
The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution (Part 4)

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

Three weeks ago we began this mini-series entitled “The Christian Worldview in an Age of Sexual Revolution.” Our focus and intent has been to inform and educate ourselves on what the Bible actually has to say about the subject of human sexuality, and most especially, expressions of human sexuality. If everything we have talked about could be summarized into two statements, it might well be as follows:

1. Christians are called to be set apart and holy unto God, abstaining from and avoiding both the practice as well as even the appearance of sexual immorality (sexual immorality being biblically defined as any sexual activity outside the marriage bed of one man to one woman).
2. Our culture is increasingly accepting, adopting, and even celebrating various forms of sexual expressions that do not fit a Christian or Biblical worldview, the most prevalent of which is homosexuality and transgenderism.

As alluded to, our “theme” verse for this whole series has been 1 Thessalonians 4:3 which states the Christian worldview on these matters:

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

Another passage that I have only mentioned in passing, but one which would do us well to include in our repertoire of verses that make up what ought to be our thinking on such matters is found in Ephesians 5:3-6. Please turn there with me and, as you do, you might remember from our study last week in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, that those whose lives are identified with anything that God calls sin, whose lives practice and celebrate such sins, such will not inherit the kingdom of God, or, as Paul puts it a bit different here, ***“an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”*** Please read along with me:

3 But immorality (porneia) or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral (pornos – committer of immorality) or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

In other words, the Christian worldview says to the believer, “Do not let such things be practiced or even rumored among you as acceptable, knowing that the wrath of God is coming upon those who engage in such things.” Notice again that Paul’s list not only includes things like being known for involvement in sexually deviant activities, but also for worldly, demonic and greedy activities; also for foul language and crude joking, coveting and idolatry. Also notice that Paul gives a similar warning to the Ephesians as he did to the Corinthians as seen in our text last week. He says in verse 6, ***“Let no one deceive you with empty words...”*** In other words, there will be those who try to undermine, write off, or simply dismiss the clear understanding of Scripture in order to support and justify their behavior.

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But now having considered what the Old Testament teaches on the matter of sexuality and particularly of homosexuality; and having looked at Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6 and even 1 Timothy 1, let us consider the teaching of Jesus. For there are many who will, in seeking to deceive you and in order to justify sinful behavior, will pipe up as say, “But Jesus never once spoke about homosexuality, but rather commanded everyone to love one another.” Have you heard that? It would be akin to saying since Jesus never specifically mentions pedophilia, bestiality, or the use of cocaine, that such things must then be okay with Jesus.

But the question remains, since Jesus never specifically mentions homosexuality, did Jesus actually say anything concerning this and other matters that fall under the umbrella of sexual immorality as we noted in 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Before looking at what Jesus taught, let me remind you that the red words you find in the gospel accounts are no more inspired by God than the black words. The Lord is just as responsible for the inscripturated words of Paul as He is for the recorded words of Jesus. When Paul wrote the words of 1 Timothy 2:5, *“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...”* such words are just as true and authoritative as when Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me...”* And so, if the New Testament only condemned homosexuality or any other sinful behavior in Romans 1, that would be enough for the Christian to not ponder, practice, or give preference to such sins.

To argue that Jesus never dealt with the issues that we face today would be disingenuous. Our Lord Jesus Christ was the teacher of teachers and we often find in His teachings principles that deal authoritatively not simply with just one action that He might address, but also apply with equal authority to a whole spectrum of sins. This morning I wish to share with you three passages in which we find Jesus laying out principles by which even His 1st century readers would have understood as condemning homosexuality. All three of these passages will reveal to us just how much we fall short of God’s glory, sin against Him and thus are desperately in need of His grace.

I. **Mark 7:20-23 – Jesus’ Teaching on Sexual Immorality**

Let us read Mark 7:20-23 and make note of the fact that while Jesus does not directly mention homosexuality here, as we have come to understand the meaning of the term “sexual immorality” – He most certainly includes it, by definition. Here we read:

20 That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications (sexual immoralities), thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.

Here we find Jesus declaring that there are thoughts and activities that make a person spiritually unclean before God. Interestingly enough, the first thing Jesus mentions as being in the category of that which defiles a person are **“evil thoughts”** and **“fornications”** or “sexual immoralities.” This is the same word Paul used in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, instruction the Christians to avoid and abstain from such things. Remember that the word “fornications” or “sexual immorality” is *porneia* – that catch all phrase that covers everything from adultery to homosexuality to zoophilia. Now, you might notice that Jesus actually mentions adultery in this list. This means that although adultery is sexual immorality, He mentions it specifically because it was evidently

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more of a problem in the culture He was speaking to. This also means that His first hearers would have clearly understood that Jesus was using the term sexual immorality to speak of any sexual activity outside of a biblically defined marriage. By saying that such things **“defile the man”** Jesus took His readers right back to Leviticus 18 and 20 where a list of sexual deviations that included homosexuality, were said to defile a person. There can be no doubt that Jesus’ first hearers would have understood His reference to *porneia* to include homosexuality.

Let me illustrate this for you. Imagine if I were to say to you right now that everyone in attendance today will receive a pint of my wife’s homemade salsa. To receive your gift, you must greet me at the door on your way out. Now, if you are here when I make this offer, you are included in it, right? Even if I have not mentioned you by name, are you not included in this offer? Even if I do not specifically address you, you are included in this offer. Beloved, when Jesus condemns sexual immorality, although He does not name it specifically, He is yet condemning homosexuality because it is included in that group of sins known as sexual immorality.

There is one other comment I would like to make about this particular statement of Jesus. Notice that sin, in whatever form it takes, is not environmental, that is, it is not the culture or the circumstance that causes people to sin, but people sin because it is their nature to sin, it is within them and it is constantly looking for an opportunity to express itself. I will often get asked if I believe that a person may be born a homosexual. My response is that people are born sinners, with varying propensities to sin. And, apart from the grace of God, sinners will choose to express their sin nature in some form or another. These words of Jesus in Mark 7:20-23 reveal what theologians call *“the total depravity of man”* – not that man is necessarily as bad as he can be, but that he is as bad off as he can be because left to his own way, he will choose sin over righteousness.

So then, Mark 7:20-23 reveals to us that people are sinners and that all forms of expressing that sin nature come from within the heart. It also reveals to us that Jesus condemns all forms of sexual immorality, which would include homosexuality. Now, let’s turn our attention to a second passage that reveals the teaching of Jesus...

II. **Matthew 5:27-28; the Sweeping Scope of Sin**

Turn to Matthew 5:27-28 and let us consider this teaching of Jesus as it relates to the topic of sexual purity and the prohibition of Jesus on the matter of homosexuality. Here we read:

27 You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; 28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

In this passage Jesus lays out an important truth that we all do well to remember; that God’s standards of what is right and what is wrong is not limited to simply the external acts, but also includes our very thoughts and heart. In other words, it is a sin, it goes against God’s will even to fantasize about things immoral.

This text speaks most directly to those who are married and the sin of both the physical act as well as mental adultery. But we would do this text injustice to think that is the limit of its scope. What is the principle that Jesus is seeking to teach here? Jesus is showing the religious leaders and the people that danger of sin goes beyond simply what a person does, but also covers what he thinks and dwells on. How do we know this? Consider the verses just before our text, in verses 21-26, Jesus spoke about the matter of murder, pointing out that even being angry with or

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insulting a brother will also bring God's judgment. In other words, the thoughts and actions of being angry and of insulting others are akin to murder. The point is that God's standard goes deeper than mere actions, and clearly, in contrast to the self-righteous perspectives of the religious leaders, such a standard, of never being angry with someone, of never insulting another, of never having lustful thoughts toward others is, because of our sin nature, impossible to keep. Of course, this is one of the purposes of the law, to show us our sin and then drive us to faith in God and His provision of grace.

What does this have to do with homosexuality? Was Jesus addressing the topic here? Let us remember that sexual sins always go further than only adultery or a physical act. In verse 22, the point is not simply the anger or broken relationships that might come between "brothers." There examples and specific cases in which a sin goes beyond the mere "letter of the law." The sad thing is when people seek to restrict the applicability of a divine principle in order to make themselves appear to be holy and righteous in the midst of their unrighteous behavior. Remember, God is not deceived. Whether a person or a culture seeks to minimize acts of lying, cheating, stealing, envying, coveting, adultery, witchcraft, pornography, fornication, swindling, drunkenness, homosexuality, or any other unrighteousness act, this passage clearly reveals that Jesus would not be in agreement with using God's word in such a way. A careful reading and understanding of Matthew 5:20-48 reveals that Jesus' definition and understanding of the sins He mentions is much broader than the religious leaders of His day or even we would like to think. Jesus said that He had not come to void the Law, which included repeated warnings against all forms of sexual immorality, including homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13). Murder includes being angry with an insulting others; adultery includes looking upon another person with lustful intent. The definition of sin is broad in scope.

Let us note the last of the three passages where Jesus addresses issues that affect one's view of homosexuality.

III. **Matthew 19:3-9; Marriage According to Jesus.**

Turning to Matthew 19:3-9 we find the heart and understanding of marriage according to Jesus. Here we read:

3 Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" 4 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5 and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." 7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?" 8 He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. 9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

What we have here is Jesus' understanding of God's intention for men and women when it comes to marriage. Jesus was asked a question about relationships and He answered it by taking His hearers all the way back to Genesis, to God's original plan and design for a man and a woman. God's intention was that one man would be united to one woman in an institution God

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ordained called marriage. This plan of marriage has been twisted and perverted by peoples' own sinfulness and hardness of heart in almost every possible way imaginable. Here Jesus addresses a specific case that included the elements of divorce, immorality, and adultery. But the principle Jesus proclaims would speak equally against any and all possible variations to God's original purpose and design.

When Jesus affirmed God's original creational plan, and there is no way to deny that is what Jesus is doing, Jesus is actual undermining, invalidating, and declaring as wrong any and all activity which is in opposition to that design. God established marriage and the expression of sexuality in marriage as moral and right. Any deviation from that is, by definition, immoral. And remember that Immorality of any kind is a declaration that God's provision and design were insufficient to make people truly happy. Thus, homosexuality, since it goes against the creation standard declared by God in Genesis and reaffirmed by Jesus in Matthew 19, says to God and to others that God does not know what He was doing.

Now, let me be clear on something. Do you realize by preaching this series of messages in which we come to see that homosexuality goes against God's standards, that we have actually have been speaking on the matter any kind of sexual immorality? And, when we speak of God's disdain for sexual immorality, that we are actually addressing far more people than those who identify themselves with the homosexual community? By incredibly larger numbers, there are far more people in our culture today who are involved in equally disdainful and God-dishonoring acts of sexual immorality including, living together, one night stands, adultery, divorce, child abuse, pornography, and the like. Let us remember not to engage in comparative righteousness, to think that because I am not inclined toward homosexual thoughts, that I am better than homosexual, all the while I may be trapped in pornography, anger, arrogant pride, or a whole host of other sins. All of it is detestable to God. Every sinful act, every pattern of sin in our lives needs to be biblically and loving addressed. Every sin is ultimately contrary to God's original designed plan for humanity. Every sin is deserving of God's wrath. Each one of us has failed meeting God's standard. Each one of us is guilty whether it is in thought or in deed.

One of the things we are to recognize when Jesus makes such a strong and affirming statement concerning the nature and makeup of marriage is just how sinful, desperate, ruined and needed we are. We cannot cure this disease of the heart that takes the one union in which God pronounces as the only good union in which to express one's God-given sexuality and twisting it into something else, justifying it by saying, "Well, it's only in my head" or "What does it matter if two people love one another." We need the utterly amazing grace, the magnificent mercy, the lofty love, the fervent forgiveness and life transforming power of Jesus Christ. By faith, believing He died for all our sins, all our sexual immoralities, all our deviations from His will so that we might now live according to His standard, to His praise and glory.

These three passages, Mark 7:20-23, Matthew 5:27-28, and Matthew 19:3-9 we learn that there is no escape from the truth that Jesus taught God's standards of sexuality and marriage. Jesus Himself reaffirmed and taught that God's intent was for a pure, monogamous, heterosexual relationship in the context of marriage alone. Nothing else is valid, not even lustful thoughts in any other direction.

What is the bottom line? Beloved, if anyone is involved with any heterosexual or homosexual interactions outside of a man/woman marriage these truths have wide reaching implications. Jesus' teaching clearly reveals that such relationships and even fantasies about such relationships are invalid and are sin. Again, even if you are not involved outwardly, actively in any such sins, these teachings of Jesus have profound implications. The truth of the matter is

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that each one of us will, in some way or another, struggle internally with such things until the day we die. Beloved, if we are Christians and are depending on the grace of God day by day, then we will desire to lovingly share the grace and truth of Jesus with others. If we are not depending on that grace daily, then we are living a lie and pretending to be holier than we are. The only holiness that we have is the holiness that we are given in Jesus Christ and that He works within us. There is no room for personal pride or boasting.

Let me be clear, it does not matter whether your sin is from external or internal actions; it does not matter if it is heterosexual or homosexual in nature, it does not matter if others can see it or not; if you choose to continue any such behavior, the result is that you will slowly but surely destroy your life and often the lives of others through such sins. Beloved, there is no one who can live up to God's plan and standard while engaged in any such behavior or thought.

What is the answer? First, we must confess our sin; we must be in agreement with God that our thoughts and behaviors in such matters go against God's intent and purpose for humanity. Second, we must repent, we must turn from such sins, forsaking them and looking to live in a manner that is according to and pleasing to God. Third, we must recognize that none of this is possible apart from the grace, mercy, forgiveness and love of God and that such grace is found only in the person of and in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let me close this message as I began, by reminding how what we have been looking at can be summarized into two statements:

1. Christians are called to be set apart and holy unto God, abstaining from and avoiding both the practice as well as even the appearance of sexual immorality (sexual immorality being biblically defined as any sexual activity outside the marriage bed of one man to one woman).
2. Our culture is increasingly accepting, adopting, and even celebrating various forms of sexual expressions that do not fit a Christian or Biblical worldview, the most prevalent of which is homosexuality and transgenderism.

Before I close in prayer, I invite all of you to make every effort to attend this week's Home Bible Fellowship where we will address a number of questions concerning this subject including how we can biblically and effectively reach those trapped by such sins.

Soli Deo Gloria

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