

# Homosexuality and the Church

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I had a recent conversation with a man in a computer store who saw my clerical collar and wanted to know what church I was with. I replied that I was with The Reformed Episcopal Church, and I hastened to add that we were very conservative, not having been in the news lately. His response was something like, “Oh, you are anti-gay.” It became clear in the ensuing conversation that he was a proud member of a mainline, liberal Episcopal church that tolerated – if not promoted – homosexuality, and he added the comment that God’s love encompassed everything, including homosexuals. What is one to say to this often repeated statement, and what are some of the issues?

The issue behind the homosexual issue is what is the standard for morality, God’s written word, or society? If we do not go by God’s word, then how do we know what God is like? Do we make up our own god by what we think, by what is popular at the moment, by what is politically correct, by what society says? The only way we can know anyone is by revelation, by what the person reveals about himself. Do you know my Uncle Jim? Can you characterize him by just dreaming up ideas about him? If not, what makes us think we can do that with God? God has revealed Himself in His Holy Scriptures, and He does not change.

## *What constitutes a “family”?*

In the beginning God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, one male and one female. We see from this original couple what God had in mind: one man with one woman (“*male and female* He created them,” Gen 1:27) for life with the purpose of companionship and procreation (“Be fruitful and multiply,” Gen 1:28). “Therefore a *man* shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his *wife*, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Here we have God’s definition of a family and of marriage. No, homosexuals are not born that way; rather, *they choose*

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to rebel against the Triune God and His creation order, thinking that they—not God—get to determine what the original design was, or at least what a subsequent “alternative” is.

As psychologist James Dobson, Ph.D., has rightly observed recently, once a “family” is redefined to mean two males or two females, what is to prevent others wanting their “rights,” such as a brother “marrying” his sister, a father his daughter, the “marriage” of two brothers or two sisters, a father “marrying” his son *and* daughter, making “marriage” include three persons, or one “marrying” his/her dog? (Don’t laugh at that, for such unspeakable practices are done.) Once the family is destroyed, our society will quickly degenerate into a cesspool of human depravity that reminds one of the sins of the Canaanites whom God severely judged (read Leviticus chapters 18 and 20). There has been no society that has survived such sinful practices.

### **Are orthodox Christians intolerant?**

First, we must clearly state that all branches of Christianity—and by that we mean Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism—have rejected homosexuality as sinful for 2,000 years. If we include Judaism as the beginning of the Church, we go back another 2,000 years. Second, the only approved form of sexual practice is in heterosexual marriage, so we are not just anti-homosexuality, anti-lesbianism. Third, we are not “anti-gay” in the sense that we are angry with homosexuals, wanting personally to see them “get what they deserve,” for if we got what we deserved, we would also be judged. We are not homophobic in that way or in the sense that we are too good to be around them. We do not think that they are less than human or that they have not been created in the image of the Triune God. But we are biblically opposed to their lifestyle, their agenda to push their “alternative lifestyle” on everyone (intolerant!) as if it were a legitimate choice, and *especially to their agenda to redefine the family.*

Everyone is intolerant of something. We are all rightly intolerant of murderers, thieves, terrorists, and others who hurt society. The moral question is not whether intolerance is ever right but whether it is right to be intolerant of homosexual lifestyle and if so in what way?

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I must add that homosexuals are very phobic about conservative Christians, and many are Christo-phobic, against Christ Himself. They are offended that we believe their practices are wrong, that we believe the Bible, that we teach against their views, proclaiming that we are intolerant, unloving, and prejudiced, while all along the very opposite is the case. We only want them converted to Christ and to stop their sin, for otherwise they will perish under the just judgment of God. Is it unloving to tell people to flee from judgment? Is it unloving to protect innocent children from their practices? We don't think we must affirm their sin to affirm them. We can love them, accept them as persons made in the image of God, without approving their sin.

One great example of loving the sinner while not approving the sin is the woman caught in adultery (John 8). Some think that He changed the Old Testament law about condemning those caught in adultery, but the opposite is the case. When Jesus said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first," the Old Testament law required the witness to cast the first stone and to be innocent of the same sin (Deut 17:7; 19:18-19). Thus Jesus was carrying out the law to condemn her. When no one could qualify as the appropriate witness, He did not affirm her sin but said: "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11).

### **Is the sovereign Triune God's love unconditional?**

It is an incredible distortion of love to define it as unconditional and without righteousness. Indeed, *love without righteousness is perversion*. What would we think of one who said that murder was ok because God's love encompasses all things, all lifestyles, and all people, that His love was unconditional? We would correctly state that such was a perversion of love, that it was not love at all to kill one's neighbor? Such "love" promotes a "god" who only has love but who does not also have righteousness. This would be to create a god after our own image to worship, one who will conveniently never judge anyone for anything but who was only a cheer leader on the sidelines saying, "Do your own thing, I'm for you." This is not the Triune God of the Bible; it is idolatry.

God's love is indeed unconditional, but that does not mean He accepts any lifestyle as legitimate. Do we not remember that *God is not only love but also infinite*

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*holiness?* His commandments are a reflection of that holiness. Once one becomes a Christian, God begins to make the person holy, to change his lifestyle from enslavement to sin to the freedom of righteousness. Salvation is not that God places His approval on a lifestyle we have already adopted, but a deliverance from our sins and we adopting *His* lifestyle *He* has revealed in *His* holy commandments. The Triune God's unconditional love is that He accepts us in Christ, forgives our sins as a free gift (unconditional), and then delivers us from those sins by changing us to love and practice holiness. Do we think that salvation means we get to do just whatever we want? We don't even do that with our own children.

We must forever rid ourselves of the idea that biblical love is freedom to do what we want; that is enslavement to ourselves and to our appetites. ***Biblical love, God's love, is defined as obedience to His commandments:***

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbor; ***therefore love is the fulfillment of the law*** (Rom 13:8-10).

Notice the last words in bold italics. Homosexual relationships are by definition contrary to God's Word and thus unloving. They are a violation of the commandment Paul quoted: "You shall not commit adultery," for if the lesser is condemned (adultery), so is the greater (homosexuality). Indeed, the commandment against adultery means that marriage between a man and a woman is sacred and not to be violated. One must not divorce his wife to commit himself to another man and call that a legitimate relationship; it would not only be adultery but also homosexuality, two terrible sins. Therefore, those who do such things do "harm to a neighbor." Moreover, the law is *His* law, not ours. Indeed, since the Triune God is creator, there is really no moral law that exists but His; and any "law" enacted by any human institution (church, Congress, state, etc) ***is either an application of His law or an act of rebellion.*** There is absolutely no neutrality regarding the Ten

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Commandments. One is either for Christ and His commandments, or one is against Him. And if one is against the commandments of Christ, He is against Christ (Matt 12:30).

### **Are Christians being unloving when they condemn gay practices?**

What would you say if a doctor, after examining a patient, found that the patient had a deadly disease, the disease could be cured 100% of the time, but the cure involved condemning the patient because of his or her lifestyle that led to the disease, and the doctor refused to tell him/her? The doctor said to others, "I have my lifestyle, and he/she has his/hers. What right do I have to tell him/her he/she is wrong?" Would this be love or hate? It would, of course, be a vile act of hatred by the doctor to allow the patient to die. Likewise, we Christians know that the lifestyle of homosexuals is devastating to the family, to society, and to themselves as they self-destruct and will ultimately lead to final judgment if they do not repent. Thus, in love, we tell them what the Triune God has told them: They must repent or perish. This is not a matter of private interpretation, but what the Church has held since the time of Moses because Holy Scripture is clear. In faithfulness to God's infallible Word, we say to repent, which is concern for society, and love for those who are ensnared in such sin. *Those who allow them to perish are unloving.* There is a cure that works every time without exception, and that cure is confessing and turning from one's sins and coming to God the Father through the death and resurrection of God the Son. Such a sinner will then enter the ranks of Christians, seeking to overcome his sins.

### **Do Christians have the right to condemn homosexuals?**

Again the answer is yes and no. We have not only the right but also the obligation to condemn homosexuality if we are faithful to God. But we should realize that such condemnation is not our word against theirs but a record of what God has said. Thus the condemnation is not personal in the sense that we just do not like homosexuals, nor is the condemnation relative to the individual in the sense of just personal, arbitrary choice. Such condemnation is the same we all do when we

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condemn a murderer or thief: It is not personal (we do so in the name of justice), and it is not relative (the murderer or thief does not have the right to do such). The person who raises the question of whether condemnation is right is really wanting to disarm a Christian by making it personal or by making it just a matter of personal opinion.

### **Do not homosexuals in the church have a right to their opinion as to what the Bible says?**

Yes and no. It depends on what one means by “right.” They have the legal right in society to voice their opinion, but they do not have the moral right before the Triune God to contradict Him in His Word, the Bible. We must only think God’s thoughts, not our own. Homosexuals can express their own ideas in society, but they must realize that they will be judged severely at the Last Day judgment for those opinions.

Furthermore, those homosexuals who are in churches should not go against the constitution of their own churches, redefining its morality and beliefs to suit themselves. If they do not believe the Bible, they should go form a social club of some kind and stop pretending to be a church.

As for what the Bible says, the Church with one voice for 3,500 years since the time of Moses has condemned homosexuality because Holy Scripture is crystal clear:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination (Lev 18:22).

<sup>9</sup> Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals [idea here is the effeminate male], nor sodomites, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor 6:9-11).

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<sup>24</sup> Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, <sup>25</sup> who exchanged the truth of God for the 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 vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. <sup>27</sup> Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due (Rom 1:24-27).

<sup>9</sup> Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, <sup>10</sup> for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, <sup>11</sup> according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust (1 Tim 1:9-11).

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev 21:8).

I have been teaching Hebrew and Greek in seminary for years, and I can tell you that the New King James Version is accurate in the translations given above, and these passages from all over the Bible are only a few that could be given.

These passages do not say that monogamous homosexuality is legitimate, but they all declare that whenever men lie with men or women lie with women sexually – whatever the reason – it is sin. They do not say that temple prostitution was only what Paul forbade. But please note in the 1 Corinthians passage given as the second quote above that one can be forgiven of homosexuality: “such *were* some of you. But you were washed. . . .” This forgiveness is conditioned on them repenting, confessing the acts as sin and seeking by God’s grace to turn from such

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acts. Though all cases of such sexual conduct are wrong, how much worse is it for a man to leave his wife and/or children for another man, and even worse still if that man is a bishop! Now we not only have homosexuality but also unfaithfulness to one's legitimate spouse, to one's children, and to one's God in the Church. This is family destruction, which is an abomination to God. If one is unfaithful to one's human bride, he will be unfaithful to Christ's bride, the Church.

When I was the pastor of a church in Amarillo, TX, a woman called me who had just moved to town. She stated that she had left her husband for another woman, and brought her daughter with her. She wanted to know if she would be welcomed at my church. I told her that she could attend, but that I could not serve her communion until she repented of her sin, broke off the relationship with the other woman, and sought forgiveness from her husband. She was indignant, stating in strong terms that she had no reason to repent. She said she was monogamously faithful to her new lover, to which I said that she had not been faithful to her legitimate spouse, so what assurance did she give that she could be faithful now? Furthermore, I gently reminded her that any kind of sex with a same sex person was sinful before God under any circumstances.

Consider what she was teaching her teenage daughter: my wants are more important than the vows I took to love my husband until death; one must put self first; God accepts me without repentance; God is not concerned about sin and holiness. I get to define what sin is.

### **Are not homosexuals born that way, not being able to help it?**

There is no biological gene of homosexuality so that one can't help being that way anymore than there is a gene of pedophilia or a gene of murder, rape, and kidnapping. Homosexuality is a moral problem, not a genetic problem, just like the other items I listed. I've met former homosexuals who were changed by Christ never to go back to the old lifestyle, and were so grateful to God to be delivered. They were also extremely grateful to the Christian who loved them enough to tell them the truth about themselves, God, and Christ so they could be changed.

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We have already seen God's answer above that they choose this lifestyle. In redefining marriage as same sex unions, homosexuals are destroying the family. For all of recorded history, societies have had laws against sodomy, and there is no known society that has survived the destruction of the family. Indeed, when a society (or individual) seeks to go his own way in disobedience to God, it (or he/she) self-destructs against the rocks of God's commandments. God's law is like quicksand: the more one rebels the quicker he sinks into destruction. The family is the most basic unit of society, and once it is destroyed, society self-destructs. Consider that one cannot even have a same sex relationship without either destroying an existing family or without giving up the ability to have children. God places diseases on a society because of promiscuity (Ex 15:26; Lev 26:14-16; Deut 28:58-61).

The modern day push for the lowering of our country's morals to accept homosexuality is rebellion against God and invites His judgment on our whole society. Indeed, if God does not judge us, He'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. And make no mistake that the next item on the gay agenda is to legalize pedophilia, saying a gene made them do it. Once one gives up the vertical (God) in defining morality, there is no objective way to stop the dominoes from falling into greater and worse sin until there is a complete destruction of the family and of society.

In Romans 1:18-32 God gives us the reason people choose homosexuality – idolatry. The Apostle Paul is clear that such people first suppress the truth about God, accept their own moral standard, create a god after their own image to worship, and then choose homosexuality and lesbianism. In other words, idolatry leads to sexual perversion. Rejecting God Himself leads to perversion regarding His image in mankind. If one distorts the original (God), he will also distort the reflection (God's image in mankind). If a denomination chooses these perversions, one can always know that it was because they had **first** turned from the true and living Triune God to a fictional god of their own making, one that just happens to have the same standard for sin that they do! And it is not true, according to Romans 1:18-32, that one is driven to conclude that these sins are acceptable to God by intellectual arguments. No, Paul's point is that *what the heart loves the will chooses and then (and only then) the mind justifies*. Sin and rebellion determine

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intellectual argument, not that intellectual argument determines one's standard for righteousness. Non-Christians are not objective but subjective. Indeed, Paul emphasizes that such people *suppress* the truth about God, all the time knowing they are wrong, using arguments in a form of self-deception to justify a behavior they have already chosen.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, *who suppress the truth in unrighteousness* (Rom 1:18).

Later in the Romans 1 passage, God states that they had suppressed the truth because of their idolatry and that as a consequence He turned them over to same sex relationships for future judgment.

Notice what God says elsewhere:

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed (John 3:19-20).

In both Romans and John, we see people suppressing the truth about God's morality, engaging in deliberate self-deception to justify what their hearts love.

### **What is the issue?**

The real issue is which God do we serve? A biblical definition of an idolater is one who suppresses the truth, who hates the Triune God and His commandments, who wants to be his own god so that he can determine his own moral standards, and obviously does not believe in Adam's sin, rather believing that man is born good, not evil. In the words of Romans 1, he rejects God, accepts himself, and then invents a morality that suits him/her. Satan told Adam and Eve that they could be their own god, "knowing" or "determining good and evil" for themselves (Gen 3:5). Since that time, man has been trying to overthrow the real God and be his own lawgiver, which is idolatry. Welcome to the sexual agenda of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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The recent incident of the Christian judge in Alabama who was removed as judge because he would not remove the Ten Commandments from a state building is a case in point. The judge over him stated that he must uphold the law, *man's* law, and forget about God's law, which the Christian judge refused to do. *The law considered supreme reveals the ultimate god over a nation.* If a nation has God's laws, recognizes them, seeks by the grace of God in Christ to obey them, that nation has the true God for its God. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). The same is true with an individual, namely, the standard of righteousness for that individual reveals his/her true God. Which God does one really serve? Tell me the person's standard for righteousness, and I can tell you who his god is.

We are engaged in the battle of the gods in the USA. Have you noticed that our society is committed to **Christian bashing**? The media will not make disparaging remarks about Islam, Judaism, or Buddhism, but they go out of their way to malign us. The reason is not difficult to see: Satan knows that we represent the true God, that we are the ones who are the most dangerous to the ungodly liberal agenda. We are involved in spiritual warfare, the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent (Gen 3:15), the seed of Christ against the seed of Satan. Observe this passage:

<sup>10</sup> In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. <sup>11</sup> For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, <sup>12</sup> not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you (1 John 3:10-13).

The world hates us because it hates Christ (John 15:18-20). It hates both Him and us because of His standard of righteousness. The ultimate issue is which god is Lord, the Christian God or the many gods in society, and one can tell by the standard of righteousness adopted.

**There is hope for the homosexual:**

We Christians are forgiven sinners, who by the grace of God have come to confess (and still confess) our sins to God through Christ, and who know that we deserve the judgment of Almighty God. We have no righteousness except what Christ has given us. It is our joy to see a person come to Christ in humble submission to Him, to confess and forsake his/her sins, and join His Church through holy baptism. This is what we want for all people, not the least for those who have fallen prey to sexual lusts. *We gladly give the right hand of fellowship to anyone who has committed any sin, including homosexuality, who genuinely repents and comes to Christ.*

Once I was teaching New Testament Greek in my home to a group of men, and one night due to inclement weather only a few showed up. Instead of class, each one gave his conversion experience. One young man told of being homosexual, living only for the night times, dressing like a woman to attract men, hating himself all along. Then he was gloriously converted to Christ! He said that he knew there was a God in heaven when later he saw a nude man and had no desire for him; he had been changed! (If a gene had made him homosexual, he could not have changed.) Salvation does not mean that God accepts us and leaves us the way He found us, but that He accepts us and He makes us into something new. This young man has since married a Christian lady, and the last I knew they were doing fine. She knew of his past, but in Christ all sins are wiped away. Such can be the case for anyone who genuinely confesses his sins, turns from them, and comes to God the Father through the merits of God the Son, trusting in His death and bodily resurrection. **Amen.**