

The Biblical Teaching on Homosexuality by John Smyth

The Bible condemns homosexual practices more strongly than heterosexual immorality. Why is this?

Right from the very first chapter in the Bible God makes it clear that his plan and purpose for creation was predominately the *male-female* relationship:

1. Both men and women were created with an equal status in the image of God. (Genesis 1.26,27).
2. Both men and women were to rule over the earth and all its creatures. (Genesis 1.26)
3. Verse 31 adds that all God had made, was *very good*, thus immediately endorsing the wonder of male-female creation.
4. Chapter 2 of Genesis gives us a second account of the creation of male and female stressing more than once that God made woman as '*a suitable helper for man.*' In other words the two sexes were designed to *complement* each other.
5. Chapter 2 ends with the *reason* why God made man and woman as two different sexes.

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. (Genesis 2.24)

This verse is enormously significant in Scripture for at least 3 reasons:

- (a) It is the only verse in the Bible that tells us how sex *is* to be used. Other Scriptures tell us how sex is *not* to be used, but right at the beginning God spells out why he had created two sexes. 'One flesh' means sexual intercourse; and nowhere in Scripture do we get any indication whatever of any other proper use of sexual intercourse. It is always and only to be between a man and his wife. God has provided no alternative.
- (b) Jesus unequivocally and explicitly endorsed the teaching of Genesis 1 and 2 when asked about marriage and divorce in Matthew 19. He began by reiterating Genesis 1.27 thereby endorsing *heterosexual creation*, and then quoted Genesis 2.24 endorsing also *heterosexual marriage* and *heterosexual intercourse* within marriage. This three-fold endorsement gives us Jesus' definitive statement for the use of sex for all time.
- (c) The apostle Paul quotes the same verse in Ephesians 5.31 and goes on to speak of the union of man and woman as a profound mystery which is an allegory of the relationship between Christ and his church. Obviously to Paul sexual relationships as God designed them were something very sacred.

Is it any wonder therefore that when the Holy Spirit, speaking through the various human authors of Scripture, has to condemn the *misuse* of sex (immorality), he does so in strong terms?

And if such condemnation comes as no surprise to us, surely the *unnatural use, or abuse of sex*, between persons of the same gender is understandably condemned even more stringently. Homosexual practices in God's eyes are *both* immoral and unnatural, and do violence to the divine institution of marriage.

The Old Testament

Sodom and Gomorrah: The Bible leaves us in no doubt why God destroyed these two cities in such a devastating and dramatic way. Genesis 18.20 speaks of the outcry against the cities being 'so great and their sin so grievous.' Why was Lot spared and described in 2 Peter 2.7 as 'a *righteous* man?' The story of Lot as we follow it in Genesis would hardly lead us to expect the New Testament to commend him in this way. The reason for the commendation must be because he hated and resisted the homosexual practices going on around him (See Genesis 19 where Lot, rather than permit homosexuality, offers the men from Sodom his two daughters as the lesser of two evils, and 2 Peter 2.8 which tells us that Lot was 'tormented in his soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard'). The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was not mere immorality, nor was it only homosexual rape; it was widespread sodomy, most of it no doubt consensual, and the New Testament confirms this in Jude 7 by using the description 'perversion'. Every city at that time was full of immorality; Sodom and Gomorrah were singled out because their *homosexual* immorality constituted a greater offence in God's eyes.

An incident similar to Lot's experience is recorded in Judges 19 in a village called Gibeah, again demonstrating that righteous men regarded heterosexual immorality as very much the lesser of the two evils.

The Mosaic Law

Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable. (Leviticus 18.22 and 20.13).

This prohibition is part of that section of the *moral law* that deals with incest, adultery, and bestiality. It flies in the face of common sense to say it is merely part of the rules and regulations written only for the health and welfare of the Israelites in the desert.

The New Testament – No Change

It is often said that nowhere in the Gospels do we read of Jesus speaking of homosexuality. Certainly we do not find him speaking *explicitly* of it. Why this is we do not know. We do not read that he ever came face to face with it, and perhaps in the

absence of any occasion calling for his censure he felt with St Paul 'it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.'(Ephesians 5.12)

But Jesus did mention it *implicitly* when on more than one occasion he referred to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. (Matthew 10.15, Matthew 11.23,24). What Jesus was doing was following the example of the Old Testament prophets who referred to Sodom and Gomorrah when they needed an example or reminder of God's most severe judgement. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos and Zephaniah all did the same as any concordance will show. And Jude in his epistle follows suit (verse 7).

And we have already seen how Jesus endorsed the principles of *heterosexual* creation, marriage and intercourse by quoting from Genesis 1 and 2. To reiterate the exclusive heterosexual use of sex, implicitly condemns homosexual use.

Romans 1.18-32 A Devastating Summary – Don't be Deceived

Paul introduces this section with the words: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men **who suppress the truth** by their wickedness...."

He goes on to speak of "**their thinking becoming futile and their foolish hearts darkened...**"

He says they "**exchanged the truth of God for a lie**", and these devastating indictments about deception lead directly to a specific condemnation of homosexual practices which needs to be quoted in full:

"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." (verses 26 & 27)

Of course we must comment at once that this terrible Divine indictment is not intended for the Christian believer who has fallen into homosexual practices but rather for the pagan homosexual cults in Rome. For the believer there is always forgiveness and restoration.

At the same time it unequivocally spells out two dire warnings for us. First, homosexual practices are always the fruit of *self-deception*. We start to deceive ourselves that what God calls black can somehow be represented as white. Secondly this passage emphasises that homosexual practices are not merely immoral but *unnatural*, and therefore they are particularly abhorrent to the creator (verses 26 & 27).

1 Corinthians 6. 9-11: It is important to distinguish between the Offence and the Temptation

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves.....will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. 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.

Again we see that Paul is concerned to warn of the temptation to be deceived. And we see too that the indictment of God is against homosexual *offenders*, not simply homosexuals. It is not the inclination, nor the temptation to commit homosexual acts, which constitutes the offence, but the acts themselves. The whole tenure of Scripture of course teaches us not only to love the sinner, but always to love and empathise with those tempted to sin, without ever condoning the sin itself.