

## **FIRST CORINTHIANS**

### **Homosexuality And Lesbianism I Corinthians 6:9-11**

Pick up the paper or watch television on any given day there will be some article or show on homosexuality - gay rights, gays in the military, gay discrimination, lesbian love affairs, same sex marriages and so on. Because the media is bombarding us on every side with the idea that homosexuality and lesbianism are viable alternative lifestyles, it is imperative that Christians know what the Bible teaches on this subject so an intelligent commitment can be made which will glorify God.

Homosexuality can no longer be evaded by the Church. The Gay Rights movement claims millions of followers and is one of the most powerful lobbies in all of Washington, D.C. Polls indicate that about 60% of the American public believes homosexuality is a legitimate alternative lifestyle and should be legalized. Unfortunately of the 60% some are professing Christians, among whom are the President (and the First Lady) and Vice-President of the USA.

Sexologist and sociologist disagree over the percentage of the American population which is truly homosexual. The Kinsey Report of the 1950s stated that 10% of the population is homosexual. Other reports have said 1% to 6%. A recent French study indicates that 4.1% of men and 2.6% of women indicated some homosexual orientation which is probably an accurate figure for America and most western countries.

The whole issue is further complicated when some medical researchers are saying homosexuality is purely genetic. They claim some people did not have a choice in being homosexual but were born with lesbian and homosexual genes. This has confused most people because until recently it was assumed that homosexuality was environmental (learned) and not genetic (inherited). There has been much research on this issue done by doctors many of whom are homosexual themselves. But other researchers have refuted the findings which claim homosexuality is inherited. The jury is still out on this whole issue.

The real issue for the Christian is what does the Bible teach on this subject? If we believe the Bible is the inspired, infallible word of God in both the Old and New Testaments, then we must submit to what the Bible says, believing God has given us revelation on the subjects of homosexuality and lesbianism. Homosexuality is mentioned in at least seven different passages in the Bible and in none of these is it an approved practice. Critics of the Biblical position say these passages refer to abuses in homosexuality like homosexuality prostitution for money or pederasty (adult men with underage boys). They say the Bible is not against lesbians and homosexuals who are in a monogamous relationship. However, that is not the clear teaching of scripture. It refers to homosexual activity of any kind.

Some of you might be saying, What right does this holier-than-thou preacher have to teach us about homosexuality? He really doesn't know anything about these people!" My credentials are that I had an older brother who was a homosexual and died of AIDS. This has given me a particular hatred for homosexuality but love for the homosexual.

## HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 19:1-11. The first mention of homosexuality is found in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah. Early in the history of men, homosexuality was a problem. God severely judged Sodom and Gomorrah for this sin which we call "sodomy" today. Jude, writing inspired scripture, says this about the Genesis 19 incident: "In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7).

Leviticus 18:22: 20:13. When God called the nation of Israel out for Himself to be a holy nation, He set certain laws which would help them be a holy nation and distinct from the Gentile nations and their sexual perversions. In Leviticus 18, God lists all kinds of heterosexual and homosexual acts which are a perversion to God and says this about homosexuality: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable" (Lev. 18:22). For homosexual acts, one was put to death. "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads" (Lev. 20:13). God warned the Israelites what would happen if they practiced homosexuality: "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. But you must keep my decrees and my laws. . . And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you. Everyone who does any of these detestable things-- such persons must be cut off from their people. Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God (Lev. 18:24-30).

## HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1 Timothy 1:8-10. "We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, adulterers and perverts (homosexuals), for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine" The Apostle Paul is giving one of the major uses of the Mosaic Law which is to bring conviction when the law is broken. This verse confirms that homosexuality is sin and a breaking of moral law. This verse also hints to the fact that homosexuals can change their lifestyles. We know adulterers and liars can change and this may indicate homosexuality is also a changeable condition.

Romans 1:15-32. "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. The Apostle Paul's point is that early man had a right, true concept of God and His moral law but they deliberately chose against God. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped idols made by man rather than the Creator. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Their punishment for rebellion against God was that God lifted His restraints on men and women and they went into homosexuality and lesbianism. They refused to retain God in their knowledge so God gave them over to a depraved, rejected, reprobate mind. Their sinful passions ran rampant and out of control.

No matter how much the Gentile world tried to suppress the truth about God, there was the still small voice which told them they were doing wrong and violating the law written on their hearts in common grace. They knew God's law that those who do such things deserve death (physical and spiritual), but they did them anyway. They had no intention of changing their sinful lifestyles to follow God.

They not only continued to do all kinds of heterosexual and homosexual perversions but they approved of everybody who practiced them. Many people today (even some Christians)

who would not think of practicing homosexuality or lesbianism, approve of those who do. Approval of homosexual acts is just as sinful in God's eyes as the act itself.

I Corinthians 6:9-11. "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." At the time Paul wrote these words, homosexuality was running rampant in Corinth and throughout the Roman Empire. In Corinth was the Temple of Apollo who was the male god who had homosexual relationships with boy gods. The whole Roman Empire was infested with this sin.

"This was the sin which swept like a cancer through Greek life and which, from Greece invaded Rome. We can scarcely realize how riddled the ancient world was with it. Even so great a man as Socrates practiced it; Plato's dialogue The Symposium is always said to be one of the greatest works on love in the world, but its subject is not natural, but unnatural love. Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors practiced unnatural vice. At this very time Nero was emperor. He had taken a boy called Sporus and had him castrated. He had then married him with a full

marriage ceremony and took him home in procession to his palace and lived with him as his wife. With incredible viciousness Nero had himself married a man named Pythagoras and called him his husband. . In this particular vice in the time of the early church the world was lost to shame" (William Barclay, Letters to the Corinthians).

The Apostle Paul is telling the Corinthian Church that no one is going to inherit the kingdom of God if he or she is a practicing fornicator (premarital sex), adulterer (extramarital sex), homosexual, drunkard, slanderer or swindler no matter what their profession of faith in Christ might be. This does not say a Christian cannot fall in these areas but it is declaring that continual, habitual, practicing of these sins with no conviction about them or no desire to repent of them is a basis to wonder whether that person has ever been saved.

This passage teaches the New Testament church was filled with ex-sexual perverts of all kinds. It says, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified..." Christ changed their lives and their lifestyles. They were no longer inextricably caught up in this way of life. Christ supernaturally changes people!

This passage confirms homosexuality is a condition which can be changed. It is not a matter of genetics (inherited) alone or environment (learned) alone. People choose to go into homosexuality and lesbianism and they can choose to come out of this condition. The key, however, is Christ who changes lives, granting supernatural power and new desires for holiness and the moral law of God.

What would the Apostle Paul say to a gay man who wrote to Ann Landers this letter:

Dear Ann Landers. I am a gay man, 27, who was raised in a good Christian home. I've recently "come out" to my family, and they took it pretty well, although my mother is still having a hard time dealing with it. I lied to the people I love the most for years because I was terrified of what would happen if I told them the truth. Fortunately, my family loves me enough to support me.

Ann, how can we educate people to help them understand that this is not a choice? In a book on homosexuality that I recently read, the author quotes a gay person who says, "Why would I choose to be something that horrifies my parents, that my religion condemns, that could ruin my career and could get me killed if I dared to walk down the street holding hands with my boyfriend?" Many people don't understand how difficult it is for us. They don't understand how hard most of us have tried to change the way we are. I now know that you cannot change what God has made you."

I think Paul would tell this man that he can change. He has tried in his own efforts and has failed but he needs to turn to Christ alone for salvation and Christ can change his life through supernatural power and give him new desires. I think Paul would tell him that he has turned from the true God of scripture and there is deep rebellion in his life towards the true God and his moral law. I also think Paul would say that this man has an addiction to the same sex as many have an addiction to the opposite sex. For a few minutes of sexual pleasure, men or women will risk their marriage, family, job, fortune and reputation. Men do this because they love darkness rather than light. I think Paul would have asked this man if alcoholics, criminals, murderers, rapists, and physical abusers were the result of genetic make up? If so, should we acknowledge their lifestyles as normal? If the answer is "yes," then what is normal? I think Paul would tell this man to trust in Christ as a guilty, condemned sinner and turn from this lifestyle to follow the living Christ. A choice must be made for Christ, a different lifestyle and eternal life or a choice will be made for selfishness, homosexuality and exclusion from the eternal kingdom of heaven.

#### HOMOSEXUALITY AND GENETICS

There are those who believe homosexuality and lesbianism are genetic. That is, their condition is due to genetic malfunction. They reject that homosexuality is a willful choice. They reason if a person did not choose his homosexuality can society hold him responsible? Therefore, can we deny a homosexual relationship to one who knows only a homosexual orientation? For them, homosexuality is fixed at birth (conception) and is irreversible.

While there is no real scientific proof today that homosexuality is genetic, I personally feel genetics play a part in sexual orientation. However, a person is not born a homosexual. It may be that genetics give a person a more masculine or feminine personality. Some men may be more effeminate and women more masculine, but a conscious choice is made somewhere to do homosexual acts and if persisted in, it becomes an addiction. Sexual addiction, whether heterosexual or homosexual is one of the toughest to break but it can be done by God's grace.

## HOMOSEXUALITY AND ENVIRONMENT

Environment is probably the biggest contributor to homosexual perversion. Children with absentee fathers and domineering mothers play a big part as to why children get rebellious and fall into sexual perversion. Every young boy needs a father as a role model to develop his masculinity. Every young girl needs a mother to develop her femininity. We also know that sexual and physical abuse by fathers and mothers can drive children to homosexuality and lesbianism. In fact, most women who are involved in lesbianism were at one time sexually or physically abused by a man. Many homosexuals were recruited to this lifestyle by older boys or men when they were struggling for their sexual identity between the ages of ten and fourteen. Then over time it becomes an addiction. Since the greatest cause for homosexuality is environmental, then where there has been social learning, there can be social re-learning in the areas of thought and behavior. A few homosexuals give up the addiction without Christ, but most homosexuals today who get delivered from the addiction do so through a personal, living, dynamic experience with Christ.

## HOMOSEXUALITY AND SIN

The real problem is not genetic or environmental, but spiritual. Man is a homosexual because he is a sinner. Every person born into this world is a sinner because he has a sin nature, and that sin nature is capable of all kinds of vile affections and perversions whether heterosexual or homosexual. In order to practice them a person must first reject the moral laws of God which are written in the heart and voluntarily surrender to sensuality. The real key is conversion to Christ whereby one receives a new heart and new desires for Christ and the moral law of God. Many homosexuals are delivered out of that lifestyle by Christ and find satisfaction in a normal heterosexual marriage although they may fight with homosexual desires until they die.

We can argue whether homosexuality is genetic or environmental or both, but the Bible says that a person is always responsible for his behavior no matter what caused it and the Bible always says homosexuality and lesbianism are sin.

## HOMOSEXUALITY AND CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES

Homosexuality Is Sin. For a Christian to be true to Christ, he must state that the Bible declares homosexuality is sin and a deviation from the moral law of God. Christians must also equally state that heterosexual perversions are sin and come under God's judgment.

Homosexuality Is Unnatural. God has created order. He made man male and female for a purpose. In the ordered world of God's creation, everything has its exact place and function.

Any deviation from the pattern not only violates God's will but frustrates the purpose behind that will. Homosexual acts, for instance, cannot reproduce the human race; therefore, it is out of God's order and an unnatural perversion.

## HOMOSEXUALITY AND LESBIANISM

"After all, since the vast majority of homosexuals do not procreate, the simple laws of mathematics lead to the inexorable conclusion that homosexuality would have substantially died out over the centuries if there were a purely or even predominately genetic component" (Craig Blomberg, I Corinthians).

Homosexuals Can Be Changed And Forgiven. Christ can save any person, forgiving all sins and make him or her a new creation in Christ. Christ can cause a homosexual to stop practicing homosexual acts. While it may be possible for a baby Christian converted out of homosexuality to fall back into that sin on occasion, the Bible says he cannot be a mature Christian and do this act as an habitual practice. The Bible says, "That is what some of you were" (I Cor 6:11)!

Homosexuals Converted To Christ Will Fight Temptation. The act of sexual perversion is condemned in the Bible not the urge. Nowhere is a man or woman condemned for having homosexual feelings. Most humans, at one time or another, have had homosexual thoughts. Those who have had a homosexual orientation may fight thoughts continually after conversion. This is just as true for a heterosexual.

Homosexuals Must Be Warned. They must be warned that this perversion from God's law will not only bring God's judgment in eternity but also in time, if men and women choose to break the moral law of God, then they can expect God's judgment in the form of AIDS, a horrible dreaded disease. To practice homosexuality is like putting a gun to one's head. The key to bringing the AIDS epidemic under control is to have homosexuals stop practicing. We know that 50% of all homosexuals have between 100 and 1000 different sexual partners in a lifetime, most of whom are anonymous. Of that 50%, 30% have thousands of partners. Christians have the responsibility to warn the homosexual and lesbian of impending judgment.

Homosexuals Must Be Loved. Homosexuals and lesbians are real people with deep spiritual needs. Some of them are very nice people. They need Christ and only Christians can tell them about the Savior who can deliver them from their bondage. Christians must welcome converted, non-practicing homosexuals into the church. Many of these homosexuals will be HIV positive and will soon die of AIDS. Those who are HIV positive but not practicing homosexual acts must be loved and cared for by the church even when AIDS ravages their bodies. If the church does not care for these people, who will?

Surely Christians should shed themselves of all homophobia. They should not make fun of homosexuals by calling them "homos", "fairies" "queers" or "fags." These are degrading terms. In my opinion we should not discriminate against them in the secular workplace if sexual behavior is irrelevant for that position. Christians should oppose same sex marriages based on the moral law of God.

The Orlando Sentinel a few weeks ago had an article entitled, "Catholics Launch Ministry for Gays." The essence of the article was that Catholics are trying to minister to homosexuals and lesbians to bring them back under the umbrella of the Roman Church. It states that many

Catholics are ready to receive all practicing homosexuals back into the church but at the same time oppose same sex marriages. Patty Sheehan, who ran for Orlando City Council and lost, is a lesbian and left the Roman Church over this issue is quoted. Sheehan responding to all this said, "it's progress, but what kind of progress is it? I'd rather go somewhere where I'm welcome for what I am than have to go somewhere where I'm expected to change." This is precisely the problem. Christ, not the church, expects homosexuals and heterosexual perverts to change. No true church can change its beliefs about the sinfulness of homosexuality, but homosexuals can be changed by Jesus Christ. The church has been and will be open to all sinners, homosexual and heterosexual who truly repent and follow Christ.

Homosexuality Must Not Be Approved As A Normal Lifestyle. True Christians can never approve of homosexual or heterosexual perversion. The media propaganda of our day is to make homosexuality look like an exciting alternative lifestyle. So we hear terms like "gays", "gay rights", "toleration", "liberation", "discrimination", "right to privacy", and "consenting adults" to desensitize us to the fact that homosexuality is a sinful lifestyle disapproved by God. If we don't practice homosexuality but somehow approve of it, then we are guilty of approving what God hates.

Homosexuals Forced On The Church Will Bring Conflict. If it ever comes to the place that the government forces unconverted active homosexuals or heterosexuals on the church on the basis of discrimination, demanding they be made members of a local church without being converted to Christ and seeking to follow Him, then the true Bible-believing churches will come into direct conflict with the state. In fact, forced homosexuality may be the catalyst which causes the church to go underground in America. If things continue on as they are, we are not too far from the breaking point. God, give us grace to know what to do when it comes.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps I'm talking to someone today who has been involved in homosexual or lesbian activity. Perhaps you have never told anyone. Perhaps you feel real guilty and even a sense of condemnation.

I have good news for you. Christ can forgive you. Christ can make you a new creature in Christ. Christ can give you new desires and even change your sexual orientation.

Come to Christ just as you are. Receive Christ as Savior for your sins. Bow to him as your God. He receives homosexuals and lesbians but He changes them so it can be said of them, "And that is what some of you were!"