

# HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE BIBLE, PART I

## The moral reasoning against homosexuality

- homosexuality is a rejection of God's creation design

### Romans 1:18-32

<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

<sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

<sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> 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.

<sup>28</sup> And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup> Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

## God's creation design

- God created human beings as male and female
- male-female marriage union is a reflection of the gospel

### Genesis 1:27-28

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

<sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

### Genesis 2:18-24

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

<sup>19</sup> So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

<sup>23</sup> Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

### Ephesians 5:31-32

<sup>31</sup> "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

<sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

## Questions to be addressed next class:

- (1) Isn't it cruel and deeply unrealistic to expect our LGBT friends not to act on their deepest sexual attractions and to find fulfillment in homosexual relationships?
- (2) If homosexuality is a sin, why would God create people to be born this way?
- (3) Isn't it unfair to ask our LGBT friends to permanently abstain from sex, with no hope of marriage?  
This goes beyond what we ask anyone to do.
- (4) How can love be wrong? Love is love.
- (5) The Old Testament condemns homosexuality.  
But it also condemns eating shellfish, mixing fabrics, etc. Aren't Christians arbitrarily following some laws and ignore others?
- (6) In the past, Christians supported slavery, miscegenation laws, anti-Semitism, all based on the Bible. Just like then, aren't Christians are on the wrong side of history?
- (7) Doesn't the Bible condemn only exploitative same-sex relationships? Does the Bible really condemn committed, long-term gay relationships?

## Homosexuality and the Bible, part I | Notes

### *Two audiences in mind*

- the “not convinced” on the classic, orthodox position on sexuality | hope to persuade you
- those “convinced” but feel tongue-tied on how to explain why | give beautiful vision

### **Begin by acknowledging *long history of bigotry and hatred* against our LGBT friends**

- in 1998, Matthew Shepherd was beaten, tortured and killed for being gay (University of Wyoming)
- in high school, students were mocked and picked on for being effeminate or ‘acting gay’
- the change in culture and the gay rights movement is to be applauded in that sense
- and still acknowledge for many gay youths, life is difficult | struggle teasing, high suicide rate

---

### **The *moral reasoning* against homosexuality**

- there are 5 Bible passages that explicitly condemn homosexuality
- Romans 1 is the lengthiest and most well-known
- also *only passage* where *an explanation* is given | the rest simply express moral disapproval

### **To a secular person, Romans 1 just *smacks you in the face***

- the moral condemnation seems so strong that it overwhelms us
- but it’s important to carefully understand *the logic and flow* of what Paul is saying
- this is key to understanding why the Bible says ‘no’ to homosexuality

### **As read Romans 1, notice Paul is talking about *human rebellion* against God**

- essence of our rebellion is suppression (distortion) of truth of God
- that distortion has vast ramifications for the human condition

**Romans 1** – <sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

<sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

### **The key word here is “*exchange*”**

- God intended for created things to testify to God
- but in our sin, we “exchanged” the glory of God for idols made of created things
- the result of the Fall is an inversion of the natural order | reversal

God  
↑ (testify to)  
created things

God  $\xrightarrow{\text{exchange}}$  idols

## This inversion of God's design *reverberates* throughout the *human experience*

- in particular, human sexuality

<sup>24</sup> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

### Because we “**exchanged**” the truth for a lie

- God “gave up” humanity to sin | the punishment of sin is more sin
- one of the most glaring and obvious distortions is human sexuality



<sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> 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.

### What does Paul mean by “*natural relations*”?

- not “natural” as in the “natural world” | he’s not saying, “you don’t see homosexuality in nature”

### “**Nature**” is Paul’s reference back to the *original creation design*

- this is obvious from the context – all throughout, Paul is making references to Genesis

### So let’s go back to *Genesis*

- try to understand the reasoning and beauty behind God’s design

### Genesis 1:27-28

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

### Wonderful doctrine of *Imago Dei*

- Imago Dei means we reflect God’s character | God made us to be like him, bear resemblance
- notice that essential to the Imago Dei is our *gendered reality*
- we’re not made unisex, but two distinct halves: male and female
- humanity is not undifferentiated sameness – but dual sexuality
- why? this is the key question \*
- part of the answer lies in v. 28 – “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth”
- oh, you need sex to produce children...but can imagine possible to reproduce asexually, or storks!
- answer goes deeper than just reproduction (part of the answer, but we’ll explain more later)

## Genesis 2:18-24

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

### “A helper fit for him”

#### (1) “Helper”

- woman is to help the man
- “help” is not denigrating term – Psalms, “the Lord is my help”
- to help someone means you bring resources and strengths the other lacks
- Adam, alone, is lacking – he needs a helper

#### (2) “Fit for him”

- in other translations, “suitable for him”
- Hebrew – conjunction of two words, “like-opposite”
- man needs a companion who is like him and yet unlike him
- *complementary* – different yet similar

### We see this in the drama of Adam inspecting all the animals

- each of the animals are different/opposite, but not like him

<sup>19</sup> So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

### So God creates a woman

- notice she comes out of the man (created from his rib), signifying equality

<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

### And yet, the woman is clearly and distinctly *different!*

- Adam names her “woman” | Hebrew – *ish* and *isha*
- he recognizes their sameness and yet their wonderful differentness

<sup>23</sup> Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

### Then, in that context, God commissions *marriage*

- marriage is the bringing together of the two halves of humanity – male and female

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

## What is the *ultimate meaning of marriage*?

**Ephesians 5:31-32** – <sup>31</sup> “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

### **Marriage is ultimately about *the gospel* – our union with Christ**

- notice the parallels: we are made in God’s image and yet we are not God
- God and humanity are separate and distinct, and yet we were created to love and be loved by God

### ***Heterosexual marriage is an image of the drama of redemption* – marriage of Christ and church**

- the marriage of Adam and Eve in the garden was always pointing forward to end of Revelation

**Revelation 19:7** – Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride (the church) has made herself ready.

### **Fitting and beautiful that *children come out of marriage***

- only male-female sexual relations produces children
- children are the concrete product of marital love
- out of male-female union in marriage, children are produced | fulfill creation mandate
- every child is to be raised by both halves of humanity, not single parent, not same-sex parents

### ***Homosexuality is the rejection and inversion of God’s beautiful drama of male-female marriage***

- homosexuality lacks the complementary union that makes marriage a pointer to gospel
- homosexuality rejection of the gendered reality of human beings, that we need each half
- homosexuality aborts the deeply meaningful process of child-rearing

### **This is why in *Leviticus 18:22* – “you shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination”**

- “as with a woman” indicates the subversion of God’s good creation design

### **Homosexuality is a *particularly glaring example of human rebellion***

- but it is not the ultimate sin or the worst evil
- part of the full spectrum of human rebellion and brokenness

<sup>28</sup> And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup> Though they know God’s decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

### ***Just as evil as homosexuality is gossiping, disobedience to parents, envy, etc***

- meaning, we’re all broken sinners | something deeply corrupt and evil within all our hearts

**Romans 2:1**

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

***Our response to homosexuality should not be judgmentalism***

- feeling of moral superiority or disgust at homosexuality
- rather, it should be deep sympathy and love (since we are all sinners) – give us humility and compassion but also firmness of love (truth in love) as we speak to our LGBT friends and neighbors
- self-righteous judgment of homosexuality is just as sinful as homosexual behavior itself

**We need to balance the Bible’s “no” to homosexuality with the Bible’s “yes” to love and forgiveness**

---

**Questions to be addressed next class:**

- (1) Isn't it cruel and deeply unrealistic to expect our LGBT friends not to act on their deepest sexual attractions and to find fulfillment in homosexual relationships?
- (2) If homosexuality is a sin, why would God create people to be born this way?
- (3) Isn't it unfair to ask our LGBT friends to permanently abstain from sex, with no hope of marriage? This goes beyond what we ask anyone to do.
- (4) How can love be wrong? Love is love.
- (5) The Old Testament condemns homosexuality. But it also condemns eating shellfish, mixing fabrics, etc. Aren't Christians arbitrarily following some laws and ignore others?
- (6) In the past, Christians supported slavery, miscegenation laws, anti-Semitism, all based on the Bible. Just like then, aren't Christians are on the wrong side of history?
- (7) Doesn't the Bible condemn only exploitative same-sex relationships? Does the Bible really condemn committed, long-term gay relationships?