

Man's Wrong

Verses 21 through 32 look like they came off a police blotter on the desk down at headquarters. They describe circumstances that are just as raw and debasing as you can imagine—the outcome of man's turning his back on God. In three places Paul says, "God gave them over": "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts" (v. 24a); "God gave them over to degrading passions" (v. 26a); "God gave them over to a depraved mind" (v. 28a).

That's the extent of His wrath. What does it mean? It's not simply that God withdrew from the wicked the restraining force of His providence and common grace, but that He positively gave men over to the judgment of a more intensified and aggravated cultivation of lust.

And so mankind has turned in three directions. To begin with, he has turned to idolatry (vv. 24–25). The idolatry has led to immorality (vv. 26–27). And the immorality has led to total, gross iniquity (vv. 28–32).

Idolatry. First, let's examine idolatry. If you take away all of the education, all of the sophistication, all of the sham, and pull off all of the masks, you find humanity believing and living a lie. The lie, simply stated, is revealed in verse 28, "[We do] not see fit to acknowledge God any longer." Down deep within the old nature, below the crust of his life, man says, "I refuse to acknowledge Him at all." Man turns to things of his own hands, and he puts something in the place of God.

"Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. 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" (vv. 24–25). Man begins to create his own gods. In the process, he is sucked into impurity and his body is dishonored, because he has ignored the truth.

Immorality. Let's go a step further. The second way man turns is toward immorality.

"For this reason [For what reason? Because man exchanges the truth for the lie.] God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 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" (vv. 26–27).

As a student of history, it interests me that these verses describe one of the marks of a decaying civilization. Today there is increasing tolerance and, in fact, encouragement of a lifestyle that involves what Scripture calls "degrading passions," "unnatural," "indecent acts," and "error."

Time magazine, in an article some time ago, released information that they had received from a national cross section on the subject of inversion, or homosexuality. They noted that there are many who consider homosexuality a form of sickness. The authors concluded that it is not a sin but a "serious and sometimes crippling maladjustment."¹

I would like to say some things about this subject based on God's Word. First of all, Scripture reveals that homosexuality is a sin, not a "maladjustment" or a sickness. Inversion creates areas of illness, I am sure, but it is basically sinful. As a matter of fact, the Word of God states that "those who practice such things are worthy of death"

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way toward recovery*

(v. 32). Now friends, if it is only a sickness, it is the only sickness I know of that God says is deserving of death.

With the same breath, I want to add that homosexuality is not declared in Scripture as being worse than any other sin. Sin is sin. It is rebellion against the revealed will and work of God—a choice made to satisfy the lust of the flesh based on a depraved nature. I believe that by viewing homosexuality as sin, one can work his or her



way toward recovery, though it certainly seems to be a lengthy process.

Look at the last part of verse 27: "Men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." Mark that. This is present tense; it's not a future judgment.

I attempt to interpret those words strictly from Scripture when I say that as I understand it, *due penalty* means "a distinct, tragic loss of identity." A due penalty is uncertainty as to one's role in life. If you have done much work with individuals who are in such a lifestyle, you know they wrestle with an incredible, unendurable tension that often ends in suicide. They don't know where they fit in society.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. I want to show you another reference which seems to verify that homosexuality is a sin, and that those who are caught in it can find forgiveness and recovery.

"Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Notice what he says: "And such were some of you"—meaning you no longer are, and that's your testimony. "Such were some of you; but you were washed [You don't wash a sickness; you wash sin.], but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 11). Those terms are for sin—sin that is correctable. "You, under the blood of Jesus Christ, have found forgiveness and relief and liberty from the bondage!" That's the beauty of this great grace of the Lord Jesus!

Listen to these words: "To call homosexuality a sickness does not raise the client's hope. But to call it sin, as the Bible does, offers hope. Probably there is no more important factor in the work of helping homosexual sinners than

hope.... One is not a homosexual constitutionally any more than one is an adulterer constitutionally. ... Precisely because homosexuality, like adultery, is learned behavior, into which men and women with sinful natures are prone to wander, it can be forgiven in Christ."²

Now I say to you, that's hope, a bright jewel of hope. Although it may take time, there can be recovery, but it will not be easy. Sins related to the sexual desire drive deep roots—there must be inward bleeding before there can be complete delivery. By the way, I am amazed at how a Christian community can open its arms to a recovered alcoholic, but if one has recovered from homosexuality, God help him or her if it's ever made known.

That's a strange irony, isn't it?

Iniquity. "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" (Rom. 1:28).

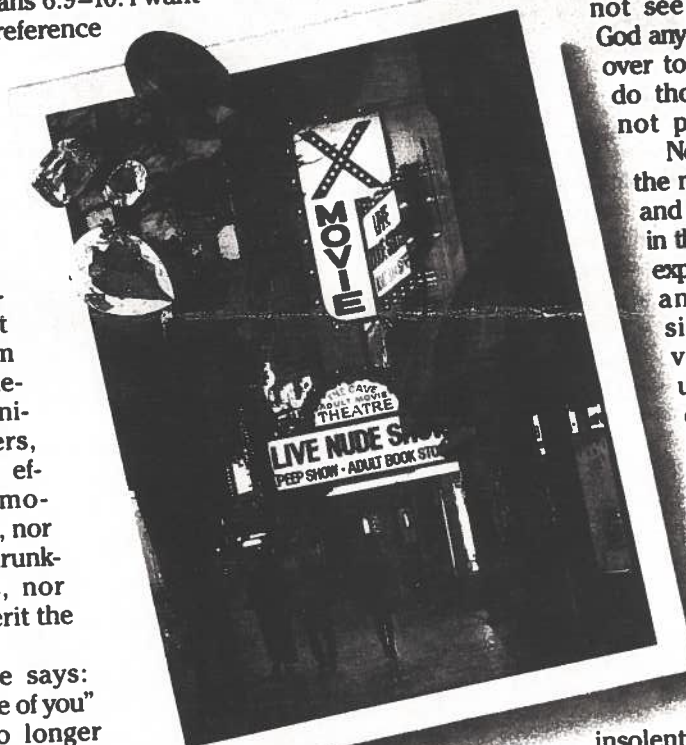
Now we have before us the most exacting, lengthy, and formidable list of sins in the whole Bible. Verse 29 exposes the sins. Verses 30 and 31 describe the sinner by name. And verse 32 reveals the ultimate extreme of depravity. Notice the words "filled" and "full" in the following verses:

"Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God,

insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful" (vv. 29-31).

Do you see that in our day? I've taken time to think through our recent history, and I believe the facts bear it out. Reflect for a moment on the increased and growing number of child abuse cases, the rise of rebellion among teens, and the intimidation of parents.

The Minnesota Crime Commission, a purely secular body, released a statement a number of years ago regarding the condition of children. "Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants



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CLOSING COMMENTS

In spite of the popular myth that "homosexuals can't change", we've seen Biblical proof that says homosexuals *can* change! The excuses "Once gay always gay", and "I can't help it, I was born this way", are no longer true in light of the Scriptures. Additionally, there are now *many* Christians in America and around the world who have been set free from homosexuality by the power of God — and their numbers are growing! Several former homosexuals have even married and have families, not a "proof" of their freedom from homosexuality, but as evidence of their new lives as followers of Christ.

Sure, it wasn't easy for any of them to give up the only life they had known. Each of them faced struggles, rejection and temptation, but they never gave up on God's ability to change them. They were determined and committed to continue their relationship with God, knowing He would help them face a new future. *"Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he has become a new creation; old things have passed away, all things have become new"* — 2nd Corinthians 5:17.

Finally, our purpose in writing this was not to condemn you. We LOVE you! We cared — and *dared* enough to share what we know to be true — so you might come to experience God's tremendous love for *you*! The Bible says that if we know the truth, then the truth can set us free. Jesus is the truth, and He would love for you to share your life with Him!

If you have further questions or would like more information, we'll be glad to help!
Contact:

P.S. Be sure to ask for THE MAN IN THE MIRROR, Sy Rogers' own story of freedom from homosexuality! Copyright 1983

Answers to some questions compiled and edited from Bob Davies' excellent research article on Gay Theology for LOVE IN ACTION Ministry, P.O. Box 2655, San Rafael, CA 94912.

Homosexuality & the Christian Questions Gays Ask Most...

Sy Rogers &
Bob Davies

- As a homosexual, I believe that my sexual feelings are natural and normal for me. Why is this against God's Will?

Homosexuality is against God's Will because it was never part of God's original purpose or design for human sexual behavior. Seeing Adam's need for physical and emotional companionship, God did not create another man for him, but rather, God created woman for man (see Genesis 2:18-25 and 1st Corinthians 11:9). This was God's original plan, His design which is obvious in the natural and complimentary function of the male and female sex organs and the male and female temperaments. Prior to the fall of mankind, there was *only* the male — female relationship. Like all life on earth, human heterosexual (male-female) pairing was affected and distorted by the fall of mankind. This led to cases of polygamy (having more than one wife... Genesis 4:19), adultery (Gen. 12:17, 26:10), Incest (Gen. 19:33), prostitution (Gen. 38:15) and rape (Gen. 34:2). Homosexual pairing also resulted from the fall.

Though a person may "feel" that their sexual orientation or inner drives are natural and normal for themselves, remember, feelings can mislead us (see Jeremiah 17:9). What we may "feel" is right does *NOT* make it morally right. The bottom line here, is that we live according to the principles in God's Word, not according to our feelings.

- In spite of the drawbacks, I'm satisfied with the gay lifestyle and I have no desire to become heterosexual. I don't think it's fair that God expects me to give up what I have now and attempt to live as a heterosexual. What am I supposed to do?

God isn't asking you to become heterosexual. Heterosexuality isn't your goal, being in right standing with God is! God doesn't want you to stop having gay sex just to start having "straight" sex. Heterosexuals don't have Heaven's blessing just because they *aren't* gay. Remember, God does *NOT* have a personal hatred against homosexuals. He doesn't consider it the ultimate sin. However, God *DOES* have a personal hatred of sin, and He hates heterosexual sin (such as incest, adultery), just as much as He hates homosexuality, stealing, murder, lying and gossip. God hates sin because He knows that it will lead to corruption, destruction and eternal punishment. God hates sin, including homosexual sin, because He sees what it does to those He created and loves. Yes, God *is* Love, but His love *NEVER* justifies our sinful behavior. He does desire to forgive us and change us so we can be pleasing to Him, but it's up to us to be *willing* to be changed. Where God requires change, He makes change possible (Mark 10:27 and Philippians 4:13).

The *only* sexual relationship God blesses is between a man and a woman who have a lifetime commitment to each other (marriage . . . see Hebrews 13:4). Every other form of sex is sin, whether it's gay or straight. As mentioned earlier, the *only* alternative to heterosexual marriage is celibacy. This may sound extreme, especially in our easy-sex society, but God's attitude toward sex is *NOT* casual. No argument or philosophy of man will ever change God or what He has said about sin, including homosexuality (see Malachi 3:6). God will never compromise His standards to satisfy our human desires. His ways may not seem fair to us, but God *IS* GOD. It is not up to us to debate His standards — just obey them.

Though you may enjoy being gay for now (even the Bible says that sin is pleasurable for a while . . . Hebrews 11:25), only a real and vital relationship with God will bring lasting happiness and purpose in life. God has created us with a *need for Him* which nothing else can fulfill. When we don't have a right relationship with God, we tend to look everywhere and try everything to fill up that need for Him. But philosophies, lifestyles, money, fame, sex — even religion, can't be a satisfying substitute for God in the long run.

- If God is a God of love, how can He condemn anyone?

Yes, God *IS* love (1st John 4:8), although God's version of love is *not* always like our human version of love. God is also truth (John 14:6-7), and God's love will not compromise His truth. In fact, God's judgement is based on truth (Romans 2:2). Jesus came to earth to show us God's love — and He proved His love for mankind by dying for us (John 3:16-17). Jesus loved people enough to be honest with them. He was even willing to confront and offend people with the truth in order that they might turn away from sin and be saved. Jesus sharply reprimanded His disciple Peter for a wrong attitude (Mark 8:33). Jesus blasted the religious hypocrites in Matthew chapter 23, and Jesus threatened a sinner with punishment if he didn't stop sinning (John 5:14). Jesus never condemned people — but He *did* condemn their wrong actions *and* wrong attitudes (Matthew 23:27-28, Mark 7:20-23). He warned them that unless they turned away from sin and turned to God (to repent), they would suffer eternal torment in Hell after death (Luke 13:1-5 and Acts 17:30-31).

People end up going to Hell not because of the sins they committed, but because they never turned from their sins and got reconciled or "made right" with God. Because of mankind's fall (read Genesis 3), all of the creation, including every human being, has been contaminated with sin. It doesn't matter whether a person is an axe murderer, a prostitute, a homosexual or the world's sweetest grandmother, *everybody* has been affected by the terminal plague of sin. Sin separates us from God here on earth, and will result in our eternal separation from God after death (Isaiah 59:1-2).

BUT . . . the "Good News" is this: Now it is possible to get right with God and be pleasing to Him by having our sins removed or washed away, through faith in Jesus, who has made *the* way for us to return to God!! Through faith in Jesus, our sins won't separate us from God (see Ephesians 2:8, Luke 7:50 and Galatians 3:26). Because it cost Jesus His life to make this way back to God for us, God will severely judge all those who reject Jesus (disobey Him) and His teachings. Those who directly or indirectly reject Christ have not been cleansed from the contamination of sin, and God will not allow sin and its corruption to exist in Heaven. The Bible says that *none* of us is good enough to qualify for Heaven without being cleansed by faith in Jesus (read Romans 3). Though God's judgement is just and terrible, no one need go to Hell. That's why Jesus has made a way of

escape for us! All those who come to Christ for His forgiveness and cleansing will not be turned away! (John 6:37).

- **Although I'm a practicing homosexual, I believe in God and Jesus and consider myself to be a Christian. Recently, I've been told that you can't be gay and be a Christian too. What do you say?**

First we need to determine what a Christian is. In brief, a Christian is a person who lives in obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ, regardless of the personal sacrifice, recognizing Christ's teachings to be ultimate truth (John 14:6, 18:37). Such obedience is required by God to qualify for Heaven, and as proof of our love for God and our fellow man (John 14:15, John 14:23-24, Hebrews 5:9, and 1st Peter 1:22).

This obedience is possible only after a supernatural experience Jesus called being "Born Again" (John 3:3). Being Born Again of the Spirit of God is a result of faith in Jesus: who He said He is, and what He has done for us. But saving faith is much more than just believing (James 2:19). Faith that saves is faith that trusts God and believes what Jesus has said *to the degree* that a life-time commitment is made to follow Christ's way. This life-time commitment requires abandoning all things which God declares to be sin. The Bible says that if a person is Born Again, he will live to please God through obedience to His Word (John 8:31). Additionally, the Bible states as proof of a Born Again experience, the person will no longer live in a state or situation of *continual* sin (1st John 3:9-10). The Born Again person will no longer be a slave to sin and its passions (see Romans chapter 6), and the Born Again person will turn from and give up evil ways (again from Romans 6 and Hebrews 10:26-27).

Though a person will struggle with sin and temptation after being Born Again (read Romans chapter 7, 1st Corinthians 10:13 and James 1:12), they will no longer continue to live in a lifestyle which disobeys God's Word (John 14:23-24). The Word of God is clear that homosexuality is sin. The Word of God is also very clear that all those who continue to practice and live in sexual sin will *not* enter Heaven, but will be judged and punished eternally (1st Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21 and Revelation 21:7-8). Regardless of a person's claim to be a Christian, God's Word tells us that our actions reveal the truth more than our words (Galatians 5:19-25 and Matthew 15:7-8). As Titus 1:16 says, "They claim to know God, but by their actions deny Him." Therefore, based on what the Bible says (not my opinion), you

cannot be a Christian and remain a practicing homosexual — it is a direct contradiction to God's Word. Remember however, where God requires change, He gives us the power to become His children . . . John 1:12-13.

- **I've been reading about gays being "Born Again" and delivered or "set free" from homosexuality. Is there any Biblical record of homosexuals being changed by God?**

Yes! The Bible *DOES* mention that there is hope and freedom for the homosexual! In 1st Corinthians 6:9-10, we are told that neither the sexually immoral, nor idolators, nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders . . . will inherit the Kingdom of God. BUT . . . following in verse 11 we are told: "And that is what some of you *were*. But you were washed (made clean), you were sanctified (set apart for), you were justified (declared right with God) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God."

Regardless of the sin, regardless of the situation or problem, God is willing to forgive us *and* change us so we can be pleasing to Him. Some of the most famous people in the Bible were murderers (Moses, King David and the Apostle Paul) and prostitutes (Rahab and Mary Magdalene). Why would God use them? To prove that *no sin was too big* for God to forgive. These people trusted God's love for them and allowed Him to change their lives.

Yes, the thought of change can be scary — but remember, God knows you best and loves you the most. He understands your fears. He knows all about your hurts and He knows your need for love. God would never ask you to do anything that wasn't possible — and with God *all things are possible* (including freedom from homosexuality). Will you resist God and His love for you at your own expense? Is the moment of passing pleasure worth the price you'll be paying, both in this life and in eternity? Consider the alternatives. Nothing has greater worth than God's love. Trust Him and discover His love for you!

"Come and let us reason together saith the Lord; Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land, but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." — Isaiah 1:18-20.

- I've been told that nowhere does the Bible "flat-out" condemn homosexuality. I've even heard that the word "homosexual" doesn't appear in the original Scriptures. What's the scoop?

The scoop is this . . . you must first decide whether or not you will accept the Bible as *the* Word of God, and as our true, absolute authority for faith and conduct. You must also believe that the writings of the Bible are relevant and applicable today. I believe, as 2nd Peter 1:21 says, "That men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God." I believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is without error and that His Word is very much for us today (Isaiah 40:8 and Psalm 119:160). 2nd Timothy 3:16 says it best: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and it is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness."

To answer this question, the Bible *does* "flat-out" condemn all homosexual behavior in both the Old and New Testaments (see Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, Romans 1:24-32 and 1st Corinthians 6:9-10). Since the word "homosexual" is a relatively new word, it doesn't appear in the Bible's original writings. But God needed no modern label to describe homosexual practices. Besides, the word "homosexual" is a general term which covers a variety of same-sex sexual behavior. God, however, is much more specific in His Word. There are several words in Hebrew and Greek (the languages the original Scriptures were written in), which pinpoint the kinds of sexual behavior God declares to be sin. Sinful sexual behavior includes: sex outside of marriage or sex without intending to get married, adultery, sex with family members, sex with animals, male and female prostitution and all passive and aggressive sex acts with the same sex. (Note: All references to homosexuality in Scripture refer to male-to-male sex, *except* in Romans 1:26-27, which is the only record of God's condemnation of lesbianism.)

- Since we live under "grace" and not the "law" why should we be concerned with outdated Old Testament standards and Levitical laws dealing with ceremony, food and sex?

Many people believe that we can ignore the Old Testament "Holiness Code" God gave to Moses while the Israelites traveled through the desert. In that code was God's standard for our sexuality, including God's condemnation of homosexuality. The natural argument is, "If we are under grace and not the law, then we can do away with God's condemnation of homo-

sexual acts found in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13." Some argue that these laws no longer apply to us, or that God only gave these laws to encourage the population growth of the Israelites to ensure their survival. In reality, God forbade adultery and incest, He led the Israelites into war several times, and God said to kill those who disobeyed His moral laws . . . all of which helped to *reduce* the population. So it wasn't quantity God was concerned with, it was, and still is, quality!

Additionally, God's holiness code for Israel had two categories: the "ceremonial or symbolic" laws, and the "moral" laws. The ceremonial laws dealt with religious worship, dietary laws, clothing and various cultural aspects of the Jews, representing a people set apart for God. These ceremonial laws also symbolized the future coming of the Messiah, Jesus and these laws were temporary (Acts 10:15). However, the *moral* laws were God's principles for humanity, and were not limited to the Jewish culture, but were universal. These moral laws are permanent (Psalms 119:160) and apply to every culture including our modern society. Obviously, the commands concerning sexuality and homosexuality are part of God's moral laws. Jesus was the fulfillment of the ceremonial or symbolic law (Ephesians 2:15), and He did not come to do away with the moral law (see Matthew 5:17-19). Jesus said of the Old Testament moral commandments: "Whoever keeps and teaches them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." - Matthew 5:19 (Also read Romans chapter 6).

- Did Jesus ever say anything about homosexuality?

Directly, no. HOWEVER - there are many things Jesus said that the Bible doesn't record (see John 21:25). He *could* have mentioned it, although He probably had no occasion to - the Jews of His day were strictly against such practices. There are many subjects Jesus didn't mention such as incest, rape and bestiality. Just because Jesus didn't mention these practices doesn't mean they are therefore "OK" to do.

Jesus always upheld the Old Testament law (Matthew 5:17-19), which strictly condemned homosexuality. Jesus only spoke of sexuality in a heterosexual sense. The only alternative to marriage Jesus spoke of was *celibacy* - no sex of any kind (Matthew 19:12). Additionally, there is absolutely no support to any accusation of homosexuality among Jesus' disciples. Christ's enemies would have gladly exposed it, as homosexuality was a crime punishable by death in the Jewish culture.

Biblical Perspectives on Homosexuality



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