

— THE ABI REPORT —

Applying Biblical Hermeneutics to Important Issues Facing the Church

5/17/2010

Homosexuality and the Bible - Part II

Homosexuality and the Believer's Identity in Christ

by Dave James

In Christ, our unique identity as individuals is properly found only in and through our relationship with Him, not in what some consider to be scientific and psychological evidence that can be used to defend homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12–13, NKJV)

There are many things that distinguish Christianity from the religions of the world, not the least of which is the believer's identity in Christ. In other religions, philosophies and worldviews, one's identity - how we view and value ourselves, and how we are viewed and valued by others - is inseparably tied to an endless list of things like ethnicity, gender, appearance, physical and mental abilities (or disabilities), skills, talents and anything else that we think helps us to order the world around us. We use these to identify ourselves and others, while also usually comparing ourselves to others.

However, in Christ our unique identity as individuals is properly found only in and through our relationship with Him. For those of us who have trusted in Christ for salvation, we are first and foremost children of God. As such, we are heirs and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:16–17, NKJV)

Through faith in Christ and his finished work on the cross, God mercifully forgives our sin and graciously gives us the free gift of eternal life.

But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:22–23, NKJV)

Whatever we may have been through our physical birth has been transformed through our spiritual rebirth.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV)

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9–11, NKJV)

A Manufactured Complexity

Unfortunately, more and more within the church are asking, "What does this have to do with homosexuality?" And unfortunately, more and more are answering, "Very little, if anything." However, this has not been the historically-accepted view - and with good reason: God has clearly and unambiguously condemned homosexuality in the Scriptures as sinful. And yet, that this is true is being increasingly challenged - even by some who would identify themselves as part of the evangelical community.

These challenges to the historical view seem to fall primarily along two lines of reasoning. The first has to do with the issues of physiology that I mentioned in the first article in this series. This challenge ultimately seeks to discredit the accuracy and authority of the Bible on the basis of ignorance on the part of the biblical writers. And in reality, it is simply part of the tired, yet oft-repeated argument that the Bible was written by people in ancient societies who lacked the cultural sophistication and scientific knowledge that we now possess. Therefore, we have wrongly condemned something that the Bible wrongly condemns.

The second line of reasoning is arguably more insidious because it superficially gives the impression that

the inspiration and authority of the Bible is being kept intact. In this case, it is argued that it is not the accuracy of the text that is being challenged, but rather, the historical interpretation of the text. In other words, the contention is that for centuries even scholars have misinterpreted the passages which mention "homosexuality." It is maintained that the inherent meaning of certain words has been misunderstood or that there has been a failure to understand the cultural context. Therefore, we have wrongly condemned something that the Bible doesn't really condemn.

However, I believe that both lines of reasoning unnecessarily introduce layers of complexity to an issue which is not nearly as complex in general as it is often made out to be (even though it may be somewhat complex in certain instances). Whether intentional or not, the apparent complexity introduced by both the quest for the "homosexual gene" and for obscured meanings in the biblical text must be ultimately viewed as being driven by the pursuits of those whose hearts are darkened by sin and who seek to suppress the knowledge of the truth.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. (Romans 1:18–19, NKJV)

Scientific Evidence and the Word of God

Although, I presented some fairly well-documented evidence of the scientific complexity in the first article, my point was to demonstrate that genuine awareness of these issues does not require that we abandon God's Word in dealing with them. We need to understand that evidential complexity does not necessarily equate to spiritual complexity. While it may be true that humans are psychologically complex, this doesn't mean that solutions to psychological problems must necessarily be equally complex. Biblical solutions, though often not easy to implement because of our sin nature, don't involve complicated concepts or convoluted methods.

Yet, when we encounter such complex scientific evidence for the first time, it can be a faith-shaking experience. This can happen, for example, when we start getting into the issue of creation versus evolution. And of course, whole ministries have been established for countering the claims of the scientific establishment that the evidence unequivocally proves evolution to be true.

However - and this is an extremely important point - the issue is not the evidence itself. Everyone has access to the same evidence. It is not as if the evolutionists have access to one set of evidence and creationists have access

to different set. The real issue is the interpretation of the evidence. Therefore, the task of those who trust the Bible as God's inspired, infallible and inerrant Word is to reconcile what may appear to be contradictions between the Scriptures and the evidence.

However, apparent contradictions are not reconciled by simply ignoring the evidence. That is dishonest. But neither are they reconciled by ignoring clear biblical texts nor by irresponsibly re-interpreting those texts. True reconciliation occurs when both the Bible and the evidence are properly interpreted. This is the essence of the task of apologetics. And it is a central part of the ministry of The Alliance for Biblical Integrity as we seek to apply a biblical hermeneutic to the tough issues and difficult questions that threaten to weaken the church in this generation.

Sorting It All Out

In future articles I will address how to apply biblical principles to the physiological issues and potentially-related temptations which I noted in the first article. However, in the next article I will begin to examine the biblical passages that directly address the issue of homosexuality and respond to some of the exegetical challenges that form the basis for the second line of reasoning used by an increasing number of opponents of the historical view.