

THE FULL FAMILY CHURCH

DATE : **6 APRIL 2008**

SERMON : **A TEACHING FOR GAY PEOPLE. WHO AM I AND WHAT IS MY PURPOSE ON EARTH – “OTHER MISINTERPRETED PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE”**

Allow me to say right here: we as same gender orientated people should not feel so special because we are fighting a battle of this nature. Not to many years ago women went through the same kind of persecution. Especially in the Eastern cultures. Women were regarded as personal property. In our own country, South Africa, women were only allowed to vote during the previous century.

Not only women suffered in this way. Slaves also. Even Israel knew what it felt like to be a slave and be exiled from their country. The history of King Nebuchadnezzar says it all.

The whole enslavement movement gave rise to the suppression of minority groups with a different culture and belief system. This is how apartheid started. We all know that apartheid was approved from scripture. Then one day people's eyes opened and the truth came out. Today South Africa is united as the rainbow nation and apartheid is regarded as criminal.

Therefore we as gay people should never think that we are fighting an exclusive freedom fight.

Through the past five lessons we have seen that the Bible, and especially our Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit, have no problem with gay people.

The only problem that God has is the same one He has with heterosexual people as well: promiscuity.

Let's read today's three scriptures - usually the last nails in the anti-gay coffin.

Romans 1:18-32, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; because that which is known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, *even* his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonoured among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is

blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due. And even as they refused to have God in *their* knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful: who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also consent with them that practise them.” (ASV)

Paul wrote the Book of Romans in the first and last place for the Romans. Last week we read about the Roman Centurion’s lover whom Jesus healed.

Now we are off to Rome and we see how Paul addresses the newly converted among the Latin people.

We notice quite early in the Book that Paul kicks off with his reprimandment to the Romans regarding their sexual promiscuity and prostitution which they practice quite openly.

In the previous teachings we have already seen in which way the pagan worship system prescribed to heterosexual people that they should get involved with temple prostitution as part of their religious activities.

When we take a tour through Rome we will notice how many statues and temples, like the Coliseum and theatres were erected in honour of their gods. Sexual worship formed a great deal of their worshipping prescriptions.

Paul plays the Romans and Jews off against one another. The Romans with their rich cultural background and their many gods and demi-gods in the Parthenon. It is their religious system that Paul plays off against the Jewish religion in which the true God of heaven and earth, Yahweh, Adonai, Elohim, is worshipped. He points out to them that the true God is not interested in their self destroying styles of worship. No, our God looks for a pure heart and a personal relationship with each one of His followers.

By the time Paul wrote this book to the Romans in 58 after Christ, many Jews lived in Rome, and Caesar Nero had already started with his reign of terror and sickening orgies and festivals.

Throughout history Nero was renowned for his untameable lust and wild sexual relationships with very young boys and girls. He even had a similar relationship with his own brother, Britannicus, as well as with elder men and his palace staff.

The man was so infatuated with sex that he killed his mistress, Sabina, by jumping on her abdomen when she became pregnant. He did that to enable him to marry his gay servant in his palace, Sporus. Nero referred to Sporus as his

girlfriend, his queen and mistress. The Romans were forced to celebrate during a feast in honour of this disgusting marriage.

During that time the goddess, Cybele, was worshipped by a strong cultic movement. The rituals were wild. It became messy multiple debauched orgies which often ended in voluntary self castration, blood letting, abortions, self cutting, the drinking of blood, cannibalism, and often suicide.

This is the kind of idol worship and temple prostitution Paul addressed in Romans 1.

That was also the idol worship system in which heterosexual people were forced to participate in homosexual activities in the name of religion. Even in the New Testament those kinds of activities were abominations to God.

Why? Because that was against man's **created nature**.

What is man's created nature?

That refers to our natural gender orientation and gender preference which is determined by the way one is attracted to a specific gender. When one reaches puberty and realises that one is attracted to the opposite gender, then there is a strong possibility that one is heterosexual. Should you be attracted to someone of your own gender, there is a strong possibility that you might be homosexual. Being heterosexual or homosexual would be regarded as one's created **nature**. In other words the natural orientation that the Creator of heaven and earth gave you as your gender frame of reference while you live here on earth. That is the way that you are *hard wired*. Nothing can change that. Make peace with who you are and go on with your life. It is not a sin.

This is exactly what Paul refers to here. Here in **Romans 1** Paul addressed heterosexually orientated people who get involved in homosexual activities; acts that were against their created nature. For that reason God refers to their sexual permissiveness or promiscuity.

In the same way Paul warns against same gender prostitution in **Romans 1**. Regardless of whether you are heterosexual or homosexual. Also the fact that we are not allowed having sexual intercourse with "*strange flesh*". Do you remember the Sodom and Gomorrah encounter where people had sexual intercourse with heavenly beings?

We have to look very carefully at this passage as Paul focuses on *cause and effect*.

There are three causes that have three effects. I will briefly go through these aspects. Please follow the study with me in your Bible.

The three causes:

- The pagans made idols.
- The pagans worshipped the idols.

- The pagans refused to keep (recognise) God in mind, so in stead of worshipping God, the Creator, they acknowledged and worshipped the creation, the idol.

The *first cause* we find in verse **23 of Romans 1**, “[they] changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. ” (ASV)

The *effect* of this violation we find in verse **24**, “Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonoured among themselves.” (ASV)

Paul refers in this verse to “*uncleanness*” – in Greek, “*akatharsia*” – or idol worship. God gave them over (Greek: “*paradidomi*”) to this behaviour. Giving them over to this prevented them from distinguishing between truth and lies. The more they succumbed to their ways, the more they wanted to do it. During the process they became and more confused regarding their created nature.

The saying goes, “Give someone enough rope and he will hang himself”.

This had to do with idol worship and pagan sexual rituals.

The *second cause* we find in **Romans 1 verse 25**, “for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” (ASV)

Can you see? Here they worship the idol, the creation in stead of God, the Creator. Paul once again refers to the fertility goddess who demanded from her worshipper to serve her with sexual sacrifices across all gender boundaries.

Can you see that Paul says nothing about two people of the same gender who love one another and live together in a faithful, committed love relationship?

Have a look at what Paul says regarding the effect on those people who worshipped the creation, the idol, in stead of God, the Creator.

Romans 1 verse 26 & 27, “For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural [**NATRURAL!**] use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due.” (ASV)

There you have it! The **natural** intimacy, between man and woman here becomes a punishment, an anti-natural, against the nature they were born with – man-woman – and it now becomes confused, without the created nature boundaries. Men lust after men and women after women. There is no love involved. It all revolves around lust. They burn of desire.

But wait there’s more!

Let us have a look at the *third cause*. Please read **Romans 1, verse 28**. "And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting." (ASV)

Paul here refers to someone that is improper or indecent, the sustained scandalous, atrocious, humiliating passions, namely idol prostitution.

Since the beginning God has been a jealous God. He made man to serve and worship Him alone. The price for idol worship is therefore very high.

One does not become gay because of idol worship. Paul never mentions that in this passage. Those people still had a created nature of heterosexuality but they became so confused in their gender orientation that they got caught up in passions that were against their creative nature so that they violated that nature.

Never ever allow anyone to put you under condemnation if you have a same gender orientation. If you love the Lord Jesus Christ and confess the Name of God, Jesus will never allow you to fall away from His loving arms. **He** promises that! Not me!

This gender orientation confusement is the price people who participate in idol worship have to pay. We also read that God does not punish them into that. He merely withdraws from them. Subsequently they bring it upon themselves because they are no longer under the divine protection and blessings of God. Their idol worship causes them to mock God. Having moved away from God's protection in this way implies that they have to face what comes their way. They burn with lust and do not get enough out of their creative nature gender orientation; in their case, being heterosexual. They not only get involved in homosexual activities but also participate in bestiality, etc. That unquenchable lust in the end consumes them. The price is too high for any human being to pay because our souls were not designed to carry such high emotional voltage.

That is as far as Romans 1 is concerned.

Now we move on to the next nail in the anti-gay coffin: **1 Corinthians 5: 1-11**.

In the first part of this letter Paul addresses people who take fellow believers to court with an attempt to settle disputes. In stead of settling the matters peacefully among themselves, they run off to faithless judges.

In **verse 9** he gets to people who commit injustice. Then he names a few.

Please now turn to **1 Timothy 1: 3-11**, "As I exhorted thee to tarry at Ephesus, when I was going into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, (4) neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God which is in faith; so do I now. (5) But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned: (6) from which things some having swerved have turned aside unto vain talking; (7) desiring to be teachers of the law, though they understand neither what they say, nor whereof they confidently affirm. (8) But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully,

(9) as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, (10) for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine; (11) according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust." (ASV)

Have a look at **verse 9** again: "as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for ***manslayers***."

Here Paul speaks about those who do not submit under law and order, the godless and sinful, people who have no regard or respect for that which is holy. Then he names a couple of those kinds of people.

Now, let's quickly go back to **1 Cor.6** to have a look at the specific verses that have to do with homosexuality.

In the last part of **verse 9**, several Bibles translated this word as, "'*lustful sodomites*" (AOV), "*behaves like a homosexual*"(CEV), "*homosexual perverts*" (GNB), "*abusers of themselves with men*" (ASV), "*homosexuals*" (GW), "*homosexuals*" (ISV), "*abusers of themselves with mankind*" (KJV), "*homosexuals*" (LITV), "*homosexuals*" (MKJV), "*those who abuse sex*" (MSG).

Quite a variety of translational impressions. So who is right and who is wrong? They can't all be right or all be wrong.

The New Afrikaans translation mentions, [my translation], "people who practice homosexuality". It does not say "*gay people*". The other translations mentioned above, hits more on gay people.

When we as same gender orientated people read these verses, we have a tendency to feel condemned. Isn't that so? We have been raised in a society where being gay is odd, out of the order, sinful, "God hates gays", not accepted, etc. We feel that we have to live a lie to be accepted.

Now when we read **1 Timothy 1:10**, we feel like we are taking a double blow, "*sodomites*" (NKJV), and "*people who practice homosexuality*" (NAV).

Now, in order to get to the crux of the matter we have to go back to the original Greek scriptures. All the translations become too confusing as the various versions do not correspond.

The Koine Greek (the language in which the New Testament was originally written) refers to this clause as "*malakos*" and "*arsenokoites*" and in **1 Tim.** also of "*arsenokoites*".

The Greek word, "*malaka*" literally means, "*soft, without energy or guts, a weakling, sickly, without grid, spineless, lazy, without ambition, etc.*"

That does not sound very gay to me. Not when I think of all the achievements gay people reached in the world up till now.

And by now we know that this word refers to people who commit idol prostitution in a worship context.

Let's have a look at the various character traits of these people. In this context it refers to what they did during their idol worship.

1 Tim. 1 says that they have killed their parents, killed other people, were adulterous, kidnappers, liars, committed perjury, etc.

In **1 Cor.** we read that they were immoral, worshipped idols, were adulterers, thieves, covetous, drunkards, gossipers, etc.

Can you see the contexts? Idol worship!

Also the word, "*arsenokoites*" in **1 Cor.**

The Greek meaning of this word is, "*a promiscuous heterosexual man*", "*a male heterosexual prostitute who can easily switch from a male to a female roll*", "*a heterosexual man who cheats on his wife by having sexual activities with another man*", "*a heterosexual or homosexual person who would be guilty of rape and/or prostitution*", etc.

Does this passage mention anything about same gender orientated people who love one another, are true to one another and love the Lord? No! God has a problem with idol worship, temple prostitution and promiscuity in general. Not with people who love one another and are faithful to one another!

For this reason a relationship that is based on sex often leaves one with heartache, rejection and loneliness. When there is love, sex can never be the main reason for the relationship. It becomes a bonus. The cherry on the cake, so to speak. Never the other way around. When love is at the heart of a relationship a couple will honour, respect and trust one another. They can never become the object of lust for one another.

We further see that the Greek word, "*arsenokoites*" is a compound word. It derives from two words, like "tophat" - "top" and "hat". The word, "*arsenokoites*" is a composite of "*arseno*" and "*koite*".

"*Arseno*" means, "*man*", and "*koite*" means, "*bed*".

Can you see why translators had a problem with this word? The easiest option was to assume a cultural connotation to the word therefore it was conveniently translated with "*homosexual*". Such an illogical assumption: MAN + BED just have to be gay, faggot, queer!

Let's have a look at another few examples in our general English language:

Butterfly - BUTTER + FLY - A fly that craves butter?

Butterflower - BUTTER + FLOWER - That special ingredient Granny uses to garnish a cake?

Mankind – MAN + KIND - A man who shows kindness?

Ridiculous, isn't it? One cannot merely assume the meaning of a composite by taking a guess based on one's own frame of reference or the cultural context of oneself. That is why words like these should be translated with the context of the text discourse. This requires a thorough study of the culture and time of that time, as well as consulting other literature of that period.

So, what does God want to communicate to us through this lesson?

Only this: "My dear child, you who have a same gender orientation or an opposite gender orientation, I made you perfectly in My image: in your mind, in your entire being. I gave you the ability to love and to be loved. To love Me. Live life to the full, the way I created you. In doing that you will show Me that you also love Me and serve Me. Love the way in which I created you naturally, whether you are heterosexual or homosexual. Stop running away from who you are. Make peace with whom I had made you. Live in dignity, in the way I intended you to live. Then you will be blessed. That means: then you will be happy, fulfilled and prosper."

The only difference is what you allow to happen with you when you go through persecution? Do you allow that experience to make you **better** or **bitter**? There is no position of indifference.

I have great compassion for people who have suffered through the ages; who where confronted with this choice. Many women became bitter. Many slaves became bitter. Many black people became bitter because of apartheid.

Yet, the way you react to whatever suffering you go through is your own choice. Only yours. You have a choice whether you will get bitter or better. If you have made your choice you have to live with it.

Yet, many women, slaves, black people and gay people chose the other option. They decided to use the challenge in a positive way. They chose to become **better**.

For those of us who suffered during the past-apartheid era, South Africa drafted a very secure Bill of Rights to protect us and to give us freedom. A rainbow went up.

Let me ask you: has the rainbow gone up for you yet? Do you realise that you are free and that you are protected by a Bill of Rights? Most of all: do you realise that you are standing under the grace and the freedom that God gave you in His Word?

Not? Well, my dear friend, then you have to read this series again and familiarise you with the truth. Open your eyes and see the rainbow! If you don't you are going to miss out on it. That implies self imprisonment. The choice is yours!

The worst is: there are many people who are sourcing from this liberating pot of gold at the end of the rainbow: freedom, dignity, love, acceptance, respect, and a zest for life! It is available for you as well. Yet, it remains your choice how you are going to react by driving the dirt road of life. Remember, you are not the first person to go through this; you will definitely not be the last. Does it make you bitter or better? The choice is yours.

Stop sucking your self pity lemons. Nobody likes a sour face. Enjoy the wonderful freedom of the truth and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ now that you know the truth about these scriptures. Indeed He gave His life for you so that you might have life in abundance.

Equip yourself with the truth. Let nobody derail your faith. Do not allow it. In **John 10:10** we read that, "A thief [*the devil*] is only there to steal and kill and destroy. I [*Jesus*] came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of. "

This is your portion. This is what God intended you to have. Believe Him and take His promise to heart and live by it.

Be blessed.

Pastor Anton Smith