

HOT TOPICS – HOMOSEXUALITY

“Remedy for Homosexuality” (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Genesis 39:1-13)

The Bible makes clear that God condemns homosexuality as a sin that He will judge. God has not changed His opinion on that in the twenty first century. The Bible reveals that homosexuality is a sinful choice as a consequence of rejecting God’s authority. It is no more or no less than wrong thoughts and wrong acts. We inherit our sinful nature from our first parents but specific sins are not tied to our genes. So homosexuality is a sin that emanates from a stream of other sins.

The Gospel is about repenting of sin and not celebrating it. Homosexuals don’t need therapy or counselling but salvation, because homosexuality is a sin. One does not show love to the homosexual by denying that homosexuality is a sin or by trying to dilute the teaching of God’s word on this subject. Sin of any kind always damages those who engage in it. The Bible defines true love as a love that, *“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth”* (1 Cor. 13:6). There was no one more loving to sinners than the Lord Jesus Christ yet He continuously confronted sin. If we deny homosexuality as sin, we deny the homosexual sinner the means of salvation. Al Mohler makes a valid point,

Liberal churches have redefined compassion to mean that the church changes its message to meet modern demands. They argue that to tell a homosexual he is a sinner is uncompassionate and intolerant. This is like arguing that a physician is intolerant because he tells a patient she has cancer. But, in the culture of political correctness, this argument holds a powerful attraction. Biblical Christians know that compassion requires telling the truth, and refusing to call sin something sinless. To hide or deny the sinfulness of sin is to lie, and there is no compassion in such a deadly deception.

Although God hates the sin of homosexuality He has a love for the homosexual, as He has for all sinners, *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). This love enables homosexuals to be delivered from the penalty and power of their sin. The Gospel is for homosexual sinners just as much as for heterosexual sinners.

Just as it is a sin to argue that homosexuality is not a sin, so it is a sin to argue that homosexuality is not a sin that cannot be escaped from. It is not the unpardonable sin. All sexual desires can (and should) be subjugated to God’s word. Homosexual sinners are redeemable. Jesus Christ’s power has not diminished, as He is *“the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever”* (Heb 13:8). The gospel is still *“the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”* (Rom. 1:16). The blood of the Saviour can wash away every sin, as *“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”* (1 Tim. 1:15). There is hope for every homosexual to experience this change from the inside out, *“if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17).

It doesn’t matter how dark has been the path of the sexual sin or how deep has been the spiral of addiction, the Gospel can set a person free. Jesus said that He, *“came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”* (Luke 5:32). So if you are willing to admit you are a sinner, you are a prime candidate for Christ’s deliverance. There is nothing too hard for the Lord. He specialises in the hopeless cases. When a person trusts Christ alone for salvation, the old life

passes away in the new birth. In this new life, sin's dominion is broken and the Spirit of God lives inside of you.

PROOF FROM CORINTH CHURCH

The city of Corinth was the Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire. Luxuries from all over the world were available, and the vices of the world were also found there. It was a thoroughly morally depraved city and its own name was a byword for the grossest debauchery and corruption. Greek and Roman authors in the centuries before the rise of Christianity often referred to Corinth as the city of fornication and prostitution. The Greeks had coined the proverbial term *corinthiazesthai* (literally, "to play the whore, or to live a Corinthian life") to describe immorality.

In his epistle to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul lists some of the city's characteristic sins,

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Paul then revealed that some of the members of the church at Corinth had openly practiced these sins including homosexuality before they were converted,

And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11).

However, Paul made clear that these former homosexuals were no longer living that lifestyle, "*And such were some of you.*" This sinful sexual activity was a thing of the past because, "*ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*" Because of the regenerating power of God, these former homosexuals were empowered to live new lives. Their former sins were not to be part of their new life. That is why Paul urged the Corinthian brethren to "*flee fornication*" (1 Cor. 6:18) rather than to flee to fornication!

OTHER EXAMPLES

Down through the ages, the power of the Gospel has proven that it can deliver those ensnared in this sin. Recently in America there were two prominent examples of this. In October 2013, former editor of *Young Gay America*, Michael Glatze married a wife after living an openly homosexual lifestyle for more than a decade. Glatze made national headlines in 2007, when he "came out" of homosexuality after converting to Christianity. He testified that there is freedom in Christ, "I do believe that homosexuality is a flaw, a mistake, a distortion and something from which one can be completely restored."

In 2012 Rosaria Butterfield published her autobiography, "*The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey Into Christian Faith.*" Before she was converted Rosaria Butterfield was a radical lesbian activist and English literature professor at Syracuse University who specialized in Queer Theory. She had no time for the Bible and stated that, "I despised Christians." Today Butterfield is a mother of four and happily married to a pastor in the

Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. When Professor Butterfield was living a lesbian lifestyle, she was confronted with the Bible and admitted, "I fought against it with all my might." She went on to reveal,

Jesus triumphed. And I was a broken mess. Conversion was a train wreck. I did not want to lose everything that I loved. But the voice of God sang a sanguine love song in the rubble of my world. I weakly believed that if Jesus could conquer death, He could make right my world. I drank, tentatively at first, then passionately, of the solace of the Holy Spirit. I rested in private peace, then community, and today in the shelter of a covenant family, where one calls me "wife" and many call me "mother."

When a true Christian is born again, he leaves his sinful way of life behind, "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (2 Cor. 5:17). True repentance always produces a changed life. There is no other possible alternative offered in Scripture. Through the power of the gospel and the new birth we have the ability to do so.

If a homosexual claims to have been born again and still continues on in this lifestyle, the Apostle Paul makes clear that such a person is not a true Christian (1 Cor. 6:9-10; cf. Rev. 21:8, 27). There is such a thing as a former homosexual believer but there is no such person in the Bible as a "homosexual Christian." It is a theological oxymoron as much as a "Satanic Christian."

DEALING WITH HOMOSEXUAL TEMPTATIONS

The Bible promises that the power of the sin of homosexuality is broken when a homosexual repents of his or her sin. However, the Bible does not promise that he or she will never face temptation concerning his or her past life of sin. In fact you become an even greater target for the tempter. The devil would dearly love to snare a Christian with a reputation for moral purity with such a sin. **A Christian can be tempted to sin in this area.** However, there is no sin in the bait of temptation, for even the Lord Jesus Christ was tempted yet He was sinless.

This world we live in is not heaven. Temptation is a sign that we still live in a fallen world. Every Christian has to fight a daily battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. All of us will struggle with various sins until the day we die. Our sanctification is a constant battle that must be won one victory after another. The cessation of hostilities in this war only ends in glory. John MacArthur gives good pastoral advice to the temptations of homosexual desire for a former homosexual,

It will always, and I tell people this, no matter what your sin patterns are, if you've been engaged in them long enough, the sin may go away gradually and slowly, you may find greater victory, but the memory will be there. And Satan always has a way and the flesh always is open to recycle iniquity. Do you notice that in your life? Sins you committed in the past long ago forgiven, the devil brings back the memory of those sins, sometimes even makes the excitement of those sins a sin in itself. So there's no guarantee in this life that the memories will go away. There's no guarantee that you're going to be perfect in this life. That's not going to be true. But there will be forgiveness, there will be victory and there will be joy and peace and confidence in the forgiveness that's found in Christ.

There is always grace to overcome the temptation, *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”* (1 Cor. 10:13). So no one has any excuse to give into this sin. God will not allow a former homosexual to be put in a situation where he has to give in to this sin. There is always a *“way to escape”* sooner or later. However, this *“way to escape”* may not necessarily mean that God will remove a believer from the temptation, but He may just place him in a position to endure it with God’s grace. It also should be noted that this verse does not promise that the *“way to escape”* is easy or even swift.

Great humility and constant dependence on God is needed to find this *“way to escape”* (cf. Prov. 3:5-6; Zech. 4:6; Mark 11:22-24; John 15:5). In the preceding verse, Paul warns, *“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”* (1 Cor. 10:12). No one can stand confidently and boast that he or she is immune to the power of temptation. The Bible is warning us that the first step to dealing with temptation is to beware of the attitude that says, *“It couldn’t happen to me.”*

Sexual sins begin in the mind. This is the great battleground between the flesh and the spirit. If a person wins the victory here, he or she can overcome the temptation when the thought arises. However, if a sexual temptation is not immediately cut off, it can lead to a series of sinful thoughts, which is very difficult to resist. Jesus made this point that it must be judged immediately it enters the mind when He said,

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (Matt. 5:27-30; cf. Job 31:1)

It is notable the Lord gives no exceptions to sexual infidelity, *“whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her.”* Barton makes a helpful observation,

Jesus declared lustful looks to be sin. God is not bound by our privacy—our thoughts and emotions are as visible to him as our actions. From the divine perspective, they are actions. This, in part, explains their sinfulness. Lust also creates an offense before God by misusing one of his most powerful gifts—the capacity to reflect.

Jesus’ point about cutting off our bodily members here is seemingly figurative, as a removal of the physical member does not necessarily change the thoughts. The principle that He is teaching is that radical action is required to deal with the source of temptation. We may have to change friends, throw out certain literature, cut off the internet etc. As believers there are times when passing thoughts of temptation strike unexpectedly, but we can certainly choose where our heart and mind will rest and reflect on. God has given us the ability to switch off something in our minds we don’t desire to dwell on. Simply switch topics and cut off the old one.

There are tools that a believer can use to overcome temptation. God promises to give us power when we pray for help, *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain*

mercy, and find grace to help in time of need? (Heb. 4:16; cf. Matt.7:11). The Word of God is another vital tool. It is powerful (Heb. 4:12) and can keep us from sin (Psa. 119:11) and guide our path to walk aright (Psa. 119:105).

We are also called to take active steps to remove our minds from places of obvious temptation, *“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes”* (Psa.101:3; cf. 1 Cor. 6:18; Eph. 5:3). Our desires are rooted in what we have been feeding our five senses. We should avoid companionship with those who will lead us into temptation, *“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners”* (1 Cor. 15:33; cf. Psa. 1:1). For instance, a former homosexual would be foolish to go to former homosexual haunts or maintain close friendships with active homosexuals.

By contrast, we are to saturate our minds with godly conversations, godly music, and Scripture (Philp. 4:8-9). Immerse yourself in serving others (Mark 10:44-45) and in the spiritual life of a Bible-believing church where you can be nurtured and be a blessing (Heb. 10:25). There you will find the accountability, encouragement, opportunities to serve others, and the prayers of your fellow believers. Right thinking is not coincidental. It is the product of a mind actively choosing to dwell upon good things.

Former sins cannot be undone but we can change our future lives. Purity demands sacrifice, as any battle is painful. But purity is what honours God and will be worth it because the pure in heart see God (Matt. 5:8). Resist the devil with all your might and with God’s help Satan will flee from you. That is God’s promise, *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). However, James warns us that before we can stand up to the devil, we must bow in continual dependence before God. No one can beat the devil in his or her own strength. If the serpent could snare Adam and Eve in a perfect environment without sin natures, he will have no difficulty in snaring any of us in sin.

EXAMPLE OF JOSEPH

In Genesis 39, Joseph faced a very powerful sexual temptation by the wife of Potiphar. This woman was probably very alluring and she repeatedly tried to entice this young, handsome man into adultery. He did not need to go looking for this temptation - it came looking for him in the form of this woman. There were two critical forces at work here in this temptation – the inner attraction of the flesh and the outer bait of this woman. Joseph wonderfully demonstrated how to be victorious over a powerful temptation. He proved that giving into it is not inevitable. We need to note carefully his response:

(1) Joseph did not procrastinate – he *“refused”* (v8). Don’t flirt with sin. Act quickly to judge the sinful thought. When you are tempted to do wrong, just say no.

(2) Joseph called sin a *“sin”* and *“great wickedness.”* He did not dilute, rename, focus on the pleasure associated, or reason with sin (v9). As Steve Cole says, “Joseph’s resistance wasn’t accidental or natural. He had made a previous commitment to moral purity and he had a strategy for resistance already in place.”

(3) Joseph recognised that sin was primarily against God and that God saw everything (v9; cf. Psa. 51:6). We can reason that others deserve to be sinned against but never God.

(4) Joseph recognized that sin can affect others such as Potiphar (v9) – doubtless, he had witnessed to this man, which would make the discovery even more heinous.

(5) Joseph confessed his faith to the one tempting him – he faced down her enticement with righteous boldness.

(6) Joseph kept himself busy in his God-ordained duties (v11). He avoided the place and person bringing this temptation. The sad story of Samson reminds us of what happens when a man hangs around places of temptation. Don't hang around with the Mrs Potiphars (or even Mr Potiphars) of this world or listen to their enticing words promising sexual gratification in sin. Remember, it is all a lie.

(7) Joseph fled the place of temptation when faced with no other choice (v12) – we need to be direct at times, even if we risk being impolite (2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 10:13). This woman was the only one that he did not have authority over so he had no other option. Doubtless, he did not trust himself to always refuse by hanging round the place of immediate temptation.

Not every believer has resisted the bait of sexual temptation. Joseph showed how to resist whereas David is an example of how to fail. A lack of self-control in this area has devastating consequences for our testimony and brings God's judgment (Prov. 25:28; 2 Sam. 12:9, 11, 14).

The fact that overcoming homosexual temptation is more difficult for former homosexuals is definitely not an excuse to succumb to the sin of sodomy. "It is very hard to resist" is not an excuse God will accept from a former homosexual. If we do not take advantage of the divinely provided "*way to escape*," (1 Cor. 10:13) we are without excuse. Remember, God is not obligated to give us two or three further opportunities to escape if we reject the promised first one.

CONCLUSION

Christians are called to be always "*speaking the truth in love*" (Eph. 4:15). Therefore, our attitude and words to homosexuals must be a balance of condemnation for the sin and compassion for the soul of the sinner. However, our compassion for the sinner must never allow us to compromise the truth of the Bible. We must never deceive those who are perishing by diluting God's view of their sin. That balance is the essence of biblical love.

Homosexuality is a perverted sexual lust that has become out of control and can never ~~can~~ be satisfied. The activity is itself a judgment from God on the individual. Once a man or a woman chooses to engage in this activity they spiral deeper and deeper into the addiction of sexual sins in the same way that those who are addicted to pornography and adultery do. But there is hope if he or she recognises it as a sin and repents.

God wants homosexuals to be saved and delivered from their sin. Neither homosexuality and adultery, nor any other kinds of sexual sins are outside of God's forgiveness, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9). God can close the closet! Homosexuals can "come out" from their sinful lifestyle! As Christians, we have the only message of hope for homosexuals. Let's share it.