

What the Bible Says About Same Sex Relations5

Rom. 1:18-32

Introduction:

1. In this lesson we continue our study of “What the Bible Says About Same Sex Relations.”
2. Read with me from Rom. 1:18-32.
3. This passage reiterates much of what we have observed in this series already.
 - a. Note that the statements of verses 26-27 are set in a context of people rejecting the communication of God.
 - b. From the beginning of the series, we have assumed acceptance of the revelation of God. Thus, we are reasoning about what the Bible says.
 - c. In this passage same sex relations spring from a rejection of God and His revelation to us. It involves suppression of the truth, exchanging the truth of God for a lie, and worship of the creature rather than the Creator.
 - d. It is good for us to note that same sex relations are set alongside of a whole list of other violations including greed, envy, strife, slander, arrogance and gossip. I do not think that Paul means this list of sins to be exhaustive but representative of the direction of those who suppress the truth and believe a lie instead.
4. What does the text say and what does it mean?

Discussion:

- I. Observations about the context.
 - A. Paul may be focused in this text on sins associated particularly with the Gentiles.
 1. There seems to be a contrast drawn in 2:1, 9-16.
 2. Gentiles may not have the Law, as Jews did, but they did have their conscience, disciplined by what they did know about God (1:20-23). Through the revelation of God through nature there is some responsibility (Psa. 19:1-6).
 3. It might be reasoned that observing the male and female differences in nature that you can see the design of the Creator and that you should respect that rather than contradict it.
 4. We have already seen what the O.T. has revealed about same sex relations and so it was not an acceptable practice by Jewish law. There is congruence between what the Jewish law said and the natural law understood by the Gentile conscience. The practice of same sex relations therefore involves a suppression of truth either of the Gentile conscience or of the written law of the Jews (note 2:12).
 - B. While we have made the point that same sex relations are set in context with other sins like greed, arrogance, gossip, slander, strife, etc., same sex relations

are 1) at the head of the list; 2) are separated out for comment rather than simply being including in the miscellaneous listing in vs. 29-31.

1. No reason for this is identified in the text. Is it because such sexual sins are considered particularly heinous?
2. In other lists of sins those of sexual nature seem to head the list (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Tim. 1:9-10). It might be argued that they are not always mentioned first. This is true, but they are used as primary examples of sinful conduct and so “head” the list in that sense and they seem to not be “omitted” as some sins are.

II. Three times the text says, “God gave them over” (vs. 24, 26, 28).

- A. Since they refused to acknowledge God, God gave them over to the direction that they chose.
- B. Verse 24 says, “God gave them over to impurity (uncleanness, KJV, akatharsia, Gk.)” This is a term often used to denote moral uncleanness and is used in connection with sexual immorality (2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 5:3).
- C. Verse 26 says, “God gave them over to degrading passions (vile affections, KJV, atimia, Gk.). This term is used of dishonorable things (cf. Rom. 9:21).
- D. Verse 28 says, “God gave them over to a depraved (reprobate, KJV, adokimos, Gk.) mind.” This term is used of a mind that God cannot approve—“They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer” (v. 28).

III. Verse 26 addresses both female same sex relations and male same sex relations.

- A. “Their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.” The natural/unnatural (contrary to nature, para physin, Gk. Cf. Rom. 11:24) distinction harks back to the divine design that we have observed already as that which is consistent with nature. Again, the argument seems to be that what is revealed in nature is congruent with God’s male to female design.
- B. “In the same way also, the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire for one another, men with men committing indecent acts (shameless acts, NASB margin) and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”
- C. The language is explicit. The parallel between female same sex relations by comparison to male same sex relations spells it out clearly.
 1. Rape is not a consideration.
 2. Adult males taking advantage of young boys is not the consideration.
 3. Same sex relations is the issue and it stands in contrast with that which is natural, namely male to female relations.
- D. While some may argue that “aids” is the “due penalty of their error” there is no evidence that such is the case, any more than any other sexually transmitted disease is the result of any other sexual sin.

Conclusion:

1. This passage just does not allow for any other understanding of the text.
2. There are no special unique terms used like in 1 Cor. 6 and 1 Tim. 1. (Will discuss in later lesson.)
3. Same sex relations are considered a violation of what is natural and are predicated on a rejection of the communication of God.