

HOMOSEXUALITY

A Biblical Perspective

Gil Rugh



Homosexuality: A Biblical Perspective

Copyright © 1994

Published by Indian Hills Community Church

Systematically Teaching the Word

1000 South 84th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68510-4499

First Printing: 1994 (500 copies)

Second Printing: 1995 (500 copies)

Third Printing: 1997 (3,000 copies)

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible, © Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977. All quotations used by permission.

Accompanying audio tapes: GRM398, GRM399

Visit our Web Site at: www.ihcc.org

E-Mail us at: ihcc@ihcc.org

FAX: (402) 483-6716

Phone: (402) 483-4541

C O N T E N T S

Foreword	7
Introduction	9
Chapter 1	
<i>What Does the Old Testament Say?</i>	15
Chapter 2	
<i>What Does the New Testament Say?</i>	25
Conclusion	33
<i>Bibliography & Notes</i>	35

F O R E W O R D

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall 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 Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

It is no surprise that the unbelieving world practices such sins. However, it should be noted that this type of behavior is being increasingly accepted, and in some cases encouraged, within the Church. What does this say about the spiritual condition of the Church today? Does the Bible support the claims of those who say behavior such as homosexuality should no longer be considered sin? Are these simply the claims of those who have twisted the Scripture “to their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16)?

In this commentary, Gil Rugh, pastor of Indian Hills Community Church in Lincoln, Nebraska, examines the truth of the Old and New Testaments to present what God’s Word clearly teaches about homosexuality, the “forgotten sin.” It is hoped that this material will help Christians come to a better understanding of God, Who is not only loving, but completely righteous and holy as well.

INTRODUCTION

In today's society, homosexuality has become "the forgotten sin." While Scripture is clear on the subject, the Church has quickly, and meekly followed the world and softened its' stance. This book examines God's revealed truth about homosexuality in both the Old and New Testaments.

Homosexuals are not to be singled out and rallied against by Christians. Their sin is no greater than anyone else's. It was James who said more damage is done by the tongue than by any other sin. Christians need to be careful not to gather up our self-righteous robes and attack a particular sin that we, ourselves, do not struggle with. We are to examine this subject as sinners redeemed by grace, not as superiors with authority. Nevertheless, the Church needs to be clear on what the Bible teaches about homosexuality. My concern is not that the world has deemed homosexuality an acceptable form of sexual expression, but that the Church has willingly done so.

It should come as no surprise that the world has declared homosexuality a behavioral norm. In a September, 1992 editorial in *The New York Times*, Dr. Richard Isay asserts that a "consensus is growing among mental health professionals that homophobia, the irrational fear and hatred of homosexuals, is a psychological abnormality that interferes with the judgment and reliability of those afflicted."¹ Isay is chairman of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Issues Committee, of the American Psychiatric Association.

How quickly the world changes. Not long ago, psychiatrists believed homosexuality was a form of mental illness. Now they say homosexuality is normal, while those who oppose it have a mental

illness. It is easy to see the total lack of scientific validity of psychiatry or psychology when one understands how their theories are established. Whatever the popular view of the world may be, the “psychological sciences” are sure to support that view.

Notice the definition of homophobia according to Dr. Isay. It is the “irrational fear and hatred of homosexuals.” Does this definition imply there is also a *rational* fear and hatred of homosexuals? This definition puts anyone who opposes homosexuality in a box. They are irrational and hateful. The problem is, this definition cannot apply to a Christian addressing the subject of homosexuality according to Scripture. Irrational thoughts and hatred have nothing to do with what God says about the subject, but that is not how the world sees it. If a Christian condones homosexuality, he is in open rebellion to the Word of God. On the other hand, if a believer opposes homosexuality, the world says he is irrational, hateful and cannot make a reliable judgment. Also, if a person does not accept homosexuality as a perfectly normal expression of love, the world says he is mentally ill. There is no way to win.

What positions are Christians taking regarding homosexuality? A recent article in *Christianity Today* by Andres Tapia proclaimed “Homosexuality Debate Strains Campus Harmony.”² The article began, “Christian college campuses across the country have become the setting for an intense struggle over homosexuality.”³ That, in itself, reflects a changing attitude. Homosexuality used to be one of the black and white issues all Christians agreed upon: homosexuality was sin. Now, it is in the forefront of intense debates raging on Evangelical Christian campuses across the nation. Proponents of homosexuality assert that gay rights include freedom of speech, academic freedom, and freedom of theological beliefs.

The only question that needs to be addressed is that of theological beliefs. The subject of homosexuality as a sin has nothing to do with the Constitution of the United States of America, but it has everything to do with the Word of the Living God. The issue is, “What does the Bible say about homosexuality?”

At Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, great turmoil was raised as an anti-homosexual rights speaker arrived on campus. After more than one thousand students attended his speech, the administrators decided that they must also present the pro-homo-

sexual view. In a similar situation, a group of self-defined “Christian” students from Eastern College (formerly Eastern Baptist College) in St. David, Pennsylvania, marched in the gay rights parade in Washington, D.C., our nation’s capital. Gordon College in Wenham, Massachusetts, also has had serious debate over this issue.

On the other side, the Christian and Missionary Alliance’s Nyack College in New York did not renew the contract of a teacher who proudly displayed a button that read “support gay rights.” The president of the university was also fired for defending the teacher’s actions.

In his *Christianity Today* article, Tapia went on to write, “most of the schools involved in the recent controversies either officially make, or are considering the distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual conduct.”⁴ This is disastrous reasoning. When someone becomes a Christian, he becomes a “new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The description of someone as a homosexual, or an alcoholic, or an adulterer, or whatever area of sin someone was involved in, has validity *before* he becomes a believer. When someone has experienced life-changing salvation through Christ, however, the power of sin no longer controls that person. He is a “new creature.” There is no distinction between orientation and conduct in the Bible.

One reason the Church has gotten into so much trouble is due to the authority that has been given to psychiatrists, psychologists, and sociologists. Consider what Tony Compollo, professor of sociology at Eastern College said concerning the subject of homosexuality: “Evangelicals have been undeniably cruel and mean. I feel that the way the Church is behaving toward gays is an embarrassment to Jesus.”⁵ The article continues, “these stands, as well as the large number of students who wrote letters to their school newspaper condemning the bitterness of the debate, seems to have reassured some homosexuals that it might be safe for them to remain enrolled at Christian colleges.”⁶

Another concern is the political activity of accrediting associations. Some states have passed homosexual rights legislation. Richard Gathro, Vice President of the Christian College Coalition said,

“Some Christian schools might become vulnerable to losing accreditation, or to lawsuits.”⁷

The “coming out” of homosexuals who say they remain true to their Evangelical Christian heritage is galvanizing the theological debate. These students are often respected by their peers and teachers, and their faith language sounds familiar. They feel they are being good Christians. The issue is not what “feels right,” but what is *biblically* right. Correct biblical interpretation has nothing to do with feelings and emotion. Christians must take a position on a subject by looking at the theology first, second, and last.

When emotions and feelings become part of the consideration in an issue such as homosexuality, we begin to question the validity of the Bible. Thoughts creep in such as, “I know that person who said he’s gay. He’s pretty nice. He doesn’t cause any problems. I respect his opinion in class. He publicly displayed his faith in Christ last year. What’s the big deal? Let’s just go on with our lives and not make an issue out of his homosexuality.” That all may be true, but Christians are not called to “get on with our lives.” They are called to take a biblical stand with Christian love. The character of Christ must characterize all who are believers in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Often, those who are genuine Bible-believing Christians are called “narrow-minded,” “judgmental,” and “bigots” because of the stand taken against the things welcomed by the world. The stand Jesus Christ took against *all* sin, however, could not be any clearer. He was perhaps the most “narrow-minded,” “judgmental,” “bigoted” person to ever walk the face of the earth, as viewed by this world’s standards.

Within the homosexuality debate is the argument that claims scriptural acceptance of homosexuals. A leader in this movement recently asserted that Scripture forbids only the act of homosexual prostitution. He asserts that a monogamous homosexual relationship based on love is within the bounds of a scriptural relationship. He said, “If homosexual students on Christian campuses do not find support, they will go outside of the school to find it. If gay students can’t date on campus, where are they going to find someone to share their life with?”⁸ How does this question have anything to do with the issue? Are we to believe that we cannot tell a homosexual he is

in sin, because he might leave the campus of a Christian school, without finding a homosexual, lifelong partner? The Apostle Paul instructed Christians on how to deal with such situations. He said, “deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5:5).

The article in *Christianity Today* concludes, “Because they are often respected, likeable and spiritually committed students, the issue moves from being solely a political and moral debate to being an agonizingly personal one.”⁹ Well, that is just not true. Homosexuality is a biblical issue, not a political issue. How we “feel” about it is not relevant. What the Bible says about it is completely relevant.

For believers, the pressure from the world to conform to its’ standards is intense. Romans 12:1, 2 reminds us how we are to live as children of God. Paul says, “I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” When believers allow themselves to be harnessed by the standards of this world, they are being conformed, rather than transformed.

There are two foundational points I would like to examine before delving into the biblical view of homosexuality. The first is found in Isaiah 8:19: “And when they say to you, ‘Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,’ should not a people consult their God? *Should they consult* the dead on behalf of the living?” In this passage Israel was turning to other things besides the Living God to set their standard. They were even consulting the mediums and the spiritists. In Isaiah 8:20, Isaiah goes on to say, “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.” In other words, if someone disagrees with the revealed Word of God, it is because they are in darkness. God’s Word is absolute truth and is the only true standard by which we must live.

The second point that must be understood is that Scripture is not to be reinterpreted to fit particular needs and wants. This is what the proponents of “Christian” gay rights are doing. In 2 Peter 3:14 we read, “Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be

diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.” Peter continues, “As also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Peter 3:16,17). Christians must be wary of those who distort God’s truth.

In the Church today, the Scripture is being twisted over and over again, and many believers are being misled by unprincipled men. Behavior which the Bible unequivocally condemns is being welcomed with open arms, while biblical standards and commandments are being called “outdated,” “narrow-minded” and “unloving.”

CHAPTER ONE

What Does the Old Testament Say?

The Old Testament view of homosexuality begins in Genesis. God's purposes for man and woman are seen in the biblical account of creation in Genesis 1 and 2. The acceptance of homosexuality in the Church can be traced to an erosion of the understanding that men and women have very distinct roles that differ from, yet compliment each other. In the past, the majority of churches recognized the truth that the Bible defined homosexual behavior as sinful. More recently, however, the roles of men and women began to be blurred to the point where the only difference was that women could have children, while men could not. Thus, these churches created a uni-sex humanity. Suddenly, homosexual behavior was not so hard to accept.

Genesis 1:26 recounts the creation of mankind. Moses wrote, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' " Continuing in verse 27, we are told, "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." In Genesis 1:31, Moses tells us the opinion God had of His creation, "And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good." This includes, at that point, the one man and one woman that God had made.

In Genesis 2 an elaboration of the creation account is given. In Genesis 2:7 Moses declared, "Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." Then God placed man into the

garden He had created. God created the first man. He was perfect. He had no flaws, no imperfections, and no shortcomings. Yet something was missing. In Genesis 2:18, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Incidentally, the word "helper" is not a put down as so many feminists love to claim. It is a word that was used for God Himself in the Old Testament. God knew that man was not complete by himself. He needed a helper who complemented him. He needed a helper who was fitted to him.

First, however, God created the animals (Genesis 2:19). Why did He do this? He wanted Adam to realize that he was alone. It was not that God all of a sudden realized Adam wouldn't be happy having a cow as a mate. God wanted Adam to be receptive of the woman He was going to create for him, and understand that he was not yet complete.

Genesis 2:21-24 gives the account of the creation of woman, and establishes the foundation for the marriage relationship of all men and women. Moses said, "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place. And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. And the man said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother; and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." This account is foundational to all Scripture. The Old and New Testaments build continually and consistently on the truth of the creation of man and woman with distinct roles within the marriage relationship.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul referred to the creation account to make his point that God established a certain order of authority. Paul reminds us, "For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake" (1 Corinthians 11:8, 9). Men and women were created differently. Adam was created from the dust of the ground, but Eve was created from Adam's rib. God created man and woman differently for a reason. He could have created both man and woman from dust, but God did not want two

separate, independent entities. He wanted two people who were fitted together, complementing each other.

A woman is the perfect counterpart for a man. She is necessary for the man to completely fulfill his responsibilities before God. Only those with the special God-given gift of celibacy have the ability to meet these responsibilities without the help of a marriage partner. Consequently, we understand that God did not create men and women to go their own separate ways, but intended a man and a woman to be together, helping each other in a lifelong marriage relationship.

The establishment of the marriage relationship is seen in Genesis 2:24. Adam and Eve began as one flesh. He was part of her, and she was part of him. The bond established in a marriage relationship supersedes the physical relationship between a man and woman. It also supersedes the relationship between parents and children. This bond between a husband and wife is expressed through the sexual relationship. Although the relationship goes beyond sex, it is this sexual union that expresses the oneness that God intended for the husband and wife.

In the New Testament, Matthew 19:4-6 validates what the Old Testament says on this subject. When asked about the subject of divorce, Jesus said, "Have you not read, that He who created *them* from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." Jesus condemned the Pharisees for not knowing the truth of Genesis 2. Not only did Jesus emphasize that relationships are to be between males and females, He specifies that relationships are to be between one male and one female, for an entire lifetime. Men and women are perfectly fitted to meet one another's needs.

Today, the Church is following the world's pattern. In 1972, 76% of all adults were married. By 1992, that figure had dropped to 54%. It is apparent that Christian men need to get back into the Scriptures and take a spiritual leadership role in their families. A man is to leave his mother and father and cleave to his wife. We should not be surprised that the world rejects the Word of God concerning marriage, but it is appalling that those within the Church also reject

His Word concerning marriage.

In the New Testament, Hebrews 13:4 reminds us that there are consequences to rejecting the Word of God. God said, "Let marriage *be held* in honor among all, and let the *marriage* bed *be* undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge." When men and women are called before the judgment throne of God, the question will not be, "what was the law and accepted practice in your state?" The question will be "what does God's Word say?" That is the divine authority.

The problem today is that the Church has rejected the roles God outlined for men and women. In Christian homes across the country, daughters are encouraged to act exactly like the sons in the family. There is no distinction between the roles of men and women. As the world becomes more rebellious and contrary to the mandates of Scripture, so too, does the church that is not grounded in the Word of God.

It is easy to understand how these types of churches have come to reject the established male and female roles found in the Bible. When gender lines are erased, what does it matter if a man has a sexual relationship with another man, or a woman with another woman? They love each other don't they? Surely God understands that this is the 1990s. This is the worldly attitude that many churches are taking, but it is in direct opposition to the Word of God.

Another popular movement today is male and female bonding. It is not wrong for men to get together, or women to get together, and enjoy each other's company. The idea, however, that our closest bond on earth is with those of the same sex is a blatant lie. Our closest bond on earth is to be with our husband or wife. God has provided the perfect helpmate for us through that person. This is why it is so important that the scriptural position on men's and women's roles be clearly taught. When we don't have a clear understanding of Scripture, it is only a matter of time before we are lured from the truth of the Word of God by the "unprincipled" teachers Peter warned us about.

Rebellion against the Word of God is usually stronger in one area than another. This is a direct result of the fall of mankind seen in Genesis 3. Since that time, every man and woman has been on a course of rebellion against God, rebelling in one area at one time,

and another at another time.

For example, homosexuality was once viewed as sinful behavior in our society. Now it is viewed as an acceptable lifestyle, and it is openly encouraged. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were also in this situation. Their prevailing sin was sodomy (unnatural sexual acts with members of the same sex). Many proponents of gay rights say that Sodom and Gomorrah cannot be considered as a scriptural basis for the sin of homosexuality because these homosexual relationships were not between two loving, monogamous homosexual partners. Rather, they claim that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah had to do with the fact that sodomy was forced on those who did not willingly participate. In other words, homosexuality was not the sin, rape was.

These same people also quote Ezekiel 16, saying that the real downfall of Sodom and Gomorrah was their love of materialism. Certainly the people of Sodom and Gomorrah had many sins. Their corruption ate away at their moral fiber and created an environment that was open to decadent practices. The book of Jude specifically says God judged Sodom and Gomorrah for their “gross immorality,” and because they “went after strange flesh” (Jude 7). The focus of Jude was their sexual sin, not their love of money.

Genesis 19:4, 5 is also clear on this point. In reference to the angels disguised as men who were staying with Lot, Moses said, “Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.’ ” Some people have twisted this verse, saying, “This doesn’t mean the men of Sodom wanted to have sex. They just wanted to get to know, and be friends, with these new people.”

Lot’s response to the men who came to him, however, indicates otherwise. Lot said, “Please my brothers, do not act wickedly. Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof” (Genesis 19:7,8). This response makes clear that Lot understood what these men really wanted. They wanted to have sexual relations. In our society, it is impossible for

us to understand how Lot could offer his own daughters for the sexual fulfillment of these men. In biblical times however, the worst thing that could happen was to have a house guest come under harm. Lot was forced to offer his daughters to save his guests.

Genesis 19:9 illustrates the attitude people have when they are told their behavior is sinful: "But they said, 'Stand aside.' Furthermore, they said, 'This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge.'" Not much has changed since the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. When you confront someone about their sin, what do they normally say? They usually say, "Who made you the judge? Go away and live your own life."

What happened to Sodom and Gomorrah is clear. God judged them based on their sensuality and utterly destroyed the cities (Jude 7). Leviticus 18:22 warns us that homosexuality is sinful, "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination." An "abomination" is something defiled and offensive to God. Homosexual activity defiles the individual who practices this behavior, and also defiles the nation that tolerates this activity. This was the case in Sodom and Gomorrah. In Leviticus 18:24, 25 God said, "Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. For the land has become defiled, therefore I have visited its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants."

God then warned Israel in Leviticus 18:28-30: "So that the land may not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you. For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people. Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God."

Scripture is absolutely clear: there is to be a difference between the people of God and the people of the world. To be perfectly blunt, it is a puzzle how the homosexuality issue has become such an intense debate on Christian college campuses across the nation. The Word of God forbids the practice of homosexuality, period.

Some advocates continue to twist and distort Scripture, claiming that all references to homosexuality refer to the practice of male

or female prostitution or rape. They theorize that if two homosexuals have a loving, monogamous relationship, God does not condemn their union. This is a blatant lie. Leviticus 18:22 refers to all acts involving homosexual behavior. It doesn't matter if they love each other or not. God says homosexuality is sin.

The same is true for bestiality. Bestiality crosses the line that God has established. This is evidenced in the fact that a human cannot have offspring with any kind of animal. Homosexuality crosses the line God has established as well. Homosexuals move from the natural to the unnatural which Romans 1 emphasizes so strongly. Adultery or fornication between a male and a female is a perversion of the natural relationship God intended for man and woman, but homosexuality and bestiality move into the realm of the unnatural. They are activities that are contrary to the laws of creation.

How seriously does God take homosexuality? Leviticus 20:13 declares, "If *there is* a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them." Leviticus 20 is in the context of the holiness of God and His people. Leviticus 20:7 says, "You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord your God." Again in Leviticus 20:26, God said, "Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine."

Supporters of homosexuality often claim this passage refers only to incest, but they limit the context. Leviticus 20 is in the context of incest, bestiality, and homosexuality. When the door is open to activity such as bestiality, other corruption and sinful behavior follows close behind. Obviously homosexuals are not put to death today, but the seriousness of homosexuality and all sin is made clear in Leviticus.

Another passage in the Old Testament that concerns homosexuality is found in Judges 19. Here there is an account that is very similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. In Judges 19, a Levite man traveled to Judah to bring back a concubine who had been unfaithful to him. She was living in her father's house. As they traveled back he decided to stay in the Benjamite city of Gibeah. While waiting at the city square, a man invited them to spend the night at his house. In biblical times, it was customary to wait in the

city square until someone offered their hospitality.

After they arrived at the man's house, the men of Gibeah approached. "While they were celebrating, behold, the men of the city, certain worthless fellows, surrounded the house, pounding the door; and they spoke to the owner of the house, the old man, saying, 'Bring out the man who came into your house that we may have relations with him' " (Judges 19:22). This is almost the same situation that occurred earlier in Sodom and Gomorrah. How could God's own people do this? This was supposed to be a safe city in which to stay. The sin so repugnant to God had become a characteristic of some of the people of God's elect nation.

This is a perfect example of the total depravity of man. Sinful behavior that once took place only in cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah began to take place in the nation of God's chosen people. "Then the man, the owner of the house, went out to them and said to them, 'No, my fellows, please do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not commit this act of folly' " (Judges 19:23). The owner of the house offered his daughter as Lot had. The men of the city took the visitor's concubine and raped her all night long until she died. The visitor then cut his concubine into 12 pieces (one for each tribe of Israel). He sent the pieces throughout Israel, proclaiming what happened to him and his concubine while he was staying in a city that was part of the nation.

The other tribes condemned the actions of the men in the city of Gibeah saying, " 'Now then, deliver up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove this wickedness from Israel.' But the sons of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the sons of Israel" (Judges 20:13). Even the people of the tribe of Benjamin who did not participate in this sinful activity believed that those who did had every right to do what they wanted, and were willing to defend their right to participate in that behavior. In fact, they were so adamant in defending the rights of the wicked, that 25,000 of them died for the cause.

Did this make any sense? The tribe of Benjamin was almost annihilated while defending the rights of a group of bi-sexual rapists. Do you see how corrupted they had become?

Many are concerned that the Church is on the same track today. The same path to acceptance that the tribe of Benjamin took in

Judges 19 seems to be the way many churches are going.

The Old Testament is very clear that all homosexual activity is sin. It is an abomination to God. The Good News is that God has provided a solution for all our sins: the God-man Jesus Christ. The New Testament reveals the forgiveness, redemption and freedom from sin (including homosexuality), that God has provided through Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER TWO

What Does the New Testament Say?

Romans 1 is a very familiar and foundational New Testament passage. Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith.’ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:16-18).

It is imperative that we see ourselves as God sees us. This passage illustrates that truth. Man is guilty of suppressing the truth that God has revealed about Himself. God is revealed even in creation (Romans 1:20). Because man will not acknowledge God’s “invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature,” he is without excuse.

God has given enough revelation of Himself in creation alone to condemn a man. Sufficient evidence exists to prove that man is in continual rebellion against God and His revelation. It is out of this rejection that the sinful character of man is illustrated. In Romans 1:21, Paul said, “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” This is in reference to total darkness, both spiritual and moral. Those who have their foolish heart darkened live in a realm that does not let in the light of the truth of God’s Word. They exchange “the glory of the incorruptible God” (Romans 1:23) and create their own false god.

Those who reject God must accept the judgment of God. He turns them over to their own sinful desires. He does not cause them to sin, but He withdraws Himself from them and allows them to pursue the sin that they love. They get to do what they want. This is a display of God's wrath because He allows the unbeliever to be consumed and destroyed by his sinful desire.

Paul said, "God gave them over" three times in Romans 1:24, 26, 28. The natural sinful character of man is allowed to play itself out. The result is depravity. Paul said, "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error" (Romans 1:26-27). Homosexuality is given as an example of the kind of behavior that is a result of the rejection of God. It is not the only example of sinful behavior that is listed in Romans 1, but it is the example that is given the most attention.

The list of depraved behavior at the end of Romans 1 only serves to illustrate that the ills of society cannot be cured apart from God. The root of the problem is mankind's rejection of a righteous God and His Word. A clear picture of that is the example of homosexuality in Romans 1:26, 27. Romans 1:26 says they "exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural." Homosexuals and lesbians are in direct rebellion to the established rules of creation that God outlined in Genesis 1. The "unnatural function" occurs when women "exchanged the natural function" and "in the same way" men "burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts."

Romans 1 is God's evaluation of homosexuality and lesbianism. It has nothing to do with homophobia or irrational fear and hatred of homosexuals. It has everything to do with understanding that God is sovereign. Ultimately everyone who rejects God will stand before the judgment throne of Christ to give an account of his deeds. In Romans 1:26, 27, the Creator clearly indicates that homosexuality violates the natural relationship between a man and woman that He established at creation. It is sin.

What about the intense desires homosexuals have for one an-

other? Often gay people say, “I have known I was a homosexual since I was young. Even then, I had a burning desire to be with other men/women. That’s just who I am.” Well, that is not the way Paul deals with homosexuality in Romans 1. This is not a denial of the fire that is burning within a homosexual. However, God defines that “burning” as the consequence of rejecting Him and living in sin.

Today, many people—even Christians—are saying that those who oppose homosexuality on biblical grounds are not caring enough, and don’t truly understand homosexuals. Romans 1:26, 27 tells us in no uncertain terms that God understands homosexuals completely and identifies their activity as a mark of depravity.

The end result of sinful behavior is made clear in Romans 1:32. “Although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.” Remember the account in Judges 19 when over 25,000 Benjamites died as a result of their approval of the homosexual/raping activity of the wicked men in that city. The principle is clear: those who give approval of sinful behavior are worthy of judgment along with those who practice such things. The position of the Church should be obvious. Christians cannot in any way approve or support such behavior. This does not mean to stop showing love to people who practice such things, but there is a difference between showing love and showing approval.

First Timothy 1:8-10 addresses this situation as well. Paul said, “But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching.” It is clear that homosexuality is completely contrary to the truth of the Word of God with which Paul had been entrusted (1 Timothy 1:11). It is classified among activity that is considered ungodly and sinful, being placed alongside such sin as murdering one’s parents, immorality, lying, and kidnapping.

It is interesting that all these sins have increasingly become ac-

cepted in our society. Many cases of parental murder have been heard in courts across the nation during the past several years. Sentences of the guilty are reduced in some cases because of alleged verbal or physical abuse. Psychologists testify that the murderers had reason or excuse to kill. These examples and those involving adultery and other sins, indicate that the nation as a whole gives hearty approval to those who practice these types of activities.

It should not be shocking that the world considers homosexuality acceptable behavior. Those who have rejected the one, true, Living God dwell in a realm of complete spiritual darkness. When the Church embraces homosexuality as normal, however, it raises serious questions as to the spiritual condition of those who voice acceptance. Second Peter 3:16 says, those who twist the Scripture do so to their doom: "Which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."

Paul warns us about such behavior as homosexuality. He said, "Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). Those who continually practice these types of activities will not inherit the kingdom of God. Why? Jesus said to Nicodemus in John 3:3, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Unless one is born from above, no matter how the Scripture is twisted, he will not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul warned us directly: "Do not be deceived." Those who twist and distort Scripture to their own liking will come up with all kinds of arguments why they are right, but the Word of God stands true. "Do not be deceived . . . homosexuals . . . shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

Can a true believer fall into these types of sins? Yes, a true believer can fall into any kind of sin. David fell into adultery and murder. However, those two incidents stand out in his life. He was not continually practicing adultery and murder, then trying to defend it by twisting Scripture to fit his needs. These actions were out of character for King David. He recognized his rebellion to God and repented of his sin. This is how a true believer reacts when he is confronted by the truth of Scripture. David didn't whine and complain.

He didn't say, "This isn't fair. I love Bathsheba. Surely God will take that into consideration. Uriah's murder was an accident. Surely God understands my situation. I mean, the law was written years ago. It is time for God to update His Word." David didn't do any of these things. Instead, after he was confronted with his sin he said, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Samuel 12:13) and repented of his sinful activity.

This raises a serious question concerning the spiritual condition of those who continue to live a homosexual lifestyle while claiming to be believers in Jesus Christ. As we come to the Word of God, we are warned not to be deceived. God has no place in His kingdom for people who reject the truth of His Word. Who am I to judge? I am no one, but the Almighty God determines who enters His kingdom. His Word says those whose lives are characterized by the behaviors listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (everyone who has not come to trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ for salvation) will not enter heaven. This includes homosexuals. Can a homosexual who denies God's Word time after time, and continues to live a gay lifestyle be a true Christian? According to 1 Corinthians 6, the answer is "no."

Recently, I read an article in which a pastor of a church on the West Coast allowed a young man to be a member of his church while still practicing homosexuality. The young man died of AIDS. Previously the pastor had told him he could not be in leadership in the church, but he could attend the church and still be involved in homosexual activity. In other words, the man was told he could be a Christian and still practice homosexuality. As the Church, how far are we to let that go? We must rely only on Scripture. For example, how much homosexual behavior did Paul allow in the church at Corinth? According to 1 Corinthians, the answer is "none."

So, what are we to do? Society says, "People are born homosexual. They can't help who they are." What is the correct answer? In 1 Corinthians 6:11 Paul writes, "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 Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." Praise the Lord. He has given us the answer. Jesus Christ came to earth to wash sinners, to sanctify us, to set us apart for God so we might be declared righteous. Scripture does not say Christ died so

we may continue to live in sin, and anyone who says so is in direct opposition to the Word of the Living God.

Don't miss the beautiful promise in 1 Corinthians 6:11. Paul, writing under divine inspiration said, "Such were some of you." *Were* is in the imperfect tense, which indicates a continuous action that occurred in the past. Paul is saying, "some of you lived a life of fornication, adultery, homosexuality, covetousness and drunkenness, but now you are believers in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He has cleansed you of your sin, and you are no longer the sinful person you used to be." This is why it is an error for someone to say "I'm a homosexual Christian." That statement is a contradiction in terms. God says when someone becomes a Christian, he is a new person (2 Corinthians 5:17). His homosexual behavior was characteristic of his former lifestyle.

People ask, "But isn't the issue that we should not practice sin? Does it really matter if someone claims to be a homosexual as long as they are not practicing?" According to Scripture, it does matter. Isn't this the whole argument of Romans 1? Practice flows out of who you are. When people reject God, activities such as homosexuality flow out of them. God says this type of behavior is an identifying characteristic of those who stand in rebellion to Him and His Word. When a Christian says "I'm a homosexual," he is actually saying, "I claim to be a person whose normal activity is openly rebellious against God and His Word, but that's okay because I don't practice those activities anymore." If that person is really a Christian, that statement is right. He doesn't practice that type of activity anymore. However, according to 1 Corinthians 6:11, he can no longer call himself a homosexual. That was his title in the past. Someone who committed murder before he became a believer doesn't say, "I'm a Christian murderer," because that's what he was in the past. His life has been changed. The same is true for all sinful behavior, including homosexuality.

Salvation has been reduced to the point that it is only a word. People say, "that's great you're saved, but you're still a homosexual," or "that's great you're saved, but you're still an alcoholic." Statements like these are not found in Scripture. Romans 6:6, 7 identifies what happens when a sinner is saved: "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, that our body of sin might be done away

with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.” When we believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ, all that we were before is nailed to the cross at Calvary, along with our old body. We are no longer enslaved to sin. Paul continues in Romans 6:17, 18: “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.”

There are times, however, when our old sin lifestyle tries to rear its ugly head. We have all had this experience. However, the promise God gives us as believers is that we are no longer enslaved to sin. We are enslaved to righteousness. The power of sin to rule our lives has been broken. Sometimes the struggle seems almost too much to bear. As Paul said, “For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate” (Romans 7:15). Sometimes our bodies would like to indulge in the sins of the past and taste the sweetness of forbidden waters. Why does a man abandon a lovely wife and have a sexual relationship with another woman? As Proverbs 9:17 declares, “bread *eaten* in secret is pleasant.”

The Puritans called these our “bosom sins.” These are sins that have a special appeal to us. It is much easier, of course, for me to see your bosom sins than it is for me to see mine. We need to be careful that we don’t begin to feel comfortable with our own bosom sins, while we openly attack the bosom sins of others. That does not mean that we are not to take a strong stance against sinful behavior such as homosexuality, but we need to have as much disdain for our own sin as the sins of others.

Paul emphasizes the provision that has been made for our sin in Romans 7. A believer in Jesus Christ has been set free from the power and authority of sin in his life. If that sin is homosexuality, he will be able, by the grace of God, to live a normal, righteous life. This is the reason God makes us “new creatures” in Him. His intention is that we are able to serve Him in righteousness.

How does God allow us to overcome the power of sin? Are we, like the popular television ad says, to “just do it?” In Romans 8:1, 2 Paul says, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has

set you free from the law of sin and of death.” The law demanded righteousness, but it could not enable anyone to become righteous. Therefore, the law served to condemn everyone without providing an answer to that condemnation. When Christ died on the cross He provided freedom from that condemnation.

Paul went on to say, “For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:5, 6). The Spirit of God is the power of God given to all believers to live righteously in our earthly bodies. Notice the end of Romans 8:6. Paul said that the mind of the flesh is “death,” while the mind filled with the Spirit is “life and peace.”

The battle between the flesh and the Spirit that we examined at the end of Romans 7 is resolved in Romans 8. God says that the Spirit brings “peace.” Paul continued in Romans 8:8-11, “And those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.”

It should be clear now why it is impossible for someone to say, “I am a Christian homosexual.” A believer is freed from the power of the flesh. If you are not freed from the power of the flesh, that is an indication that the Spirit of God is not in you. If the Spirit of God is not in you, you are not a true believer.

That is the reason homosexuality must be dealt with just as Scripture addresses it—as sin. When we begin saying it is a genetic condition, or a result of the way our parents treated us, we have denied the Word of God. Homosexuality is a sin that is the result of the fallen condition of mankind, but Christ died so that we can have life. We can bow before Him, turn from our sin and cast ourselves on His mercy. He promises that when this happens He will wash us and cleanse us of all our sin. He will remove the power of sin from our lives, even the sin of homosexuality.

CONCLUSION

So, how are we going to please God? The unregenerate man does not have that ability. In order to please God, we have to die to the flesh. We have to nail our bodies to the cross of Christ by believing in His finished work of providing forgiveness for our sins. When we do this, He gives us the ability to please and serve Him.

Therefore, the truth of the Word of God is not proclaimed because we hate homosexuals. His Word is proclaimed because it contains a message of life and *freedom* for *all* who sin, including those who commit the sin of homosexuality. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of salvation and His name is the only name under heaven that has the power to save us. We have to begin by recognizing sin as sin. Homosexuality is sin. That is the barrier today, because our society believes that homosexuality is just “the way someone is.” Satan works diligently to convince people that their behavior is anything but sin. If our behavior is sin, we are guilty before a holy God.

Some would argue that if behavior is traced back to a “genetic condition,” “parental abuse,” or something else, it is okay because the person is not to blame. The truth of God’s Word is clear. The glorious promise from Him is that there is no sin too strong, there is no sin too tough, there is no sin too bad, that cannot be abolished by the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Praise God for the Gospel of our Lord. There are many people who claim to be believers that have never come to understand their sinfulness before a righteous and holy God. The solution is to bow before Him, the One who loved you and died for you. When you do this, believing that He died for you personally, you will be set free, privileged to live as a new person. You will remember what you were, but by His grace you will now be a child of the living God.

B I B L I O G R A P H Y & N O T E S

1. Joseph Sobran, "Today's Witch Doctors," *The Charlotte Observer*, September 10, 1992, p.11a
2. Andres Tapia, "Homosexual Debate Strains Campus Harmony," *Christianity Today*, November 22, 1993, p. 38-40
3. Ibid., p. 38
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 39
6. Ibid., p. 40
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.

Other Books by Gil Rugh

Assurance: Our Seal and Pledge
 Baptism: Truth or Tradition
 Bible Study Tools for the Layman
 (The) Bible Workbook: What Is It All About?
 By Faith: Abraham
 By Faith: Noah
 Calvinism & Arminianism
 (The) Church: God's Program for Ministry
 Church Discipline—An Evidence of Christian Love
 Deliverance Workbook
 Demonization of the Believer: An Unbiblical Teaching Exposed
 (A) Different Gospel: An Evaluation of the Teachings of Robert Schuller
 Division & Diversion
 Divorce on Trial
 Election: Whose Choice?
 Endurance: Standing Firm in a Throw-Away World
 Evangelism: Treading the Roman Road
 Freedom From Addiction
 Giving: A Result of Grace
 Homosexuality: A Biblical Perspective
 Instruction to Husbands, Fathers & Their Wives
 Instruction to Wives, Mothers & Their Husbands
 Living the Life
 Marks of the True Believer
 Prayer
 Promise Keepers and the Rising Tide of Ecumenism
 Prophecy Update 1996
 Provision or Penalty
 Psychology: The Trojan Horse
 Rendering to Caesar
 Reversing the Reformation
 Revival and Revival Meetings
 Spiritual Gifts
 Statement of Faith and Constitution
 To Earth With Love: A Study of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ
 To Tie the Knot or Not: A Biblical Study of Marriage and the Single Life
 When the Bible Doesn't Say
 Willing to Pay the Price

Other Tracts and Brochures by Gil Rugh

How To Study Your Bible
 Lordship Question: What Does a True Believer Believe?
 Pare! Y Piense A Donde Va (Spanish tract)
 Statement of Faith
 Stop! And Think About Where You Are Going
 What About Tongues?