

THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE - Part twelve - Sunday, May 9th, 2010, 6:00 p.m. - Teaching #1370
Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

MARRIAGE AND HOMOSEXUALITY - BIBLICAL AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Genesis 2:15-24 - "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. [16] And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, [17] but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." [18] Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." [19] So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. [21] So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. [22] And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' [24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

A couple of things need to be said by way of introduction to this message:

First, as a church we are called to the task of "**speaking the truth in love.**" It's not enough to just speak the truth. We're called to be **compassionate truth tellers**. What makes this task so difficult is none of us - and I mean **none** of us - naturally loves hearing the truth. As we'll see in a few minutes, the Scriptures' assessment of **all** of us since the Fall is we don't **embrace** Biblical truth. We "**suppress**" it (see **Romans 1:18**). This makes it impossible for **any** of us to **know** the truth unaided by Divine revelation, and it makes it challenging for the church to **speak** the truth compassionately because it isn't going to be **received** warmly, humbly, or graciously. This world **guards** its right to **not** hear what God says.

The **second** point of this introduction is there is an important reason this was not the **first** message in this series. No one can properly speak to the issue of **homosexual** marriage until they address the issue of **marriage** - **what** marriage is supposed to be - **why** we have marriage at all - and **where** did marriage come from? If you try to speak directly to the issue of **homosexual** marriage **without** addressing the issue of **marriage** you have nothing Biblical - nothing **important** to say. All you can do is **compare life-styles**.

It is constantly amazing to me how many times the church **begins** speaking to the issue of homosexual marriage simply by throwing rocks at it as a **bad** or **destructive** life-style. If you start talking about **homosexual** marriage **before** you talk about **marriage** you will always be forced into **framing the discussion on the wrong terms** - **human rights, alternate life-style, freedom to be oneself**, or the **right to express their love in a committed, faithful relationship**. And what could possibly be wrong with that? Nothing - nothing at all - will appear wrong with **any** of that because all of those issues approach the subject as though God didn't exist. All of those arguments assume our own **authority** and our own **ability** to rule our own selves in this world. And, as Almighty God's creatures, we have **neither**.

And so we begin this teaching by backing up. Work through some of the basics carefully with me once again:

1) **WE ARE NOT SELF-DEFINING CREATURES. GENDER AND SEXUALITY ARE RECEIVED WITH HUMILITY FROM OUR CREATOR**

As I've already covered in this series, I am a **creationist**. While one **can** be a Christian and hold other views, I have never adopted **evolution, theistic evolution, or progressive creationism**. But I hope we all understand something else. I hope we all understand that the **biggest** issues of Genesis one through three have nothing to do with carbon dating or fossil evidence. You may well be able to survive with a different view of the age of the earth. But you will never understand **anything** about God or Christianity without learning creation's lessons on **sin, sexuality, the Fall, or redemption**.

Look again at our opening text and you'll find the **only** proper starting place in understanding **marriage, gender, sexuality** and yes, **homosexual marriage** as well:

Genesis 2:15-18 - "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. [16] And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, [17]

but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." [18] Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.'

This arrangement for a partner was not some growing point of consciousness that came upon Adam. In other words - and this is exceptionally important - God's provision of a partner didn't have its origin in any expressed **desire** on the part of Adam. There was no **self-discovery** that arose and expressed a request to God. He did not go to God and **request** a partner.

What I'm saying is Adam makes no **autonomous** choice in the matter whatsoever. God went to Adam and **declared** Adam's incompleteness and need. Adam didn't **define** his need to God. Up to this point in the creation account Adam has no real concept of his own "**maleness**" because there is no human **gender differentiation**. **Male** has no real meaning without **female**. Adam is just Adam - period.

God will make a "**helper fit for Adam**." But not quite yet. First Adam is given the assignment of observing and classifying the rest of the animals, made **male and female** because they have been given the capacity to multiply "**after their own kind**."

It is only **after** this exercise that God creates Adam's partner, Eve. Adam **observes** gender complementarity before he **experiences** it. Then God creates the woman and "**brings her to Adam**." The important point in all this telling is Adam doesn't **choose** his partner. He doesn't go to God with a **description** of what he would like. Eve is not Adam's partner by **request**, or by **vote**, by **desire**, or by **right**. God **initiates** the whole issue and God **decrees** the solution.

The important point in this account must not be missed or we will never even **approach** the issue of homosexuality in general, and homosexual **marriage** in particular, from the proper starting place. Because man is not **self-defined**, but **God-defined**, he is the **humble receiver** of both **sexuality** and its **expression** in **committed, exclusive gender distinction**. This is made clear as the text continues in words both Jesus and Paul would quote and apply as God's abiding creative will for the uniting of these two genders in marriage:

Genesis 2:22-25 - "And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. [23] Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' [24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. [25] And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

These words lead into my second point:

2) **FATHER GOD IN HIS CREATION, AND JESUS CHRIST (GOD THE SON) IN HIS INCARNATION, AND THE APOSTOLIC TEACHING OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT ALL JOIN TOGETHER TO MAKE MARRIAGE THE STANDARD BY WHICH ALL OTHER SEXUAL PRACTICES ARE MEASURED AS NORMAL OR ABNORMAL**

That traditional marriage is the hot-spot in this war is not accidental. It is to be fully expected. If you are going to **normalize** any other sexual arrangement you must first **abnormalize** God's absolute measuring standard. Marriage is the standard that shows all other sexual arrangements - **heterosexual** or **homosexual** - fall short of His sovereign intent.

Compared to the divine standard every other disordered sexual practice is **shown** to be disordered. Or let me try to say it differently. For **any** disordered sexual practice to sustain and validate itself marriage must first be redefined, replaced, discarded, or marginalized. That's why it is most fitting and Biblically logical to deal with homosexuality while we're studying the subject of marriage.

Think about this for a minute. It is **Biblical marriage** that reveals the sin of **adultery**. Adultery is sinful **because** it violates the boundaries marriage sets. It is **Biblical marriage** that reveals and defines the sin of **fornication and sexual permissiveness**. As we've been studying for two weeks now, these sexual sins are wrong, not because God is against sexual excitement or pleasure, but because they betray the sacredness of sexual expression being **saved for the marriage relationship**.

It is **Biblical marriage** that defines and reveals the sin of **polygamy** because, however the command was disobeyed (with serious consequence, I might add) in the Old Testament, **creationally** marriage was defined as an **exclusive** relationship with one man and one woman. And it is **Biblical marriage** that defines and reveals the sin of **homosexuality**, as the first point of this message emphasized, because **God** declares both the **need** for companionship and the **solution** on His terms. And the revealed terms are **heterosexual**, not **homosexual**.

This is the way God has **created** marriage in this world. We may be **disappointed** at our country's endless attempts at a redefinition of marriage, but we certainly shouldn't be **surprised**. This is the **natural** point of attack, given the pattern of God's creative design. It is simply proof that God's Word is infallibly true and that Satan, for a little while still, is, as the Apostle Paul described, **"the god of this world"** (2 Corinthians 4:4). He hates the glory of God and attacks His central design first. It's much like the way a thief cuts the power and phone lines before breaking into a house. This paves the way for other sins.

3) NEITHER OUR CONSCIENCE NOR THE "NATURAL" INCLINATIONS OF OUR DESIRES ARE RELIABLE GUIDES TO MORAL TRUTH REGARDING HUMAN SEXUALITY

This must be said. It is amazing how people can stand Bible passages on their head to fit their purposes. Let me give just one very common and important example:

Romans 1:22-27 - "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. [24] Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, [25] 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. [26] For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; [27] 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."

The argument some interpreters raise is that Paul isn't talking about homosexuality as we know it today at all. He may be talking about homosexual rape or molestation but he never even intended to prohibit a loving, monogamous homosexual relationship entered into by people who are, as the term goes, **constitutional** homosexuals - homosexuals all their lives - homosexual **by nature**. And that's a very important point in this interpretation because the kind of homosexuality Paul describes in these verses is men and women who commit homosexual sins **"against nature."**

Romans 1:26b-27 - "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; [27] 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."

So, these interpreters argue, the sin Paul is really speaking out against is the sin of those who are **not** naturally homosexual, but who **"exchange"** their natural heterosexual orientation to commit homosexual acts that, of course, are **against** their nature. After all, they argue, if one is **constitutionally** homosexual, one doesn't **switch** from heterosexuality to homosexuality, the way Paul describes in this passage.

So, these people argue, it is **not** unnatural when genuine homosexual persons have homosexual relationships. It is **only** unnatural if homosexual persons have **heterosexual** relationships (or if heterosexual persons have **homosexual** relationships). This is what Paul means by committing sins **"against nature."**

But it's very hard to see how this interpretation can possibly work with Paul's words. Look again at **verse 27** - **"...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."**

If these men are heterosexual by nature, and going **against** their natural desires, it is difficult to make sense of the words **"were consumed with passion for one another."** Do those words accurately describe some one doing what they **don't** want to do?

If these men were going **against** their heterosexual desires, why were they **"consumed with passion"** for

homosexual relations with men? Surely, if homosexuals want us to believe anything about them it is that they don't **choose** their desires. They are homosexual precisely because they **desire** their own sex over its opposite. So, if these men Paul describes in **Romans 1:27** were "**consumed with passion**" for other men, in what sense, as they say in their treatment of this passage, were they **constitutionally heterosexuals**? Clearly, this doesn't make sense.

There is such a thing as a **bisexual**, who seems to have desires for **both** men and women. But if **that** were the case Paul's words don't make sense either because the bisexual is called **bi-sexual** precisely because he feels naturally inclined to both men **and** women. Paul's words about giving up "**natural relations**" by exchanging sexual preferences make no sense at all when applied to bisexual people.

No, the answer lies elsewhere. When Paul talks about both men and women exchanging **heterosexual** desires for **homosexual** desires, and going "**against nature**" in such a choice, he **doesn't** mean what **feels** natural for either party. He means they are "**going against natural relations**" in terms of **what God originally designed and created**. Paul is talking about Genesis one through three, just as we did at the beginning of this teaching.

This is so important. It's the hub of the whole wheel. If Paul teaches anything in Romans chapter one it is none of us can trust our **natural** desires because they **aren't** natural anymore. Not one of us is exactly the way God created us to be. And the place Paul says we are most naturally defective is in the area of our own **sexuality** - **Romans 1:24-25** - "**Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, [25] 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.**"

Our own desires have jumped the fence of God's truth. They run wild. They trespass - overstep proper boundaries. They still **feel** natural to **us**. When the homosexual says "**I don't choose my homosexuality, he speaks the only truth he knows**." Fallen sexual desires deceive. They take captive. In fact, sin is **so** destructive, and the effects of the Fall **so** pervasive, we no longer understand **why** we desire what we desire, nor **how destructive** the fulfilling of these desires can be.

This is the answer to the oft asked question, "**How could a loving God create me with a set of desires and then deny me their fulfillment?**" The only Biblical answer to that question is assumed in the question itself. It is **because** God created me that He knows how deeply this world is affected by sin (those **affected** by sin **never see** how dangerous and unnatural their desires are). He knows which desires can be trusted and to what extent.

4) THE CALL TO THE CHURCH IS TO BE A COMPASSIONATE TRUTH TELLER

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 - "**Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, [10] nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.**"

It is **not** a loving act to leave sinners like us lulled in a false security by the pleasure of false desires. If the New Testament teaches the sinfulness and self-destruction of "**exchanging the truth**" of God then love must polish the truth once again. I've already discussed why this is so difficult. But it **is** our assignment. Only God's revealed truth is a big enough center to hold our fallen desires in proper orbit. Once you remove the sun from the solar system of our fallen desires and replace it with a man-made satellite, there is not enough gravitational pull at the center to keep everything else aligned. Only God's truth is loving. And only **telling** God's truth is helpful: **1 Corinthians 13:6** - "**Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth.**"

As in the battle with abortion, there comes a weariness in compassionate truth-telling. People in this fallen world will always twist our intentions. You and I both know the world is full of **homo-phobia phobia**. But leave all that with God. Bear the burdens of those who don't even know how desperately they need Jesus. Speak the truth in love, and long for that coming day when every eye shall see Him come, and every false way be exposed for what it truly is.