

Homosexuality and The Bible

by Pastor Tom Eckstein

The issue of homosexuality has created much debate among various Christian denominations. Some Christians suggest that the Bible has been misinterpreted by those who assert that God condemns homosexual activity. Instead, pro-gay Christians stress that the Bible does not condemn consensual homosexual behavior between adults. The purpose of this brief article is to show what the Bible actually teaches about homosexuality.

First of all, Genesis chapters 1 & 2 clearly teach that sexual activity is reserved only for one man and one woman within the context of marriage. Jesus Himself quotes from Genesis chapters 1 & 2 in Matthew 19:1-9 where He stresses that the only option to sex between one man and one woman in marriage is celibacy! The Apostle Paul refers to Genesis chapter 2 in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 where he condemns sexual activity apart from marriage. In addition, Paul also quotes from Genesis chapter 2 in Ephesians 5:22-33 where he speaks about God's ideal plan for marriage between one man and one woman. Simply put, Genesis chapters 1 & 2 lay the foundation for a proper understanding of sexual behavior throughout the rest of Scripture. Even if nothing more were said about sexuality in the rest of Scripture, Genesis chapters 1 & 2 alone would be enough for us to understand that homosexual behavior is outside of God's will. However, Scripture does indeed have more to say about sexual behavior!

The prohibitions against sexual sins found in Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 are based on what Genesis chapters 1 & 2 teach about sexual activity within marriage between one man and one woman. However, many who want to disregard the condemnations of homosexual behavior found in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 will often point out that we no longer obey many of the laws found in the book of Leviticus – such as the prohibition against eating pork. They then wrongly conclude that since the prohibition against eating pork no longer applies that the prohibitions against homosexuality no longer apply. But they fail to distinguish between the ceremonial laws that were given only to the people of Israel for a temporary period of time versus the moral laws

that apply to all people of all times and places. In Leviticus chapter 18 God clearly states that He condemns the Gentile nations for their sexual immorality – including homosexuality. However, God never condemns the Gentiles for eating pork because He never gave them that law. In addition, other sexual sins such as adultery, bestiality and incest are also listed in Leviticus chapters 18 and 20 in the very same context where the condemnations against homosexuality are found. Would those who want to say that the Leviticus condemnations against homosexuality no longer apply also suggest that the condemnations against adultery, incest and bestiality no longer apply? We hope the answer is “No.”

In addition, others point out that certain texts in Leviticus require the death penalty for homosexuality and other sins. Such people then suggest that since we no longer apply the death penalty for such sins this means that the biblical condemnation of these sins no longer applies. But this faulty interpretation fails to consider that Old Testament Israel was a theocracy and that the death penalty laws applied only for that place and time. In addition, the fact that God required the death penalty for homosexuality, adultery, bestiality, murder, etc., shows that God was very serious about His hatred of such behavior. In fact, in Romans 1:28-32 and 6:23 the Apostle Paul clearly states that all sin is worthy of death. Even though Jesus did not encourage the death penalty for such sins, He still clearly taught that we must repent of such sins and trust in Him for salvation or face something far worse than physical death (see Luke 13:1-5, Matthew 5:27-30, 7:13-21, 10:26-39, 11:20-24 and 18:6-7; also see I Thessalonians 4:1-10). Of course, Jesus taught us to “love our neighbor.” But Jesus’ own example shows us that “loving our neighbor” includes telling them to repent of their sin and that they can have forgiveness through Christ’s sacrifice for sinners on the cross. Jesus reached out in love to the tax collectors and prostitutes – but Jesus did NOT affirm their theft and sexual sin! Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery: “Go and sin no more!”

Some also argue that Jesus never mentioned homosexual behavior, and that this supposedly means that Jesus affirmed it! But Jesus never mentioned the sins of rape or bestiality, either. This does not mean that Jesus would have affirmed such sins. Also, Jesus did not have to

mention homosexuality because His Jewish audience was in total agreement that homosexual behavior was clearly condemned by God's Word. For example, in Matthew 15:16-20 Jesus condemns adultery along with "sexual immorality." The Greek word translated as "sexual immorality" is "porneiai" which included homosexual behavior among various other sexual sins condemned in the Jewish culture of Jesus' day. Finally, the Apostle Paul (who spoke for Jesus!), when speaking to the Gentile culture (which approved of homosexuality!), clearly condemns homosexuality as being opposed to God's will (see Romans 1:21-27, 1st Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1st Timothy 1:10).

Even though many attempt to explain away what Scripture clearly teaches about homosexuality being against God's will, the fact is that the most highly respected pro-gay biblical scholars admit that Scripture clearly condemns even consensual homosexual behavior. For example, in his book *Homosexuality and Civilization* Louis Crompton writes: **"Nowhere does Paul or any other Jewish writer of this period imply the least acceptance of same-sex relations under any circumstance. The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by mutual devotion would have been wholly foreign to Paul or any other Jew or early Christian."** In addition, lesbian New Testament scholar Bernadette Brooten writes the following in her book *Love Between Women*: **"I see Paul as condemning all forms of homoeroticism as the unnatural acts of people who had turned away from God."** Finally, Martti Nissinen, author of *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, writes the following regarding the Apostle Paul's treatment of homosexual behavior in Romans chapter 1: **"For him, there is no individual inversion or inclination that would make this conduct less culpable ... nothing would have made Paul approve homoerotic behavior."** Those who wish to learn what Scripture actually teaches regarding homosexual behavior should read the following books: *The Gay Gospel?* by Joe Dallas, *The Same Sex Controversy* by James R. White and Jeffrey D. Niell, *Welcoming But Not Affirming* by Stanley J. Grenz, and *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* by Robert Gagnon.

Still, in spite of Holy Scripture's clear teaching that homosexuality is not God's will, some argue that homosexuality is genetic and that those who practice homosexuality have no choice. However, current scientific research actually opposes the idea that homosexual behavior is merely genetic! This fact is documented well in *Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth* by Jeffrey Satinover and *Homosexuality: The Use of Scientific Research in the Church's Moral Debate* by Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse. Nevertheless, even if the cause of homosexual desire were merely genetic, this would not require those with such desire to choose to engage in such behavior. In fact, there is more scientific evidence supporting a genetic link for alcoholism. Yet we insist that alcoholics can and should change their behavior, and help is available in our culture to assist them in doing so. In the same way, there is also help available for those who struggle with unwanted same sex desires! Organizations such as Exodus International provide help and support for those who want to leave the gay lifestyle. Just one example of a person who left a homosexual lifestyle is Joe Dallas, author of *Desires in Conflict*. In this book Joe Dallas details his journey out of an active homosexual lifestyle. He is now married to his wife, Renee, and he has two children with her. Other books by Joe Dallas include *A Strong Delusion* and *When Homosexuality Hits Home*.

Finally, the Good News is that there is forgiveness for all sins - including heterosexual and homosexual sin – through Jesus! As Paul says in 1st Corinthians 6:11: **“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 and by the Spirit of our God.”** Even though we will continue to struggle with various sinful desires our entire lives (see Romans 7:14-21 and 1st John 1:8), we can rejoice in the fact that our sins are forgiven through Jesus (see Romans 3:23-24, Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:13-14) and that He will help us to resist the desires of our sinful nature and live according to God's loving plan for our lives (see Romans 12:1-2, Colossians 3:1-17 and Titus 2:11-14).