
Homosexuality

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Homosexual behavior, whether male or female, is one area which reflects an alarming erosion of national moral standards. Unprecedented boldness is being manifested in the demands homosexuals are making. Others who deny involvement in this aberration have nevertheless become champions of these people.

One reason why Christians are deeply concerned about this problem is that a nation's tolerance or intolerance of homosexuality is one indication of the nation's spiritual condition. When Israel drifted away from God, it tolerated various evils, including sodomy (1 Kings 14:24). When Israel returned to God, homosexuality was not tolerated (1 Kings 15:12).

The Assemblies of God believes all faith and conduct must be evaluated on the basis of Scripture. Since the Bible speaks to the issue of homosexuality, it must be considered the authoritative rule by which a position is established.

Homosexuality Is Sin

Human reason sometimes considers homosexuality to be a psychological problem, a physical condition, or the deliberate choice of an alternate life-style. Scripture considers it sin against God and man. The church's concern about this problem is not a matter of discrimination against a minority group. This is a moral issue. The Bible makes this very clear.

1. Homosexuality is sin because it is contrary to the principles of sexuality which God established in the beginning.

When God created man, "in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). After God had created the man, He indicated it is not good for man to live alone (Genesis 2:18). It was for this reason that God created a companion suitable for man (Genesis 2:18). It should be noted that man's loneliness was not remedied by the creation of another man, but by the creation of woman.

When God brought the woman to him, Adam 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," The Scripture then states: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:23, 24).

In the creation of mankind God established principles of sexuality by which the human race was to develop. Psychologically this relationship was sound. Physically the relationship was natural. Sociologically it established the ideal family unit. The Biblical concept is that human sexuality ideally is a heterosexual, monogamous relationship.

When people choose to be homosexuals, they reject God's principles of sexuality. Their aberrant sexual behavior results in sin against the nature of sexuality which God established (Romans 1:27). And they establish a social unit contrary to the divine instruction of the man leaving father and mother and cleaving "unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

In His discussion with the Pharisees Jesus reiterated the principle of sexuality which God established in the beginning (Matthew 19:4-9). He pointed out that the only approved life-style apart from heterosexual marriage was celibacy for the kingdom of heaven's sake (Matthew 19:10-12).

2. Homosexuality is sin because the Bible refers to it as evil.

When God called Israel to be His nation in a distinctive sense, He miraculously provided for its deliverance from Egyptian bondage. But God did more. He provided a code by which His people were to guide every aspect of conduct. Among the laws relating to morals, specific reference was made to homosexuality.

In Leviticus 18:22 God commanded: "Thou shall not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." Then in Leviticus 20:13, the commandment is reinforced with sever penalty for violations. The record states: "If a man also lie with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."

This prohibition is reiterated in other portions of the Bible.

In Romans 1:21-27 Paul recorded the results which followed in the lives of those who rejected God and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. They dishonored their bodies between themselves. They changed the natural use of sex into that which is against nature. They were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness. They were without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful.

In Paul's day the city of Corinth was notorious for immorality. It was not only the crossroads of commerce, but of vice and immorality as well. Because the church was being established in this city, it was important that people understood how God perceived immorality of every kind.

The record is very explicit. Paul wrote: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" Then he continued: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10). C. K. Barrett in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* indicates that the word translated "effeminate" refers to catamites, while the word translated "abusers of themselves with mankind" refers to sodomites. These two expressions thus refer to both the passive and active partners in male homosexual relations.

In his letter to Timothy Paul wrote that the Law was made "for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly, and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind [homosexuals] . . ." (1 Timothy 1:9, 10). These people are identified as ungodly in contrast to those who are described as being righteous.

Scripture consistently identifies homosexuality as sin.

3. Homosexuality is sin which comes under divine judgment.

The ancient city of Sodom has become a synonym for homosexuality. While other evils existed in this community, sodomy was prominent. The homosexuals of Sodom were so depraved that they threatened to abuse visitors to their community. The historical record indicates they became violent and tried to break down the door of the house in which Lot entertained his guests. Only divine intervention spared Lot and his household from their evil intentions.

These people became so depraved it was necessary for God to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:4-11, 24, 25). The severity of judgment on these cities was of such intensity that it is used as an illustration of divine judgment both by Peter (2 Peter 2:6) and Jude (Jude 7).

Homosexuals Can Be Saved

While Scripture makes it clear homosexuality is sin and will come under the judgment of God, it also indicates homosexuals can be saved. Homosexuality is a moral problem, and only God can help the sinner. Nothing is impossible with God.

In the church at Corinth were former homosexuals who had been delivered from the power of sin by the grace of God. In 1 Corinthians 6:9 Paul listed homosexuals among those who cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Then in verse 11 he wrote: "And such were some of you." This is in the past tense. They had been homosexuals, but they had also been delivered from this sin by the power of God.

Scripture makes it clear that the efficacy of the Atonement is unlimited for those who accept it. There is no stain of sin so dark that it cannot be removed. John the Baptist announced: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Paul wrote: "For he [God] hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

John wrote: "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).

Through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, people, regardless of the nature of their sin, can be made new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17).

God's plan of salvation is the same for all. The homosexual who wants to be delivered from the penalty and power of sin must come to God in the same way other sinners come to God.

The act of turning to God for salvation includes both repentance and faith. There must be an acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Saviour. While these aspects of conversion may be simultaneous rather than in sequence, Scripture makes it clear they are both involved.

Jesus, in His instruction to the disciples prior to His ascension, indicated that repentance and remission of sins should be preached (Luke 24:47). Since repentance represents a change of mind in which there is a turning from sin, the person coming to God must recognize the sinfulness of sin. This includes not only the sin of Christ-rejection, but other attitudes and conduct contrary to the teaching of God's Word.

Like the Philippian jailer who asked what he must do to be saved, those desiring salvation must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30, 31)--believe that He can save from the power as well as the penalty of sin. Obedient faith, like repentance, is a condition of salvation.

Christian Attitude Toward Homosexuals

Christians are not only concerned with what the Bible teaches about homosexuality, but also what the attitude of Christians should be toward those involved in this practice. Some sins seem more reprehensible than others because they not only affect the pervert but often involve recruitment as well. For this reason Christians must be sure their attitudes toward homosexuals are in harmony with the teaching of Scripture. They must on the one hand avoid the sentimental credulity which results in tolerance of this behavior. On the other hand they must not overlook opportunities to help those who want to live according to God's Word.

Caution must be exercised as opportunities for witnessing develop. Believers must trust the Holy Spirit to guide them in distinguishing between those who honestly want God's salvation and those who may be recruiting sympathizers for homosexuality as an alternate life-style.

Scripture warns believers: "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things [immorality described in verse 5] cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Ephesians

5:6). It continues to warn that Christians are not to be partakers with them or have fellowship in "the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:7, 11).

The Church cannot condone what God condemns.

If homosexuals reject God's offer of salvation, Scripture places them outside the bounds of God's kingdom along with others who reject Jesus Christ. For this reason they cannot be accepted into the fellowship of the Church.

However, when those involved in homosexual perversion are really looking for salvation through Christ, Christians should do all they can to help. As the love of God is shed abroad in the believer's heart, this love will be manifested to all. Like God, the believer can love the sinner while at the same time hating the sin.

In other words, believers must be true to God and His Word in helping homosexuals recognize the sinfulness of their ways. They should testify to the transforming power of God and the fulfilling life there is in a right relationship with Him. They should pray for them and do all that is possible to help those who want the blessings of God's mercy and grace.

They will then have the satisfaction of knowing "that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:20).