

TRAINING FOR GUYS

35 September 21st 2013

We get to the New Testament....

Summary so far

Verses that mention homosexuality:

Genesis 19:4,5; Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13; Judges 19:16-24; 1 Kings 14:24 & 15:12; 2 Kings 23:7

We saw that these often are speaking of right worship, that Genesis and Judges are not talking about the same activities as 'ordinary homosexual behaviour' today.

Now we go on to look at:

Romans 1:18-32
1 Corinthians 6:9-11
1 Timothy 1:8-10
Jude 7

So now we get to the New Testament. We do this remembering that what we saw last time was the subject of sexual behaviour in the O.T. is often in passages related to worship and the right positioning of the People of Israel before God and their separation and distinctiveness from the nations surrounding them – in short, *holiness*. Will we see this in the New Testament passages too?

Let's start in Romans, and go back to 1:16,17 which says *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.....For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed,by faith from first to last*. That is the context that leads in to the passage we read two weeks ago (and you might like to read again now).

The gospel is the power of God for salvation, but without it, where it is not promoted and accepted, the wrath of God is being revealed.

Everything that is true about God are clearly seen in creation, people are without excuse for not recognising Him and turning to

Him (*that statement alone could spark a new series...!*). As a result of people turning from God, not looking at Him but instead focussing on what He has made (the Bible calls this creation, modern ears might prefer *Nature* or *the Universe* or *the ecosystem*); as a result of this focussing on what has been made instead of the Creator God 'gave them over' in their sinful desires to reap the consequences of the actions that resulted.

A number of times in Romans Paul uses the story of the people of Israel, or individuals such as Abraham, to be examples in what he is teaching.

Here, his words echo Psalm 81 which says

¹⁰*I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.*

¹¹*'But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me.*

¹²*So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.*

¹³*'If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways,*

¹⁴*how quickly I would subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes! (my emphasis).*

By reading the story of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament, we get an idea of that that phrase "I gave them over" means. They lost God's protection from enemy forces, and instead had to experience the consequences of their actions. Yet God was always there "If my people would listen to me"...."how quickly I would subdue their enemies". God *gave them over* **until** they turned back to Him.

Looking up the word translated as 'gave over' it is paradidomi from para = beside + didomi = to give (so literally to give beside). It is a very strong Greek verb meaning to hand someone over to the power and authority of another. From the Creation God has given people self-determination. He wants us to yield ourselves to Him, but He does not force this. Therefore He gives us over to whoever or whatever we choose to worship.

In the Romans passage we see that God has also given

over the non-believer,

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Bible Study Series

We continue our series on

Ephesians ch 3:14-21

Paul commits himself to the revelation of Jesus, to grow the family and that Christ might dwell in us richly

Read the passage, and go to

www.tfgministries.org.uk/podcasts to join in.

those who never turn back to Him, and the result of continually reaping the results and fruit of sin get deeper and deeper. Note that the ultimate error was to stop worshipping God and instead to worship created things...ultimately the human body.

So we get to verses 26 and 27. These are part of the progression, it's not the end. By vv28,29 the fruit of all this sin becomes a depraved mind and 'every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity'. People become actively God haters.

But let's stick at vv26 and 27. We're on the journey. We have abandoned God, we no longer glorify Him but have begun, instead, the worship of created things. We've gone further and begun to worship the human body, and have been degrading our bodies with each other (elsewhere we learn our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and should not be misused sexually...1 Corinthians 6:12-20). God has 'given us over', we're no longer under His protection. The choice that we have made of what to worship is to 'shameful lusts', therefore God has given us over to them and we have engaged in homosexual activity.

So this passage in Romans, in many ways like the ones in Leviticus, is entirely framed in the concept of worship. As humanity moves away from the worship of the Creator, so it becomes consumed with the worship of itself, and of each other, and this leads to sexual immorality in a variety of ways.

But, v16, the gospel is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes (who chooses to return to correct worship).

So, whilst some Christians might rage about homosexuality being the 'sin of Sodom, vile and filthy' and others might say we need to accept people as they are and not judge them, God is asking "who are you worshipping?"

Let's move on to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Romans, Corinthians and all the epistles were written to the Church, God's called-out-and-separated people who live in a world that does not follow God. These Corinthian verses remind us that the wicked (the godless) shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

He lists (New Revised Standard Version):
neither the

1. *fornicators* (those who sleep around)
2. *idolaters* (those who worship created things)
3. *adulterers* (those unfaithful to marriage vows)
4. *male prostitutes* (those who gain money from sex)
5. *homosexuals* (Greek word *arsenokoites*)
6. *thieves*
7. *greedy*
8. *drunkards*
9. *revilers*
10. *robbers*

Now the problem we have (in relation to our current topic) is that the word *arsenokoites* is rare, and its meaning is very unclear. By tradition it has come to mean homosexual but its origins are probably *abuser* (so the NIV plays clever and says

homosexual offender to try to get both meanings in). If you look at the list it progresses from sexual sins to those of greed, drunkenness and finally robbery. As such *abuser* fits much more neatly between prostitution and theft than homosexuality would, which would probably be linked more closely with fornication, as it is more similar to that. *Having said that*, it is only relatively very recently that any commentator has suggested Paul was not

referring to homosexuality in these verses.

There is a lot on this word online, mostly by sites promoting Gay Christian agendas, if you are interested in reading more you might look at biblesuite.com/greek/733.htm and also www.gaychristian101.com/Arsenokoites.html (which gives a fair enough analysis given its obvious bias).

The same word, *arsenokoites*, is the one used in 1 Timothy 1:8-10, but here, at least, it does appear alongside *fornicators*. The next word is slave traders. Again, the modern concept of child abuse is linked to modern slave trade, so there perhaps



isn't clarity about the meaning of the word even here. Having read several websites on this, I've concluded that, on balance, Paul probably did have *homosexuality* as we understand it in view when he used the word. I was particularly swayed by the reasons the site referenced above gave for it *not* meaning this, which I was not convinced by, and so concluded the opposite. But be aware that there are scholars who take the opposite view.

Finally we go to Jude 7, which refers back to Genesis 19 and Sodom and Gomorrah. In a way it's where we came in this week, because it is talking about the state of mankind when it turns its back on God and ends up reaping the depravity that results.

So, having now looked at all the passages in the Bible about homosexuality...

What do we conclude?

I think the heart of everything, as we have seen, is worship. There is a significant contrast between those without God and those who wish to be followers of God, and to worship Him alone. We live, as the people at the time of Moses and Paul lived, amidst a Godless culture that surrounds us. Within that Godless culture there will be all levels of depravity – such as Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 or the atrocities of Auschwitz in 1940s Europe.

As Christians we are called to be distinctly different to all that. Instead of being on a journey *away* from God we are to be on a journey *towards* God.

So, *let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us* (Hebrews 12:1)

Clearly, from the passage in Romans and also the ones in Corinthians and Timothy, sexual sin hinders and entangles. It is stuff engaged in by those running in the opposite direction to the one we wish to be travelling in as Christians.

Whilst we have looked at the verses mentioning homosexuality, we have not looked at some broader contexts. God made sex for the joining of a man and woman and for procreation, for instance. How does that shed light on what we have read?

Next week we will look at what this means practically today. Questions like "Is it ok for a Christian to be actively Gay?" and so on. But I don't want to say what I think, based on these studies, in detail yet. It would be great if you could let me know what it says to you...either on the Facebook group or privately... and let's build on this together.

Next week: What does all this mean for us today?
 2 weeks time: What about Gay Marriage?
 3 weeks time: What about David and Jonathan?