

Why Homosexuality Is Not Like Other Sins

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April 21, 2014

Homosexuality is not the only sin mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

It's not the only sin mentioned, but it is different from all the rest, at least right now. At this moment in history, contrary to the other sins listed here, homosexuality is celebrated by our larger society with pioneering excitement. It's seen as a good thing, as the new hallmark of progress.

To be sure, the masses increasingly make no bones about sin in general. Innumerable people are idolaters, not to mention those who are sexually immoral, or who commit adultery, or who steal and are greedy and get wasted and revile neighbors and swindle others. It happens all the time. And each of these unrepentant sins are the same in the sense of God's judgment. They all deserve his wrath. And we're constantly reminded that "such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:11). You in the church.

Concerning Popular Opinion

But as far as I know, none of those sins is applauded so aggressively by whole groups of people who advocate for their normalcy. Sexual immorality is no longer the tip of the spear for the progressive push. Adultery is still frowned upon by many. Accusations of greed will still smear a candidate's political campaign. Thievery is still not openly embraced, and there are no official initiatives saying it's okay to go take things that don't belong to you. There's no such thing as a drunk agenda yet. Most aren't proud to choose a beverage over stability, and there aren't any petitions that the government should abolish the driving restrictions of inebriated individuals. Reviling others still isn't seen as the best way to win friends and influence people. Swindling, especially on a corporate level, usually gets someone thrown into jail. In fact, the infrastructure of the American economy depends upon, in some measure, our shared disdain for conniving scammers.

Perhaps excepting fornication, these sins are still seen in a pretty negative light. But not homosexual practice, not by those who are now speaking loudest and holding positions of prominence. According to the emerging consensus, homosexuality is different.

What to Be Against

As Christians, we believe with deepest sincerity that the embrace of homosexual practice, along with other sins, keeps people out of the kingdom of God. And if our society celebrates it, we can't both be caring and not say anything. Too much is at stake. This means it is an oversimplification to say that Christians — or conservative evangelicals — are simply against homosexuality. We are against any sin that restrains people from everlasting joy in God, and homosexual practice just gets all the press because, at this cultural moment, it's the main sin that is so freshly endorsed in our context by the powers that be. Let's hope that if there's some new cultural agenda promoting thievery — one that says it's now our right to take whatever we want from others by whatever

means — that Christians will speak out against it. The issue is sin. That's what we're against. And that's what should make our voice so unique when we speak into this debate.

Some would like to see this whole issue of homosexuality divided into two camps: those who celebrate it and those who hate it. Both of these groups exist in our society. There are the growing numbers, under great societal pressure, who praise homosexuality. We might call them the left. And there are people who hate homosexuality, with the most bigoted rationale and apart from any Christian concern. We might call them the right.

Those Glorious Words

The current debate is plagued by this binary lens. Those on the left try to lump everyone who disagrees with them into that right side. If you don't support, you hate. Meanwhile, those on the right see compromise and spinelessness in anyone who doesn't get red-faced and militant. If you don't hate, you support.

But true followers of Christ will walk neither path. We have something to say that no one else is saying, or can say.

Distancing ourselves from both the left and the right, we don't celebrate homosexual practice, we acknowledge God's clear revealed word that it is sin; and we don't hate those who embrace homosexuality, we love them enough to not just collapse under the societal pressure. We speak the truth in love into this confusion, saying, simultaneously, "That's wrong" and "I love you." We're not the left; we say, this is wrong. And we're not the right; we say, you're loved. We speak good news, with those sweetest, deepest, most glorious words of the cross — the same words that God spoke us — "You're wrong, and you're loved."

God tells us we're wrong, that the wages of sin is death, that unrepentant rebellion means judgment, that our rescue required the cursed death of his Son (Romans 3:23; John 3:36; Galatians 3:13). And God tells us we're loved, that even while we were sinners, Jesus died for us, that while we were unrighteous, Jesus suffered in our place, that though we were destined for wrath, Jesus welcomes us into glory (Romans 5:8; 1 Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:1–7).

Where the Gospel Shines

You're wrong and you're loved — that's the unique voice of the Christian. That's what we say, speaking from our own experience, as Tim Keller so well puts it, "we're far worse than we ever imagined, and far more loved than we could ever dream."

That's our message in this debate, when society's elites despise us, when pop songs vilify us, when no one else has the resources to say anything outside of two extremes, we have this incomparable opportunity to let the gospel shine, to reach out in grace: you're wrong and you're loved. We get to say this.

That's why homosexuality is not like other sins.