. "Love" has been redefined to mean approval of whatever behavior an individual or group wants to call "love." But "love is love" is a lie. There ARE different kinds of love. We don't love God, our parents, siblings, children, other relatives, neighbors, co-workers, pets, belongings, etc. each in the same way. "Love" is not the same as sex. We're all in trouble and are no better than animals if that ever becomes synonymous! Whereas, "hate" apparently now means disapproval of the behavior for which approval is being sought.

The problem with these evolving definitions is that again, God doesn't change. He IS love, yet He said He hates certain behaviors. He IS the truth, so we can believe Him as to what is right or wrong.

"Woe to him who strives with him who formed him, a pot among earthen pots! Does the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no handles'? Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' or to a woman, 'With what are you in labor?'" Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and the one who formed him: "Ask me of things to come; will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands? I made the earth and created man on it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host." Isaiah 45:9-12

Ah, you who hide deep from the LORD your counsel, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, "Who sees us? Who knows us?" **You turn things upside down!** Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, "He did not make me"; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, "He has no understanding"? Isaiah 29:15-16

Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers. You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. **These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest**

I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver! *The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!" Psalms 50:14-23*

Our society is quickly (and purposefully) moving in a direction where the intent does not matter—only how the recipient of words or actions perceives them matters. But a person seeking approval for their sin will not accept anything but approval as being "loving." They will always call what they disagree with "hate." Nevertheless, the Bible tells us to "speak the truth in [with/out of] love." (Ephesians 4:15-16, 1Corinthians 13) This means there is no place for name-calling or physical violence, but we must strive to be the salt and light while maintaining compassion for the lost.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. 1 John 4:7-13

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 1 Timothy 1:5

To wrap up the discussion on this instance, this was very difficult to listen to. It was very prideful and ignorant, and so were the smiling, approving reactions of the panel and show host. This kind of Bible illiteracy is dangerous, not blissful. The devil is behind this, seeking persecution of true Christians who stand up for God even when it's not popular, even when it causes them to be despised and makes their lives harder. (Hebrews 10:32-39) But don't forget, Jesus said:

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste,

how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet." Matthew 5:10-13

Salt is a preservative to prevent decay. It kills germs that cause rotting. I don't know about anyone else, but I don't want to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet... We're not to fear men, but God. We're to be willing to suffer rather than go along with the lost world. (Philippians 1:27-30, James 1:12-21, 5:10-11, 1 John 2:15-17, 1 Peter 2:19-25, 3:13-17, 4:12-19, 5:6-10, Colossians 3:23-25, 2 Timothy 2:4-7, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-12)

"So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 10:26-33

Let's contrast the last part in the passage above with Dowd's plea for help from followers of religions that do not even believe in Jesus. This really shows that he doesn't get it that Jesus is the ONLY way—how loving is that to not even know and share the REAL Gospel? We are indeed told to love one another, but that is a commandment to believers (who are saved), NOT the Gospel that saves. That is what we do because we ARE saved. We're not even able to do that without the help of the Holy Spirit. Whoever doesn't have the Holy Spirit doesn't belong to Jesus, which means He will not be returning for them to save them from God's wrath. And again, God decides what love is. (Psalm 97:10-11, Proverbs 8:13)

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit,

*if in fact **the Spirit of God dwells in you.** Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. Romans 8:5-9*

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:22-23

When we misrepresent God and “love” as giving approval of sin, we un-do the warnings in the Bible. That is anything but loving! “Conquering” (or overcoming, as found in Revelation 2-3 and Revelation 12:10-12) is done by abiding in Jesus (John 15) and holding fast to the testimony of the true Gospel (which means Good News, because we can be saved from our sins by faith in Jesus—but nowadays people don’t want to hear the word “sin”).

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” Revelation 21:5-8

And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.” “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” The Spirit and the Bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. Revelation 22:10-21

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And **no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.** Hebrews 4:12-13*

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that **Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11*

The second instance I would like to briefly (at least at less length than the first one) discuss is the prayer of Anna Sheetz of First Presbyterian Church in Iowa City on April 3, 2022 in honor of International Transgender Day of Visibility on March 31, 2022. She made her idolatrous address to the "god of pronouns," which is clearly a god of her own making. However, she does also clearly refer to the one, true God in some instances, which makes the rest of it blasphemous. Here is a transcript of her melodramatic speech:

This past Thursday, March 31st, was the International Transgender Day of Visibility. In the PCUSA, we welcome all of our transgender and queer siblings into this family and relationship with the creator god. So today, I wish to pray a prayer that was written for this incredible day. Will you pray with me?

Oh god of pronouns, we give praise to the great one, the one who was identifiable as god. "I am what I am," you say. The great "they," the incarnate "he" and "she," the god of trans-being. Impregnating Mary, fathering god. Breastfeeding god of many breasts, you shatter all stereotypes, making every

single person...male and female, intersex, nonbinary in your image. Exactly in your image. Spectrum rainbow god, who put your promise for non-violence in the symbol for queer love before humanity knew. Because you knew. Who had Joseph, who could not sleep with a woman in a beautiful lady's cloak, perhaps of rainbow colors. Before we knew, you knew. God of pronouns, who said, "You can call me 'he' or 'she' or 'they,' whatever makes you feel closest to me." Invisible and visible god, on this day where visibility, celebration, belatedness, affirmation, and acceptance is the bare minimum, remind us that you are the god of pronouns, so you affirm and you celebrate them. God of Saul, Paul, Simon, Jacob, Isaac, Simon Peter, Abram and Sarai and Abraham and Sarah, god of Joseph, of the coat of many colors, of the Ethiopian eunuch, of the virgin Mary, god of all found families in the Bible. Remind us that you affirm us in our full identity—name, pronoun, found family, all of it. For this, we give you thanks and praise to the great I am. The great they/them. Thank you, god.

And so now, in the words that our mother, our father, and our sibling god taught us to pray, and pray with us now, [recites the Lord's Prayer]..

I hardly feel that I need to repeat this, since it was spelled out above, but God made man and woman in His image. There are no other genders than male or female, which are evidenced by the bodily parts that go with each. No one is stuck in the wrong body. If some feel this is the case, then that is a mental disorder that can be treated. No surgery is needed except in the case of birth defects, which should only be performed after genetic testing to determine the correct sex/gender. Sex/gender is not "assigned" at birth. It's common sense.

All of this hysteria (some feigned, some simply misinformed) about little kids needing to know about these things starting in preschool, and how they will harm themselves otherwise is ridiculous. The fact is that no amount of surgery and hormone therapy will truly change anyone's gender. That has resulted in MANY suicides by people who are utterly disappointed by the false promises made to them, compounded by the fact that the surgeries and therapies are not completely reversible once the patient comes to the realization that they still feel abnormal.

Next up—the maligned rainbow. I don't know how anyone who truly believed in the actual God of the Bible would feel free to take such liberties as to make up sinful stories about the meaning of the rainbow. God plainly told us what the rainbow symbolizes. But if someone believes in an imaginary god they have invented, then I could see how they would feel free to wing it on every single thing. Such a "god" would have no power, since they wouldn't actually exist.

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, **"This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."** God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth." Genesis 9:8-17

Next, God's name. She does know what His name is, because she used it in more than one place: The Great I Am. To be fair, God does use other descriptive names for Himself in the Old Testament, but she doesn't use any of those, and instead has added many other names—falsely quoting God as saying that He's okay with all of them. Notice that the name "Jesus" was not used even once.

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. Exodus 3:14-15

Lastly (I'll ignore the rest of the details of this bizarre "prayer"), it would appear that she is trying to suggest that Joseph was transgender or gay? I've heard people attempt to do the same with King David, Jonathan, Paul, and even Jesus. This is simply disgusting. The following passages come to mind:

*To the pure, all things are pure, but **to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.** They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are **detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.** Titus 1:15-16*

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For **certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality** and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise **indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire**, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." But **these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively**. Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever. It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, **to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him**." These are grumblers, malcontents, **following their own sinful desires**; they are **loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage**. But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, **following their own ungodly passions**." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, **hating even the garment stained by the flesh**. Jude 1:3-23

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And **many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed**. And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and **to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority**. Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. But **these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!** Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. For, **speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved**. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment

delivered to them. What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire." 2 Peter 2:1-22

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. Romans 1:16-32

For anyone who has been tricked into believing any of the lies being promoted in the two instances above, you can ask God for forgiveness and receive it. Admit your ignorance and sin and turn from it. It's not too late if you're reading this and feel convicted in your spirit.

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **If we say we have fellowship with***

him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say 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. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:5-10

Finally, the last (and shortest) instance I will be covering in this article is the speech by Sam Allberry on “How to Know Your Gender” at a Ravi Zacharias Ministries conference on February 15, 2019. In case you’re not aware, Ravi died of cancer on May 19, 2020. After his death, it came to light that he had been living a lie. That shed some light on how he could have gone astray in his doctrine during his late years as well. When we harden our hearts as the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin, we grieve and quench Him who is our only connection to God’s wisdom. (Ephesians 4:30, Jeremiah 17:9-10, Psalm 139, Psalm 51:17) We can no longer understand spiritual things, and may not even believe anymore—we see this happen a lot these days. People “deconstruct” their faith and no longer feel that God even exists, or if He does, that He would never punish a sinner and so they feel no need to be saved. I don’t know what was in Ravi’s heart, but it would seem that he apparently didn’t believe (or care?) that God knew exactly what he was secretly doing.

I was shocked and outraged when I first saw a clip from this conference. I had no idea who Sam Allberry was (according to the web, a same-sex attracted Anglican priest who runs a “ministry” called Living Out, which [I think] encourages gay people to believe that God made them gay and is pleased with their behavior), nor did I realize how far off track Ravi Zacharias had gotten. I wondered how on earth he could have allowed this person to speak, but as it turns out, Sam Allberry officiated at Ravi’s funeral—so it wasn’t an accident.

On a side note I’m personally repelled by overly intellectual apologists who want to impress everyone with their stellar logic as to why God exists and so forth. Their investigations and conclusions always seem to me to be relying on the wisdom of men instead of true faith—their opinion could change at any time. Instead of listening to them (and let’s face it—it’s a profitable industry for “experts”), people could be getting to know God for themselves by reading the Bible (a normal version, not “special” with an agenda, etc.) and observing the wonders of all He has done, which naturally inspire worship and gratitude.

For the word of the cross is folly 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 the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.** For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For **the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.** For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, **“Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”** 1Corinthians 1:18-31*

*Woe to those who call **evil good and good evil**, who put **darkness for light and light for darkness**, who put **bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!** Woe to those who are **wise in their own eyes**, and **shrewd in their own sight!** Isaiah 5:20-21*

But to the point, Allberry said several offensive things in his talk (including making fun of King David for being a “pretty boy” who wrote about his feelings in the Psalms—see Matthew 12:36-37). I will only focus on one portion (remember, this speech is about gender/body dysphoria, which is when people are confused and unhappy about those things):

“He knew what it was like for his body to cause him enormous pain. He knew what it was like, if I can put it this way, to have body image issues, because we’re told in Isaiah 53 that people turned their faces away from him. People couldn’t bear to look at him. His body image issues weren’t in his head—they were real...there was something about Jesus on the cross that was so appalling that people would actually look the other way. It was more than they could cope with, and there was no greater dysphoria than when he who knew no sin became sin for us.”

Here is the passage that Allberry referred to:

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Isaiah 53:3

He really ran with it, didn't he? From what he said, it's almost as though he doesn't know why someone would be unable to bear looking at Jesus on the cross. We can find the answers to this in the previous chapter of the Bible, as well as in Psalm 22. How is this person giving a speech at a conference for people of the Christian faith if he doesn't know that? But then, Allberry's not there to actually make sense—he's there to lead people astray—people who are also "blissfully" ignorant and Bible illiterate.

Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. As many were astonished at you—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand. Isaiah 52:13-15

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet—I can count all my bones—they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. Psalms 22:14-18

But the real issue is that this is NOT "real" dysphoria, as Allberry claims. Here is the definition of that word:

dysphoria: a state of feeling very unhappy, uneasy, or dissatisfied; a state of mental discomfort or suffering, often leading to depression

Was this just a "body image issue" in Jesus' head? Even Allberry says it wasn't, but is there even such a thing as "real" dysphoria? How is it dysphoria if it's real, not just perceived? What a sick, disgusting spin to apply to Jesus' suffering on the cross in order to trick people into thinking that Jesus had some sort of unhealthy mental condition and can relate to theirs. He can surely help people recover their health, and will forgive any sin we repent of, and THAT is what suffering people REALLY need.

But don't forget, again, the topic is gender dysphoria. Let's look that one up.

gender dysphoria: a persistent unease with having the physical characteristics of one's gender, accompanied by strong identification with the opposite gender and a desire to live as or to become a member of the opposite gender; a condition in which a person feels uncertainty or anxiety about his or her birth gender

Wow. I can't fathom how anyone who actually believes in God the Father and Jesus, His only begotten Son, who created everything, including two genders—male and female—how could a true believer feel free to accuse their Maker of having a mental illness such that He doesn't feel comfortable in His body and/or gender? Even if Allberry didn't directly say it, he implied it and linked it together when he included Jesus in his coverage of this topic. That's a pretty sad day when someone feels at liberty to throw their Creator and Savior under the bus.

Let's clarify once again. Jesus' physical body was so mutilated because of the whippings, beatings and crucifixion He had endured that He no longer even resembled a man. (Matthew 26-27, Psalm 22, Isaiah 52:13-53:12) We're not informed of this so that we can twist it for use to support an ungodly agenda. We're told so that we can understand how much agony it cost Jesus to pay for OUR sins. He didn't do this because He had "an abusive father" as some wickedly say. Despite knowing in advance how painful (in every possible way) that it would be, He did it out of love for us—because He was the only one qualified and able to do so (see the Book of Hebrews, Isaiah 59:16, 63:5), and out of love for and obedience to His Father, who also desires all to be saved. (John 10:17-18, 1 Timothy 2:1-6, 2Peter 3) When He was made to be sin though He knew no sin (as Allberry quoted - 2 Corinthians 5:21), that was absolutely NOT "dysphoria." That was the grace and love of God.

*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For **the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.** As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:1-5*

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit,

*interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. **The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.** 1 Corinthians 2:12-14*

*The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and **with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.** 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12*

By the looks of things, we're in the end times. Have you put on your armor of God yet? There is no other way to avoid being deceived. Ignorance is NOT bliss. Read the Bible for yourself so that you'll be able to discern the truth from lies. (Hebrews 5:14)

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, **holy and acceptable to God**, which is your spiritual worship. **Do not be conformed to this world**, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may **discern what is the will of God**, what is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2*

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