

Armagh Baptist Church
Sunday 26th January 2020 – 6:30pm
'Issues Facing Christians Today – Transgenderism'

Introduction

We are currently going through a series called 'Issues Facing Christians Today.' All of these questions came out of a Members Forum over a year ago. One of the questions that was asked that night was as follows:

Question: 'Transgender issues – *'Be what you want to be'* – how do we support our young people against that narrative.'

Well, how do we? Because we are all being bombarded with this on every hand.

I'm glad to say that we still live in a free country, where we are still allowed to express what we believe, and we are still willing to allow others to express what they believe, even though it might be diametrically opposed to what we think. Like Voltaire, *'We will defend to the death their right to say it!'* That is freedom of speech – one of the most important principles that any democracy is built on.

But when it comes to this issue of **Transgenderism** – some have got themselves into difficulty in this area. Take the case of James Caspian. In an article in the Daily Mail on 14th October 2017, just over 2 years ago, Rebecca Hardy pointed out that 'No one could accuse psychotherapist James Caspian of being a bigot or prejudiced against transgender people. His LGBT credentials are impeccable.' (In other words he was a supporter of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people to live whatever way they like, since he was actually a gay man himself). He was even a trustee of the transgender charity, The Beaumont Trust, and has dedicated 10 years of his life to counselling hundreds of patients who wish to change their gender.

But he crossed the line with LGBT groups whenever he wanted to carry out some Academic Research at Bath Spa University in England in 2016 under the title:

'An examination of the experience of people who have undergone Gender Reassignment Procedure and/or have reversed a gender transition.'

In other words, he simply wanted to carry out some research by interviewing people who had transitioned from being male to being female, who then regretted it, and who wanted to change back. These people would have undergone a long process of counselling, hormone treatment, and probably physical surgery to change their gender in the first place, and now were wanting to revert to the way they were - because they were realising it wasn't the answer to all their problems!

The LGBT lobby came down the phone at him criticising him for what he was doing, undermining their position, and all the rest of it. And the University itself, which should have been a bastion of research and free speech, wasn't prepared to face the flack that might come their way if his research became widely known.

What kind of a world do we live in?! Our society has changed dramatically in the last 20 years, or so. We are facing issues as Christians today, that previous generations have never had to face.

The idea of a 'sex change operation' (because that's what it was called 30 years ago) was often the butt of school boy jokes in the play ground. Something that only a very small percentage of the population would ever have considered, and yet now, transgenderism is part of the mainstream debate of everyday life in our country, and it is being actively promoted, and accommodated in our schools – even here in Armagh! - Where has all this come from?

Transgenderism, is a current phenomenon in our society, that I never thought I would have to preach on, but it is one of those Issues facing Christians today, that I do need to address. As I said, it was one of the questions asked at our Members Forum over a year ago:

Question: 'Transgender issues – *'Be what you want to be'*
How do we support our young people against that narrative.'

Well, how do we? This is different from homosexuality or same-sex marriage. That is where two people of the same sex want to have a relationship together, or want to formalise their relationship by getting married to each other.

Transgenderism is different. It doesn't have to involve anybody else at all. It can be a genuine struggle which goes on inside the mind, or inside the body of an individual person themselves. (i.e. Who **they are** is different from their body).

Medically, there is such a thing as **Gender Dysphoria**, when someone who is born as a boy, genuinely thinks they should have been a girl, or vice-versa. It affects about 0.1% of the population, so it is very rare. (That's not what we're talking about tonight).

But in the last 10 years something else has been going on.

Less than 4500 people have legally changed their sex in the UK, since 2004. This usually involves undergoing gender reassignment hormone treatments, or undergoing operations to change their sexuality.

N.B. There is **transgenderism** – thinking you are something other than your birth gender, and there are **transsexuals** – who've actually done something about it.

There is a clinic run by the NHS called the **Tavistock and Portman Clinic**:

- It has 1000 young people on its books.
- The service has expanded by 50% every year for the last 5 years.
- In 2015 the clinic received 1398 referrals. Twice as many as in 2014.
- The number of referrals has risen by more than 1000% since records began in 2009.
- Children as young as 3 have been referred to the clinic.
- 167 children aged 10 or younger received transgender treatment on the NHS in the past year. This number stood at 87 in the previous year.

Something has changed. There is something going on in the minds of many young people in the last 10-15 years which wasn't an issue before. What is it? Where has all this transgenderism come from?

There is no doubt about it, transsexualism or transgenderism has been receiving an awful lot of promotion and focus on the internet, in social media, and in our schools - something which is bound to be confusing to our children.

For example, some of you may have watched ***'I'm a celebrity; Get me out of here!'*** a TV programme hosted by Ant & Dec, set in the outback or the bush of Australia, where a number of celebrities are consigned to the jungle for a number of weeks, where they all have to learn to get on with each other, and engage in various bush tucker trials and challenges, to win food for the camp each day. One of the 'celebrities' this year was Kaitlyn Jenner. Kaitlyn started off life as a man – William Bruce Jenner, born in 1949. In fact, as Bruce Jenner, he won a gold medal for the USA at the decathlon in the Olympics. But then he decided he didn't want to be a man anymore. He felt inside himself that he should really have been born a woman, so he underwent a process of major hormonal and surgical changes until he looks like a woman (in some ways) and yet in other ways still has the stature of an athletic man. So Bruce transitioned to Kaitlyn and is now married to Chris Kardashian (a woman).

When that is presented on prime-time TV as something that is normal, not a bit of wonder young people are becoming confused.

Transgenderism is actually an **ideology**, it's a philosophy of life taken to an extreme. Behind it is the idea that you don't have to be anything that anybody

else tells you to be, or puts on you as a society. In fact, you can be whatever you want to be. Don't let anybody stop you! If deep inside you feel that you're a woman trapped in a man's body, then you should be that woman, and do whatever it takes so you can live as a woman, whether that involves changing your clothes, taking hormones, or undergoing major life-changing surgery!

How do we answer all of this, from the Bible?

It will not surprise you to know that Transgenderism is not mentioned in the Bible. This is a new phenomenon, of our generation. I have struggled to even put this message together for tonight, but nevertheless, it must be addressed.

I'm reminded of a verse in **Ephesians 5:12** which says this:

'It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.' (NIV)

And that's why I've found it hard to prepare to talk about this tonight. Should we even be talking about this in church? And yet, if our young people are facing it in school, and in social media, and on the internet, then we must. But I will of course be careful as to exactly what I say in this context.

I have become more and more convinced as I have gone through this series of ***'Issues Facing Christians Today'*** over this past year, that the devil really has had a field-day ever since Charles Darwin launched his book *'The Origin of the Species'* in 1859. He may not have realised what a can of worms he was opening up, but when he began to question the Divine Origin of all things, and began to suggest that we all just evolved from lower forms of life, what he was really doing was undermining the opening 3 chapters of the Bible. (Genesis chs.1-3).

And when those 3 chapters are undermined or ignored, then the whole foundation to our faith begins to crumble. But if we ignore the first 3 chapters of the Bible to do with Creation, what are we going to do with the last 3 chapters of the Bible to do with the New Creation, that God is preparing for each one of us who love him? An eternity in heaven with him in a new heaven and a new earth, or an eternity in hell without him in the place the Bible calls the Lake of Fire?

To answer all of these Issues facing Christians today, I have always found myself going back to Genesis chs.1-3. So come with me to that passage once more:

1. Where did the idea of Gender come from? (Genesis 1-3)

This is the best place to start when we are asked about **transgenderism**. Because all of our Biblical and Christian **worldview** starts here...

In **Genesis 1:26** we find that God made us *'in his image'*.

He also made us *'male'* and *'female'* (1:27). That means in terms of our sex and in terms of our gender we were created by God either as a male, or as a female. Sex and Gender has always been the same thing, up until recent times.

Every single cell in a man's body has two chromosomes – X and Y.
Every single cell in a woman's body has two chromosomes – X and X.
And the children that those two people have will be either XX or XY – if they have a Y chromosome, they will be a boy. If they have 2 X's, they will be a girl.
That is the simple science of the matter. We are either male or female from birth. There is no other option as far as creation is concerned. We are one or the other. We are either male or female, men or women, from birth.

(As I said a psychological condition called Gender Dysphoria or Gender Identity Disorder can occur in about 1 in 30,000 males or 1 in 100,000 females –
N.B. It is a very rare **psychological** condition, not a physical one).

So God made us **male** or **female**. To say otherwise is to fly in the face of God.

In **Genesis 1:28** God told them as the first couple to *'be fruitful and multiply'* – something that he could never have said to a homosexual couple, or indeed a transgender couple, because it would have been impossible for them to fulfil.

The model for all of us to follow is clearly spelled out in **Genesis 2:23-25** – Marriage is to consist of one man and one woman joined together in a one-flesh sexual union, which should last for life.

A 'one flesh' union of a man and a woman is required to fulfil the mandate that God gave at the beginning of time, and it's repeated by Moses, Jesus & Paul.

Now, when we come into **Genesis ch.3** we discover that the Fall of Adam & Eve into sin affected every area of their lives – including their relationships and their sexuality. There is a brokenness about creation ever since, and God's original design in every one of our lives has been marred in one way or another.

That includes our **sexuality** – it is no longer pure – and it is not necessarily always expressed in the right way, or within the right confines. There has been a marring of God's image within us. That could mean that for some people they have confused ideas about their own sexuality. Maybe sometimes they do think as a small child, *'I wish I'd been born a boy'* or *'I wish I'd been born a girl'*. But those ideas usually sort themselves out as that child goes through adolescence.

By the time a person reaches the age of 18 they have usually come to terms with who they are, and they usually find themselves attracted to the opposite sex and go on to marry, and find fulfilment within marriage, as God intended them to do.

But it's this narrative that's being fed to our young people today, from childhood, through their teenage years, influenced and impacted by the internet and social media, that is telling some of our young people not to wait until things settle down in their adult years, but to say to themselves, *'I am what I am'* and *'I'm going to be whatever I want to be'* and *'If I want to be a man, I'll be a man.'* Or *'If I want to be a woman, then I'll be woman.'* - *'I can be whatever gender I want to be!'*

What's going on here?

Well I want you to notice everything that God introduced into his world before the Fall in Genesis ch.2.

We've already noticed from ch.1 that we've been made in God's image. (1:26)
We've already noticed that we've been made male and female. (1:27)
We've already noticed that we've been called to be fruitful and multiply. (1:28)
And we're told in what context we should do that – in the context of marriage. (Gen.2:23-25).

And there was **only one thing** that God told Adam and Eve not to do in those chapters. What was it? (2:17) They were not to eat of *'The tree of the knowledge of good and evil'*. Was he spoiling their fun? No! In fact He was protecting them!

So what happened then, in the very next chapter. They disobeyed God. They rebelled against God. They wanted to be God themselves. They fell into SIN. And SIN is rebellion against God's rightful rule and authority over our lives.

Now I want you to look closely at how the devil, the serpent, got them to sin: **Genesis 3:1-7**. Here we have a picture of how Satan usually tempts us into sin.

- The Devil **cast doubt** on what God had said (v.1)
'Did God really say, you must not eat from any tree in the garden?'
The Devil often begins to tempt us by casting doubt on God's Word.
- At first Eve answers him by **putting the record straight** of what God had said (vs.2-3). Although she adds a little to it..! ('Nor touch it').
- The Devil then goes on to **totally contradict** what God said (v.4)
*'You will **not** surely die!'* the serpent said – a total falsehood!
(i.e. Just like he's doing in this whole issue of transgenderism).

- Next he tries to **make sin look attractive** to Eve (v.5)
'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God – knowing good and evil!'
If someone thinks they have the right to determine their own sexuality, they are trying to be God. And nobody else can contradict them!
- Now the Devil has Eve **convinced** (v.6)
He's made sin look attractive. (The grass on the other side is greener!)
He's emphasised its benefits and played down its penalties. (The pain!)
So Eve goes ahead and takes the fruit of the tree and eats it.
- **But her sin didn't just involve herself** (v.6)
She involved **Adam** as well:
'She gave some to her husband and he ate also!'
But more than that, she also involved **you and me** as well:
Adam & Eve were our ancestral mother and father.
Eve was *'the mother of all living'* – that's what her name means.
Their fall into sin involved you and me too: all mankind fell that day!

The moment they ate, they sinned against God and sin entered the world.
You and I are sinners by birth, by nature, by practice and by our own choice and because we are sinners, we are under God's wrath and facing death – spiritually and physically – because that is God's punishment for sin. We are all fallen!

What else does the Fall explain?

Look at Gen 3:7 – *our sense of shame and nakedness* – when we know we've done wrong, we know it. We feel exposed. We feel shame. We feel guilt.

Look at Gen 3:8 – *our fear of God* – they hid themselves from God.
Before they had walked with God! Instead of being confident and happy and in fellowship with God, now because of sin, they felt ashamed, guilty and afraid before God. (v.10) *'I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid.'* (body image?)

Look at Gen 3:11-13 – *It explains why we're so quick to pass the buck!*
To not take responsibility for our own actions, to blame other people when we've only ourselves to blame. We're a sorry mess, aren't we?

So what were Adam & Eve doing here, that helps us with transgenderism?

Well, they were proudly rising up and saying in effect,
'I don't want this God to rule over me anymore!'

'I'm going to be my own god.'
'I'm going to rule over my own life.'
'This God is not going to tell me what to do. I'll do whatever I like!'
Do you hear the rebellion in those statements?
Do you hear the roots of this idea: ***'I can be whatever I want to be!'***

That's the seriousness of what happened in Genesis 3 at the Fall.
It's not just that they ate an apple that they shouldn't have eaten (as some think)
It's that they usurped God's authority over their lives, and they wanted to be as God. They would be their own god. And if you're God, then nobody can tell you what to do, nobody can contradict you. You can do whatever you like!

But that's a very scary place to get yourself into.

Because we're not infinite, eternal beings, knowing the end from the beginning.
We are finite human creatures, with a limited time span on this earth, and one day, whether we like it or not we have a God, a real God, to answer to.

And what kind of mess will we have made of our lives, and our bodies, by then?
So we've thought about **Gender**, now let's think about our **Bodies**...

2. How should we think of our Bodies? (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

The root problem with **transgenderism** is that it separates the soul (the real me) from the body. The body becomes secondary; who I am inside is all that matters. This is as old as the hills. It was known as **Gnosticism** in the Second Century. Spirit – good. Body – bad. Anti-materialism. It led to false ideas about Jesus. If the body is bad, then Jesus couldn't possibly have had a real body. He only appeared to have one. He only *seemed* to be human. This became **Docetism**. But the N.T. doesn't allow us to separate our souls from our bodies. They both matter. Our **souls** need to be saved. But our **bodies** will one day be resurrected! So 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 says:

*'Your **body** is a temple of the Holy Spirit, therefore honour God with your **body**.'*

If our bodies as Christians are indwelt by God the Holy Spirit, then it **does** matter what we do with them. We shouldn't despise them, as if God has given us the wrong body. We should appreciate the body He has given us. Stop always putting yourself down, because you have a poor body image.

Your **body** is important. But what's going on **inside** is equally important.

Is God the Holy Spirit living within you?

Then you should honour God not just with your **spirit**, but with your **body** also.

That brings us finally to...

3. What should we do with our Bodies? (Romans 12:1-2)

After spending 11 whole chapters presenting the truth of the Gospel from first principles, Paul gets carried away with himself, and bursts out in praise to God at the end of **Romans ch.11 (See vs.33-36)**.

And then, in the light of the Gospel, and thinking of the Glory of the Gospel, Paul goes on to teach us what to do with our **bodies**, not just our **souls**!

*'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 you see? There is no dichotomy between our bodies and our spirits!
We can't separate the one from the other, as if what's inside us is good, and what's on the outside is bad. No, if we've been cleansed from our sins on the inside, then the outside of the cup is clean too. Our bodies are acceptable too.

So, Paul, not knowing anything about 21st Century **transgenderism**, says this:

'Do not be *conformed* to this world...' OR

'Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mould... (J.B. Phillips)

'...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.'

'For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment.'

Conclusion

In other words, **You are not God!**

God made no mistakes when he made you.

Our God, the God of the Bible, doesn't make any mistakes.

So don't listen to those who say that He did.

When God made mankind, male and female, He looked around

and He saw everything that he had made, and it was **VERY GOOD!**

In fact, when God made you, he said *'You are fearfully and wonderfully made!'*

He knit you together in your mother's womb. There is nothing wrong with you!

Stop shaking your fist at God; fall down before Him and worship Him as God!

Amen.