



OK, you've now all had more than a week to process the decision by the Supreme Court to legalize gay marriage. Since this is truly an earth-shattering decision, I decided to take a full message and speak to this. Here's how Robert Gagnon of the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary began his post.

"Today, June 26, 2015, a day of national tragedy, the Supreme Court of the United States rendered what should rank as the worst decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the lifetime of every living American (rivaled only by *Roe v. Wade*) and at least one of the two or three worst decisions since the Court's inception (compare the *Dred Scott* case)." ¹

We may have been a bit shocked at this ruling but I don't think most of us can fully appreciate the repercussions and shockwaves this will send into the future. We are already seeing some of the fallout.

A Montana man has applied for a marriage license so he can legally wed his second wife.

Nathan Collier of Billings said Wednesday that last week's U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing gay marriage inspired him to try to force the acceptance of polygamous marriages.

He says he'll sue the state if his application is rejected.

Collier says Yellowstone County Courthouse officials initially denied the application Tuesday. When he told officials he planned to sue, they said they would consult with the county attorney before giving him a final answer. ²

If you believe Dr. Gagnon, in terms of Supreme Court decisions, it is as about as bad as it could be. You have probably done a lot of reading on the subject and you may even be tired of hearing about it, but given the importance and impact, I wanted to preach some truth into it and share some perspectives you may not have heard.

1. Only God can deliver us.

Listen to this short but powerful Psalm.

1 Make haste, O God, to deliver me!
O LORD, make haste to help me!
2 Let them be put to shame and confusion
who seek my life!
Let them be turned back and brought to dishonor
who delight in my hurt!
3 Let them turn back because of their shame
who say, "Aha, Aha!"
4 May all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you!
May those who love your salvation
say evermore, "God is great!"
5 But I am poor and needy;
hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, do not delay! (Psalm 70)

This past week we all experienced verse three. Let them turn back because of their shame who say, "Aha, Aha!" Especially on social media, there was quite the celebration going on. It felt like lots of people saying, "Aha, Aha!" Didn't it feel like that to you? But as I said last week, I don't place any hope in the courts because only God can deliver us from this,

Some Christians said we should not be speaking out against this sin because we all have enough sins of our own to take care of first. Here is one comment I copied from facebook.

While I realize that the legal implications are far-reaching, and that the decision really does affect everyone, my question for the church is this: Where in the Bible is homosexuality a bigger sin than adultery, gluttony, greed, licentiousness, lying, or coveting? I think there's more talk in the Bible about how God hates gossip and PRIDE than about homosexuality. I don't remember Christ going after those who lived a non-biblical sexual lifestyle. I **DO** remember him tearing into the hypocritical Pharisee that claimed a special relationship with God because he was "not like those people."

I respectfully disagree with this sentiment. In this message, I will be speaking to our sin and our responsibility, but it is not a question of either speaking about this sin or our own sin, but rather speaking about this sin *and* our own sin. It is not either/or but both/and.

The decision was shameful and the behavior is shameful. As many have said, other than abortion, it is the only sin that has billions of dollars being spent on lobbyists, lawyers, activists, and theologians. Murderers don't get billions of dollars to spend, not are they asking for such. Thieves and liars may not be personally ashamed of their behavior but generally speaking, they are well aware of what society thinks of their behavior. So do not hesitate to call this a shameful tragedy. But we must also echo the truth of this Psalm.

May those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is great!"
But I am poor and needy; hasten to me, O God!
You are my help and my deliverer; O LORD, do not delay!

2. Deliverance is not always pain free.

Only God can deliver us but deliverance may not look like we expect it to look. Listen to how Paul was delivered.

At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom (2 Timothy 4:16-18).

Yes, Paul was delivered from death on countless occasions but he also suffered through the deliverance. In this case he was abandoned by all of his friends and co-workers. He was delivered many times but he was rarely free of pain. Our hope for deliverance is in the Lord but what comes next will not be free of pain.

In his dissenting opinion, Judge Clarence Thomas wrote the following. "In our society, marriage is not simply a governmental institution; it is a religious institution as well. Today's decision might change the former, but it cannot change the latter. It appears all but inevitable that the two will come into conflict, particularly as individuals and churches are confronted with demands to participate in and endorse civil marriages between same-sex couples."

But it won't just cause pain for clergy. Despite their victory, many will still call us haters and bigots. And understand this—if we are wrong, we are haters and bigots. If homosexuality is the same as the color of one's skin, if homosexuals are born that way, then it is of the highest evil to be against them in any way. So if you are going to continue to hold that opinion, then you need to have ultimate confidence in the Scriptures. You can have some confidence in science because science has never proven a genetic determinism. You can have some confidence in the Constitution, despite the decision Courts majority. Here is Scalia's opinion.

"When the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868, every State limited marriage to one man and one woman, and no one doubted the constitutionality of doing so. They [the majority] have discovered in the Fourteenth Amendment a 'fundamental right' overlooked by every person alive at the time of ratification, and almost everyone else in the time since."

Science does not lead one to a legalization of gay marriage. Our United States Constitution does not lead to gay marriage but most of all, the Word of God does not lead to it. If we are to endure pain, then we must have complete trust in the Scriptures.

3. We will always have enemies.

If this issue were one day resolved, a new issue would take its place. God's people have always had enemies. This struggle is minor compared to what Jews and Christians have experienced throughout history and throughout the world in our day. This is tiny, tiny, is it not? Nevertheless, it is a real struggle that by all accounts will get worse.

4. If God wills, He will turn back our enemies.

There are two sub-points under the last point. God is in the business of turning away our enemies. The entire Scriptural record proves this over and over again. He could have prevented this from happening and he could overturn it. God could have caused the presidents to have appointed more conservative judges.

5. If God wills, He will allow our enemies to flourish.

On the other hand, God may choose to allow this trajectory of evil to continue and grow as we suspect it will. If we learned anything from our study in Romans 13 it is that God appoints and God overthrows government leaders at every level. It may just be part of his greater plan. It does not mean that God does not hate the evil. The single greatest act in human history was the crucifixion of Jesus. Scripture states that Herod and Pontius Pilate did exactly as "whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." God predestined the action but the actors remain 100% guilty. The same is true in this case.

6. What then does civil disobedience look like?

Scalia and countless Christian leaders have predicted that things will get worse. While we can't know that for certain, we do need to be prepared for what could happen. Last month we established the principle of civil disobedience. All that we did was establish that it can and must happen at times but we did not so much the whys and the wherefores.

I opened the message with a quote from Robert Gagnon. Dr. Gagnon is a professor of New Testament and is considered to be the leading evangelical New Testament scholar on the topic of homosexuality. If you are interested in learning more, his website is filled with lots of free resources.



In his opening quote, Gagnon mentioned the Dred-Scott case. If you are not familiar with it, in the Dred-Scott case, the Supreme Court put its stamp of approval on slavery. Slavery was the law of the land though that was about to change. In his first inaugural address in 1861, Lincoln keyed in on the issue with laser precision. "One section of our country believes slavery is right and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is wrong and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute."

Four years earlier, Lincoln expressed his strong disagreement with the court's decision in Dred Scott.

"If the opinion of the Supreme Court covered the whole ground of this act, it ought not to control the co-ordinate authorities of this Government. The Congress, the executive and the court, must each for itself be guided by its own opinion of the Constitution. Each public officer, who takes an oath to support the Constitution, swears that he will support it as he understands it, and not as it is understood by others."³



Do you see the impact of what Lincoln said here? Years before he was elected our fourteenth president, Lincoln had the guts to say two things few were willing to say: 1. Slavery is wrong. 2. The Supreme Court is wrong. Lincoln did not hide his opinions and was elected as president largely because of them. During his years in the White House, Lincoln practiced what could be called civil disobedience in regard to the Dred Scott ruling.

"In office, Lincoln gave effect to his position against judicial supremacy by consistently refusing to treat the Dred Scott decision as creating a rule of law binding on the executive branch. His administration issued passports and other documents to free blacks, thus treating them as citizens of the United States despite the Court's denial of their status as citizens. He signed legislation that plainly placed restrictions on slavery in the western territories in defiance of [the Supreme Court's] ruling."⁴



In his dissenting opinion, Chief Justice John Roberts echoed the second half of Lincoln's belief.

"Understand well what this dissent is about: It is not about whether, in my judgment, the institution of marriage should be changed to include same-sex couples. It is instead about whether, in our democratic republic, that decision should rest with the people acting through their elected representatives, or with five lawyers who happen to hold commissions authorizing them to resolve legal disputes according to law."



The top of the Supreme Court building is inscribed with these words: EQUAL JUSTICE UNDER LAW. This is the only way that a civil society can be governed. And we must not forget that all good laws are merely derivative of God's laws. But equal justice under law was not rendered in the 1857 Dred Scott decision or the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision or the June 26th gay marriage ruling.

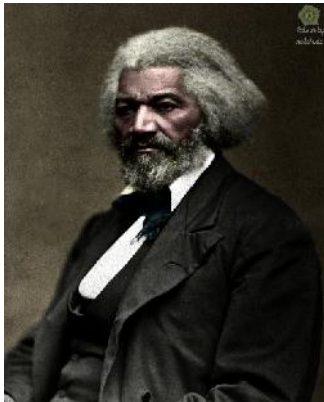
a stumbling block and a retribution for them;
let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see,
and bend their backs forever.”

These Psalms are as much a part of inspired Scripture as anything else. All of them were written by King David, whom the Lord said was “a man after my own heart.” We should not be embarrassed by these Psalms, but we must understand them. Again, they are not appropriate attitudes for us, but they do teach us. They teach us the absolute holiness of God and his anger at sin. They teach us that it is not only acceptable to have a moral outrage over sin, it is our responsibility to be morally outraged over sin.

If you have followed the debates on social media, many Christians are telling you to love and forgive, to not get angry and just trust the Lord. These are all good sentiments, absolutely right attitudes to have. However, they are incomplete because they subtly communicate that we are not allowed any room for true moral outrage. Once again, Professor Gagnon nails this on the head.

“Friends, if this were the Supreme Court attempting to restore the Dred Scott ruling, would it be unchristian to express "outrage"? This is not a tea party. Democracy and liberty in America have been struck the greatest body blow in our lifetime. The action of the five lawless Justices will have enormous negative repercussions for the church corporately and Christians individually. And outrage at egregious immorality is not antithetical to love.”⁵

Former slave and abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, was asked to give a speech for a fourth of July celebration. It was an event commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence, yet unlike Douglass, most blacks still lived under the tyranny of slavery. The speech was given on July 5—this very day, in 1852. Here is a powerful excerpt from that speech.



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. O! had I the ability, and could reach the nation's ear, I would, today, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke. For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder. We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be proclaimed and denounced.”⁶

So if you have been saddened and outraged over this decision, that’s the right response to have. Now there’s all sorts of caveats and caution associated with this principle. Do NOT use this as an excuse to be a jerk. Do not use this principle as a reason to be over the top on facebook. “Pastor Rich said we could be outraged, so I’m really mad.” Don’t do that. But we do have every reason to be utterly outraged over the unrighteous behavior and insane court decision.

8. We need moral outrage over our own sin.

Here's my final point. To be outraged at the sin of others yet ignore the sin in your own heart is the height of hypocrisy. This is what really angers the opposition. The homosexual lobby will say that the heterosexuals have already ruined marriage so what's wrong with them giving it a shot. That's a horrible argument, yet we deserve it. We can make judgments about such things but not until you have removed the log from your own eye.

Watch this ten second clip from the latest installment in the Rocky series. (Rocky Balboa says to Apollo Creed's son while Creed looks at himself in the mirror: "See this guy here? That's the toughest opponent you're ever gonna have to face. I believe that's true in the ring and I think that's true in life.")

That is so true. Our real enemy is the man or woman in the mirror. Few of us truly hate our sin. We tolerate our sin. We love our sin. We make provision for our sin so it comes just a little easier, but very little hate. No, we may not hate our neighbor but we must hate our sin. It doesn't matter if you never even speak out against gay marriage. If you are outraged over it, you should also be outraged over your own sin. I'm ultimately just talking about the need for more confession, not perfection. Admit your sin, especially if you are talking to someone about this difficult topic. May God have mercy on us.

Rich Maurer
July 5, 2015

ADDITIONAL FACTS AND COMMENTARY

Thomas Jefferson: Letter to William Jarvis, Sept. 28, 1820

"To consider the judges as the ultimate arbiters of all constitutional questions ... [is] a very dangerous doctrine indeed, and one which would place us under the despotism of an oligarchy. Our judges are as honest as other men, and not more so . . . and their power [is] the more dangerous, as they are in office for life and not responsible, as the other functionaries are, to the elective control. The Constitution has erected no such single tribunal, knowing that to whatever hands confided, with corruptions of time and party, its members would become despots. I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society, but the people themselves: and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is, not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. This is the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power."

Chief Justice John Roberts

"Stripped of its shiny rhetorical gloss, the majority's argument is that the Due Process Clause gives same-sex couples a fundamental right to marry because it will be good for them and for society," Roberts wrote. "If I were a legislator, I would certainly consider that view as a matter of social policy. But as a judge, I find the majority's position indefensible as a matter of constitutional law."

Justice Antonin Scalia

"Until the courts put a stop to it, public debate over same-sex marriage displayed American democracy at its best," Scalia wrote. "But the Court ends this debate, in an opinion lacking even a thin veneer of law."

Justice Clarence Thomas

"Whether we define 'liberty' as locomotion or freedom from governmental action more broadly, petitioners have in no way been deprived of it," he continued. "Petitioners cannot claim, under the most plausible definition of 'liberty,' that they have been imprisoned or physically restrained by the States for participating in same-sex relationships."

Justice Samuel Alito

For millennia, marriage was inextricably linked to the one thing that only an opposite-sex couple can do: procreate. Adherents to different schools of philosophy use different terms to explain why society should formalize marriage and attach special benefits and obligations to persons who marry. Their basic argument is that States formalize and promote marriage, unlike other fulfilling human relationships, in order to encourage potentially procreative conduct to take place within a lasting unit that has long been thought to provide the best atmosphere for raising children.

"By imposing its own views on the entire country, the majority facilitates the marginalization of the many Americans who have traditional ideas. Recalling the harsh treatment of gays and lesbians in the past, some may think that turnabout is fair play. But if that sentiment prevails, the Nation will experience bitter and lasting wounds,"

Portion of Lincoln's speech about Dred Scott SCOTUS decision

If this important decision had been made by the unanimous concurrence of the judges, and without any apparent partisan bias, and in accordance with legal public expectation, and with the steady practice of the departments throughout our history, and had been in no part, based on assumed historical facts which are not really true; or, if wanting in some of these, it had been before the court more than once, and had there been affirmed and re-affirmed through a course of years, it then might be, perhaps would be, factious, nay, even revolutionary, to not acquiesce in it as a precedent.

But when, as it is true we find it wanting in all these claims to the public confidence, it is not resistance, it is not factious, it is not even disrespectful, to treat it as not having yet quite established a settled doctrine for the country

Why this same Supreme court once decided a national bank to be constitutional; but Gen. Jackson, as President of the United States, disregarded the decision, and vetoed a bill for a re-charter, partly on constitutional ground, declaring that each public functionary must support the Constitution, "as he understands it ." But hear the General's own words. Here they are, taken from his veto message:

"It is maintained by the advocates of the bank, that its constitutionality, in all its features, ought to be considered as settled by precedent, and by the decision of the Supreme Court. To this

conclusion I cannot assent. Mere precedent is a dangerous source of authority, and should not be regarded as deciding questions of constitutional power, except where the acquiescence of the people and the States can be considered as well settled. So far from this being the case on this subject, an argument against the bank might be based on precedent. One Congress in 1791, decided in favor of a bank; another in 1811, decided against it. One Congress in 1815 decided against a bank; another in 1816 decided in its favor. Prior to the present Congress, therefore the precedents drawn from that source were equal. If we resort to the States, the expressions of legislative, judicial and executive opinions against the bank have been probably to those in its favor as four to one. There is nothing in precedent, therefore, which if its authority were admitted, ought to weigh in favor of the act before me.”

Abraham Lincoln’s first inaugural address

“The candid citizen must confess that if the policy of the government, upon vital questions, affecting the whole people, is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made, in ordinary litigation between parties, in personal actions, the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having, to that extent, practically resigned their government into the hands of that eminent tribunal.”

That Eminent Tribunal: Judicial Supremacy and the Constitution (Edited by Christopher Wolfe)

The debate is not merely about how the Supreme Court should use its authority to resolve authoritatively our great constitutional questions, and whether it has used this power well or ill. The question is whether the Supreme Court has such authority, especially in light of the fact that the Constitution for at least the first century was generally understood to give no one branch such final authority.⁷

¹ <http://www.robagnon.net/homosexSCOTUSgaymarriage.htm>

² <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2015/07/01/man-applies-for-marriage-license-to-have-two-wives/>

³ <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/speech-on-the-dred-scott-decision/>

⁴ <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2003/02/lincoln-on-judicial-despotism> Robert George

⁵ <http://www.robagnon.net/homosexMooreERLCMarriageDeclaration.htm>

⁶ The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro, by Frederick Douglass, A speech given at Rochester, New York, July 5, 1852.

⁷ <http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i7864.html>