

# Exchanging the Truth for a Lie: The Bible and Homosexuality

June 30, 2019 - Handout

## Introduction

Goal: 1) Provide a simple overview of the Bible's teaching on homosexuality 2) Provide a brief reply to revisionist interpretations of those passages.

**Preliminary Point:** Sexuality is a good gift of our creator, but like fire it must be contained within boundaries established by God and that are in conformity with how He made man and woman. Fire outside a fire pit is dangerous and causes great harm; likewise, sexuality outside God's boundaries and intention for it is sinful and produces much harm.

## I. Central Passage about Homosexuality in the Bible

**A. Tale of Two Cities.** Genesis 19:1-11. It should be acknowledged that more than homosexuality is the problem in Sodom and Gomorrah (such as rape, lack of hospitality) but homosexuality is at its core.

**B. The Holiness Code.** Leviticus 18 & 20 contain two unambiguous references to and condemnations of homosexual behavior.

*"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." Leviticus 18:22; "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them." Leviticus 20:13*

**Points to note:** 1) **Absolute statements** – these passages represent an **absolute** prohibition of **any** homosexual behavior. They do not just address pederasty, prostitution, or rape, but consensual homosexual acts between adult males. 2) **Other sexual sins** – other sexual sins (incest, rape, bestiality) are mentioned in this section. 3) **Major offense** – homosexual behavior is labeled an abomination (*toevah*: a thing abhorrent, detestable, loathsome, repugnant).

**C. Exchanging the truth for a Lie. Romans 1: 24-27.** Identifies homosexual and lesbian acts as "contrary to nature" and examples of activity illustrating a denial of the truth that brings the wrath of God.

*"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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." Romans 1:26-27.*

**Points to note:** 1) Contrary to nature refers to physical nature (design); homosexual acts contradict nature and God's revealed will for sexuality 2) All homosexual behavior is rejected, not just oppressive forms (such as pedophilia, rape, prostitution)

**D. The Former Life. I Cor. 6:9-11 & I Timothy 1:8-11.** These two passages together refer to sins that cannot be part of the life of a Christian, including homosexual behavior.

*"<sup>9</sup> 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**,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> 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."* I Corinthians 6:9-11

**Points to note:** 1) Two words make up this phrase: *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*. These words indicate the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts 2) These behaviors exclude one from the kingdom of God, along with other sinful patterns 3) These sins are all forgivable and represent the **past** life of some in the Corinthian church. People can and do change.

<sup>8</sup> Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully,<sup>9</sup> understanding 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,<sup>10</sup> the sexually immoral, **men who practice homosexuality**, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, <sup>11</sup> in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted. I Timothy 1:8-11

**Points to note:** 1) the same word as above (arsenokoitai) is used here 2) homosexuality immediately follows the general term for sexual immorality (*porneia*). This list of sins represents the second half of the 10 commandments.

**II. Is the Bible really against Homosexuality?** Some try to dismiss the straightforward reading of the Bible on with the following claims:

**A. "Only 6 Passages address homosexuality". Response:** It is more like 11, but 6 deal explicitly with homosexuality. Almost every general reference to sexual immorality in the Bible would implicitly include homosexuality.

**B. "Jesus never condemns homosexuality". Response:** the Greek word *porneia* is the general term for sexual immorality and was understood by every Jewish teacher of the time to include homosexual behavior. Jesus says that *porneia* is one of the things that defiles a person (Mark 7:14-23). So, Jesus condemns homosexual behavior.

**C. "Sodom and Gomorrah's sin was to be inhospitable". Response:** Jude 7 and II Peter 2:7-10 refer to the sexual sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as what led to their destruction.

**D. "The Law of Moses doesn't apply anymore". Response:** 1) Some of the civil and ceremonial law no longer applies (diet, sacrifices, uncleanness rules), but the moral law is reaffirmed by Jesus and the apostles 2) Paul specifically uses the word *arsenokoitai* for homosexuality. This word is taken directly from the Greek translation of Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13. Paul, the preacher of the gospel of grace, believed that God's moral law still had a use.

**E. "The Bible condemns only oppressive or promiscuous homosexual behavior". Response:** this claim has been debunked definitively in the scholarly literature. 1) Paul's reference to lesbianism confirms that consensual homosexuality was in view 2) The text does not use technical words available for oppressive forms, but general words used that include consensual relationships. 3) The Greco-Roman world knew of all kinds of homosexual behaviors, both oppressive and consensual and monogamous (even marriage). Paul is aware of them all and condemns all homosexual behavior as sin.

Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (2003) was a pioneering book in the field of queer studies and personally homosexual. Responding to the attempt by some to downplay Paul's condemnation of homosexuality he wrote:

*"But such a reading, however well-intentioned, seems strained and unhistorical. Nowhere does Paul or any other Jewish writer of this period imply the least acceptance of same-sex relations under any circumstances. The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by mutual devotion would have been wholly foreign to Paul or any Jew or early Christian."* Cited in Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality*, 86.

## Conclusion

The Bible speaks with one clear and unmistakable voice about homosexual behavior. That message is that it is a corruption of God's design for human sexuality. Revisionist arguments are examples of special pleading and reading one's own agenda into the Bible. It is simply impossible to make the Bible "open and affirming" of consensual homosexual behavior.