
The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality..." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

This morning I am inclined (I pray by the prompting of the Holy Spirit) to set aside our current study in the book of Acts to address openly, publically and biblically an issue that has been at the forefront of the cultural war for some time and one that is making so much headway into both our pop and political thinking that it not only is redirecting people in general away from a Christian worldview, but sadly, it is also moving many in the Christian community away from a legitimate and solidly biblical Christian worldview.

What I have to share with you today may be seemingly "intense" for being issued on Father's Day. But in truth, if our fathers in particular do not discipline themselves and instruct their families in such matters, the evangelical church will continue to weaken and dwindle. Because of the subject matter, I do have to give this message a PG rating. I will do my best to be careful with my terminology in the presence of our younger and more sensitive hearers.

And so, to begin with, I would have you turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 4. I would like to read for you a very simply, straight-forward verse. In 1 Thessalonians 4:3 we read:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality.

God's will is that His people be "sanctified" – that is "set-apart"; different, distinguished, clearly living by a standard defined by God Himself. And just what is God's will? God's will that that you and I abstain, stay clear, keep ourselves from "***sexual immorality.***" But just what is sexual immorality? To be sure, the standard and understanding of our culture has increasingly accepted things that 50 years ago would have been publically rejected. For the sake of expediency, let me give you a very simple definition of what is meant by the phrase, "***sexual immorality***" or "*porneia*" in the Greek. Sexual immorality is any sex act that is committed outside the marriage bed (as described in Hebrews 13:4); marriage being biblically understood as one man united to one woman. Beloved, this is God's norm; God's standard; God's expectation. It is what God established from the beginning with Adam and Eve. It was reaffirmed by God in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ as the only "God given expression of sexuality" (Matthew 19:3-6). Thus, any sexual activity practiced, fantasized or otherwise dwelt upon; whether in action or in thought is sexual immorality, something to which God has willed for each and every believer to abstain.

Let me remind you that when Paul wrote this command and expression of the will of God to the congregation there at Thessalonica, he did so from a city named Corinth. I mention this because Corinth was truly one of the most sexually deviant cities of the first century. A person could indulge himself or herself in pretty much any perverse activity desired. Paul was in the midst of such a culture and he reminded the believers to abstain from anything that was not God's norm. You see, what the Bible says in normal is truly normal. Anything else is abnormal, less than worthy of the God who created us as well as less than worthy of who we are, being created in the image of God. And so, any sexual sin, as we will come to see (and in fact just any sin) undermines who we are meant to be in Christ; those who are set apart and holy unto God in all our behavior and thought.

I have started with 1 Thessalonians 4:3 because I do not want to be misunderstood or accused of doing something that I am not doing. Our culture is pushing upon itself and the church a non-normal, unbiblical, unworthy expression humanity understanding of sexuality. We are in the midst of a new sexual revolution where pretty much anything is tolerated and even seen as acceptable. But there is one particular sexual deviation that is at the heart and core of this sexual revolution. What I wish to address in general is a biblical understanding of what God has clearly established as the "norm" for human sexuality and how that norm is being twisted and under-minded by a non-Christian worldview, a non-Christian way of thinking that is even creeping into churches. It is important that we address this issue because, for good or for bad, churches, for spiritual, practical and even legal reasons, are being forced to make a decision,

The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution

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declaring where they stand on the matters of same sex marriages and the acceptance as "normal" homosexual relationships.

Now, to say that homosexuality is a controversial issue is an understatement. For many of us here, well, we are behind the times. For the controversy is no longer whether or not homosexuality is to be an accepted expression of human sexual behavior; at least culturally speaking. No, the controversy and contention now is whether or not it is even right; or if someone has the right to express any view of human sexuality that regards as ungodly or unnatural any form of sexuality that does not line up with what the Bible teaches.

I am saddened to inform you that at this time the Church has lost the culture war; particularly as it relates to sexuality. The failure of the church to be engaged and involved both personally and publicly has contributed greatly to the rapid decline of morals and we are leaving our children a world that our parents and grandparents could never have imagined. And while saddened on one level; this does not leave us without purpose or hope. For while our society is spiraling downward at a rapid pace, we are yet left with the same mandate; the same calling, the same commission. Regardless of what our culture does; if we would be faithful, obedient followers of Christ, we must go and make disciples of all the nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and teaching them to observe/obey all that Christ Himself has commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). I believe that as our culture moves out of the grey on such issues; things will by default become more black and white. It will be easier to discern what is good and what is evil; and with such clear distinctions, I believe the opportunity for the church to see people's lives changed by the proclaiming of the gospel of Jesus Christ will increase.

But to see this opportunity realized, we must be ready. We must be armed; armed with the truth of what the Bible really teaches about sin, self and salvation; armed with the experience of the *grace* that saved sinners such as us; and armed with a deep love and compassion for those who are trapped in hell-damning sins of all kinds, taught by the culture that seeks to justify their behavior rather than compare it to the only standard of proven morality and character; the Word of God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The focus will be on what I have termed "human sexuality" and how that relates to a proper Christian worldview. I hope I have been clear that ultimately any form or experience of sexuality outside the marriage bed; of one man and one woman, is sin. It does not matter what form that sexual deviation takes, anything other than what God has ordained is, by its very definition, outside the will of God. What we, as evangelical Christians are being faced with aggressively is the acceptance and celebration of a whole host of sexual deviations, but most especially of homosexuality and the tolerance of same-sex marriages. And so, it is to this I intend to speak directly. However, never forget that homosexuality is just one of many sins, sexual or otherwise, that if continued in to the neglect or rejection of the life changing truth of God's Word, will result in eternal damnation.

As anyone who has paid attention to the news over the past many months knows, the homosexual agenda has conquered much new ground. At current, the whole issue has become one of equal rights seeking to legalize same-sex marriage. For many of us in evangelical Christianity, we find ourselves scratching our heads, trying to figure out why so many people don't seem to care. I am surprised how many people there are out there that are utterly indifferent to homosexuality. The whole discussion for them is simply a matter of intellectual curiosity. They are not sure one way or the other and since it not a personal matter, since they are most likely neither a Christian or a homosexual, they invest little time in it. Of course there are others for whom this issue is very personal. For the one who might identify him or herself as a Christian, or as a homosexual, or as a Christian struggling with homosexuality, or as a Christian with friends or family that are involved in homosexuality, this is a matter of most importance. Wherever you find yourself, please know that my intention in this message is to be gracious, loving, and truthful.

The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution

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I would suspect that it would come as no surprise that as we look at human sexuality and the Christian worldview that the Bible teaches that homosexuality, along with a list of other sexual deviations is sin and that sexuality is only to be expressed in the God-ordained, God-honoring institution of marriage between a man and a woman. This is the meaning behind Paul's exhortation to abstain from sexual immorality.

Now before anyone might think I am over-emphasizing this, let me make a couple of things clear. First, I firmly believe that all people, all Christians, and all non-Christians alike have sinned and have fallen woefully short of the glory of God. When we speak of equality, this is one thing in which every single person is equal with others; sinners who have missed God's mark regardless of the type of sin that had led us there. There is not one unique person anywhere in this regard.

Second, my intention is to present to you some logical, biblical ways in which we as Christians are to respond to those who are trapped in any kind of sexual sin; particularly the sin of homosexuality. I cannot over emphasize two words that much reflect the attitudes and actions of every believer when it comes to confronting those engaged in sexual deviations; those two words are "grace" and "compassion." As a Christian, as a pastor, as a church, neither I nor this congregation must ever condone insulting, mistreating, or reacting with violence toward any person engaged in unbiblical thinking in these matters.

Because I believe that the issue of what is acceptable sexual behavior will only continue to be pushed and pressed, I would have us look at what the Bible, the only authoritative standard and guide, has to say on these matters. On a side note, for those who reject the Bible as a standard, then there is no standard at all by which to determine what constitutes love between two people; and while today we are face with the increasing reality of same-sex marriages (which, by definition is not a marriage at all), it will only be a matter of time before polygamy, pedophilia, incest and bestiality all have to be considered as tolerable; for the standard is being removed.

For this week and next then, I wish to accomplish two things. First, to give you a working understanding of what the Bible teaches regarding human sexuality, particularly as it relates to what we see taking place around us with the increasing acceptance of homosexuality; and then, second, to educate you on having a proper Christian response to all these things. To accomplish the first goal of giving you a working understanding of what the Bible teaches regarding homosexuality, we will consider first the Old Testament's teaching, followed by the New Testament teaching and then we will consider specifically what Jesus Himself taught that has a direct bearing on this matter.

The elders have recently adopted the Chicago Statement on Biblical Application which contains three articles of biblical affirmations and denials regarding marriage, family and sexual deviations. Additionally, the elders have adopted a position paper on the matter of marriage, divorce, family and sexuality. These will be posted and available to you on our website and we encourage you to read them as they reflect a proper biblical understanding on these matter.

Now then, let us look to our only standard for faith and practice in all matters, the Word of God. This morning I will take you through some of Old Testament passages that address the matter of sexual deviations, including, but not limited to the practice of homosexuality. Let me make one more comment before we begin. I have been using the term "sexual deviations." What is a sexual deviation? As we noted at the beginning, God has just one place where He has sanctioned the experience of sexuality, the marriage bed. That marriage bed has been defined by God as being occupied by one man in union with one women. A sexual deviation is any experience of sexuality outside this definition. A deviation is a going in a different direction. A deviation is generally not a good thing, it is a going or doing of something that was not prescribed or intended. God's will is that we abstain from such sexual deviations. With that said, let us now look at...

The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution

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I. The Old Testament View of Homosexuality

While it may seem to be an overwhelming task to consider what the Old Testament has to say concerning homosexuality, in reality there are only four passages that explicitly relate to the issue. The first two we will look at are prohibitions found in the Law of Moses. These first two passages forbid any kind of homosexual activity. The other two passages are historical accounts in which homosexuality was either involved or sought. We have the account of Sodom/Gomorrah in Genesis 18 and the account of Gibeah in Judges 19.

All I desire to accomplish here is to establish the Biblical worldview; the proper Scriptural understanding regarding this subject and then to build on that perspective as we will look next week at the teachings of the New Testament and of Jesus Himself. So, considering first the two prohibition passages. Turn with me to Leviticus 18:22.

A. Leviticus 18:22, Prohibition of Homosexuality in the Law

"You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination."

Without going into any graphic details, this is a clear statement that prohibits any and all homosexual acts. Notice that there is no provision made that even suggest such acts are okay if they are consensual, or if the two involved "love" each other. It is a complete ban on such activity and is described by God as "an abomination" – a pretty clear word meaning "something that loathsome or detestable because it is dangerous, sinister, or repulsive." Notice those three characteristics. According to this verse then, homosexuality must be seen as an abomination; that which is "*dangerous, sinister and repulsive.*" It is certainly repulsive to God; but it is not dangerous or sinister to Him as He is not tempted by such things. But even as our culture has sought to remove the repulsive nature of homosexuality from our thinking, making it acceptable, it will always continue to be dangerous for humanity as it undermines God's purpose for men and women and marriage; and sinister, tricking people into thinking they have something good that God has simply withheld, the very lie Satan tricked Eve with, making her think that God was not good because He was withholding some other "good" experience from her and Adam.

And so, even if this were the only verse on the subject, it is clear that homosexual activity of any kind is always; always sin. But, I must point out the context here so as to avoid being accused of simply picking on this one particular sin of sexual deviation. Let's notice the larger context of Leviticus 18.

It begins as an address to the people of Israel; God's people. The whole passage is a prohibition against doing any of the godless, God-dishonoring practices of both the Egyptian culture from where they had come as well as from the Canaanite culture to which they were headed. The overall point of the passage is that God's people are never to adopt the popular ways of the culture if they stand contrary to God's revealed will. We are not to accept the statement, "When in Rome do as the Romans" when it comes to the world's understanding of morals or immorality.

Then, beginning in verse 5, and I need you to note this, there begins a list of prohibitions against a variety of sexual deviations. In other words, the prohibition against homosexuality is made in the middle of a section of laws that deal with various sexual deviations including incest (18:5-17); polygamy (18:18), adultery (18:20); idolatry (18:21 – the inference is that idolatry, at least in this context, included sexual immorality); and even bestiality (18:23) to name a few. God's people are to see each and every one of these sexual deviations as equally sinful and those who practice such things must repent.

Another thing worth noting here is that no consequence is given but rather each of these sexual actions are regarded as things that must not be done. They are identified in verses 24, 27, and 30 as things which "**defile**" (a word that means to make utterly unclean, or thoroughly polluted) not only a

The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution

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person, but also the very land in which these acts are committed. They are also things that are abominations, which as we noted, are things which offend God. In other words, any sexual deviations harm the person committing them, the culture in which they are accepted and committed, as well as offensive to our Creator God.

I need to say this again, homosexuality is not singled out from among the rest of the sexual sins but it is included with the rest. Likewise, those who violate *any* of these laws are, according to verse 29, to be **"cut off from among their people."** Looking back up at verse 24, notice that it is because of all these various sexual deviations that God punished the previous inhabitants of the land. The point is this; that according to the Law of God, homosexuality, along with any other sin of sexual deviation, is an offense against God and is a self-inflicted harm upon the one who practices it. God's intent was that such sins would not be found in or among His people at all.

B. Leviticus 20:13, Punishment of Homosexuality in the Law

First we had the prohibition of homosexuality in the law; now let us note the second text that not only prohibits but also states the punishment of homosexuality according to the law. Let us turn to Leviticus 20:13 and read there these words:

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 (same word in 18:20 – abomination); they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them.

This is again a very clearly understood statement that not only prohibits homosexuality, but it also states the consequences of such acts to be carried out by Israel's theocratic government. Again, note that this is not singled out sin, but if found in a text that deals with sexual offenses and their judgments. The consequence for homosexual acts under the laws was the putting to death both of the involved parties. Back in chapter 18 we read that those who did such things were to be **"cut off from among their people..."** This seems to indicate how such people are to be cut off. According to the Word of God, homosexuality was a sin against God that required capital punishment.

Now, these are the two clear statements speaking against the sexual deviation of homosexuality. Let us now turn to two passages in which we find a real example of homosexuality being practiced and condemned.

C. The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah - Genesis 19:1-11

The biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah is recorded in Genesis 18-19. In Genesis 18 we find the account of the LORD and two angels coming to speak with Abraham. The LORD informed Abraham that **"The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave."** In Genesis 18:22-33 we find Abraham pleading with the Lord to have mercy on Sodom and Gomorrah because Abraham's nephew, Lot, and his family lived in Sodom.

Then, in Genesis 19 we read of two angels, disguised as human men, visiting Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot met the angels in the city square and urged them to stay at his house. The angels agreed. The text then reads in verses 4-5, **"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.'"**

The angels then proceed to blind all the men of Sodom and Gomorrah and urge Lot and his family to flee from the cities to escape the wrath that God was about to deliver. Lot and his family flee the city,

The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality..." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

and then, according to verses 24-25, **"24 Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, 25 and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities..."**

The great question that comes to mind when reading this passage is this, "What was the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah?" The typical (and mostly correct answer) is that it was homosexuality. This is how the term "sodomy" came to be used to refer homosexual acts between two men, whether consensual or forced. Clearly, homosexuality was in large part the reason why God destroyed the two cities. The men of Sodom and Gomorrah wanted to perform homosexual gang rape on the two angels (who were disguised as men). But let us be clear, it is also true that homosexuality was not the exclusive reason why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The peoples of Sodom and Gomorrah were definitely guilty of more than just this one "grave" sin in which they indulged.

If we look at Ezekiel 16:49-50, we get an indication of what was going on. There we read: **49 "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food and careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. 50 Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it."** The Hebrew word translated "**abominations**" refers to something that is morally disgusting and is the exact same word used in Leviticus 18:22 that also refers to homosexuality as an "abomination." We must also not Jude 7 where we read, **"...just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh [perversions]..."**

So, while homosexuality was not the only sin in which the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah indulged, it does appear to be the primary reason for the destruction of the cities. As a side note, it is interesting to me that here in Genesis 19 as well as in both the Judges 19 passage we will look at and in Ezekiel 16, we find that inhospitality is often linked to sexual immorality, including homosexuality. In other words, the sins of sexual deviation are often the result of or are found in combination with other sins.

Now, those who attempt to explain away the biblical condemnations of homosexuality will claim that "the sin" – the singular sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was inhospitality. To be sure, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah were certainly being inhospitable. I can think of nothing more inhospitable than a homosexual gang rape. But to say God completely destroyed these two cities and all their inhabitants for being inhospitable clearly misses the point. While Sodom and Gomorrah were guilty of many other sins, homosexuality was the exceedingly grave sin for which God poured brimstone and fire on the cities, completely destroying them as well as of their inhabitants, for as we read in Leviticus 18, for such sexual deviations even polluted the land. To this day, the area where Sodom and Gomorrah were located remains a desolate wasteland. Sodom and Gomorrah serve as a powerful example of how God feels about sexual deviations in general, and homosexuality specifically.

D. The sin of Gibeah - Judges 19:22ff

We have one other example in Judges 19 where we find another attempt of homosexual activity being sought. A man, a Levite arrives in Gibeah at sundown with his concubine and a servant. Not being invited into a home by anyone, they take refuge in the town square. Eventually an old man comes into the city and insists that they stay with him, not wanting them to spend the night in the open square (19:20). Then, in verse 22 we read...

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."

The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality..." (1 Thessalonians 4:3)

Rather than all the men like in the city of Sodom, here in Gibeah it was "**certain worthless fellows**" who demanded to have sexual relations with this traveler. Eventually this lustful mob was pacified with the man's concubine who was sent out to them in his place. She was sexually abused and died of her injuries. This incident led to the very first civil war in Israel's history, and the near extinction of the tribe of Benjamin. This war was sanctioned by God's approval after Gibeah refused to hand over the offending men for judgment (Judges 20:18; 23, 28, 35).

If you take time to read the Judges 19 account, you will find that there are multiple sins being committed. Just like what we experience today, sin is never a singular thing, but the result of sin after sin compounding. While so many try to make the sin of Genesis 19 and Judges 19 simply inhospitality, I would say that the sin of inhospitality is shown in these texts to lead to immorality. One sin prepares the way for the other.

Here in Judges 19 there are at least three sins that can be clearly seen. First, these men attempted to, in the words of verse 23, "**act so wickedly**". And just what was the action to which the old man of the text was speaking? According to the testimony of the worthless fellows themselves in verse 22, that they "may have relations (sexual intercourse) with" the traveling man (19:22-23a).

Second, to compound this sin, it was attempted on a person who was under the hospitality and protection of another and was regarded in verse 23 as an "**act of folly**" or an outrageous (ESV) or horrible (HCS) thing.

Third, these men raped and abused the traveler's concubine all night and caused her death (Judges 19:25-30).

Fourth, the rest of the tribe of Benjamin refused to turn these men over to punishment (Judges 20:13).

The brief re-telling of the story to the tribes in Judges 20:5 does not focus on the homosexual side of the intent towards the traveler like the original event does back in Judges 19:22-24. The re-telling focuses on the actual offenses rather than on the intended ones. However, the attempt at homosexual relations is included in the longer account and is seen as distinctively wicked and detestable. Thus, after the giving of the law, attempted homosexual relations was part of the sin that resulted in a God-sanctioned civil war.

From these four passages we can make some solid conclusions. One is that even before the law was given as well as after it was given, homosexuality was regarded to be sin for both Israel as well as for and in the Gentile nations. Another conclusion is that while the Genesis 19 and Judges 19 point toward the intention to force homosexual activity on either the angels or upon the Levite respectively, the law is clear that such activity is prohibited regardless of whether it is consensual and non-consensual cases. The consequence of such activity under OT law was death; which occurred in Sodom and Gomorrah and would have been the result for anyone practicing such things in Israel.

It is interesting to note that before the law was given, that the only incident of God directly judging the sinfulness of man on a larger scale than that of Sodom and Gomorrah was the Flood as recorded in Genesis 6. There in Genesis 6 is no specific mention of homosexual activity. We are only told in verse 5 that "**the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**" After the law was given, God's great acts of judgment occurred primarily for other sins, particularly that of idolatry as seen in Israel (2 Kings 17), on Assyria (2 Kings 19) and on Judah (2 Kings 25).

The point of this is to remind you that rather than minimizing (or maximizing) any particular sin, God is revealed to be active both in declaring many deeds to be sin and in punishing them all. There is no injustice with God. In the OT, His actions were never limited to one particular sin. God's judging the sins of idolatry, homosexuality, and other moral shortcomings ought not to surprise us since part of the

The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution

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purpose of the law was to reveal sin as sin, and God's righteous standard as determinative, or as we said in the beginning, what is to be regarded as "normal" behavior (Romans 7:7-14).

What is interesting to note as we close is that there seems to be a connection between the various of sexual sins listed in Leviticus 18, and idolatry, which is often seen in connection with sexual sins. In other words, sexual deviations, moving away from God's stated intentions, is a form of idolatry, worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator who is forever blessed (Romans 1:25).

But, as we will see more next week, God is also gracious, providing both His truth and time for people to repent. God's grace is seen in bringing Noah and his family safely through the Flood, in bringing Lot and his daughters out of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses as Israel is established as a nation. God's grace is seen in the life of David as one who deserves to die for violating one of the very laws stated in Leviticus 18:20, the sin of adultery. The point is, while God's righteous standard is set; the norm established and the punishment for any deviations stated, there is yet the provision of grace and redemption from such punishment through faith in the promised deliverer, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Next time we will look at how we, who are sinners like everyone else, having been saved from the very same sins that currently enslave so many, are to share the good news of grace, forgiveness and transformation through faith in Jesus Christ. For here is the gospel in just one sentence; "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." Regardless of the type of sin, repent and call upon the name of the Lord; be saved and daily transformed to think, act and serve even as Christ did to the glory of God.

Soli Deo Gloria

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