

Homophobia or Holiness?

The Bible and Homosexuality

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It was not that long ago in our country when if a person chose to practice homosexuality he had to be careful to hide it. If news of it got out he would be ostracized in one way or another, because our society viewed homosexuality as something extremely shameful.

Gradually, however, homosexuals have become increasingly open about their lifestyle, describing it in more positive terms ("gay") and defying anyone who would dare to even suggest that it is in any way improper. Such is the societal "progress" which our generation has witnessed.

Regularly, homosexual demonstrations are given the wholesale endorsement of the news media. People who abhor the practice as immoral are dubbed "homophobics" as though *they* now should be the ones in hiding. So now the evil of homosexuality has been surpassed by the evil of "homophobia." To be opposed to homosexuality has become the sin rather than the homosexuality itself. It is no longer enough for homosexuality to be legal—it must be given moral approval.

I find all of this both morally wrong and personally offensive. Homosexuality is socially destructive, contrary to nature and, more importantly, contrary to the law of God. It is wrong in every way, and decent people should not have to hide that fact. To pretend that evil has become good does not change the fact or render the evil any less wicked. It is not that we are *afraid* of homosexuality ("homophobia"), but we do not apologize for being opposed to it.

Now we cannot approve of the personal violence against homosexuals which the media has been reporting. (By the way, what the media will not report is the many more acts of violence *by* homosexuals against those who have spoken out against their sin --

a trend growing by the day.) But neither should we be forced to conform to immoral ideals, "politically correct" though they may be. We resent being frowned upon as unreasonable or unenlightened because we insist on proven standards of decency. Opposition to homosexuality is not shameful -- it is homosexuality that is shameful, as are all forms of immorality.

The prophet Isaiah and the apostle Paul both warned of the days to come in which evil would be paraded as good and good as evil. That day has come: the ethical ideals of our society have become so warped that moral vice is openly defended against virtue.

Moreover, decent people must refuse to be pressured by it all. We must not allow an immoral minority or even a majority to dictate to us what our standards will be. Our standards come from a higher authority. Holiness before God is our goal -- not acceptance by sinners.

Moreover, God's law has been proven best and safest. We dare anyone to deny that the present AIDS epidemic would be unheard of today if men and women had simply obeyed the law of God. The social diseases and social breakdown which our generation has witnessed have not come as a result of moral decency but as a result of immoral indecency. That fact remains unanswerable.

Shame and sin can only be defined by God. A degenerate society may seek to call good evil and evil good, but still it is they who bear the shame; we do not.

The Bible on Sexuality

Most people seem to think that the Bible was written in an old dusty monastery somewhere where any ideas about sexuality were always presumed sinful. The Bible, they seem to think, only condemns sexuality outright.

Quite the opposite is true. This old monastic view of sex did not come from the Bible at all. In fact, the Bible affirms that human sexuality is a part of humanity as God created it. It is God, not the

devil, who put this appetite within us. Sexuality is not basically evil but basically good.

The rest of the story, of course, is this: *just as God created us with the appetite, so also He placed upon us the stipulations and guidelines for the use of it.* This is the fact that is overlooked by our society today.

When we look to the Scriptures to see what God has said about the matter we find that He has told us to enjoy the gift within this single limit: within marriage (marriage, of course, being that of a man and a woman -- the things you have to clarify these days!). "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4). Surprisingly (to many), this is the only regulation.

But with this as our only regulation many other practices are ruled out. This stipulation alone militates against most all of what our society would have us believe.

The sins of our society are not unique to our generation. With this one guideline as its basic assumption, the Scriptures make specific prohibitions of certain activities which are as pertinent to our day as to its own. *By very definition, "fornication" or "immorality" is any sexual activity outside the marriage union.*

Homosexuality: What Does God Say About It?

The first reference to homosexuality in Scripture is in the infamous account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. The wickedness of the men of that city is obvious and is of such a severe nature that it brought divine destruction upon the entire city. Both Peter and Jude make reference to it and describe the sin of homosexuality as " *ungodly, lawless, unnatural and extreme immorality*" (see 2 Peter 2:6, 8; Jude 7).

In Leviticus 18:22 and 24 homosexuality is described as an "abomination" and "defiling." It is reprehensible and unclean.

In Leviticus 20:13 it is again described as an "abomination" but here as one worthy of the death penalty!

Deuteronomy 23:17 forbade the presence of a "sodomite" in the land of Israel.

An incident similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah is seen again in Judges 19. Again the sin of homosexuality is described as "wickedness."

In 1 Kings 14, 15, and 22 the removal of male prostitutes from the land of Israel is viewed as a sign of much-needed spiritual reformation.

The prohibition in Deuteronomy 22:5 of women wearing men's clothing appears to be a specific condemnation of transvestism.

In Romans 1:18-32 the apostle Paul condemns the practice in the severest terms. Homosexuality is "unclean," "impure," "dishonoring to the body," "vile," "degrading / disgraceful," "contrary to nature," "unseemly/ obscene," "improper activity of a depraved mind," "unrighteous," "wicked," etc. Of particular importance to the apostle in this passage is the fact that homosexuality is "unnatural"--contrary to nature. In other words, nature itself teaches that the practice is wrong; we all know it intuitively. Homosexuality is, then, a particularly *rebellious* sin.

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 the apostle Paul speaks of homosexuals as "effeminate" and "abusers of themselves with mankind" who "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." The terms he uses here seem to be specific references to both active and the passive participants in a homosexual relationship. Such people are "unrighteous," he says, and if they remain in that practice they will be condemned.

From all this we can draw at least the following three conclusions:

1) Homosexuality is *contrary to Scripture*. There is no way to speak of any kind of acceptable or "Christian" homosexuality. There is never any allowance for it. It is never anything but sinful.

2) Homosexuality is *contrary to nature*. It is a particularly rebellious sin, a violation even of one's own conscience.

3) Homosexuality is *worthy of severe judgment*. The Mosaic law prescribed the death penalty for this sin. The apostle Paul specified that such people have excluded themselves from the salvation that is in Christ Jesus and are headed toward condemnation.

Homosexuality and Society

Also of interest is what the apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 1 about that society which approves of homosexuality. He says that God will "give them over to their reprobate minds."

Now some have attempted to take this as a kind of Divine permission, but it is more than abundantly clear that Paul is not saying that! Rather, he is speaking in terms of judgment. He is saying that if men stubbornly persist in such activity *God will simply leave them to themselves--and that is precisely the worst thing that can ever happen to a man!* What every man needs, what every society needs, is for God to *interrupt* the downward spiral of sin and turn us back to Himself! Apart from this we would all be condemned!

Significantly, then, *a society's approval of homosexuality is itself both worthy of Divine judgment and a sign that judgment has already begun to fall!* It is the ultimate sign of its final step downward in decadence.

What this implies about our own society is frightening.

Cultural Norms?

Many today object that the Bible's prohibition of homosexuality reflects not a Divine mandate but a narrow bias dictated by an ancient and unenlightened culture. But this ignores the fact that the Bible is not merely the opinions of men but the very Word of God.

Further, when Paul condemned the practice in his letters to Rome and Corinth, he was not writing to his Jewish brethren who

condemned the practice but to Gentiles who lived in a pagan environment which condoned it.

Moreover, the sinfulness of homosexuality is not established only by specific Biblical prohibitions but also by the fact that it is *all sexuality activity outside of marriage* that is condemned.

Finally, as Paul points out, it is not a specific denomination of the Christian religion that condemns homosexuality as wrong but nature itself. Every man and woman knows intuitively that this practice is wrong.

Causes of Homosexuality

It seems that there are some factors that work as contributing causes of homosexuality. Researchers have found that *faulty family roles* have contributed to the practice. For example, many homosexuals come from homes with "smothering mothers," over-dominant mothers, or often-absent and/or disinterested fathers. Others come from homes with *physical and/or sexual abuse*.

But judging from what Paul says about it in Romans 1, *homosexuality is rooted in rebellion against God and against conscience*. Nothing can change the fact that every man is in the image of God and as such has an intuitive awareness of the basic principles of right and wrong. Homosexuality is one particular vice that is obviously wrong to everyone.

The most recent explanation is that people are just "born that way." Let's think about that. Let's say a man is born a kleptomaniac. Should society give him the freedom to steal? What if a man has a natural tendency toward adultery? Should it be approved? You see, the question is not that of psychological predisposition. The question is one of morality -- and one of obedience. *To practice homosexuality is a choice of the will*. Whatever affinity anyone may or may not have for it, to *practice* it he must *choose* to do so. Scripture describes it as always wrong, and so to choose to practice it is always sin.

But think about this claim of "natural tendency" a bit further. It is a denial of the fact that according to what God says *no one is born that way*. There is no such thing as a homosexual child. Homosexuality is "unnatural" and contrary to conscience. It is practiced only and always out of rebellion.

Unrealistic Expectations?

This points up another related issue. The claim that "they come by it naturally" implies that homosexuals have no control over their appetites and are driven by irresistible passions that no rational person could expect to be suppressed.

The famous counsellor Dr. Ruth recently spoke to an audience of high school students and openly stated that their natural sexual drives were too great to be suppressed until marriage. Reasonable people know that expectations of chastity until marriage are unrealistic.

But all this ignores one basic fact. *Men and women are not animals! They bear God's image and as such have the capacity to choose if and how and when their sexual appetites will be satisfied.* The popular excuse to the contrary degrades humanity to the level of a beast and denies its dignity as the crown of creation.

Moreover, even those who promote this "can't help it" philosophy often acknowledge the contrary. If a man wants to have premarital relations with his fiancée, for example, and she wants to wait, he is told he must wait also. The point is clear: we have power over our passions -- and we know it.

The same can be said about the excuse, "But it is such a fulfilling relationship! We love each other!" In such a position we are responsible to sort out priorities and make choices accordingly. Our love for God and our obedience to Him must supersede all other loves and loyalties.

We are capable of and responsible to choose what is right. To do anything else is always wrong.

Is Holiness Harmful?

So the real menace of society is not those who oppose immorality but those who promote it. Clearly, things have gone too far. We must not take the law into our own hands, but we can and will refuse to allow immorality to become acceptable. This is not "gay bashing." This is commitment to a higher authority. This is but one responsibility of holiness.