

The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution (Part 2)

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

We will begin once again with what I hope has become for you not simply a familiar verse, but one that has also become a filter that serves as a protection for you, informing you, reminding you, warning you as to what God's purpose is for your life. This verse is 1 Thessalonians 4:3 where we read:

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

God's will for each and every one of us in this room is positively stated as "sanctification" – the process and practice of becoming more and more holy, which is actually becoming more and more like Christ in every thought, attitude, action and word; and negatively states as our abstaining, avoiding, to keep away from, literally to hold one's self back from sexual immorality. Let me remind you that sexual immorality is most simply defined this way – ANY sexual activity outside of biblical marriage (that is the physical, emotional and spiritual union established by God as only rightly existing between one man and one woman).

Sexual immorality, as this diagram indicates, is an umbrella term that covers a multitude of deviations from the norm God established for humanity from the beginning. Anything that deviates from God's normal is, by very definition, abnormal, in rebellion against God as though He did not know what He was doing or how humanity is to be the most fulfilled and happy. And thus, sexual immoralities, which includes more than what I have indicated on this list (adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, incest, pornography, rape, lustful thoughts, prostitution and bestiality), are sin; missing God's mark and are subject to inciting and incurring the wrath of God.

By way of both reminder and warning; to not be naïve or deceived; sexual immoralities are temptations that are always in front of us; to which so many of us are prone. In the movies we watch, the magazines we read, and even on our televisions, sex outside of marriage and sexual deviations are treated as a normal, expected and even desirable parts of life. At the very same time sex in the context of marriage between a husband and wife is often shown as joyless and restraining. In our culture, our young adults and even teenagers are often looked down upon by others if we are suspected of being sexually pure. If we dare say we would not see a particular movie simply because there is nudity in it, we may be mocked at and considered, "lame."

But be assured, sexual sins are serious business! Beloved, our God does not warn against and prohibit certain sexual activities in order to be a killjoy and difficult. If we believe the Scriptures are from the very mouth and heart of God, it would stand to reason that He who created us not only knows us, but that He knows the power that sexual deviations have to diminish and destroy us physically, emotionally and spiritually. The danger of our culture and even of us in the church is to underestimate the power of sexual immorality. If I were to ask you, many, if not most of you either have been directed devastated by some type of sexual deviation or know someone or someones whose lives, families, churches, or even communities have been brought into upheaval because of sexual sin. From a verse like 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (and many others like it), I am grateful to a God who intends to protect His people from damaging themselves and others by offering to fill our desires with Himself.

Thus far we have considered what the Old Testament had to say about the topic of sexual immorality and specifically about homosexuality. Leviticus 18 and 20 are the prohibitions of such activities while Genesis 19 and Judges 19 reveal to us the extraordinary lengths God went to in order to punish communities and cities where rampant homosexual intent and practice were found.

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Last week we turn our attention to Romans 1, a passage where the apostle Paul, desiring to present the good news of the gospel (1:16-17) first reveals the bad news of humanities rebellion and rejection of God, a rejection that leads to God giving such a people over to their sins, one of which is clearly, literally, grammatically and historically understood as the practice of homosexuality. Remember that Paul's intent was not to "pick" on homosexuality; it is just one sin in a list of other sins in Romans 1:18-32, but it is a telling sin, a sin that leads to further rejection of God.

This brings us to the text I wish to present to you this morning. Yet another warning clearly against homosexuality but, as we constantly note, not only against homosexuality. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Here Paul, writing to the Church; to the saints in Corinth, in what we know today as Southern Greece, wrote:

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 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.

In context, Paul is writing to a congregation that had allowed the influence of the culture around them to infiltrate the church. In large part, this influence involved varying immoral acts, both sexual and otherwise. At the time Paul wrote this letter, pagan worship of false gods was taking place in the local temple. In this temple there were at any given time around 1,000 prostitutes ready to engage in various sexual activities calling it worship. The sexual saturation of the culture was everywhere as Corinth was clearly a hyper-sexual city.

In our text, and others like it in this letter, Paul emphatically implores the Corinthian Christians to have no part in the ways of the city, which included sexual immorality. And hear this well; they were not to accept, tolerate, or even celebrate such activities in the church even if such practices were acceptable or popular in the culture.

I wish to remind you that believers in Christ are free to be all they can be and to do all they can do for God, but we are never free from God. Our God created sex to be beautiful and essential in marriage, but sex outside of marriage always hurts someone. Let me say that again because the lie of our culture is this, "What does it matter what two consenting people do behind closed doors; love is love; if it does not hurt anyone, how can you call it wrong?" Have you heard something like that? I will say it again; sex outside of marriage ALWAYS hurts someone. How can this be, Pastor? Let me begin with what our culture denies and what Christians so easily forget when it comes to this topic. Sex outside of marriage first and foremost hurts God. How does it hurt God? It hurts God because it reveals that we rather pursue our own desires and ways rather than what God has revealed to us in His Word. Read Ezekiel 23 if you would, but be warned, it is a GRAPHIC portrayal of how sexual immorality stirs up the heart and wrath of God. The sexually immoral acts of a culture and people hurt the heart of God who created us for something He deemed better. But not only does it always hurt God, it also hurts others because it violates the commitment of a biblical relationship. It deeply affects our personalities by which we respond in grief when we harm ourselves physically and spiritually. While many people think they have the right to do whatever they want with their own bodies, calling it freedom, they fail to realize that what they call freedom is actually enslavement to their own desires. I don't know where I heard

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this, but someone has said that sex is a wonderful servant but a tyrannical master. In other words, to be driven by sexual desires and practices is enslavement; but to direct such sexual desires according to God's design is making the most of this gift of God.

Let me remind you, that upon coming to Christ, we are given the Holy Spirit of God who indwells us; beloved, He lives within us. As God the Holy Spirit takes up residence, we need to remember that our bodies are no longer our own. The death of Christ indeed freed us from the obligation to sin in our bodies, but, according to Romans 6, it also obligates us to serve Him, in our bodies. In Romans 6:11-13 we read:

11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

Beloved, if you are staying in a home owned by someone else, you try not to violate that person's rules. Since our bodies now belong to God, we must seek to keep His standards for living in this body. We must be careful not to take what God has given us to enjoy under His own rules and turn it into an evil vice that controls us.

II. Who Will Inherit the Kingdom of God? 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Having already looked at Romans 1:18-32, let us get back to our text, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, the second NT passage that applies to the subject at hand, the Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution. Reading the passage again:

9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 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.

Notice carefully what Paul is doing in these verses; he is clearly informing his readers that unless people repent from some very specific kinds of behavior, they will be excluded from the kingdom of God. It should be noted that there are a number of sins listed, which if describe your character and practice, exclude you from being one with the hope of heaven. In other words, I believe it to be utterly wrong, disingenuous to the work of Christ and thus unbiblical to have to put a cultural adjective in front of the word "Christian." According to our culture, to call one's self a "Homosexual Christian" is to be celebrated. Yes Paul here reveals that to be engaged in such a way of thinking and lifestyle is to be excluded from the promise of Christ. We don't have fornicating Christians, idolatrous Christians, thieving Christians, drunken Christians or reviling Christians. As we will note, every Christian will have his or her area of temptation and weakness, but as we will also note, these are no longer to define you.

Of the ten sins listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (and this was not intended to be a complete list) four of the sins are sexual in nature and half of those speak directly against homosexual behavior, the effeminate and the homosexual. In context, these two words speak of the two

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different roles or activities involved in homosexual relationships, and I will, for the sake of modesty, leave it at that.

But again, the point of the passage is clear. Using unequivocally non-ambiguous terms, we have here a strong and definitive statement about sin (homosexuality being specifically named) and its consequences. Additionally, we have here as well the one way to be rescued from all such sins. Paul is unmistakably reminding the Corinthian church that these kinds of behavior are not compatible with the kingdom of God. Paul already had been dealing with a number of behavioral and ethical problems that have been plaguing the church. Now he reminds them that their former behaviors were influencing their present lives in completely inappropriate ways. Beloved, it got so bad in this church that in his next letter of 2 Corinthians, Paul had to challenge them to examine themselves to see whether they had truly become believers (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The point is this, homosexuality and every other sexual sin, is serious business to God. What 2 Corinthians 6:9-10 tells us is that anyone who is an active and unrepentant homosexual (as with any and all unrepentant sin), will not enter the kingdom of God. This is the clear truth of Scripture here. Let me point something else out to you as seen in this text. Paul makes an assumption here. Did you catch it? What is the assumption that Paul makes? Paul's assumption is that some of his readers will actually deny his teaching; will say that some forms of homosexual behavior are acceptable to God. And so, in the only command in these verses, Paul says, "**do not be deceived**" – a present, passive imperative verb. We might rightly translate it this way; "Do not continually allow yourselves to be deceived in these matters..." Do not allow yourselves to be tricked, seduced, lead to think a different way; tempted to think otherwise. Do not put yourself in a situation to listen to someone other than God and to something other than His word even as Eve listened to the serpent and was duped into disobeying the will of God for her.

Another implication in this text based upon this command "do not be deceived" is that people who teach that the sins in this list are justifiable and commendable to God (as more and more supposedly Christian leaders are teaching) is synonymous to sending people to hell. In other words, if you are speaking to people who are engaged or tempted to engage in such sins as listed in our text, homosexuality, sexual immorality, adultery included, it is a gospel issue; not a polite non-salvific disagreement between whether or not you see the Scriptures teaching Jesus as literally reigning and ruling on this earth for a thousand years in the millennial kingdom; but literally a life or death, heaven or hell, conversion or damnation issue for those involved. This is why such things are so important and worthy of our study on the matter. Those unrepentantly engaged in such things as listed in our text are on the brink of losing their souls.

And praise God, those who are ensnared by any of these sins, homosexuality included, are not in a hopeless place. Let us read again 1 Corinthians 6:11 where Paul writes:

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.

Do not let this escape your notice. Paul says that the behaviors he listed are no longer to be the ongoing experience of Christians because it is no longer who they are. The implication is clear; there were those in the Corinthian church who practiced one or more of these sins. There WERE those who HAD BEEN active as homosexuals. That was the way the USED to live; but no more. The language Paul uses here is intense. Paul said that those who used to live this way "were washed", "were sanctified" and "were justified." With each of these three terms, Paul

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speaks of an action that was done and completed at some point in the past. At conversion, these people were once for all washed – to have something removed from you as dirt is removed with water; these were sanctified – made set apart for something different and godly use; these were justified – declared righteous; free from the charges of such unrighteous behavior. Beloved, in Christ we have a new identity, a new standard and a new life to live before and for God.

One of the lessons we must draw from this; and this is important; is that however deeply ingrained one's sinful behavior may be, it is not inescapable. It is contrary to this verse and the teaching of the Bible to say that homosexuality is a behavior (actually a sin) from which a person has no choice. The word of God gives the hope that anyone who is practicing a lifestyle engaged in any of these sins, homosexuality included, is to be made new in Christ. Now, this does not mean that temptations and feelings will just disappear. Notice that Paul is warning his reader not to do something...what is that something. They are not to revert to these former behaviors, which imply that some were still tempted to do so. The truth of 1 Corinthians 6:11 is this, that the sin that used to define you (be it the sin of homosexuality, the sin of sexual immorality, the sin of drinking, the sin of stealing, the sin of greed, the sin of mocking or reviling others, whatever sin you were known for; those sins are to no longer define you now.

Time affords us to look at one other passage in which Paul addresses homosexuality and other sexual deviant behaviors. Turn with me to 1 Timothy 1:8-15. There we read:

8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, 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 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, 11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted. 12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, 13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; 14 and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. 15 It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

I read this longer passage to make a point. We believers today can be tempted to think of homosexuality as the sin of sins; or as somehow a worse sin of other sins. Notice that Paul here lays out some rather hideous sins, does he not. We have murders, sexual deviants, homosexuals, kidnappers, liars...simply a bad lot. Did you catch how Paul ended these verses; that "Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all." We might be able to pin some of the sins of this list on Paul. We know he had Stephen murdered to be sure, but he regards himself as worse than any kidnapper, perjurer or even than those who practice homosexuality. Until we see all sin as needing to be called sin and repented from, including our own, we will have an incomplete understanding of the depravity of man and thus of the gospel that saves man from his depravity.

Many of the same points we talked about regarding 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 apply here. The difference is simply Paul's emphasis. Here Paul calls such behaviors as not being righteous and that the law, what God's rules and expectations are, are given to unrighteous people in order to bring about true conviction of sin and the need for the grace and mercy of God. Here in 1 Timothy

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1, the practices listed are in conflict with what Paul calls, "sound doctrine" or teaching. In other words, to teach that homosexuality is acceptable to God is as contrary to God as teaching that murder, kidnapping, or lying is acceptable to God.

To wrap things up this morning, while it may seem to go without saying, we yet need to say it, homosexuality is sin. It is not acceptable or compatible with a Christian or Biblical worldview. It is not a moral. It, along with all other sins results in the judgment of God, both in the present and in its fullness in the future. All the Scriptures we have looked at the last three weeks confirm this. And yet, we are NEVER to stop in our discussions with others on the fact that homosexuality is a sin. We must declare that while all sins deserve the judgment of God, the grace of God offers freedom from the penalty, the practice and one day even from the presence of such sins. God's grace brings us a new life, a new way to live, a new identity to bear, and the help of the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures and even the people of God.

Let me close with the words of Paul from Romans 6:1-14. Let these words sink deep into your heart. Ask yourself, "Are these things true of me?" If they are, praise God and ask for the grace to continue even more fervently in a life that is distinguished from the world. If these things are not true of you, would you confess as such to the Lord, ask for forgiveness of the sins that are keeping you from knowing, loving and serving Him the way He has prescribed. Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord; believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead understanding that it was your sin that put Him in the grave and be born again; transformed into the likeness and image of God. Hear then Romans 6:1-14...

1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. 14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

Soli Deo Gloria

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