

THE BIBLE AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION - Part eight

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SAME-SEX INTERCOURSE AND THE BIBLE - WHAT DO THE TEXTS SAY AND WHAT DO THEY MEAN? (continued)

There is not a single Biblical text where same-sex intercourse is endorsed or mentioned in any favorable light. Two Sunday nights ago we continued our study of the Biblical texts condemning same-sex intercourse with a look at the well-known account of Sodom and Gomorrah in **Genesis 19**.

This is the passage where the men of the city come to Lot's house demanding sexual relations with the "**men**" in Lot's house. Lot, inexplicably, offers his own two virgin daughters rather than allow the demanded homosexual rape.

Then we studied how many discount this entire passage citing **Ezekiel 16**, where the prophet calls Judah to repent of her lack of compassion for the poor by reminding them how God judged Sodom for **her** greed and indifference to the poor. So, many say, the **real** sin of Sodom wasn't **homosexuality** but **economic injustice**.

The argument is then taken further. The sin for which the men of the city were guilty was the sin of **violent, forced gang rape**. It just **happened** to be same-sex gang rape in the case of Sodom, but God would have felt just the same had it been **heterosexual** forced sex. So the passage really says nothing specific about **homosexuality** at all.

This is all online and you can see why this argument simply won't stand. It makes no sense of Lot's offer of his daughters **in place** of turning over the men in his house. It seems to imply the sexual violation of Lot's daughters **wouldn't** have been forced or violent. How would Lot's solution have **solved** the sin of violent gang rape. Clearly this is ridiculous.

And the homosexual argument makes no sense considered against the background of **Jude's** explanation of the account of Sodom either. Jude says God judged the sin of replacing heterosexual intercourse with intercourse that was **against nature - Jude 7** - "**....just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.**"

Today we wrap up our study of the Biblical texts turning to the New Testament. We'll study the clear statements from the Apostle Paul in **Romans 1:24-27** and **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**.

1) **PAUL'S CONDEMNATION OF SAME-SEX INTERCOURSE IS UNIVERSAL AND ABSOLUTE, BASED ON THE HETEROSEXUAL INTENT AND DESIGN OF OUR CREATOR**

Romans 1:18-27 - "**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. [21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] 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 creeping things."**

[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."

In just a minute we're going to carefully trace the logic of Paul's argument in this important passage. But first I want to lay out two lines of argument used by the religious gay community when **they** read these verses. I want you to see why their arguments simply don't work.

Here are the two arguments most commonly used by the religious gay community to negate Paul's condemnation of same-sex intercourse in Romans 1. **First**, there is the argument about **sexual exploitation**. Paul, so they say, was only condemning homosexual acts that were exploitive and non-consensual. This would include acts like sex with boys, or slaves, or male to male prostitution.

The **second**, and somewhat related argument, is Paul simply had no concept of a loving, **orientation-based** same sex relationship. We cannot possibly know what Paul would have thought about this kind of mutually consensual, loving, monogamous homosexual commitment because Paul could no more write about this than he could explain video games.

As most of you will know, we've studied both of these arguments in detail earlier in this series. The gay community simply has nowhere else to go. But what about these arguments as applied to **Romans 1**? Do they work? And the answer, quite obviously, I think, must be an unqualified "no."

To see this we need to work carefully through Paul's train of thought. A light, breezy approach to this passage won't suffice. Look at the whole text with me carefully:

- a) ***Paul's first point is the blatant idolatry of mankind is inexcusably guilty because of what God has revealed of Himself in the created world - Romans 1:18-20 - "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. [19] For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. [20] For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."***

See also **Romans 1:22-23** - "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 creeping things.**"

So far this has nothing to do with homosexual sin. Paul is simply making the obvious point that people who carve idols of animals and people and worship them are judged sinful by the obvious standard of the created world. This wonderful created world shows it's simply impossible for an idol to have created it. Remember this simple point. ***Idolatry is sinful because of the obvious revelation of the real God in the created order.***

- b) ***Second, moving from the vertical to the horizontal, those who suppress the truth about God in creation also suppress the truth about themselves in creation - Romans 1:26-27 - "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."***

Those important defining terms, "**nature**" and "**natural**"(27) aren't left up in the air for whatever definition we want to give them. They are defined and born out of what Paul has already stated in **Romans 1:20** - "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."

The consistent definition of what is "**natural**" in this whole account isn't what is "**natural to you or me**." Natural isn't defined in terms of **orientation**. It's clearly defined in terms of **original creation and a specific Creator**.

Let me restate again ***the most important idea in this passage***. Idolatry and same-sex intercourse are both sins in the same sense. They are both sins because they violate the truth God has put right into the creation of the world and the creation of mankind. They both violate something fixed and permanent and obvious in God's design. In other words **idolatry** is a **vertical** rejection of God's created order and **same-sex intercourse** is a **horizontal** rejection of God's created order.

- c) ***Because Paul, like Jesus, had his eyes set on Genesis 1 for God's created order for sexual expression his condemnation of same-sex intercourse isn't altered by the loving orientation of the same-sex participants.***

This is a key point of Paul's argument. His argument isn't looking at same-sex acts that are condemned because they are forced or exploitive or against the heterosexual nature of the participants. Paul isn't basing his condemnation on **any** of those factors.

He universally and categorically condemns same-sex intercourse because of what it **isn't** and **never can be**. ***It can never be a complementary male-female union ordained by God at creation.***

- d) ***Paul specifically calls opposite-gendered sex as 'natural' and same-gendered sex as 'unnatural' - Romans 1:26-27 -***

"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."

Here is another point to consider from these verses. The gay community would have us believe that by "*natural*"(26,27) and "*contrary to nature*"(27), Paul means the *natural orientation of those committing these same-sex acts*. And so the only sin Paul is condemning in this passage is the same-sex activities of *heterosexually oriented people*. These are the ones Paul says are acting "*contrary to nature*"(27) - meaning, *their own inward nature or orientation*.

But this hardly fits the plain wording of the passage. Paul isn't talking about people acting *against* their inward desires in this passage at all. Not once. He makes himself painfully clear describing the "*lusts of their hearts*"(24), and their inward "*passions*"(26), and as if that weren't specific enough, men who were "*consumed with passion for one another*"(27).

Please note Paul's point. The *intense desire* on the part of *both* partners in **verse 27** totally eliminates any talk of exploitation or coercion. And, equally important, the intensity of inward desire - *orientation* - doesn't in any way lessen the seriousness of the sin as a breach of God's original order of a heterosexual creation.

2) HOMOSEXUAL ACTIVITY IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

1 Corinthians 6:9-20 - "Or 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. [11] And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. [12] All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. [13] "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. [14] And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. [15] Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! [16] Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? *For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."* [17] But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. [18] Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. [19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, [20] for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

- a) *It shouldn't be overlooked that Paul's list of sexual practices flows in the immediately preceding context of his instructions to the church at Corinth regarding the expulsion of the incestuous man in chapter 5.*

By all we know from the text this appear to be a mutually consensual adult relationship. And it was ongoing enough to catch the attention of the entire congregation. But the desires for such incestuous intercourse in no way lighten Paul's condemnation. Sexual relations between persons *too structurally alike* - either by *gender* or by *family* - come under the condemnation of the original creation account to which both Paul and Jesus consistently refer. A man must *leave* father and mother (prohibiting incest) and *cling to* his wife (prohibiting same-sex intercourse). The point once again is *inward desire (orientation?) does not override creation order*.

- b) *Take note of Paul's direct reference to the creation account in 1 Corinthians 6:16 - "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.'"*

I've already pointed out how Paul follows tightly on the heels of Jesus in this pattern. It is simply inconceivable to me that *Tony Campolo* can say Jesus "*never mentioned homosexual sin*." We've already studied Jesus' comments on the creation account in earlier teaching in this series. The important point here is *every time Jesus refers to the creation account in His teaching on marriage it is a direct condemnation of same-sex intercourse, polygamy, and adultery*.

- c) **All sexual activity matters because it engages the entire person in the act.** Paul makes this point even stronger when he clearly says this is the case even when the act is technically *impersonal* and only done for *money* - **1 Corinthians 6:16** - **“Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh.’”**
- d) **Continued willful engagement in sexual immorality demonstrates an unrepentant heart and a departure from divine grace - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11** - **“Or 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. [11] And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”**

Verse 11 makes clear Paul is speaking to a Christian audience when he urges they **“not be deceived”**(9). The fact that they are **indwelt by the Holy Spirit**(11) only intensifies the grime of any sexual sin - **1 Corinthians 6:16-19** - **“Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh.’” [17] But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. [18] Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. [19] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own....”**

Paul’s obvious point is sexual sins aren’t like the breaking of the temporary dietary regulations of the Old Covenant - **1 Corinthians 6:12-13** - **“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. [13] “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”**

In the next two teachings we will be moving away from these specific texts (in terms of direct study - not from their **conclusions**). We will enter more practical pastoral ground. But my closing point here is we must never fall prey to the false, empty compassion that would tell us it is more loving just to **accept** homosexual practice.

Love people enough to tell them the truth. Never treat anyone slightly by making them **unworthy** of the truth. My New Testament tells me **“Love rejoices with the truth”**(1 Corinthians 13:6).

If it is true that such, as Paul says, will **not** inherit the Kingdom of God it can’t be loving to not say so. True, it is never enough **merely** to say so. There are a host of other issues. But it is never loving to do **less** than tell the truth.

More next week.