

# Paul's Epistle to the Romans on the Reason for Homosexuality

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The imposition of homosexual marriage in the United States this June 26, 2015, is a momentous day in western history – at least for the United States. But homosexual marriage is nothing new: it's been around at least since 2001 when the Netherlands made it law. The U.S. is merely the latest western nation to cave in and accept it, following a very sad trend which will soon involve other western nations.<sup>1</sup> While it saddens my heart to see this happen, in most of the responses I've read about this topic, no one takes the time to actually consider that perhaps the acceptance of this way of life is the judgment of the one God visited upon the western world for their rejection of the biblical truths preached and practiced there for centuries. Perhaps if this reality were accepted, then the Church would know better how to deal with this sin that John Piper points out to be different from others, because it is “applauded so aggressively by whole groups of people who advocate for [its] normalcy.”<sup>2</sup>

Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, displays an interesting order of events when discussing the corrupt pagan world of his day. He writes as follows:

*For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He has made. As a result, people are without excuse. For though they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became nonsense, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.*

*Therefore God delivered them over in the cravings of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served something created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.*

*This is why God delivered them over to degrading passions. For even their females exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. The males in the same way also left natural relations with females and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Males committed shameless acts with males and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.*

*And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a worthless mind to do what is morally wrong. They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. Although they know full well God's just sentence – that those who practice such things deserve to die – they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.*

*Romans 1:18-32*

## The Decline of the West

In Paul's progression of unrighteousness, homosexuality takes up the center of the vignette and it is interesting that he points out that it is God Himself who, “delivered them over in the cravings of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves.” (v.24). Thus the sexual immorality that is displayed in Romans 1 is both a symptom of sinfulness and judgment upon mankind for

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<sup>1</sup> “Same-sex Marriage”, *Wikipedia* < [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex\\_marriage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Same-sex_marriage) > (accessed 2015-06-29)

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, “Why Homosexuality is Not Like Other Sins”, *Desiring God* < <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/why-homosexuality-is-not-like-other-sins> > (accessed 2015-06-29).

the worse sin of rejecting the One True God and living a life without gratitude to Him for all that He has done for each human on this planet (see v.21a).

If we look at western society through this lens, we should not at all be surprised that first the pan-sexual movement and now homosexuality would be so celebrated. A brief consideration of the last 500 years shows a marked downward trend from a Christianized worldview to a naturalistic worldview that in its outworking is very similar to that of pre-Christian and non-Israelite pagan societies of the past. Consider: the Roman Catholic Church did at least preach a form of Christianity in the late Middle Ages, mangled though it was. The Protestant Reformation once more made it possible for the average person to read the written Word of God and have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ without the mediation of an ordained priest. However, the Reformation was not even complete before it was already being chipped away at by the Age of Enlightenment. Enlightenment, while based in the intellectual freedoms pioneered by the Reformation, basically elevated human reason as the highest authority, putting it over the revealed Word of God. We still live in a society that has been profoundly influenced by this period. The whole western world is built on the ideals of rationalism and individualism and their resultant philosophies. Certain aspects of the Age of Enlightenment have certainly been useful for the Church as well, but by and large the philosophies of this broad movement have been to the detriment of a true understanding of Scripture – especially the challenging of authority and Lessing’s Ditch between reason and faith<sup>3</sup>. Thus people who acknowledge a higher authority than reason, human ingenuity and empirical science are laughed at and marginalized.

Perhaps the worst outworking of all this was the final move away from a view of a world created by a transcendent Being outside of the universe, to an enclosed universe that created itself. Popularized by Charles Darwin’s book *On the Origin of Species*<sup>4</sup>, evolution by natural selection became the new creation myth. And from there it expanded and evolution was applied to everything, including the formation of religion and the writing of the Holy Bible. Now western society had not only rejected God’s “invisible attributes” which “have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what He had made” (Rom. 1:20), but also had rejected the special revelation that stated where the world came from. This was then applied to other spheres of life, such as business, where the principle of the survival of the fittest resulted in profits became more important than employees (after all, the employer is fitter than the employee) and all of society was dragged along into the darkness of marketing which lies to us, making us think happiness is to be found in the next thing, the next thing, the next thing, while lining the coffers of corrupt corporations who care more for their bottom line than either their employees or their customers.<sup>5</sup>

So, if at this point we were to apply Romans 1:18-32 to western society, we should not be surprised that we have reached the point we’re at; we rather should be surprised that it has taken 400 years to get here! The forcible acceptance of homosexuality is the logical conclusion of where western civilization was going, because that is the way God punishes those who generation after generation willfully disregard His loving invitation to accept Him.

## The Response of the Church

In light of this, how should the Church react? First and foremost, the Church should remember Romans 2 and 3 in which Paul very clearly points out that neither moral pagans nor Jews (who are the stewards of divine revelation) are sinless either. They have rejected God just as much as the divinely punished and degraded atheists of their day; they have merely done it differently, all the while maintaining some semblance of belief in the divine – call it spiritism, polytheism, deism or a twisted form of Judeo-Christian

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<sup>3</sup> Lessing’s Ditch arises from his argument that one cannot prove metaphysical truths by using unprovable historical facts (see here “Gotthold Ephraim Lessing”, *Wikipedia*, < [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gotthold\\_Ephraim\\_Lessing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gotthold_Ephraim_Lessing) > [accessed 2015-11-27]). This has been broadened to say that reason and faith cannot be reconciled, making it necessary to make a “leap to faith” as Kant put it, divorcing reason from faith and ultimately making faith a private thing to be held which should not affect a person’s being.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the origin of species by means of natural selection* (London: J. Murray, 1859).

<sup>5</sup> This has become so engrained in society that when one CEO decides to cut his own wages so his employees can benefit, he is criticized as being a fool for being generous, even by those who ought to support him because of their vaunted allegiance to free-market capitalism. See Patricia Cohen, “Praise and Skepticism as One Executive Sets Minimum Wage to \$70,000 a Year”, *The New York Times* < [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/20/business/praise-and-skepticism-as-one-executive-sets-minimum-wage-to-70000-a-year.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/20/business/praise-and-skepticism-as-one-executive-sets-minimum-wage-to-70000-a-year.html?_r=0) > (accessed 2015-06-29).

theism. While the Church herself has engaged in much of the same rejection of revelation that society has by clinging to cultural mores rather than Christian teaching, attempting to legally impose Christian morality upon their non-Christian compatriots, preaching the doctrine of health and wealth and “Jesus is my best buddy”, seeking comfort rather than godliness, and much more, God’s grace is what has kept her from going completely astray. This means that the Church must make sure she is honest about her own failings and is seeking to the remedy them through humble submission to her Lord and Husband before she points the finger at anyone. She must remember that the world will attempt to discredit her prophetic voice by bringing up her vice. However, the sin of the messenger should not be allowed to negate the Message itself.

Secondly, the Church must be aware that in the process of realigning herself with the revealed truths of Scripture (which *must* involve practice, for Scripture is meant to be practiced not merely preached), she will be opposed by her mortal enemies, the world, the flesh and the Devil. This means that the more she purifies herself and seeks to live in the world without being of the world, the more she will face persecution.<sup>6</sup> While she ought not to seek it, she must welcome it and persevere through it, for such perseverance will result in the glory of God and her own glorification in eternity (see. Rev. 2 – 3).

In view of this coming persecution, the Church should pray for the courage to preach the Gospel no matter what (see Ac. 4:24-30; Eph 6:19). This means being willing to be civilly disobedient when the laws of the land and the laws of God collide (see Ac. 5:29) and then to face the consequences (1Pe. 4:15-16). Practically speaking this means that if a gay couple comes and demands to be married by a Christian pastor or priest or demands to have their wedding services furnished by a Christian professional who cannot provide said services due to their sincerely held faith, that Christian should rejoice when said gay couple or their friends and advocates take them to court. The fact that we rail and scream and cry against the injustice of it means that we don’t understand the glory of 1 Peter 4:15-16. Yes, it is unjust, there is no question about that; but it is also a great privilege, for it is a form of martyrdom that will bring glory to the One God in the long run.

The final point that I would like to make is that we should not fall into the error of our positivist Christian brothers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This world is not our home. It is not getting better, nor will it until Christ Triumphant returns to set up His rule. We may try to stem the tide through our prayers and our action, which is the right thing to do, but we must very clearly remember that this fallen planet is on a downward spiral and it will only get worse and worse until our Lord Jesus returns to set all things right. So when your prayers and efforts fail, do not fret. When you see a great society that was at least partially founded on biblical principles founder and sink beneath the waves of the Enlightenment, Postmodernism and western debauchery, mourn, but do not be surprised. This and much more *must* happen for Christ to return. And when He does, all will be set to right. Winter is here and will get much colder yet, but spring is coming, when the great Lion of Judah will shake his mane and all that is evil will be over and done. That is our hope and with Job we can proclaim that “I will see Him myself; my eyes will look at Him and not as a stranger.” (Job 20:27a-b) That must be our blessed hope, not the thought that we can change the world. We can’t. Only Jesus can and, praise be to Him, He will do just that in His own perfect time.

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<sup>6</sup> See here especially Paul’s injunction to Timothy, “In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” (2Ti 3:12)

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