



Gay Christianity

A Reasoned Response

By

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Introduction

The issue of homosexuality and same-sex marriage may be one of the most controversial and challenging in Christianity today. The subject has caused many divisions within families, churches and denominations.

My response is fairly simple and straightforward: what does the Bible say about it?

I view the Bible as the supreme authority for Christianity. Most people have opinions and feelings about homosexuality, same-sex marriage and a host of other topics, but the Christian worldview does not spring from opinions and feelings. As Jesus told Satan -

“It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” Matthew 4:4

Our lives as Christians cannot stand on personal opinion, feelings or group-think. We must stand on God’s Word alone.

Jesus ended His famous Sermon on the Mount with this powerful and insightful point concerning His Word -

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on

that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 'But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.'" Matthew 7:24-27

Christians must address every issue, every topic, from that simple perspective - hearing the words of Jesus and doing them. If we do, we can be assured that no matter how many attacks are aimed at our position we will not fall. However, if we don't, be assured that our position will fall and the fall will be great.

What we are seeing in many parts of Christianity is a great fall. The purpose of this eBook is to address the issue using a reasoned and authoritative method.

The Challenge

There is a powerful movement within Christianity that claims homosexuality is a “gift from God”. Here’s what one gay Christian wrote in a letter to the CEO of the Chick-fil-A restaurant chain -

“Homosexuality is not a choice. It is an orientation. It is no different than eye-color, or being right-handed or left-handed. My sexuality is a gift from God and I believe that he intends for me to rejoice in that by knowing the love of another in a life-time, monogamous relationship.”

Letter From A Gay Christian, Room For All

Sociology Professor Emeritus at California State University wrote this -

“Simply put, if we remove the patriarchal and legalistic trappings of ‘Christianity,’ that presents the false gospel of legalism perfectionism, and exclusion, we see that the only Gospel to be found in Christianity, the Gospel of grace, faith, love, peace, reconciliation, and inclusiveness demands that we embrace all of God’s children, we be authentic as God created us to be, and we recognize that we commit a grievous sin when we reject the wonderful gift bestowed upon us by God, the gift of being able to love another person. As Rev. Troy Perry has said, ‘God didn’t create someone whom He could sit around and hate!’ You also commit a grievous sin if you reject the sexual orientation given you by God! We are to never chafe under the sovereign choices of God, and so many LGBT Christians fail to recognize that they are God’s gift to the Church

and to society! Always remember, God has gifted you with the capacity to love and that you are God's gift to the Church and to this world!"

Some Talking Points on Christianity and Homosexuality, Professor Jerry Maneker

Is that true? Did God give homosexuality to some humans in the same way He gave heterosexuality to other humans? Is homosexuality a wonderful 'gift' from God that brings glory to Him?

If He did and made it clear in His revelation to the world through His Word, then Christians should have no disagreement about it. Homosexuality is a non-issue - *unless* we're missing something in the translation or interpretation.

First, let's look at something the Apostle Paul wrote that finds itself at the center of the modern challenge -

"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women 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." Romans 1:26-27

Here's how one leader in the gay Christian community responded to Paul's words -

“Gay people have a natural, permanent orientation toward those of the same sex; it's not something that they choose, and it's not something that they can change. They aren't abandoning or rejecting heterosexuality—that's never an option for them to begin with. And if applied to gay people, Paul's argument here should actually work in the other direction: If the point of this passage is to rebuke those who have spurned their true nature, be it religious when it comes to idolatry or sexual, then just as those who are naturally heterosexual should not be with those of the same sex, so, too, those who have a natural orientation toward the same sex should not be with those of the opposite sex. For them, that would be exchanging 'the natural for the unnatural' in just the same way. We have different natures when it comes to sexual orientation.” Matthew Vines, *The Gay Debate: the Bible and Homosexuality*, <http://www.matthewvines.com/transcript/>

Is that true? Did God give homosexuals a 'different' nature when it comes to sexual orientation? Let's take a look at the context of Paul's statement in question. Context usually helps clear up a lot of wrong ideas about a text.

The Exchange

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” Romans 1:22-25

Here’s the part I’d like us to focus on for a few minutes -

“... who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”

The Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit as he wrote to Christians in Rome, made the truth claim that the foolishness of human beings led them to “exchange” the truth of God for “the lie.” What did Paul mean by that?

The word “exchanged” is a translation of the Greek word μετηλλαξαν. It is the combination of two words: μετά (with, after) and αλλάσσω (change, alter, exchange, transform). Paul used αλλάσσω several words earlier when he wrote – “and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man ...”

Paul is pointing to a terrible exchange on the part of humans: they changed (exchanged) both the “glory of God” and “the truth of God.” What did humans receive in the exchange?

- an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things
- the lie

No wonder Paul referred to humans as “Professing to be wise, they became fools.” God created humans and gave them Himself as well as the Truth. They foolishly exchanged that for an image made like corruptible man and “the lie.”

What is “the lie”? (τό ψευδει – *to pseudei* .. definite article used with noun)

“The lie” hearkens back to the words of Satan in the Garden of Eden:

“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ Genesis 3:4-5

Satan’s lie then, and now, is that humans can “be like God.” That foolish advice led to the foolish choice by humans to exchange “the truth of God for the lie.” The Greek word translated “lie” means “falsehood, untruth, lie.” It comes from the verb ψεύδομαι, which means “deceive, speak falsely.” That is exactly what Satan did when he spoke to Eve – he deceived her through his false speech:

“For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” 1 Timothy 2:13-14

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:3

“You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” John 8:44

We know the end of the story:

“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Revelation 12:9

God created humans to worship and serve Him. What happened when humans exchanged that truth for “the lie”? They “worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.” Notice the “change” here. God created humans to worship Him, the Creator. Humans foolishly chose to worship the creature rather than the Creator. God created humans to serve Him, the Creator. Humans foolishly chose to serve the creature rather than the Creator.

What does it mean to “worship” someone or something? The Greek word Paul used in Romans 1 is σεβάζομαι. It means “to revere, to stand in awe, to venerate, to adore, to esteem highly.” What happens when people see the glory of God?

“All the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose and worshiped, each man in his tent door.”
Exodus 33:10

“So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.” Exodus 34:8

“So He said, ‘No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.’ And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, ‘What does my Lord say to His servant?’” Joshua 5:14

“When all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement, and worshiped and praised the Lord, saying: ‘For He is good, For His mercy endures forever.’” 2 Chronicles 7:3

“And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Matthew 2:11

“Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’” Matthew 14:33

“Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.” Luke 24:51-53

“Then he said, ‘Lord, I believe!’ And he worshiped Him.” John 9:38

What about beings God created who live in Heaven? How do they respond to God?

“Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.’” Revelation 4:9-11

“Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.” Revelation 5:14

“And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: ‘We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to

come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.”
Revelation 11:16-17

Angels who live in the presence of God are sensitive to making sure only God receives worship:

“Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. Then he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God.’” Revelation 22:8-9

Without question, the Bible is clear that God seeks people to worship Him. Jesus said –

“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.” John 4:23

What about “serving” God? Is that different than “worshipping” God?

The Greek word Paul used for “served” is λατρεύω. It comes from λάτρις, which means “hired servant, hireling.” The noun, λατρεία, means “sacred service, worship.” To “serve” in this context is to serve as part of one’s worship.

Question: what was God's purpose in calling Moses to go to Pharaoh and ask for the release of the Israelites from slavery?

Answer: "When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." Exodus 3:12

God calling on Pharaoh to release the Israelites from bondage so they could "serve" Him was a continual theme in Exodus (e.g. Exodus 4:23; 7:16; 8:1, 20; 9:1, 13; 10:3). Pharaoh understood what God was commanding him to do –

"So Moses and Aaron were brought again to Pharaoh, and he said to them, "Go, serve the Lord your God. Who are the ones that are going?" Exodus 10:8

"Then Pharaoh called to Moses and said, "Go, serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be kept back. Let your little ones also go with you." Exodus 10:24

"Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, 'Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the Lord as you have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also.'" Exodus 12:31-32

Once Moses and the Israelites escaped from Egypt and were in the wilderness, God reminded them that they were to serve Him and only Him

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“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” Exodus 20:4-6

God also clearly spelled out to Israel what would happen to them if they worshipped and served anyone or anything other than Him –

“They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.” Exodus 23:33

“Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon,

and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the Lord your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage.” Deuteronomy 4:15-19

The Hebrew word used to serve both God and creature (idols) is אָבַד (*abad*). It means “to work, serve, worship.” What did the Israelites often do instead of serving/worshipping God? They served/worshipped images “made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.” They “exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.” That is the sad, sad story of how humans have treated God through the millennia.

Paul added a short phrase after people exchanging the truth of God for the lie, and worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator – “who is blessed forever.” What does that mean and why did Paul add it there?

The Greek is ος εστιν ευλογητος εις τους αιωνας αμην – “who is blessed to the ages.” The word “blessed” is εὐλογητός (*eulogétos*) and it means “worthy of praise, speak well of.” When someone does a “eulogy” at a funeral they are speaking well or highly of the person who has died.

This phrasing by Paul is not unusual of ancient writings about God –

“Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and

earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’ And he gave him a tithe of all.” Genesis 14:18-20

“And he said, “Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master’s brethren.” Genesis 24:27

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people.” Luke 1:68

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” 2 Corinthians 1:3

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3

So, what does this have to do with Christianity, homosexuality and same-sex marriage? Let’s continue in the context of what Paul wrote in Romans 1

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“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women 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.” Romans 1:26-27

This is the second time in Romans that Paul has used the phrase “God gave them up.” In verse 24, Paul wrote – “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.” In verse 26, he wrote – “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions.”

The “uncleanness” that God gave them up to resulted in “lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves.” He called this lust and dishonor “vile passions.”

“vile passions” is a translation of the Greek words παθη ατιμιας. The word παθη (passion, emotion) comes from πάσχω, which means “to feel heavy emotion, passion.” The word ατιμιας (disgrace, dishonor) comes from ἄτιμος, which means “without honor, despised.”

Translators have used many English words to describe παθη ατιμιας –

- sinful desires
- shameful lusts
- dishonorable passions
- shameful things
- vile affections
- degrading passions
- degrading lust

- evil desires
- vile lusts
- passions of dishonor
- shameful affections
- shameful passions
- disgraceful passions
- evil things
- vile pursuits
- wrong things
- passions of shame

All of them agree with the basic meaning of the Greek words: God gave people up to a life of expressing the worst kinds of evil with each other – evil that is disgraceful, shameful and degrading. What would the worst kind of evil expression be between people?

“For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.”

One literal translation into English – “both indeed females of them changed the natural use into that contrary to nature.”

Another literal translation into English is – “even for females of them changed the natural use to the use against nature.”

Why Paul’s continued emphasis on “changed” and “exchanged” in this context? The theme of this part of Paul’s letter to the Romans concerns the

wrath of God revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Even though people knew the truth, they suppressed the truth “in unrighteousness.” Paul reached back in time to the “creation of the world” and how God’s invisible attributes were clearly seen, “being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.”

The word μεταλλάξαν means “change, transform, alter, exchange.” This is the third time Paul has used the word:

vs 22-23 – “Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”

vs. 25 – “who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”

vs. 26 – “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.”

People changed the “glory of the incorruptible God” into an image made like corruptible man, birds, four-footed animals, and creeping things (e.g. idols) and exchanged the “truth of God” for a lie. God responded by giving them up to uncleanness to dishonor their bodies among themselves and to vile passions.

We need to return to the 'beginning' to understand where this is headed.

The Change

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

That’s where everything begins. God existed before anything – time, space, heavens, earth, people. He created the heavens and the earth and everything in it. God created time and space – and people.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” Genesis 1:26-28

We see in these early verses of Genesis that God did something quite remarkable. He created human beings (male and female) in “Our image, according to Our likeness.”

Notice that God first said “Let Us make man in Our Image, according to Our Likeness.” That is significant in light of what He said about creating matter and creatures prior to man. In the previous creative process, God said – “Let there be.” With the creation of man, God said – “Let Us make.”

- “Let there be light”
- “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters”
- “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place”
- “let the dry land appear”
- “Let the earth bring forth grass”
- “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens”
- “Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures”
- “let birds fly above the earth”
- “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind”
- “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”

God changed His language during the creative process, I believe, to express the “personal” relationship He would have the humans who He would make in “Our image, according to Our likeness.”

The Hebrew reads –

כְּדִמוֹתֵינוּ בְּצִלְמֵנוּ אָדָם גִּעְשָׂה

The Hebrew word for man, אָדָם, transliterates as *adam*.

God first said “Let Us make *adam* in our Image, according to Our likeness;” then He said “let them have dominion.” That’s the Hebrew word וַיְרִדוּ (plural). Who is “them”?

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them ...”

Genesis 1:27 continues the creative explanation by stating that God created *adam* (man – אָדָם), in His own image (צֶלֶם); male (זָכָר – *zakar*) and female (נְקֵבָה – *neqebah*) He created them. The “man” God created is male and female. God created *adam* (man) in His (Our) image and likeness and that image was male and female. As we know now and the ancients knew then, male and female are sexual distinctions. Boys and girls are different. Men and women are different. How? The primary difference between the male and female *adam* is their reproductive and sexual anatomy. This is important to our understanding of what Paul presents in Romans 1.

We see the “image” and “likeness” of God when we see male and female together. How did God demonstrate this to the male who He created first?

“And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the

field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.”
Genesis 2:18-20

God said that it was not good that man should be alone – (בַּד – *bad*), which means “separation, apart.” Because God created *adam* in His (Our) image and likeness and that image and likeness was male (*zakar*) and female (*neqebah*), God brought every living creature to the male *adam* and told him to give them names. The male *adam* saw that the cattle, birds and beast of the field came before him in pairs (male and female) and would have seen that he did not have a helper (עֵזֶר – *ezer*) comparable (נֶגֶד – *neged*) to him. God put the male *adam* to sleep and created the female *adam* from the male’s rib. God brought the female to the male and the male said –

“This is now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.” Genesis 2:23

Some scholars believe the Hebrew words *zō’t happa’am* (זֹאת הַפֶּאִמ) have an exclamatory nature – “This is now!” The male saw the female and realized they were a completed pair even as he had seen the animals in pairs.

The next words of the text demonstrate an understanding from the earliest time that sexual union was understood to be between male and female in a marriage relationship –

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Genesis 2:24

It’s interesting to see that the word “female” is *neqebah* and the word “comparable” is *neged*. There is a special comparability/suitability with male and female in God’s purpose and design. Important to remember that male and female together are how God made man (*adam*) in His (Our) image and likeness.

Even as the male named all of the living creatures God brought to him, he named the female *adam* God brought to him. He named her “Woman” (נְשִׁימַ – *ishshah* – wife) because she was taken “out of Man” (זָאת לָקַח אִישׁ – *zoth laqach ish*).

As we continue to read Paul’s words in Romans 1, we must remember that the image of God is male and female together. That will guide us in understanding why Paul wrote what he wrote.

God gave humans the highest position on the earth He created. They would have “dominion” (רָדָה – reign, rule) over the fish, the birds, the cattle, the earth and every creeping thing.” They would co-rule the earth with God. That’s the plan God had for humans.

God created humans to reproduce through sexual union – “Be fruitful and multiply.” Genesis 2:24 reads, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” The words “be joined” come from the Hebrew word דָּבַק (cling, cleave, keep

close). This joining together included physical, sexual, emotional, mental and social closeness (“one flesh” – *echad basar*). God’s idea of creating humans to have dominion over the earth and everything in it would include a closeness that included all aspects of who they were as humans.

God’s words to the male and female (הָאָדָם וְהָאִשָּׁה יִמְלְאוּ וְיִרְבוּ פְרֹו) tell us much about the type of relationship God intended for male and female to have together as they represented the image of God on earth. The word *parah* means “to bear fruit, be fruitful.” The word *rabah* means “multiply, grow great, increase, make large.” The word *mala* means “be filled, to fill.” The word *erets* means “land, earth.” God commanded the male and female to be fruitful, multiply in number and size, and fill up the land (earth). What mechanism did God create within the male and female to accomplish this command? Sexual intercourse leading to pregnancy and birth of new males and females. The sexual relationship male and female have together is interwoven into their design as being the image and likeness of God.

Why is this so important to God?

Look again at what God said about creating humans – “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” God created the heavens and the earth; He created angels and animals, birds and fish. Yet, the only created being that would share in the “likeness” (דְמוּת – likeness, similitude) was humans. The Hebrew word comes from the root דָּמָה which means “be like, resemble.”

When a man and woman (male and female) come together as husband and wife, they are expressing the image of God on earth. When they have a sexual relationship that brings new males and females into the world, they are being fruitful, multiplying and filling the earth.

Look at Romans 1:24-25 again –

“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”

Can you imagine anything more honoring than for the Almighty God to create a living being that would be in His ‘likeness’? Can you imagine anything more dishonorable than for humans to ‘exchange’ that great honor for something as demeaning as worship and service for idols and dishonoring their bodies among themselves?

God created humans for the greatest experience imaginable – being made in the image and likeness of God and ruling the earth with Him – and how have humans repaid His great honor? by worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator and dishonoring their bodies among themselves.

How have humans done that?

Paul answered that question with a description of what women did with each other in ways he described as “against nature.”

He chose to use the word θηλειαι for “women.” It comes from a root word for the female breast and means “to suckle.” It speaks to the sexual “function” of a woman, not sexual “desire.” Only a female is designed to give birth and suckle a child.

This is important to note for multiple reasons. One is how that word is used in the Greek New Testament. Another reason is that there are other words for “women” in the Greek that Paul did not choose to use. Paul was a highly educated person and knew Greek and Hebrew very well. He was a wordsmith and selected the right word for each situation.

The word θηλειαι is used five times in the New Testament –

“And He answered and said to them, ‘Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ 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’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Matthew 19:4-6

“And Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the

two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

Mark 10:5-9

“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.”

Romans 1:26

“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.” Romans 1:27

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Galatians 3:28

All other uses of the word “woman” and “women” in the New Testament come from these Greek words:

- γυνή (a woman, wife, my lady)
- γυναικάριον (a woman, a poor weak woman, a silly woman)
- πρεσβῦτις (an old woman)

Paul chose to use a specific word for “women” (θηλειαι) that specifically addressed their function for childbearing (including childrearing) within the human race.

So, what does it mean that “women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature”?

One literal translation would be – “into that contrary to nature.” What does that mean – “contrary to nature”?

First, let’s take a look at how various English translators deal with this verse

–

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.”
KJV

“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural ...”
NASB

“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.” NIV

“For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature ...” ESV

“For this reason God gave them over to degrading and vile passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural [a function contrary to nature] ...” AMP

“This is why God delivered them over to degrading passions. For even their females exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones.” HCSB

“That is why God let go of them and let them do all these evil things, so that even their women turned against God’s natural plan for them and indulged in sex sin with each other.” TLB

“Worse followed. Refusing to know God, they soon didn’t know how to be human either—women didn’t know how to be women, men didn’t know how to be men. Sexually confused, they abused and defiled one another, women with women ...” MSG

Many Christians believe Paul was addressing a big problem in the Gentile world – homosexuality. However, as we saw earlier, other Christians believe that is not what Paul meant. They believe Paul was addressing **heterosexuals** involved in **homosexual** relations rather than homosexuals having sexual relations with other homosexuals. Their idea is that a female heterosexual who engages in sexual relations with another female is doing something **against** her nature. However, a homosexual female who engages in sexual relations with another female is doing something **within** her nature. Is that what Paul meant? Do people have “different natures” when it comes to sexual orientation? Does God give some people a heterosexual nature and others a homosexual nature? Was Paul rebuking Christians who had “spurned their true nature”? We need to look at both the original Greek text and the context of the verses leading into and following the study text.

Lead-in Text – “Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

Study Text – “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.”

Follow Text – “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.”

The lead-in text clearly states that –

- God gave them up to uncleanness
- in the lusts of their hearts
- to dishonor their bodies among themselves
- who exchanged the truth of God for the lie
- and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator

The study text clearly states that –

- God gave them up to vile passions
- even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature

The follow text clearly states that –

- 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

Matthew Vines and other gay Christians argue that Christians who hold to the traditional interpretation of Genesis 1:27 – “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”- are missing an important point of God’s design from Genesis 2:18 –

“In Genesis 2:18, God says, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’ And yes, the suitable helper or partner that God makes for Adam is Eve, a woman. And a woman is a suitable partner for the vast majority of men – for straight men. But for gay men, that isn’t the case. For them, a woman is not a suitable partner. And in all of the ways that a woman is a suitable partner for straight men—for gay men, it’s another gay man who is a suitable partner. And the same is true for lesbian women. For them, it is another lesbian woman who is a suitable partner. But the necessary consequence of the traditional teaching on homosexuality is that, even though gay people have suitable partners, they must reject them, and they must live alone for their whole lives, without a spouse or a family of their own. We are now declaring good the very first thing in Scripture that God declared not

good: for the man to be forced to be alone. And the fruit that this teaching has borne has been deeply wounding and destructive.”

Matthew Vines, *The Gay Debate*

Vines is “forcing” his interpretation onto what is clear in Scripture. He may believe that God created gay men as suitable partners for other gay men and gay women as suitable partners for other gay women, but the text of Genesis 1 & 2 doesn’t support that interpretation. “Living alone” is not the lesson of the Genesis 2:18 text. The lesson is design, purpose, completion and function.

“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.”

“likewise” is ομοιωσ and means “equally in the same way, in like manner, similarly.”

The “men” (αρρενες – males) “also” did something similar, like, equally in the same way to the women. They left the “natural use of the woman.”

“leaving” is αφεντες (aorist active participle – having left) and means “letting go, releasing, departing.”

“the natural use” is την φυσικην χρηση and is the same phrase Paul used for women exchanging “the natural use” (την φυσικην χρησην) for “what is against nature” (εις την παρα φυσιν – what is contrary to nature).

“burned” is εξεκαυθησαν and is used only one time in the New Testament, Romans 1:27. It is a combination of the words εκ (from out, suggesting from the interior outwards) and καίω (ignite, burn, consume with fire). It means “blaze out, burn out from within” and was used in the sense of burning with internal lust.

“in their lust” is εν τη ορεξει and means in their “strong desire, lust, appetite.” The word ορεξει comes from ορέγω (stretch forth, long for, eager for). It is used only one time in the New Testament, Romans 1:27.

This lust, strong desire is directed toward “one another” – εις αλληλους. Who is “one another”?

αρσενες εν αρσεσιν (males with males). How do men express their lust, strong desire, appetite with other men?

την ασχημοσυνην κατεργαζομενοι – “committing what is shameful”

ασχημοσυνην was used to describe behavior that was “unseemly, indecent, shameful, indecent, lewd, nakedness.” The word is used twice in the New Testament – Romans 1:27 and Revelation 16:15.

κατεργαζομενοι means “work out, produce, accomplish.” One Greek commentary added this – “The participle κατεργαζομενοι (nom. pl. masc. of pres. mid. ptc. of dep. κατεργάζομαι, “achieve, accomplish”) is adverbial of result; the present tense is iterative (“with the result that they are repeatedly committing what is disgraceful”). (*Exegetical Guide To The Greek New Testament*, Romans, B&H Academic, 2017, p 46).

Men lusted after other men continuously and produced what is shameful, indecent, lewd, unseemly. Was there a result from this work of shameful lust?

“and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due” is και την αντιμισθιαν ην εδει της πλανης αυτων εν εαυτοις απολαμβανοντες

αντιμισθιαν is used twice in the New Testament and means “reward, recompense, retribution.”

εδει means “necessary, inevitable.”

πλανης means “wandering, departure, deceit, delusion, error, sin.”

εν εαυτοις απολαμβανοντες translates as “in themselves receiving.” The word απολαμβανοντες is used only one time in the New Testament, Romans 1:27. It means “get back, receive back.” The idea of the word is to receive what one is due.

The men who left the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, and produced what is shameful, received a recompense, a retribution, that was due them because of their error, their departure. Departure from what? What God designed as the “natural use of the woman.”

It's important that we continue to return to the context for those who think the text is supportive of homosexual acts between homosexuals. Does Romans 1:26-27 mean that it is wrong for heterosexual women to have sexual relations with women? Yes. Does Romans 1:26-27 mean that it is wrong for heterosexual men to have sexual relations with men? Yes. Does Romans 1:26-27 mean that it is acceptable for homosexual women to have sexual relations with homosexual women and homosexual men to have sexual relations with homosexual men? NO!

People who participate in homosexual acts and those who support the right of people to participate in homosexual acts and believe the Apostle Paul would agree with them are not understanding the text nor the context of Romans 1. The context is clear that God gave up the people (men and women) “to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves” and to “vile passions.” Nowhere in the context of Romans 1 do we find a presentation of two kinds of nature: one for homosexuals and another for heterosexuals. People are treated as either male or female, part of the human race.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.” Romans 1:18-19

Because the human race did not glorify God as God, even though they knew God, nor were thankful, “but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” and because while professing to be wise, “they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things,” God gave them all up to “uncleanness, in the lust of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves” and to “vile passions.” What does that look like? Women having sexual relations with women and men having sexual relations with men, both having left the “natural use” of the opposite sex. As Paul viewed it, a very sad state for the human race.

“For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women 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.” Romans 1:26-27

“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 homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor

covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

“But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.” 1 Timothy 1:8-11

Another New Testament author, Jude the half-brother of Jesus, also addressed the idea of homosexuality in his brief letter -

“... as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Jude 1:7

Jude referenced something that happened many centuries before he was born. Keep in mind that Jude referred to “sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh.” The Greek word *ekporneusasai* translates as “having indulged in sexual immorality.” The words *apelthousai opisō sarkos heteras* translate as “after having gone after flesh strange.” That is flesh that is of “a different type or class.”

“Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, ‘Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.’ And they said, ‘No, but we will spend the night in the open square.’ But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.’ So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, ‘Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.’ And they said, ‘Stand back!’ Then they said, ‘This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.’ So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary trying to find the door. Then the men said to Lot, ‘Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—

take them out of this place! For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it ... Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.” Genesis 19

Gay Christians respond by saying that the problem in Sodom and Gomorrah was not homosexuality. Professor Jerry Maneker of California State University believes that the Bible does not condemn same-sex love. In fact, he believes the Bible “actually affirms” it. Professor Maneker referred to the relationship between King David and Jonathan as proof of that. Maneker also believe Deborah, a judge and warrior of Israel, may have been “transgendered, as she certainly didn’t live up to the cultural expectations of how a ‘woman’ is to behave.” There is no convincing evidence to support that King David and Jonathan had a same-sex relationship. As for Deborah, she stepped up because none of the Jewish men would lead the battle God had called Israel to fight with the army of King Jabin of Canaan. That speaks to her strength of character and bravery, not her being ‘transgendered.’ Deborah was a wife, a prophetess and a judge. She was also a pretty good fighter!

Maneker addressed what happened in Sodom as one of his 'talking points' on Christianity and homosexuality -

"The "sin of Sodom" (Genesis 19) has nothing to do with homosexuality. It deals with gang rape. Whenever Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned in the Bible, homosexuality is never mentioned as its sin. Its sins are primarily inhospitality and not taking care of the poor." Professor Jerry Maneker

The problem in Sodom and Gomorrah was not 'gang rape.' God sent angels to destroy both cities because of their overwhelming lifestyle of homosexuality. Lot may have spoken to them before about their lifestyle based on something the men of Sodom said to Lot -

"This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them."

Another problem with this is what Jude wrote in his comment about Sodom and Gomorrah. He wrote that the people of those cities suffered the "vengeance of eternal fire." Is that something we find support for in the Bible for how God views the sins of inhospitality and not taking care of the poor?

The Apostle Paul shared a long list of sins that came from God giving people over to a "debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness" (Romans 1:28). It's part of the same

context we've been looking at in Romans 1. Let's see what Paul listed as the sins that come from God's giving them "over" -

- Sexual immorality
- Wickedness
- Covetousness
- Maliciousness
- Full of envy
- Murder
- Strife
- Deceit
- Evil-mindedness
- Whisperers
- Backbiters
- Haters of God
- Violent
- Proud
- Boasters
- Inventors of evil things
- Disobedient to parents
- Undiscerning
- Untrustworthy
- Unloving
- Unforgiving
- Unmerciful

Hospitality and taking care of the poor are not on the list, unless we want to say that they are part of being unloving and unmerciful. Yes, hospitality and taking care of the poor are important to God, but is that why He selected the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for total destruction by fire? I don't think so.

Another claim of gay Christians is that Jesus never addressed the issue of homosexuality, so if it wasn't a problem for Him it shouldn't be a problem for us. Is that true? Let's look at what Moses wrote in the Law about homosexuality -

“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.”

Leviticus 18:22

“If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.” Leviticus 20:13

Leviticus is part of the Torah, the Law of Moses. Here's what Jesus said about that Law –

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” Matthew 5:17

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 7:12

“The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail.” Luke 16:16-17

Jesus presented His view of marriage as being between a man and a woman, supporting what Moses wrote in Genesis 1 and 2 –

“But from the beginning of the creation, God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Mark 10:6-9

It’s important at this point that we remember that Jesus is the Creator and designed the purpose for male and female –

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.” Colossians 1:15-17

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” John 1:1-3

To say that Jesus, the Creator of all things, created homosexuals is a bold statement - one that can't be supported with the clear teaching of God's Word.

As we saw in the context of Romans 1, God is angry. Paul wrote that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” Paul wrote that God gave humanity up to “uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves” and to “vile passions.” The next sentence explains what people did when God gave them up –

“For even their women 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.”

Homosexual relations (men/men, women/women) are not the only thing Paul would list for what humans did when God gave them up, but it is the first thing on Paul's list. It goes back to God's original design for the male and female sexually, a design the human race has violated in many ways.

It is about origin, identity and purpose. We originate from God, our identity is that which God gives to each of us, and our purpose is what God purposed us to be and to do. To exchange that for anything else is missing the entire point of being made in the image and likeness of God (Imago Dei).

Professor Maneker wrote this in his summary of talking points about Christians and homosexuality -

“So, next time you hear the utterances of homophobic clergy who appeal to the Bible to justify their prejudices, remember that they speak out of ignorance and/or hatefulness, and pay them no mind! They are wolves in sheep’s clothing, and even many of them are too clueless to know that fact and, unfortunately, many of their followers are too gullible to see through their lies.]”

It is, of course, up to each of us to determine who we believe speaks out of ignorance and/or hatefulness. It is our choice to determine who we believe best represents the clear teaching of the Bible. My purpose has been to share a reasoned response to the issue of gay Christianity. Thank you for spending the time to read these thoughts on the subject. Our prayers are with you as you seek to follow Christ in every aspect of your life.

If you would be interested in reading other articles concerning Christianity and homosexuality, we invite you to click on the articles below. We do not necessarily agree with everything written in the articles, but we do think you will find them helpful as you consider this important subject.

<http://www.albertmohler.com/2014/04/22/god-the-gospel-and-the-gay-challenge-a-response-to-matthew-vines/>

<https://carm.org/response-to-matthew-vines-bible-homosexuality>

<https://www.monergism.com/response-matthew-vines-40-questions>

http://evangelicalfocus.com/magazine/876/My_response_to_Matthew_Vinesgay_theology

<https://www.str.org/blog/a-response-to-matthew-vines-the-bible-doesn-t-support-same-sex-relationships#.WfZDOEyZOCQ>

<http://www.christianity.com/christian-life/political-and-social-issues/god-the-gospel-and-the-gay-challenge-a-response-to-matthew-vines.html>

https://www.redeemer.com/redeemer-report/article/the_bible_and_same_sex_relationships_a_review_article

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