

## THE BIBLE AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION - Part three

Sunday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014, 6:00 p.m. - Teaching #1726

Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

### HOW SHALL WE DEFINE PERSONHOOD AND GENDER?

In *Jonathan Parnell's* March, 2013 blog posting entitled, "*More Than Body Parts*" he charts the unfolding story of a boy in Colorado with male genitals who was prohibited from using the girl's bathroom. This was upsetting to *Donna Rose*, a transsexual journalist writing her opinion for *CNN*:

*"This six year old girl "knows she's a girl. She dresses as a girl. Her legal documents recognize her as a girl. Her parents accept her as a girl. On the playground, you would have difficulty identifying her as different from any of the other girls, because in all ways that matter socially and legally, this child is a girl."*

According to *ABC news*, the parents say when this child was 18 months old he began to "*struggle with gender identification.*" In short, he played with Barbie dolls and said he wanted to be a girl. So mom and dad took him to a "*specialist*" who diagnosed him with gender identity disorder. And that was that.

Gender identity disorder. Think about that. There have certainly always been sexual deviations and distortions. There have always been feminine men and masculine women. That's not a news flash. But there is something commonly happening today that is an absolute first on planet earth. For the very first time in the entirety of recorded history people are being **defined** by the desires they have inwardly - sexual and otherwise. People **are** what they desire. This is the new definition of **personhood**.

This changes everything. Up until recently, upon billions of births, the doctor would slap the newborn entity on the backside, listen for the cry, and exclaim, "*It's a boy!*," or, "*It's a girl!*" Anatomical gender was **personhood**. And that **person** was identified by that maleness or femaleness until death.

Now, transgender sexuality isn't the immediate topic of this series. I recognize that. But the issue of **defining people** by inward desire **is** directly related to the issue of homosexuality and same-sex intercourse. Because just as people are now **identified** as male or female by **inward inclination** rather than **outward anatomy** so homosexuality defines the **entire person** by **inward desire/orientation**.

#### 1) THE CHURCH MUST FIND WAYS OF REACHING OUT WITH COMPASSION WITHOUT FUELING DEEPER BONDAGE AND DEVASTATION

I need to paint the big picture first. Everything I say in this point is based on my conviction that whenever the Bible addresses any issue of human fallenness its message almost always feels **sterner** than our natural inclinations would choose **at first**. This is because God's revelation always comes with the **long term goal** of bringing out **first**, a **depth of personal repentance** and **second**, the broader goal of **an awareness of the depth of the ongoing effects of original sin** to reinforce in all of us a deeper reliance on God's revelation and grace. The divine goal of this initially stern approach is to alert we careless sinners of the need for ongoing trust in our redemptive God rather than the fluctuating standards of societal acceptance.

What this also means is the Bible usually looks **sterner at first** and more **gracious in the end**. And what **that** means is those who don't press Biblical absolutes will always look **kinder at first, but with the net effect of increasing deeper bondage and judgment in the end**. Short-term tolerance of sin is as compassionate as short term tolerance of cancer.

I say this because many Christians simply know the list of verses against sexual sins without understanding the deep reason **why** God's uncompromising approach is so necessary and ultimately loving. They're intimidated to **trust** the truth of God's Word to actually be **best** for the sinner. And there's vast difference between **knowing** what God says and **trusting why** God says what He says.

Either with much thought or with very little, much of the church has bought into the now commonly held view that same-sex desires **define the entire person**. I hear it all the time from concerned people in the church as they describe some cherished friend who feels the loneliness of his or her same-sex desires: "**But pastor Don, you don't understand. That's who he is!**"

That phrase says it all. The person is **defined** by his or her sexual desires. Immediately a sense of **tolerance** and

**innocence** descends upon the discussion. After all, how can you blame anyone for being **who he is**? Who anyone **is** would be **God's** doing.

I have no interest at all in being religiously hard-nosed or uncompassionate. But the question still needs to be addressed - **where does this reasoning process - this apparently more accepting, tolerant logic - take us down the road?** If the homosexual is **defined** by his or her desires - if that's just **who he or she is** - what **other** desires can be given the same person-defining status?

It's not a hypothetical question. On Monday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, the **Toronto Star** carried an article in its **Insight** column entitled "**Is Pedophilia a Sexual Orientation?**" The byline under **Dr. James Cantor of the Center for Addiction and Mental Health** reads, "**Dr. James Cantor....has spent the last decade on research suggesting that pedophilia is a deep-rooted, unchangeable predisposition.**"

The first paragraph of the article continues this theme: "**Pedophilia has been widely viewed as a psychological disorder triggered by early childhood trauma. Now, many experts see it as a biologically rooted condition that does not change - like a sexual orientation - thanks largely to a decade of research by Dr. James Cantor at the Center for Addiction and Mental Health.**"

But that's just the beginning. Also included - **in the Toronto Star** - are postings of pedofiles themselves. Here's some of what they said: "**It should be clear to anyone with any grey matter that pedophilia is just another oppressed sexual orientation or interest, and age doesn't somehow magically make consensual sex between two people into something evil.**"

Or, "**Nobody will ever quite understand the pain that we feel....seeing and longing for something we love but cannot have....and if we reach for it....we are accused of being sadistic monsters who only want to hurt kids. It will not last forever. Things will change.**"

Remember those last two sentences - "**It will not last forever** [the discrimination against pedophilia]. **Things will change.**" This is the one part of that quote that I totally agree with. Sadly, I believe it is an absolutely true statement that the current abhorrence with pedophilia **won't** last much longer. And yes, things **will** change, horrifically, for the worse. And the reason such an insidious change is inevitable is bound up in the logic of defining **persons** by the **orientations inside** those persons rather than the **actions** of those persons.

I understand the objector who would point out the world of difference between **consensual same-sex intercourse between two adult persons** and the **abusive, coercive sexual exploitation of a child by an adult**. That's true as far as it goes. But it also misses the point. Because what those pedophiles were arguing for was the **lowering of the age of sexual consent**. Their point is there is no logical reason for **discriminating against the inner orientation of those who genuinely love younger partners as long as those partners - perhaps 12 or 13 years of age - can legally consent to those same desires.**

I deeply hope you're not missing my main point in all of this. The point **isn't** to shock you with talk about pedophilia. Nor is it to irritate the gay community by linking them up with a criminal element. None of that is my point.

I know most of us would feel there is no way most homosexuals who engage in same-sex intercourse would ever consider tolerating granting such rights to pedophiles. There **is** a difference and I get that. Most of society still feels a certain inward revulsion toward pedophilia.

But **personal moral absolutes** can be quite **visceral and undefined, even though strongly held**. Moral revulsion toward **any** act can evaporate in one generation. Feelings of **compassion** or **revulsion** are fickle moral measuring sticks. It's quite another thing to move beyond your own moral revulsions and offer a cogent, specific, fixed moral **standard** for society at large. We need to offer a reason for saying, "**Yes**, there is legitimacy to sexual orientation being consensually fulfilled based on **gender** but **no**, there is no legitimacy to sexual orientation being consensually fulfilled based on **age**." And I'm arguing there is no credible way to sustain that moral ground.

I doubt very much there will long be held a universally acknowledged **stopping point** for the consensual expression of the myriad of inward sexual inclinations. That's because once **sexual desires** become the entire inward **person** we no longer have the right to **separate those desires out again** and pronounce them **sinful** or **wrong**. We have already granted the desires are merely what the person **is**. The cat can't be put back into the bag. In trying to be

loving and non-judgmental we got more than we bargained for or can long live with.

## 2) PHYSICAL ANATOMY, BRAIN GENDER AND HOW WE GOT HERE

**Karl Heinrich Ulrichs** was one of the early sexual reformers in 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany. He defined himself as a **“female soul confined in a male body.”** That Ulrichs is a significant figure in the gay community is born out by the title of **Hubert Kennedy’s** work, **“Karl Heinrich Ulrichs: Pioneer of the Modern Gay Movement.”**

His was the thinking that has paved the way for the now common theory of **“brain gender.”** Once the concept of homosexuality as an **orientation** took hold, it transformed the whole discussion of human gender and personhood. Accordingly, in much modern discussion each human person is **multi-defined**.

**First**, there is the obvious **biological sex** determined by one’s physical anatomy. **Second**, there is also **gender identity**. This has become known as a person’s **brain gender**. This is measured as masculine or feminine based on a combination of factors such as how a person talks, dresses, and behaves as **measured by the observed and tracked norms of society**. That last sentence is very important and we’ll come back to it. **Third**, there is also a person’s **sexual orientation**. This is defined basically as **heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual**, based on the individual’s sexual attraction.

The implications of this identity process are very complex. The whole human person can be identified in different ways, depending on which factors are given priority. A person could have the **body of a man** defining his **biological sex**, the **brain of a woman** defining his **gender identity** and the **sexual orientation toward both**, defining him as **bisexual**.

One can’t help but notice how different this is from the Biblical account in which God created persons as **male** and **female** - **Genesis 1:26-27** - **“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”**

In the unfallen order of God’s creation, before the domination of **original sin**, this is how personhood and gender is permanently defined. Just as the nature of the triune God is found in **sameness** yet **diversity** (**“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness**) so the creation of mankind involves a measure of **sameness** and **diversity**. The nature of mankind is expressed in **sameness** (**“Let us make man....”**) and also **diversity** (**“male and female he created them.”**).

Don’t miss the important central point of this passage. There is a **purpose** in the mind of God when humanity was created - **Genesis 1:27** - **“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”**

Human persons aren’t just made willy-nilly. There is an intentional **design** in their personhood. They are made to **point to the nature of something other than themselves**. Their created design **compares** to God. Their nature says, **“Here - This is something like God Himself!”**

And then the text goes a step further. God **defines the nature of this “likeness” of the created person to himself**. Like the Trinity itself, there is **defined sameness** and **defined diversity**. The **maleness** and the **femaleness** of this **one** created humanity reflect the **oneness** and the **plurality** of the Godhead - **“Let us make man in our image, in our likeness....”(1:26)**.

My point here is the whole design of creation argues against defining personhood on terms other than male and female. And just as God’s creative rights are discriminated against when personhood is defined by **sexual orientation**, so His rights are discriminated against when personhood is defined in terms of **brain gender** or **behavioral characteristics**.

Let me be clear here. **John Gray’s** bestseller, **“Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus,”** is only one example of the trend to track observed gender differences. It has become popular even in Christian circles to examine marriage issues along this line as well.

Which is fine - up to a point. But it is crucially important that we all remember what we are doing here. What we are examining are **generalizations**. We are looking at the way things **often seem to be** in gender traits. But that is all.

We are only looking at what seems to be **typical** in many situations. But this is **not** the same as **definitively identifying** what is **maleness** and what is **femaleness**. We do not use these generalizations to **override** the created genders of **male** and **female**.

And I want to close by reminding you why this is so important. It has everything to do with the process used to **reinforce homosexual diagnosis and identity**. In an article entitled, "**Homosexuality**," the **GLBTQ Encyclopedia** identifies homosexuality based on, "**the simultaneous incidence of same-sex orientation and gender role non-conformity.**"

Please don't miss what's being said here. Part of the process of defining homosexuality is "**gender role non-conformity.**" That means they tabulate the generalized traits that appear to be more common in men and those that appear to be more common in women and use that statistical data to help **define homosexuality based on how people fit those statistical norms.**

Here's what this means. When **new categories are introduced** to defining personhood and gender **beyond** the created order of male and female "**sensitive men**" are instantly **less masculine** and "**emotionally strong women**" are instantly **less feminine**. This kind of blatant discrimination ought to be offensive to everyone.

But even more important, we end up not only **describing** homosexuality, but **prescribing** it to any who don't fit the "**Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus**" categories. People with any degree of turmoil or angst over their sexual identity are given fresh encouragement to identify themselves as homosexual.

I close with the Biblical account of Jacob and Esau. If ever there was a Biblical warning about the danger of **gender categories** it is here. Esau is the picture of a **Mars man**. He is rugged. He is a hunter. He is physically different from his smoothed skinned brother Jacob. Jacob liked to work in the kitchen. That doesn't mean much today, but in that era kitchen work was women's work. Jacob resided the outdoors. He hated the violence and smell of hunting. He's from **Venus**.

My point is I wonder, given our new categories of defining gender and personhood, how Jacob would have been counseled in a modern school's guidance office. And yet we know from Jacob's infatuation with Rachel's physical beauty, his fathering of twelve sons, and his numerous liaisons with various concubines in addition to his two wives, he was nothing less than **overtly heterosexual**.

There is a definite plan afoot. In multiplying the definitions of gender and personhood beyond the created order of male and female - by defining **sexual desire** and **gender characteristics** as the **person himself** - it is now impossible to make any moral pronouncements about homosexuality without being accused of not loving the **person**. We are intolerant and unloving **by default** before the discussion begins. And that was the plan all along.

These new categories are designed to **promote** homosexuality, not just **define** it. And the whole church needs to know what's going on.