

MAN AND WOMAN IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE PT.8 10-28-12

MEN, WOMEN AND SEX pt.2

“Homosexuality”

(Matthew 5) The picture above is Dr. Angela McCaskil, an employee of Gallaudet University in Washington, DC where she has been the chief diversity officer for twenty-three years. I don't know why you need a diversity officer, but that was her role until recently when she was put on administrative leave. She is now suing to be reinstated. Do you know what she did to get suspended by her employer? She was one of 100,000 people who signed a petition requesting that her home-state of Maryland allow its citizens to vote on the issue of same-sex marriage. You heard me right. All she did was support the notion that the citizens of Maryland, rather than the legislature alone, should determine if they will change the definition of marriage. What are we becoming? You all know about the recent hub-bub around Chik-Fila and their president's opposition to gay marriage laws. The mayors of Boston and Chicago and San Francisco all had to diswelcome Chik-Fila. Somehow, what just weeks ago was pretty much the universal perspective of the human race is now viewed as radically bigoted. Even our president apparently changed his mind about gay marriage in recent days, and, I don't know if you are aware of this – but June was, by proclamation of our president, national lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgendered month. Did you miss it? Or did you take in the parade? Who could ever have seen this coming? How are we supposed to react? And what does the Bible say about that might inform our conduct in this day of stunning gender confusion?

Today will be our last Sunday morning to look at the subject of *The Gender Puzzle: Men and Women in Biblical Perspective*. And we conclude this eight week series with a look at the subject of homosexuality. Undoubtedly, one of the most dramatic social changes in the last 30 years is the remarkable increase in the size and visibility of the homosexual sub-culture. Just look at television shows where you have themes like you find in *The New Normal*, a show about two gay men raising a child. The state of California has mandated that its school text books at every level include the contributions throughout history of gays, lesbians, transgendered and bi-sexual persons. Really?! It has become a situation in which truth is truly stranger than fiction. So, we, as disciples of Jesus, need to know what to think and how to think. The general statements of Scripture on homosex are far from ambiguous. You ready for this? Leviticus 18:22 *You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.* God calls homosex an abomination, meaning that it

is abhorrent in His eyes. Leviticus 20:**13** *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; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them.* Today we no longer debate whether or not homosexuals should be allowed as teachers in our schools. That issue is past, but we still discuss whether they can lead Boy Scout troops or serve as pastors in our churches while God directed His people to put those who practiced homosex to death. Times sure have changed haven't they? But God's word hasn't. In the New Testament as well homosex is regarded as sin. See I Corinthians 6:9, I Timothy 1:10 and Romans 1:27. As I argued last week, to seek sexual fulfillment in any other relationship than that of one man and one woman in a marriage covenant is forbidden by God. Quite simple. Homosex is just another form of fornication or adultery. It completely overturns God's order for society established in the garden. When God created the woman He designed someone who would be suited to the needs of the man. And it is very plain that the body of the woman answers to that of the man. Man and woman were made for each other. When God sought to meet Adam's need for a companion He didn't bring to him an Eve and a George for Adam to choose from. There God said Genesis 2:**24** *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.* The one-flesh union of a man and woman, which Ephesians 5 says depicts the relationship of Christ to His church, is totally obscured by homosex.

But let's stop for a moment to establish some definitions. Everyone understands, more or less, what homosex is but what do we mean by *homosexual*? And what is homosexuality? Often you will hear people speak of someone as a homosexual because he/she has sexual interest in others of the same sex. Clearly, you can make distinctions like that but we have to be careful here. As the Bible uses the term it is not referring to a particular inclination or desire or orientation as we call it but to a particular practice. Scripturally put, a homosexual is one who practices homosex. The fact that a man may have an unusual attraction to other men does not make him a homosexual sinner. Nor does it excuse him for his acts. Think carefully with me now. The key argument of those pleading for social acceptance of homosexuality is that one is like one is because he or she was born that way. They speak of homosexuality as something *I am* rather than something *I do*. But there are two problems with that line of thought. First of all, just because a person desires to do something does not legitimate his doing it. Every child I know is born with an essentially selfish concern. Love for others, putting others first, is unnatural for us, but it is something we learn to do and it requires us to suppress the cravings of the flesh doesn't it? The fact that I want money does

not justify me obtaining it in a way that is forbidden by God. And someone who has homosexual desires can live without fulfilling those just as well as someone on a diet can go without certain foods and just like a heterosexual single must go without sexual gratification. I remember very well what it was like to suppress my sexual urges when single. It isn't always easy but it is certainly possible and possible to do with contentment. Richard Lovelace says, *Human sin and God's punishment upon it have deeply affected the processes by which sexual identity is formed, with the result that, none of us, heterosexual or homosexual, naturally desires to fulfill perfectly God's plan for our sexuality. We did not consciously choose to have the deviant sexual orientation which drives us toward fornication, adultery or homosexual practice. But we are confronted with the choice whether or not to act out our orientation and fulfill our natural desires, or whether instead to seek the control and transforming power of the Spirit of Christ to restraining and reorient our desires and behavior.* (Lovelace p.94) Desire does not justify the deed.

The second thing wrong with the homosexual's claim is that all the evidence indicates that their homosexual orientation for the most part is not natural but a learned response. Homosexuals are not chromosomally different from others of their own sex. To say that someone engages in homosexual acts because he has a homosexual nature is a little too simple. John White compares the homosexual to the alcoholic in this way. We might say that a certain individual who is an alcoholic drinks because he cannot help it. He is sick. Drink controls him. He does what he does because he is what he is. But how did he get that way. Was he always an alcoholic? Wasn't there a time when he could stop at one drink? Wasn't there a time when no one thought he had a problem with liquor but now he is an addict? At what point does the alcoholic become an alcoholic? It usually takes many years doesn't it. And had the individual early on joined AA and adopted a plan of lifelong abstinence could he not have stopped without much problem? Almost certainly the answer is *yes*. No one is born an alcoholic. There may be certain genetic factors that make it more likely but alcoholism results from a series of poor choices. We say about someone, "if he doesn't watch his drinking he is going to what? Become an alcoholic". The idea that a person drinks too much or commits certain sexual acts because of what he or she is is not the whole story. John White writes this: *We must see from a more scientific viewpoint that the relationship between what I do and what I am is a fluctuating, two-way relationship. Once I experience physical pleasure with a member of my own sex, I am more likely to want to experience it again. The more frequently I experience it,*

the more fixed will the pattern become. What I do determines what I am just as much as what I am determines what I do. (-White p.111-)

That leads me to this. We are faced in our generation with an unprecedented campaign to normalize homosexual behavior and portray it as just another form of human diversity. John Piper tells of going to his son's college – a Christian college so-called – and seeing a banner draped over a stairwell that said this: *Respect sees no color, no gender, no disability and no sexual orientation.* You got that? *Respect sees no color, no gender, no disability and no sexual orientation.* What do you notice about those four categories? Color, gender, disability and sexual orientation? Well, the first three are all imposed upon us. Things about which we have no choice. I am a white, male who can't jump and its no fault of my own. Adding to that list *sexual orientation* – a term in which most of us hear *sexual choice* suggests that it too is that same kind of thing, namely a fact of my life, not anything about which I have control. This is the big sell in a massive campaign for approval. And homosexuals are desperate for this approval or acceptance from you because they lack the capacity to accept themselves without that. Why the persistent pressure toward same-sex marriage? Some of that, I understand, has to do with special rights granted to spouses, but far and away the larger goal is the further acceptance within society. Do you have any idea how few homosexuals actually stay together for life as a couple? Wayne Grudem reports on a study which shows that only two percent were monogamous or even semi-monogamous which meant fewer than ten partners in a lifetime. Changing the definition of marriage will not change that.

Go with me now then to look at the most interesting of the New Testament references to homosexuality which is in Romans 1. In this chapter, Paul is showing how the human race turned its back on the true God, gave itself over to idolatry and reaped the consequences of that. **21-24** *even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. What is he saying? That because of a deep-seated rebellion against our Creator we have been turned over by Him to impurities that dishonor our bodies. Read on. **25-27** *For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women**

exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷*and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.* We find clearly taught here what was implied by the Old Testament story of Sodom, that perverted sexual desires, specifically homosexual urges, result from divine abandonment due to idolatry. Human society that rejects God eventually finds its natural functions all fouled up. Do you see that? Do you see what it says about our society today? America in its post-Christian era, having bought into the false gods of materialism and sensualism and personal autonomy, is now turned over to an epidemic of sexual craziness. 25a *they exchanged the truth of God for a lie.* 26a *For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions.* The outbreak of homosexuality is meant to prove the spiritual bankruptcy of paganism. 28 *just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.* Now don't understand this as saying that the homosexuality of a given individual is his or her punishment for idolatry. Not so. But, as Richard Lovelace says "it is a result of the damaged social fabric in a society of idolaters."

There is one other important point to note from Romans 1. 26b-27 *their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,* ²⁷*and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.* What does that last phrase mean? It seems to point to some particular form of judgment that comes upon homosexual sinners and the judgment finds its focus on their bodies. It implies that they will suffer physically for their deed, and is that not exactly what we see happening today? Am I referring to AIDS? Of course I am. There has been an insidious attempt on the part of the Gay community to divorce their activities from the AIDS epidemic. To pin blame on homosexuals for AIDS is seen as very narrow and uncharitable and even Christians are falling all over each other to say, "let's not be judgmental, harsh or uncompassionate." Great! let's not be those things. Let's love AIDS patients regardless of how they got that way but let's love those who don't have AIDS and get honest about where this disease comes from. The latest figures from the Center for Disease Control shows that those who participate in homosex are fifty times more likely to get AIDS. The disease started exclusively among homosexuals and the rest have, in a sense, caught it from them. And this is a group that makes up only 2-3% of our population. Am I to pretend I see no connection between the

sin and the disease? Am I to charitably assume that this is not God's judgment on them or should I read my Bible and my newspaper with open eyes. Romans 1:27 says they receive in their own persons the due penalty for their error and the fact that other people catch it only makes the sin more disturbing. I cannot infallibly read the purposes of God behind human events but I can't help either but see how consistent the AIDS epidemic is with God's way. And there is more. Jeffrey Satinover, a psychiatrist reports other medical harm that is typically associated with homosexual practice. *A twenty-five to thirty year decrease in life expectancy. Chronic, potentially fatal liver disease – infectious hepatitis. Fatal rectal cancer. Multiple bowel and other infectious diseases. And a much higher than usual incidence of suicide.* Were these statistics associated with church attendance we would be shut down.

Why does this behavior result in these pathologies? I could read you a medical explanation that would be highly distasteful but the Bible provides us with a different and sufficient angle. Do you know the story of Sodom and Gomorrah? Read Genesis 19 which tells the story of Sodom's wickedness, how they sought to homosexually rape the visitors to Lot's house. This city, whose very name is synonymous with perversion, came under God's judgment and was destroyed with fire and brimstone. That, we know, was no coincidence. And I'm hard pressed to believe that the AIDS epidemic is without divine purpose. And I am absolutely startled; I am dumbfounded at how our nation is dealing with this. People are dying and the gay rights people talk about a right to privacy that won't allow mandatory testing for AIDS. They have the audacity to demand that the taxpayers of this country come to their rescue with government-sponsored research. And it is that very audacity, that public display of corruption which may have brought down the wrath of God. It wasn't until homosexuals came out of the closet that the judgment was sent. John White says: *It is not the sin itself which seems to awaken the wrath of God or of men of God in the Old and New Testaments. Rather it is the defiant attitude of glorying in their shame which calls forth divine indignation. The laughing demands of the lusters of Sodom and of the men in Judges 19 finds its parallel in the Greco-Roman civilization of Paul's day and in the gay movement leaders of today. It is this defiance of the divine order which is so offensive.*

(I Corinthians 6) Now it should be clear from all this that homosex, not the interest, but the actual act, is incompatible with Christian faith. I Corinthians 6:**9-10** *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, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor*

drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. This list includes much more than homosexuals, granted, but it does include them. The two words at the end of verse 9 refer to two types of homosexuals. The first word translated as “effeminate” or “male prostitute” refers to those who give themselves to passive homosexual acts, while the second refers to those engaging in active homosexual acts. Neither, it says, has a place in God’s kingdom. And this passage refers to those in continued, unrepentant practice of these things. So, can a homosexual be a Christian? Someone who has homosexual leanings? – yes, absolutely. Someone who unrepentantly practices homosexual acts? - no. If you are a homosexual who desires eternal life what is required of you? The same that is required of the fornicator or the liar or the drunkard; you must repent of your sins, which includes a cessation of them, and trust your life into the hands of Jesus Christ who is the Lord. There is the promise of forgiveness for all who come to Christ regardless of their past. And there is also the expectation of purity. What do we expect of an alcoholic? Do we excuse him and let him continue on in his destructive patterns of life? No, we expect the alcoholic to get help; to get dry, and to resist the temptations. We do not and cannot excuse his drunkenness. Neither can we excuse sexual sin of any type. And if you say, “I can’t stop what I’m doing because I can’t help what I am, you have not repented and you have not considered the power of the Holy Spirit to change a life.” I’m not suggesting that all homosexual desire will go away when you become a Christian but I am saying that a powerless Christianity is not true Christianity. I Corinthians 6:**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.* And the Spirit of the Lord Jesus is greater than any addiction and is greater than any lust. Paul said, “I can do all things thru Him who strengthens me” and overcoming sexual sin is among those all things. But don’t misunderstand. I’m not saying to get straight and then come to Christ. I’m saying to accept the grace of Jesus now and respond to His goodness with a life of moral striving. You can be sitting here today a moral cesspool and walk out of that door clean before your Lord. Isaiah 1:**18** *Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.* The condition is repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is also a reasonable hope that your homosexual urges will, over time, be taken away or, at least, diminished. Treatment programs do work in some cases and I exhort you to seek counsel for your problems. There are Christian therapists and programs to help you on the road to healthy sexual thoughts and behavior. Your

bulletin contains the name of a couple of organizations that specialize in helping homosexuals who desire to change and find their way in Jesus.

Finally, I want to speak to all of us about how we treat unrepentant homosexuals and how we treat those who have repented and are seeking to reform. Those who have repented and are struggling to stay pure we receive as brothers without hesitation. They are first-class citizens of God's kingdom and should receive our love as well as our help. Those who have not repented we deal with just as we would any other unconverted person. We don't feign approval of what they do but we don't shun them either. We don't accept, but we do forgive. We don't accept, but we do forgive. Those caught up in homosex are to be respected as persons made in God's image. Some of them are in our families and it grieves and challenges us, but we are called to love them just as we would any other family member. Their choices require us to make some difficult decisions at times, but love is always the rule. And whenever we look at a sin like this, of which most of us are not guilty, I think it important to remember that we sinners are ultimately of one stock. Ed Welch says that we all, by nature, have the same sexual orientation. In his book, *Blame It On the Brain*, he writes: *We truly do have an "orientation" but it is a spiritual orientation that is against God. It is not a simple physical propensity.* That's good. Whether my sin has to do with fornication, adultery, pornography or homosex, the root issue is not my sexual drive it is my hostility toward a God who seems to think He can tell me what to do. That is what the world cannot stand – a God who dares stick his divine nose in my personal affairs. So, you see, the problem is not your choice of a "partner" but your choice of a god. Again- the problem is not your choice of a "partner" but your choice of a god, the choice to let your appetites rule rather than your Maker. The issue for all of us is the Lordship of Jesus and our response to His claims on our lives regardless of where our individual temptations may take us.

Because my corruption has not found its expression in the homosexual way is hardly a cause for pride. Indeed, it is a cause for brokenness and humility. The newly-rampant homosexuality of our day results from the moral degeneracy for which you and I share the blame. The perversity of our nation is reason for all of us to be ashamed. But it should also be a further motivation to us. I don't want, in any way, to add to the problem. The problem of sexual misconduct is so extensive and so damaging. I don't want to add to the problem but I want to be a part of the solution. That means I carefully order my own private world and I work to maintain purity in my family, my church, my city, my state and my nation. And it means too that I call out to God that, in wrath, He would

remember mercy. And our great God invited us to do that. In II Chronicles 7:**14** *if My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.* Please join with me in prayer.