

homosexuality:: thinking through the issues from a Christian perspective

Ethnos Gathering, 5.23.04

Introduction:

Why should we talk about homosexuality?

- ▶ Because of all that is going on around us.
- ▶ Because genuine, changed Christians can struggle with homosexual feelings and acting out.
- ▶ Because God is the God over our sexuality.

Things to keep in mind:

- ▶ Our Definition for Today: both sexual feelings toward the same sex and sexual behavior. Though this is simplistic (there are books written on just the terminology!), this will have to suffice.
- ▶ People who struggle with homosexuality are people, people who bear God's image, people just like you and I.

What does the Bible say?

- ▶ Sexuality is great, and is meant for pleasure, procreation, and partnership within the confines of a heterosexual, complementary marriage. (We don't have the time to go in detail- refer to *Welcoming but not Affirming* by Stanley Grenz, or *Straight and Narrow?* by Thomas Reid for a good discussion. See also Gen. 1-2)
- ▶ Sin has negatively affected all of creation, including our biological bodies. (The implications of this are that sex and sexuality are distorted, so that we now experience pain and brokenness in sex, from rape to homosexuality. Also, an implication of this is that it is possible to say that our bodies can be necessary causes for our broken sexuality, but not sufficient- see below for details).
- ▶ Homosexuality is against what God desires; it is a moral sin, a moral evil.

An example: Romans 1:26-27

¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

²¹For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. ²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In 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. Romans 1:18-27, NIV

What it says in context:

As Gentile (non-Jewish) people stopped worshipping God and turned to idolatry, God allowed them to pursue their sinful inclinations to the full, including homosexuality.

This is in the larger context of how God is against both Jew and Gentile because of their sin, and how both are in need of Jesus and His offer of forgiveness and righteousness.

But not everyone interprets this passage this way. Gay theologians, or theologians who advocate homosexuality as being acceptable by God, try and interpret this passage in the following ways:

Alternative View #1: The homosexuality that is condemned is homosexuality in relation to idolatry.

Response:

- The context clearly shows that idolatry (the general sin) is the environment for the specific sin.

Alternative View #2: Paul is not speaking against all homosexuality, but only lesbianism and pederasty.

Response:

- Paul would have specifically mentioned pederasty if he intended to. (Plato did...)

- There is a mutuality between the parties (in pederasty, there is no mutuality)

Alternative View #3: Paul's argument is cultural.

Response:

- Paul appeals to the creation mandates, truths that are above culture.

Alternative View #4: Paul is talking about the Hellenistic Jewish view of Gentile cultures to lay a foundation for his later critique of Jewish hypocrisy. He thus attacks Jewish thinking of Old Testament cultic cleanness, not sin.

Response:

- The context would suggest that we are talking about moral sin (1:18- God's wrath is against...)
- Many of the words used in this passage to describe the situation are used elsewhere in the NT to denote moral sin.

For example: "lust" or "desire" in 1:24. Of the 15 uses in Paul, only 2 usages are positive (1Thess. 2:17, Phil 1:23). Both positives are in autobiographical passages. The rest are in context of moral teaching.

Alternative View #5: Paul was condemning those who were acting against their heterosexual desires ("unnatural"); he does not speak against those today who naturally feel homosexual.

Response:

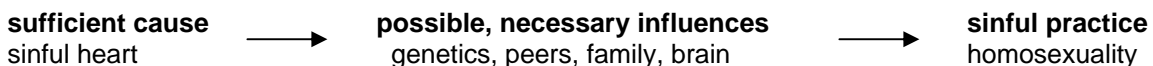
- But Paul, in a sense, is talking about today's sort of homosexuality. Note 1:27- people "burned with passion for one another."
- Jewish and Greek writings contemporary to the NT used the words translated "unnatural" with negative connotation.
- The context shows that there is a turning away from God's design in Genesis 1, against what is "natural" according to God.

The Issues Today:

- ▶ But is homosexuality biological, or "natural?" How can God judge us for something that is biological?

Response:

- Just because something feels natural, that doesn't mean it is morally right for us.
- In regard to biology- see attachment. In general:
 - a. Science has actually not proven there is a direct, biological cause to homosexuality.
 - b. But there may be biological factors that are *necessary* for homosexuality to occur in people.
 - c. This, however, does not mean that the biological factors inevitably, necessarily *cause* homosexuality- you are not destined to be homosexuality because of your genes.



(from *Blame it on the Brain?* By Edward T. Welch, 173)

- ▶ What about homosexual marriage? What should we think about it?

3 Options:

1. We should have homosexual marriages

Pro: compassionate in that it gives the economic benefits that would seem logical and right.

Con: many reasons, most notably how children are affected. See "What's Wrong with Letting Same Sex Couples 'Marry'?" in www.family.org.

2. We should not have homosexual marriages

Pro: prevents the above cons.

Con: is it compassionate? Just?

3. A Third Way- we should have a new economic entity, but not homosexual marriage

Pro: shows compassion, protects concept of marriage if done correctly. This would also mean that we would also give non-sexual, committed economic units fair rights. See "Pick your Shibboleths Wisely" by Daniel Crane, *Christianity Today*, October 2004, pp.60-64.

Con: could very well lead to the cons associated with option #1.

Potential Con: the issue of Civil Rights

Response: If injustice is mistreatment, then that is bad. But refusal of marriage is not mistreatment, since that "right" is not given by God. Rights of women and blacks are given by God- complete equality of human beings. Or, to put it another way: Civil rights is about who you are, not who you choose to be.

Conclusion:

The gospel- for all people, including those struggling with homosexuality (Romans 3:22-24). The Christian community should be a place for people struggling as well.