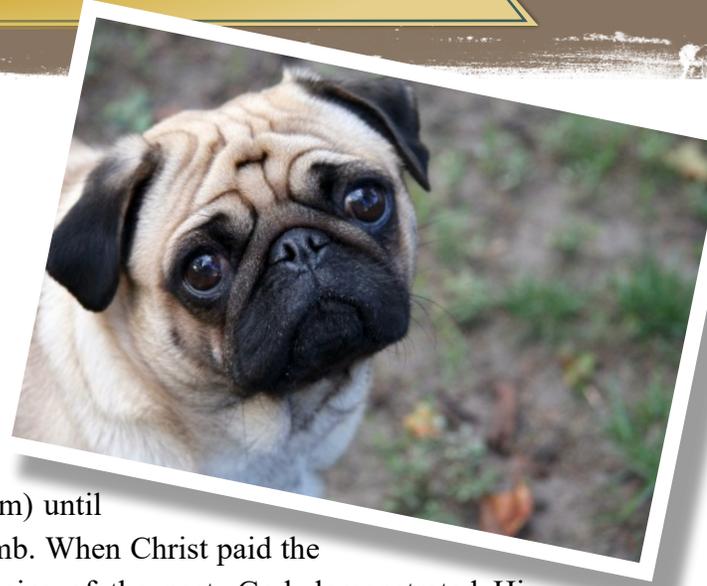


HOMOSEXUALITY

PART 1

PERSPECTIVES, ORIGINS, AND THE "CHANGE" ISSUE

"For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"
Rom. 11:32-33 NKJV



Review of Study 15

Prior to Christ's death, God passed over sins (by atoning for them) until such time as He could truly forgive them by the blood of the Lamb. When Christ paid the debt for sin, God was vindicated for having passed over the sins of the past. God demonstrated His righteousness in passing over those past sins, for He knew that Christ would die for that very purpose. Today, based upon His finished work on the Cross, we have total forgiveness of our sins (Col. 2:13), and we are justified (declared righteous by God). We can be thankful that the benefits of Christ's death go backward and forward in time, forgiving our past and future sins.

INTRODUCTION

A sincere, devote Christian wondered if a homosexual could be saved. This person has adult children, whom we will call X and Y. This person was asked, "If Y were a homosexual, but believed Christ died for his sins, would he be saved?" The hesitant response was, "I think so." The conversation continued, "If X were a heterosexual and had been committing fornication, but believed Christ died for her sins, would she be saved?" The immediately response was, "Certainly!" The heterosexual would be saved for sure, but there was some doubt about the homosexual. It was noted, "Either Christ saves sinners or He does not, so are there some people God will not save?" In addition, "Paul was the chief of sinners and God saved him; since no one can be worse than the chief of sinners, can there be any doubt?" The person admitted

both children would be saved, but said, "Of course, the homosexual would 'have to change.' "

The "have to change" matter is very critical in any discussion of homosexuality. Many children appear to be born with a homosexual orientation, which God does not change after they are saved. Many homosexuals do trust in Christ, hate their plight, wish they could change, beg God for deliverance, seek Christian counseling, and yet they retain the same sexual orientation. If a homosexual comes to church and is rejected by Christians, pointing out the special evilness of "that" sin, then where is the testimony for Christ? The Christian mentioned above was asked, "If a heterosexual man were an adulterer, would God change his sexual orientation if he became

saved?" The person, correctly, thought that was ridiculous. However, the conversation revealed an underlying problem in Christendom, that is, homosexual sins are often considered worse than heterosexual sins. In addition, many Christians do not recognize that a person's sexual orientation may not change upon belief in Christ; regardless, Christian responsibilities still pertain.

The specific goals of this study are to teach:

1) homosexuals are loved by God and a believing homosexual is a Christian;

2) it is a flawed belief system that suggests homosexuals can *just pray away the gay*, or that God will automatically change a person's sexual orientation when they become saved;

3) being a homosexual is not a sin; the behavior is a sin, forgivable like any other sin;

4) homosexuals must guard against the behavior and should not push the gay agenda; and

5) believers (gay and straight) must understand that biblical compassion and grace apply to all.

PERSPECTIVES

For this study, the word homosexual will refer to males and females with a same-sex attraction. There are two main problems that this study addresses. First, some Christians give themselves a pat on the back for standing up against the immoral behavior of homosexuals, and the presumed associated cultural decline. These people often view homosexual behavior as the worst of all sins. Perhaps this belief is due to the fact such behavior is a sin—albeit one they do not have—so they can take a strong stand against it without condemning themselves. Those who hold this belief do not relate to homosexuals in a biblical manner and are seen as anything but Christ-like.

The second problem relates to the conduct of some homosexuals. Homosexuality is not a sin, but the behavior is a sin, like heterosexual adultery. Since the behavior is a sin, it is wrong to push for church or societal acceptance of it. A homosexual agenda of seeking changes in society, laws, or biblical teachings is wrong. It is equally wrong to ask to be married in a church that does not believe such marriages are Scriptural. Pursuing the gay agenda and openly living in sin are seen as persistent "in your face attitudes," which create a backlash against gays. Gays and non-gays must learn to relate to each other in a biblical manner, which will require attitude changes.

Eight passages are commonly used to condemn homosexual behavior, shown below. Even if we allow for some misinterpretations, it is clear from the majority of God's Word that homosexual behavior is not approved by God. However, these passages cannot be used by Christians in a crude and condemning manner; if so, they are seen by gays as *clobber passages*.

1) Genesis 19:1-11 is the Sodom and Gomorrah story, generally seen as relating to homosexual activity, the origin of the word sodomy, and God's condemnation.

2) Lev. 18:22: **"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination."**

3) Lev. 20:13: **"If a man lies with a man as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death..."**

4) Deut. 23:17: **"There shall be no *ritual* harlot of the daughter of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel."**

5) Romans 1:26-27: **"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their woman exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."**

6) 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "...Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals (*effeminate, kjv*), nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

7) 1 Timothy 1:9-10: "...the law is not made for a righteous person, but for...fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine."

8) Jude 1:7: "... as Sodom and Gomorrah ... having given themselves over to sexual immorality ... suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"

It is true the older translations of the Bible do not use the word homosexual or homosexuality. It is equally true the Bible does condemn the behavior. The word homosexual was not coined as a word until the late 1800s, and not added to the English dictionary until around 1892. The older translations could not use a word that had not been coined at the time of their writing. In 1 Corinthians 6:9,

the NKJV uses the word homosexual, while in the KJV the same word is translated effeminate (the Greek means anyone who is addicted to the sins of the flesh). Even if a word or a phrase is translated poorly, the basic truth becomes clear by studying all related Scripture, which indicate it is sin to have sexual relations with the same sex.

An important word in this discussion is *fornication* (Greek, *porneia*), from which English derives the word pornography. *Porneia* carries the idea of being utterly unchaste; thus, fornication is a broad term describing sexual impurity and immorality. Fornication can refer to sexual interaction of any form outside that with one's own spouse (a biblical marriage is between one man and one woman). Thus, fornication can include heterosexual relations before marriage, homosexual relations at any time, adultery (sexual relations with another's spouse), masturbation, incest, pedophilia, prostitution, bestiality, sexual games outside marriage....

ORIGINS

Previous *Grace 4 You* adult studies have shown each human is composed of three aspects: body, soul (mind), and spirit. The three aspects are interrelated and oftentimes hard to differentiate (especially the soul and spirit). We will look at our three aspects to see what we can learn relative to the origin of homosexuality; this will help us understand the "change" issue. Homosexuality is more complicated than most want to admit, and that complexity shows why simple answers are bound to fail. The discussion to follow is intended to shed light and promote further study; there is no pretense of its being the last word.

Body (the physical aspect)

Homosexuality has not been identified in the human genome, that is, there is no specific gene(s) a person inherits that makes him or her gay. Even if not genetic, some people are born different¹ from others. If one enters

¹ The term "different" does not refer to *how* a person was born, but *who* they are. It is not intended as a pejorative or negative reference, merely a word expressing an alternative to what is considered the norm.

life outside the norm, and that difference is not genetic, what then is the cause? One physical cause of birth differences is a simple *vitamin deficiency*, common examples being cleft pallet, spina bifida, heart defects, and incomplete brain development. Nutrition has an impact on our entire development, providing evidence that nutritional factors may be involved in homosexuality. For example, nutrition influences the production of hormones, and hormones certainly impact sexual development (of the brain and the body), as we will soon see.

The development of the embryo and fetus within the uterus is a probable source of homosexuality. To help make this point clear, consider the common honey bee. Bees take royal jelly (a milky substance made of pollen, honey, and a chemical from a gland in a bee's head) and feed it to a larva, turning what would be a sterile worker bee into a fertile queen. Thus, the sexual development (body and brain) of a bee is determined by nutrition.

Although sexual development in bees and humans is different, there are similarities. While in the uterus, humans all begin with ducts, genitals, and brains that can go either way (male or female). During embryonic development, there is a stage in which the embryo has the potential to develop either male or female structures. Humans would all be born as females, the default gender, if it were not for the action of androgens (powerful hormones, the primary one being testosterone).

Androgens have the effect of de-feminizing and masculinizing the developing brain. Androgens (from *andro* Greek prefix meaning masculine), control the development and maintenance of male characteristics by binding to androgen receptors (areas on specific cells that accept these hormones). Masculinization of the brain appears to occur later in gestation than masculinization of the body. Early in gestation, estrogens have some feminizing effects on the brain. It is very clear that our early hormone environment leads to corresponding body and brain development.

If our hormonal system is not working correctly, there can be major complications. One such complication is androgen insensitivity syndrome, in which there is a *mutation* in the androgen receptors, resulting in cells not responding to testosterone or other androgens. The unresponsiveness of cells to androgenic hormones can impair or prevent the masculinization of male genitalia in the developing fetus, as well as the development of male secondary sexual characteristics at puberty; but this insensitivity does not significantly impair female genital or sexual development. Clearly, there are physical factors in our bodies that impact sexual development, and these factors are not necessarily seen in the genome. In addition, when the hormonal system is not working correctly, it may lead to feminine men, masculine women, a type of brain that does not correspond to the physical gender, and so forth.

One reason for confused sexuality (homosexuality or wrong brain type for the physical body) is the prevalence of xenoestrogens (foreign estrogens) in our environment.

These estrogens come from plastics (bottled beverages, wrappings, cooking containers), herbicides, pesticides.... Xenoestrogens are much more powerful than human estrogens, and the minutest amount will cause problems. There is a great deal of evidence showing that xenoestrogens impact the physical health of people today (adults and youth) because they disrupt and confuse the hormonal system so intensely. If these estrogens are present during embryo/fetus development, there will be mixed signals hormonally (causing sexual confusion, as seen so often today).

Hormonal factors play a huge role in fetal brain development (whether typically male or female), sexual organ develop, and, most likely, behavioral development. Brain development is physical in nature, but that development affects the actual functioning of the brain later in life (which is soulish in nature). This means hormonal factors can result in a person's being different physically and mentally. The person has no choice or control over that difference (as with birth defects). Birth differences can result from many other physical causes, such as, the *health of the mother, exposure to certain chemicals, mutation*, and so on.

Soul (the mental aspect)

A common Christian belief contends that homosexuality is an intentional *choice* by the individual. Some people make that choice, but it is also clear others have a homosexual predisposition so early in life that it is clearly not a choice. Homosexuality may result from a person's *nurture*, such as, childhood experiences, early-life impressions, and learned behavior. The nurture argument tends to place responsibility on parents, family, environment, and society, but not on choice. The nurture argument is supported by the fact there is a correlation between being a homosexual man and having an older brother(s). The correlation suggests nurture plays a role through the influence of an older brother(s). However, a physical source is probable, that is, the *mother's nutritional/hormonal status* (often low in essential fatty acids needed for brain development and

with hormonal irregularities after giving birth to older siblings).

A research study indicated *society* may play a role in the sexual orientation of rats. Rats reared in close confinement tended to develop what has been termed "unusual pairings" (in this study female-female pairing). Whether this type of "pairing" is true in humans is not known. However, the research suggests sexual preference can be influenced by societal factors, part of a person's nurture.

Going back to the human genome, we know that our genes use a chemical code: DNA. However, DNA is not all there is to the genome. Another code associated with the DNA is becoming recognized. This code is rather mysterious, and implies more inherited information in our genome than is suggested by the chemical code of our DNA, per se. This code-within-a-code may have a lot to do with *psychological* factors, like the way we think or perhaps our sexual orientation. We had best be careful saying there are no genetic components to homosexuality, for there is still much to be learned about our genetics.

The involvement of genetics (nature) and nurture in the origin of homosexuality are so interrelated that we cannot differentiate between them. This interrelationship led a Christian psychiatrist to say the origin or homosexuality, "...is both nature and nurture. I consider it to have all to do with the relative estrogen-androgen hormonal balances in both sexes that begin in utero where both genetics and environmental factors begin interacting." This belief allowed the psychiatrist to see how two siblings can turn out so differently, that is, how one can turn out to be a tom-boy and another a girly-girl because both genetics and environment became involved in the uterus and continued throughout childhood.

Spirit (the God-awareness aspect)

The spiritual aspect of homosexuality is often said to be found in Romans 1:26-27 (see above), where God gave up on people and gave them over to vile affections. These verses are referring to a time before the Age of

Grace (even before the founding of the nation of Israel), when humans turned their back on God and a downhill spiral resulted. However, the next few verses reveal that homosexuality was not the end of the story, nor the culmination of depravity, as some would like to believe (see Adult Study 17). What we do learn from Romans 1 is denial of God and rejection of His Word have a spiritual impact upon anyone, but in our Age the resulting sins will be forgiven upon belief in Christ.

Conclusions

If we remember how God works with our three aspects, we can better understand what will, and what will not, occur when a homosexual is saved. God works like this: *spiritual issues are addressed quickly by the Lord when we believe, soul issues are handled over the course of our lives as the Spirit renews our minds, and body issues of a genetic or congenital nature will be addressed in the next life.* Based upon our understanding of origins and God's interaction in our lives, some homosexuality seems to be changeable and some is not, depending upon the origin (multiple origins complicate matters). Thus, we conclude:

- If homosexuality originates in the body (nutrition, genetics, hormones, mutation, etc.) it would be like any other physical problem, that is, God will not normally change the condition when a person becomes saved (it will be a thorn in the flesh). A non-sexual example would be Down's syndrome, a handicap with a physical origin (an extra chromosome). God does not remove the extra chromosome upon faith in Christ; a person has to deal with it all his or her life.
- If homosexuality originates in the mind (personal choice, nurture, or learned behavior), it may be changed over time, by God's grace (the transformation process).
- If homosexuality has a spiritual origin, God will address it in a significant way upon salvation (He may not change it, but will give the ability to overcome the temptations). Saying it will be addressed by God, means the spiritual aspects of homosexuality would be modified, but there may be lingering mental aspects as a result of the spiritual errors. Thus, the homosexual's sins

are forgiven; but the mind may still have the former desires. In time, as the person allows the Holy Spirit to transform his or her mind, the old nature can be changed.

The discussion helps us understand why God does not always change sexual orientation when a person becomes saved, and why a person cannot *pray away the gay*. In the final analysis, what is important for homosexuals to understand is not how they got their orientation, *but how to behave with it*. Even if a person is genetically disposed to some behavior, doesn't mean that behavior is morally right. As an example, there seems to

be a gene that predisposes some people to alcoholism. That does not mean it is acceptable for someone with the gene to drink to his or her heart's content. If anything, it ought to alert the person to abstain from alcohol. The plain truth is we do not fully understand the roles of the various factors in producing homosexuality, or what God will and will not change upon faith. The important thing is knowing God's expectations and provisions, as well as His directions on interacting with those of alternative sexual orientations.

TAKE TO HEART

Summary

Being a homosexual is not a sin; homosexual behavior is. Since the behavior is sinful, a believing homosexual should not try to advance a homosexual agenda or justify the behavior. Instead, he or she should lead a celibate life, with God's help, just as a non-married heterosexual is asked to do. Leading a celibate life can be very difficult, failures may occur, but the Lord makes it possible. Christians must not condemn homosexuals who are trying to live for the Lord; it is a deep struggle, and support from other Christians is essential. Some homosexuals cannot change their orientation, and God oftentimes does not do it either; it is a cross they must bear. There are many factors that are potential contributors to the origin of homosexuality: genetics, nutrition, nurture, hormones, society, choice, and more. Understanding the various origins helps us understand why some homosexuality can be altered and some cannot. Regardless of the origin, God loves homosexuals and does not give up on them.

Gospel

"For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!"(Rom. 11: 32-33). In God's

knowledge, all humans are found to be sinners. In His wisdom, He has provided salvation, based upon His desire to have mercy upon us all. God delights in saving sinners and spiritually blessing them.

Encouragement

We all need to remember that being a homosexual is not a sin. Most homosexuals do not choose their sexual orientation and would change it if they could. The sexual orientation of humans is often part of who they are; thus, some homosexuals cannot separate themselves from their sexuality any more than heterosexuals can. Sexual sins are common for all humans, and heterosexuals have to guard against adultery and fornication, so no one ought to get "puffed up." The encouraging news is that God has not given up on anyone, nor will He. If a person's homosexuality is spiritually based or soulish in nature, God has a way for helping that person resolve his or her homosexuality (salvation and transformation). Physical sources of homosexuality most likely will not be changed upon faith, but the Lord will enable the person to live as a non-practicing homosexual, just as a single heterosexual must also live. Christians need to accept and support homosexuals who are trying to live as the Lord directs.