

Homosexuality

“Is Homosexuality Condemned or Condoned by the Holy Scriptures?”

Part 2 – How ought the Church to respond to the Issue of Homosexuality?

In our first lesson on this important matter we have approached Homosexuality from the Divine Perspective by looking at the:

- 1. The Divine Biblical Institution for proper human sexuality (Gen 1-2, Matt 19, Eph 5)**
- 2. The Divine Illustration for God’s wrath against any form of sexual perversion (Gen 19, Jude 1:7, 2 Peter 2)**
- 3. The Divine Instruction directly forbidding homosexuality (Lev 18, Lev 20, Rom 1)**

This evening our aim is to proceed by seeing in which ways the Word of God requires the Church to respond to the issue of Homosexuality. However, before we go there we need to look at the issue of ⁴a ***Divine Invitation of Redemption*** to any and all who will lay aside their sin and call upon Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Our aim in this study is to ¹see what God says on this vital matter, to ²see how the Church ought to respond to this matter, to ³discover what implications homosexuality has on the Church and to ⁴restate and affirm the Biblical perspective on Biblical marriage portraying a heterosexual relationship between natural man and a natural women.

Right at the outset it needs to be stated that Scripture both condemns homosexuality and gives homosexuals a plan for freedom and forgiveness. It is from this basic premise that I will be approaching this topic as I teach you God’s perspective on this in the next 4 weeks.

- 1. A Divine Invitation of Redemption to any and all who will lay aside their sin and call upon the Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 56 and 1 Corinthians 6)**

Although homosexuality is sharply condemned throughout Scripture, it is important to end any discussion of it by offering hope to those enslaved to such sexual sin¹. The heart of the issue is that at the Cross a Divine Invitation of Redemption has been extended to all sinners, including those who are enslaved by homosexual inclinations or practices. All those that sincerely turn away (repent) of their sin, and obediently embrace the Lord Jesus Christ will be forgiven their sin and to them is then given the gracious gift of Eternal Life.

God is willing to forgive sexual deviations and this is clearly seen in the Old Testament in the way that God dealt with eunuchs. The Mosaic Law certainly makes no secret of the fact that God does not approve of eunuchs. See Deuteronomy 23:1 *“No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD.”*² So it is therefore very clear that men who had undergone such a procedure were an abomination to the Lord, regardless as to whether it was

¹ Dr John MacArthur *God’s Word on Homosexuality: The Truth about sin and the reality of forgiveness* TMSJ 19/2 (Fall 2008) 153-174

² All Scripture quotations taken from the ESV unless otherwise indicated

by choice or by decision of the parents³. However a fascinating account is given in Isaiah 56:3-5 concerning the eunuch:

Isaiah 56:3-5 ³Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and let not the eunuch say, "Behold, I am a dry tree." ⁴For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, ⁵I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."

- The Lord here indicates that the eunuch still has hope if he submits himself to the ways of God.
- Even though the eunuch is incapable of procreation, God promises to give him an everlasting name if he chooses to please the Lord.
- Even though the eunuch is outside of God's plan for his sexuality, the one coming to God in genuine repentance could be restored to his Creator.
- We see in Acts 8 that the Ethiopian eunuch comes to faith and is immediately baptized by Philip (Acts 8:26-38). This man stood condemned under the letter of the Mosaic Law, yet he experienced grace when the Spirit saved him through the preaching of the Gospel.

Salvation-hope for Homosexuals is made even more explicitly clear in Paul's explanation in 1 Corinthians 6:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 ⁹Or 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, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And 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."

- Paul is very clear here that certain people will never inherit the Kingdom of God. Homosexuality was rife in Corinth and by the time Paul had written this letter homosexuality had been part of Greek and Roman culture for centuries. It is claimed that 14 of the first 15 Roman emperors were homosexual and that Nero, under whom the apostle Paul was eventually martyred, had a young boy named Sporis whom he had castrated to act as his wife, in addition to his natural wife⁴.
- The Corinthian believers therefore were no strangers to homosexuality. Even though the Word of God clearly condemns homosexuality, this passage clearly offers the Invitation of Divine Redemption to homosexuals and to all sinners.
- V9 explains that those who practice homosexuality or on a pathway to hell, whereas v11 explains that such sinners can be saved and cleansed from their sin. From the text it can be clearly deduced that some of the Corinthian believers to whom Paul was writing were once characterized by such behaviour before their conversions. These believers were characterized by the fact that God in His grace had changed their lives.
- "***But*** you were washed, ***but*** you were sanctified, ***but*** you were justified." Strongest use of Greek adversative participle (3 times) – indicating what mattered now is that they are

³ In ancient times, parents would sometimes crush the organs of their small boys at the age of ten or so because they thought it would appease the deities.

⁴ Richard Oster *1 Corinthians, The College Press NIV Commentary* {Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1995} 138-139

washed clean by the Blood of the Lamb. What they were before their salvation no longer mattered.

- Therefore the Gospel invitation extends to every sinner, and even though homosexuality is an abomination before the Lord, the Lord does forgive those who repent of this sin, and so should the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

With that then as backdrop we now turn our thoughts to the question as to how the Church ought to respond to the Issue of Homosexuality. The context of the Church of Jesus Christ today is much the same as the context of the Corinthian Church. What God said to them is exactly what the Church needs to hear today. Just as the Corinthian Church was exhorted to rise up against and respond to the moral decay of its day, so also the Church of Jesus Christ ought to stand up and make its voice known. Effectively I wish to present to you three ways in which the Church of Jesus Christ ought to respond to the Issue of Homosexuality:

1. The Church must expose Homosexuality as a Sin against God.

Homosexuality is more than a mere sexual preference, a social choice, a genetic predisposition as some say; it is a sin against Almighty God. It is a wilful assault on the person and work of God. Homosexuality is a sin against God in four ways:⁵

- **Homosexuality is a sin against God's Creative Order.**
 - Genesis 1:27-28 *"²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*
 - Genesis 2:22-24 *"²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then 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." ²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*
 - Matthew 19:4-6 *"⁴He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*
 - Hebrews 13:4 *"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."*
- **Homosexuality is a sin against God's Law.**
 - 1 Timothy 1:8-11 *"⁸Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, ¹⁰the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, ¹¹in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted."*
- **Homosexuality is a sin against God's Kingdom.**

⁵ Alex D. Montoya *The Church's Response to Homosexuality* TMSJ 19/2 (Fall 2008) 233-248

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 *“⁹Or 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, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”*
- **Homosexuality is a sin against God’s Holiness.**
 - 1 Peter 1:15-16 *“...¹⁵but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”*
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 *“³For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.”*

2. The Church must extend the Grace of God to Homosexuals.

It needs to be recognized as we have seen thus far in the first and the second study that homosexuality is a sin against God which God sees as an abomination; yet it must also be stated again that homosexuality like any other sin, is a sin for which Christ died. As believers we are to extend the grace of the cross to homosexuals and in so doing assure them that God’s forgiveness, peace, and the hope of eternal life is available to them as well.

Seeing we have dealt with this extensively thus far, I will just not some ways in which grace can be shown to homosexuals by believers:

- *The Church needs to learn to show compassion to the homosexual.* The Church may not be guilty of the attitude of the Pharisees of the day. Jesus showed compassion towards sinners and so should the church (Matt 9:10-13).
- *The Church must be willing to associate with homosexuals.* Whatever sin is mentioned in Scripture, the Gospel is always mentioned as the power to overcome the force of sin (Rom 1:16).
- *The Church must have the conviction of the power of the Gospel to convert the homosexual.* Whereas Scripture magnifies man’s depravity, so it also magnifies the grace of God to more than make up for man’s fallen nature (Eph 2:1-10; Tit 3:3-7).

Homosexuality is not a greater sin than other sins and does not require a different plan on God’s part to save and redeem. What Romans 6 and 8 teaches is that there is more grace in God than there is sin in your past. As someone has once said, “He is a better Saviour than you are a sinner”. The message of Amazing Grace is exactly what the Church needs to promote and practice⁶.

3. The Church must expel practicing Homosexuals from its fellowship.

The tidal wave of immorality has so invaded the Church and the Church has often done very little to deal with the cancer within. As the Church in Corinth faced much of this, so the Church today is inundated with sexual immorality and it has to be dealt with Biblically, firmly and lovingly. 1 Corinthians 5 provides the model for this:

⁶ Mark Christopher *Same Sex Marriage: Is It Really The Same?* {Constantia, South Africa: The Voice of Hope, 2007} 44

1 Corinthians 5:1-2 ¹*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. ²And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you."*

- The Church in Corinth was tolerating a man living in an incestuous relationship with his father's wife. They should have mourned over this situation, yet Paul accuses them of arrogance (v2).
- Paul knew only one solution to this: remove the wicked man from your midst (v2+13).
- Today's church is in a sad state: instead of mourning over the moral decline in the church, some mainline denominations are debating whether a homosexual may be appointed as a priest, pastor or bishop, when God's Word is abundantly clear on this matter.
- The only way to get rid of the problem at Corinth was to practice excommunication. Sadly today everything is done in the name of "love" and therefore some say today that excommunication is not the "loving" thing to do. That is completely contrary to the Biblical norm. The apostle Paul makes clear here that the way of love is getting rid of those who bring demeaning filth into the Church. the only way to keep the purity of the bride is to put out of fellowship those who blatantly choose to walk in darkness. Darkness and light can have no fellowship; and that is abundantly clear from 1 Corinthians 5.
- Sadly most churches are not willing to deal with sin within its walls. The problem in the church today is not so much the onslaught of homosexuality as it is the toleration of any sin in the church⁷. For you see, if we are not willing to deal with other forms of immorality in the church, why should we deal only with homosexuality.
- Faithful believers are not to keep close company with any fellow believers who persistently practice serious sins such as those mentioned here. If the offenders will not listen to the counsel of two or three other believers and not even of the whole church, they are to be put out of the fellowship. They should not be allowed to participate in any activities of the church – worship services, Sunday School, Bible studies, or even social events. Obviously, and most importantly, they should not be allowed to have any leadership role. They should be totally cut of both from individual and corporate fellowship with other Christians, including that of eating together (v11; cf. 2 Thess 3:6-15). No exceptions are made. Even if the unrepentant person is a close friend or family member, he is to be put out⁸.

A professing believer who lives the lifestyle we see in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 is most likely not a believer, and thus will not go to heaven. The Church must act on those in its midst who profess to be believers yet live just like the world. Excommunication of the unrepentant is the Biblical mandate of the Church. the Church is in a sad state when it so fears man that it is not willing to practice Biblical Church Discipline.

Biblical Church discipline is always for the purpose of restoration. Those who do not repent when Church discipline is exercised against them are more than likely not believers.

Excommunication is not an act a Church performs; rather it is a means of recognizing that unrepentant believers have excommunicated themselves due to sinful choices from the Body of Christ, in which the Church simply publicly and with great sadness affirms this decision on behalf of the unrepentant parties.

⁷ Alex D. Montoya *The Church's Response to Homosexuality* TMSJ 19/2 (Fall 2008) 233-248

⁸ John MacArthur *1 Corinthians, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* {Chicago: Moody, 1984} 130