

THE BIBLE AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION - Part two

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CAN GOD HOLD US ACCOUNTABLE FOR ACTIONS THAT SEEM *NATURAL* TO US?

Romans 5:19 - "For as by the one man's disobedience the *many were made sinners*, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

The title question of this teaching is the issue raised in the closing point of last week's teaching. After looking at the development of the changing terminology and research in the medical and scientific community we saw that the issue has shifted from the *act* that was once (rightly or wrongly) called *sodomy* to the *orientation* of the *homosexual*.

The upshot of this is huge for the approach of the church. Texts that used to be interpreted as condemning all same-sex intercourse are now read - at least by those who care about relating their homosexuality to the Scriptures - these texts are now read as condemning only *certain types* of same-sex intercourse. And generally those texts are read as condemning same-sex acts that are committed *against a homosexual nature*.

These texts are read as condemning *gang rape and abuse* as in the case of men of *Sodom and Lot's guests* in **Genesis 19**, or the story of the *Levite's concubine* in **Judges 19**. Other texts are read as condemning *same sex prostitution in the corrupt temple worship* as in **Leviticus 18 and 20**. There are other examples, but the important point here is the way the issue of *separating orientation from these sexual acts changes the nature of the debate*. These texts are not seen as speaking to the homosexual *by nature* for whom his or her same-sex intercourse is an expression of committed, romantic, even God-given love.

That's where we are in our study. That's the key issue. What if same-sex intercourse is *not* forced or *paid* or *contrary* to what either partner feels naturally inclined to in heart? Is *that* kind of same-sex intercourse condemned in the Scripture? Can God hold people accountable for what they feel is *normal* in their heart?

And the idea we began unpacking last Sunday was the *centrality of the Fall* in Christian thinking and the foundational, though almost universally ignored, doctrine of *original sin*. The significance of original sin is we are now no longer *reliably sensible toward our own sinfulness*. Nothing of God's diagnosis of right and wrong will make any sense if this blunt fact isn't taken into account. *Our feelings of what is right or wrong, fair or unfair, innocent or culpable are not reliable*.

This is reckoned against us repeatedly in the Scriptures - **Jeremiah 17:9** - "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" This isn't aiming a verse at the gay community. This is true of all of us. It's about *my* heart. It's about *your* heart. And the theme of this verse *isn't* what most people think. It's not talking about my sinful *deeds*. The verse isn't examining anything *outward* about my being. This is a verse about two things. It's about my *heart* - my *desires* - my *dreams* - my *delights*. And then it's about my own *understanding* of my inner self.

So it's about my *desires* ("*desperately sick*") and it's about my *understanding* of my desires ("*who can understand it?*"). And the whole point of the text is sin always effects the *understanding* of sin. This is true of any and all sin. And it's true of all people. And the net result - the conclusion - of this text is I need *divine revelation* to correct the way I will analyze my heart. And also, my own heart is so "*deceptive*" it is unlikely I will appreciate what God's Word says, at least initially.

There are enormous implications for taking the Biblical description of the Fall and the stain of original sin when we start unpacking the issue of same-sex desires and our sexual identity:

1) GOD'S CREATIVE SEXUAL ORDER IS THE ONLY ONE PRONOUNCED DIVINELY "GOOD" IN THE SCRIPTURES

Genesis 2:18-22 - "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] Now out of the ground the LORD God had 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."

This account matters greatly because it is the only account we have of God's creative intent *before* the effects of the Fall and original sin. The importance of **verse 24** shouldn't be overlooked - "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and*

hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." That opening word, "**Therefore**" means the inspired author is giving us the **doctrinal implications** of the **bare creation account**.

Significantly, the only two becoming "**one flesh**" before the entrance of the corruption of our inner selves are a man and a woman. Included in that "**one flesh**" image is certainly the idea of sexual intercourse. And the clear teaching of Genesis 1 and 2 is our **sexual identity** is defined as a **male** and a **female** that are **created for each other sexually**.

To be clear, this creation account of sexually identified male and female partners is **not** given merely as **an example** of what all committed relationships should look like, whether heterosexual or homosexual. This is made clear by the way the rest of the Scriptures identify **other forms of sexual relationship as corruptions and distortions of this one-man-one-woman created sexual order**. Listed among these distortions are **fornication** (Deuteronomy 22:28-29), **adultery** (Deuteronomy 22:22), **polygamy** (Genesis 4:19), **bestiality** (Exodus 22:19), **prostitution** (Leviticus 19:29), **incest** (Leviticus 18:6), **cross-dressing** (Deuteronomy 22:5), and **same-sex intercourse** (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13).

2) THERE IS AN ACUTE DANGER IN DEFINING PEOPLE BY THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION

I hear this over and over. "But Pastor Don, I know so and so. I've known them for years. They've **always** known they were gay - ever since childhood. How can anyone expect them to be happy otherwise? It doesn't seem fair."

We'll explore this issue more in future teachings. But even here I'd like to hold up a red flag. There are terrible consequences - often hard to see consequences - to **defining personhood** (That's **who** they **are!**) by sexual desire and orientation.

Here's why. The **increasing tendency** of scientific and medical research is exploring factors **other than personal choice** for virtually **all** sexual preferences and practices. Just one example should suffice. The preferred name for what was once called **bestiality** is now **zoophilia**. Bestiality was the term once given to those who engaged in sexual intercourse with animals. **Zoophilia** is the term given, not to the **act** of sexual intercourse with animals, but to the **orientation** toward sex with animals. This is highlighted in **Hani Miletski's** book "**Understanding Bestiality and Zoophilia**." The dominant view is there is now a proven **orientation** toward this type of sexual intercourse.

My point here is simple. As the older **behavioristic terms** of varied forms of sexual intercourse are replaced by terms describing the **orientation toward those acts** defining the point at which we are content to define the acceptability of those acts will become increasingly difficult.

This is precisely where the Biblical doctrine of the Fall and corruption of original sin is of such importance and relevance. If it is discovered definitively (at present a united consensus is lacking) that there are indeed profoundly deep biological or psychological seeds to all the varied forms of sexual orientation it would only **confirm** the Biblical teaching of the corruption and distortion of God's male-female gendered sexual identify and design. Such research would only **reveal the hitherto undiscovered depth of the effects of the Fall on our inner selves**.

However, it would do nothing whatsoever to change the the Biblical description of the created order which God pronounced "**very good**" (Genesis 1:31) **before** the entrance of the burden of varied lusts and confusions of God's male/female gendered sexual order. Such research will only reveal how contrary this fallen world is to the one God intended, created, and longs to redeem.

Greg L. Bahnsen sums this up well in his book, "**Homosexuality: A Biblical View**" - "**Even if it were somehow shown that this idea [that some are born with a homosexual predisposition] has biblical warrant, this fact would not lead in itself to the conclusion that the individual who has a distinctive sinful bent (say, toward homosexuality) in his inherited depraved nature is somehow less personally responsible for the corresponding desires and acts than for other sinful desires and acts. Adherents of the view in question have to show biblical support for the idea that the individual cannot be held specifically responsible for those particular sins that are ingrained in his depraved nature....Everyone must recognize that original sin...is itself sinful in character and something for which its inheritors are held personally culpable (Romans 5:12, 15-19)....The present theory contributes nothing to an ethical evaluation of homosexuality.**"

3) CREATION AWAITS THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES

Romans 8:23 - "And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, *groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.*"

All of our beings are wrongly oriented in different ways. This confusion affects even our physical, generated bodies. And what is frequently overlooked is the Bible gives recognition of the biological fruit of living in a post-fall world.

Romans chapter one must be read aright if we're to grasp its fill world-shaping impact. Contrary to what a light read might reveal, it is **not** primarily the description of any **one individual journey into a sinful state**. As you take note of the impersonal pronouns you will find very few mentions of **"he,"** or, **"she."** It is never **"him,"** or, **"her."** No. This is a chapter about **"they,"** and **"them."**

This is a description of a **culture's** decline. It is a vivid description of the **collective effects** of sin in the disordering of the **collective assumption of "dishonorable passions"**(1:26) and the **"lust of their hearts"**(1:24). These are not the **actions**. These are the **desires** leading to the actions.

What I'm saying is this. What Paul is narrating is the effects - the **societal, shared, collective inward effects of original sin**. He is reminding all of us that the human race is **fallen together**. He is telling us the chilling truth that we love to push under the surface of our thoughts, screaming, **"Unfair!" We live in a shared fallenness where we each bear the scars of the collective brokenness of our human community, not merely our own.**

Same-sex orientation is one specific **part** of that brokenness, not the **whole** of it. Others share in the same fashion in other areas. There truly are those who must struggle, long-term, with same sex passions. Just as there are those who will inherit a **predisposition to excessive drink**. Most in the medical community recognize that many disorders like **ADHD** frequently has biological factors contributing to it. Through no fault of their own these people may be more prone to distraction or boredom at work. Others will live under the yoke of extreme poverty or abuse due to the willful sins of reckless parents who never gave consideration to anyone but themselves.

That means **all** of these people, and a host of millions of others, will have to work harder to overcome some dangers more than others will. And what you're seeing in all of these instances is the tragic **communal** affect of the Fall. We are **guilty** for our own sins. And we must **suffer** with the results of the sins of others - including our first parents, Adam and Eve.

Every life will struggle with the unfair burden of a fallen world. We will all face frustrations, both heterosexual and homosexual. And there will come a host of unfair burdens along side. But to argue that this is just the way people are - or worse - this is just **who** they are will only increase rather than resist the momentum of original sin.

If you are casting your vote against the revealed will of our Creator God because you are on a desperate hunt for **fairness** you will live in disappointment in this fallen world of confused sinful desires and the shared scars they bring. But if your aching heart can look in hope to that glorious day when God will do something more than **fair** - when He will finish something marvelously gracious and redemptive - then pin your hope on the One who will finish what we only see dimly now in our sin diseased selves. We look in hope to the redemption of our bodies.