



Not Inheriting the Kingdom (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:10)

 The Bible and Homosexuality

 Pastor Jeremy Thomas

 September 16, 2015

 fbgbible.org

 Fredericksburg Bible Church

107 East Austin Street

Fredericksburg, Texas 78624

(830) 997-8834

Last time in our series on the Bible and Homosexuality we started looking at the NT passages that are most commonly brought into the discussion. As we look at these there are a few things we shouldn't forget. First, while we have to study closely the six or seven passages that are typically brought into this discussion it is really trivial to reduce the issue down to six or seven passages. The Bible has an overarching theme of one man and one woman in marriage producing offspring in order to spread dominion over the face of the whole earth. When you redefine marriage to be something else you necessarily change this overarching theme. In other words, the Bible becomes a very different story and the God of that story becomes a very different God. Yet in the OT in Genesis 1-2 as well as the NT in Matt 19 it is very clear that the theme of one man and one woman in marriage producing offspring in order to spread dominion over the face of the whole earth has been and remains from the beginning of creation down until our own day. The reason is because it is built into the created design of male and female as the image of God, equal in essence but distinct in mental, emotional and psychological makeup so that each is fitted for opposite but corresponding roles. What SSRA must claim is that there is no distinction between male and female in the mental, emotional and psychological makeup. The way they get around God creating them male and female and the two becoming "one flesh" in Genesis 2 is by claiming that the "one flesh" relationship established by God was one of kinship bond independent of gender differences. The fundamental problem with removing the concept of kinship bond from gender differences is that such a concept of kinship bond depends upon gender differences. That is to say that a kinship bond cannot be formed apart from a male and female with procreative potential. So the issue is much larger and comes back to the overarching theme or metanarrative of Scripture. What's the big story God is telling about Himself, us and the world around us?

Second, having changed the big story the issue comes to how to re-interpret six or seven passages that touch most directly on the issue. The claim of SSRA is that once these passages are interpreted correctly we find that they are not related to a particular kind of SSR, namely, committed, loving, SSR. That this is a new phenomenon that is not addressed by the Bible. Vines says this repeatedly in his book, *God and the Gay Christian*. Note the repetition, "...the concept of an exclusive, permanent same-sex orientation is little more than a century old."¹ In

another place he writes, "...the concept of same-sex orientation didn't exist in the ancient world."² Later in the same paragraph, "The issue we face today—gay Christians and their committed relationships—hasn't been an issue the church has faced in past eras."³ Elsewhere "In each case, we found that the traditional interpretation doesn't envision the committed relationships of gay Christians."⁴ And again, "Today's debate takes place in a context far removed from the setting of Leviticus and its prohibitions, a law code that has never applied to Christians."⁵ And finally, "The bottom line is this: The Bible doesn't directly address the issue of same-sex *orientation*—or the expression of that orientation. While its six references to same-sex behavior are negative, the concept of same-sex behavior in the Bible is sexual excess, not sexual orientation."⁶ So repeatedly the argument that is made is that the Bible has nothing direct to say about SS orientation or SS expression. By SS orientation he means this is how we are by birth and therefore since God made us this way it can't be sinful. Therefore an expression of what we are by birth can't be sinful. I will address this by the end of tonight's lesson. This line of argument has been very influential in many Christian circles. Vines, himself a gay Christian says that his father had a very difficult time at first because of his traditional understanding of Scripture, but he says, "After spending several months walking with me through these Scripture passages, Dad came to see that his faith may not be compromised by embracing a same-sex relationship for me. He was starting to think that he could continue to affirm the full authority of Scripture, and at the same time, affirm me."⁷ It becomes very obvious that these arguments are all about me and not really about what God thinks.

Here's a major issue you don't want to miss. Can a Christian affirm the full authority of Scripture and at the same time affirm SSR? Well, it depends upon what you mean by the full authority of Scripture. If you mean what has traditionally been meant that the Scripture speaks to every area of life and is sufficient for all matters of faith and practice, then the claim that the Scriptures do not speak to the issue of modern, loving SSR is a denial of the full authority of Scripture, not an affirmation of it. And since God has failed to address this with His wisdom then we are left to our own discretion. The only information we have is the information we receive from those who claim to be SS oriented. They claim that they are born this way and it is an immutable orientation and that trying to change the orientation has not only proved impossible but damaging. In the end, God made them this way so it can't be sinful and the church needs a reformation in this area. The reformation is a departure from the traditional understanding of the overarching theme or metanarrative of Scripture and the traditional interpretations of six or seven passages. Once this is accomplished the church will have grown into a fuller understanding of God and His will and will be healthier. The fundamental problem is that if we grow in that direction it will be growth based on a departure from the full authority of Scripture because it necessarily entails denying that the Scriptures speak to every area of life and is sufficient for all matters of faith and practice. Once you have made that leap you are virtually on your own and you must take man's word for it because God's word doesn't speak about it. Those are a few things to keep in mind as we work through this series. Nevertheless, I think you need to be prepared to speak to those who hold these views or are indifferent because there is great value in bringing a fellow believer from the error of his way back to the truth (Jas 5:19-20).

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Tim 1:10: Vice Lists and Inheriting the Kingdom

What we're going to discuss tonight is the last two NT passages that are typically brought into the discussion; 1 Cor 6:9-11 and 1 Tim 1:10. These passages use two words that have become the center of heated controversy; *μαλακοι* and *αρσενοκοιται*. In our modern NASB they are translated as "effeminate" and "homosexuals" respectively. These words fall within what are known as vice lists in the ancient world. There is abundant evidence of vice lists evidenced by archaeological remains now preserved in museums throughout the world. Among these are Latin lists using Greek loan words showing Hellenistic influence, there are pagan lists that do not condemn idolatry and there are Jewish lists that do condemn idolatry. There are also several vice lists in the NT. These lists often cover the same vices but also have differences. The two words of controversy here are used only in the vice lists of 1 Cor 6:9-11 and 1 Tim 1:9-10. We conclude that the NT vice lists were not written to be exhaustive but are often just exemplary or directed to a particular audience.

The vice list in 1 Cor 6:9-10 says, "Or 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 *effeminate*, nor *homosexuals*,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.¹¹ Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." The vice list in 1 Tim 1:8-10 reads, "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,⁹ realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers¹⁰ and immoral men and *homosexuals* and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,¹¹ according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." Those are the two passages under dispute.

Let's look at 1 Cor 6:9-11 first. Usually we look at this passage with respect to the issue of inheriting the kingdom of God and whether that refers to going to heaven or having rewards in heaven. Today we look at it because of the words translated "effeminate" and "homosexuals" and how this passage is most commonly used to tell gay people that they are lost and going to hell. Of course, that's not how we would use the passage in the overall, Paul is imploring Christians not to continue to live like they did when they were non-Christians. But you can see why that usage of the passage has caused a lot of damage in this debate.

The only debate in this passage is two words. What SSRA are saying is that these two words are wrongly translated in our modern bibles; that they rarely have a sexual meaning in extra-biblical literature and therefore most likely in biblical literature refer to something non-sexual. In that way they disconnect this passage from having any bearing on modern, committed, loving SSR. The first disputed word is *μαλακοι*. SSRA Vines says it "literally means "soft." And when used in a "moral context" describes "lack of self-control, weakness, laziness, or

cowardice" and while it "could involve sexual conduct," as in a "passive same-sex behavior," it "was actually more frequently applied to men who succumbed to the charms of *women*." Through this mode of argument he concludes that interpreting *μαλακος* as one who takes the passive role in same-sex behavior is anachronistic, reading our situation back into the ancient situation. He prefers to understand Paul as condemning lack of discipline or self-control in line with older translations such as the Geneva Bible of 1587 which translates "wantons" or Tyndale's New Testament which translates "weaklings."

How do we respond to this? The Liddell Scott Greek Lexicon, which is from the classical Greek period, prior to NT times says this, "in bad sense, of persons, soft, yielding, remiss"⁸ which to me sounds like passivity. Moulton and Milligan in their *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* analyzed everyday Greek usage in papyri and say, "a certain musician Zenobius is described as ο *μαλακος*, probably in the same sense in which the word is found in 1 Cor 6:9, rather than simply with reference to his style of dancing."⁹ Deissmann added that "It is an allusion to the foul practices by which the musician eked out his earnings."¹⁰ Which is all somewhat vague. Moulton and Milligan agree, however, that it was used to allude to a person's "corrupt mode of life" and add that "the adj. = "soft."¹¹ The leading Greek Lexicon of the NT is Bauer-Arndt-Danker-Gingrich. It cites two meanings depending on the context and is more explicit. 1, "pertaining to being yielding to touch, *soft*." This usage refers to fine garments worn by attendants in a king's palace (e.g. Lk 7:25; Mt 11:8ab). To interpret *μαλακοι* with this meaning in 1 Cor 6:9 would be highly unlikely because there is nothing wrong with wearing fine clothing in a king's palace. 2, "pertaining to being passive in a same-sex relationship, *effeminate*" especially of *catamites*, of men and boys who are sodomized by other males in such a relationship, opposite *αρσενικοιτης*."¹² According to this definition the word refers to a passive male, one who allows himself to be penetrated. There are several reasons this understanding is more probable than mere lack of self-control as SSRA suggest. First, the position of *μαλακος* in the vice list is in situated between two sexual sins. Before *μαλακος* is "adulterers" and after *μαλακος* is "homosexuals." To place a non-sexual sin in between two sexual sins would be strangely out of place. Second, Corinth was known for its sexual vices and so we would expect Paul to deal with several, which he does. On the acropolis overlooking the city stood the Temple of Aphrodite with over 1,000 prostitutes. So commonly did travelers, seafarers and soldiers frequent the Temple that to sleep with a temple prostitute became known as "to Corinthianize." Further, in 1 Cor 5 one of the believing men in the congregation was sleeping with his step-mother and the Church wasn't doing anything about it. Sexual vices were a severe problem at Corinth and therefore we should not be surprised to find that every vice in verse 9 is sexual in nature except idolatry which was associated with sex in Corinth. Finally, if we were to translate this as SSR suggests, "lack self-control" or "lack of discipline" is not really a sufficient vice meriting not inheriting the kingdom of God. Therefore, the interpretation of *μαλακος* by SSRA seems highly unlikely. So much for *μαλακος*.

The second word, *αρσενικοιτης*, is the more important and controversial word. SSRA Vines admits that the two component parts of this word, *αρσενος* and *κοιτη* mean "male-bed" but rejects that in this case the etymology has any bearing on the meaning of the word as used by Paul. He also admits the possibility that because the

word is not found in use prior to Paul that Paul coined the word on the basis of his familiarity of the Greek LXX version of Lev 20:13 where *αρσενος* and *κοιτην* are next to one another and used to translate “a man lies with a male” but finds this an unlikely prospect. He concludes the possibility that Paul is referring to a particular form of SSR known as pederasty, man-boy sex, but that it is more likely due to later uses of the word in extra-biblical literature that it refers to “economic exploitation” possibly in connection with sexual behavior that may have included same-sex behavior. The bottom line is that Paul is not using this word to condemn modern, loving, committed same-sex relationships but a form of economic exploitation. In his own words, “While *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* could encompass forms of same-sex behavior, the behavior they might describe bears little resemblance to the modern relationships of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Christians.”¹³ There again is another disconnect.

How do we respond to this? The leading Greek Lexicon, BDAG says, “*ρσην* ‘male’ + *κοίτη* ‘bed’” “in a vice list—*ρσενοκοιτε* *ν*” “cp. the association of *ρσην* and *κοίτη* Lev 20:13”¹⁴ “cp. the formation of *μητροκοίτης* [*μήτηρ* + *κοίτη*] ‘one who has intercourse w. his mother’”¹⁵ and concludes with this definition, “a male who engages in sexual activity with a person of his own sex, *pederast*,” and in the explanation adds, “of one who assumes the dominant role in same-sex activity, opp. *μαλακός*”¹⁶ adding more discussion, “Paul’s strictures against same-sex activity cannot be satisfactorily explained on the basis of alleged temple prostitution (on its rarity, but with some evidence concerning women used for sacred prostitution at Corinthor limited to contract with boys for homoerotic service.”¹⁷ In other words, the leading Greek lexicon disagrees with the conclusion of SSRA. It is too limiting to say the word refers only to economic exploitation or economic exploitation involving pederasty. It seems far more likely that *μαλακος* and *αρσενοκοιτης* are referring to the passive and active partners in a same-sex relationship of any two males, regardless of maturity, and that both activities are condemned by Paul. James B. De Young agrees saying, “It is feasible, then, that both *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* come from Lev 20:13 and point to the passive and the active same-sex roles.”¹⁸ Where did Paul get the word? The most plausible explanation so far is that he based it upon the Greek LXX of Lev 20:13 where *αρσενος* and *κοιτην* are juxtaposed. This would mean that the NT ethics are in agreement with the OT ethics. That Paul was familiar with the Greek LXX is founded on solid evidence. Of his 93 quotations of the OT many are allusions to the LXX, 14 are from the LXX and only 4 are from the Hebrew. Obviously Paul was quite familiar with the LXX making it reasonable to conclude that Paul coined this term on the basis of his familiarity with Lev 20:13. James B. De Young says, “The word is general, reflecting the passage in Lev 20:13...His term expressed gender but not gender and maturity; he condemned “males who lie with males of any age.” It agrees with the threefold use of *rshn* (arsn, “male”) in Rom 1:27 where Paul condemns same-sex activity.”¹⁹ Kevin DeYoung agrees saying, “Both terms refer to men who have sex with other men, the passive and the active partners. Paul is saying what we find hard to hear but what the rest of the Bible supports and most of church history has assumed: homosexual activity is not a blessing to be celebrated and solemnized but a sin to be repented of, forsaken, and forgiven.”²⁰

In support we turn now to 1 Cor 6:11. This verse sheds light on whether same-sex orientation is an immutable characteristic, a fundamental presupposition of SSRA. Paul says, "Such were some of you." "Were" is an imperfect verb referring to ongoing action in past time. The Corinthians had a number of vices. They were so identified with these vices that over time they became identified with the vices. In other words, they did not just steal but they stole so often that they were thieves. They did not just get drunk but they got drunk so often that they were drunkards. And they did not just practice homosexual sex but they practiced it so often that they were homosexuals. This means it is an acquired or developed characteristic. One chosen repetitively and not based on genetics. The supposed gay gene has yet to be discovered and identical twin studies where one twin is gay have proven that there is no such thing as a gay gene. This is nothing more than claiming to be a victim.

Most significantly Paul then implies that a radical change took place so that they should no longer live in their vices. "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus..." All three are aorist passive verbs, all look back to the moment they believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. These three are the basis for them no longer living unrighteous lives but righteous lives. The first one, "But you were washed" refers to their being "cleansed from filth." The aorist means this happened at the moment they believed the gospel. What filth were they cleansed from? All the filth of vv 9-10; if they were thieves they were cleansed from that filth. If they were drunkards they were cleansed from that filth. If they were adulterers they were cleansed from that filth. And if they were either the passive or active partner in a homosexual relationship they were cleansed from that filth once for all. The verb is prefaced with the preposition *απο* and so is an intensive cleansing. They were made pure, fresh and new. The second one, "but you were sanctified" refers to their being "positionally set apart" at the moment they believed the gospel. Set apart for what? Set apart for the purpose of eliminating impurities. What impurities? All the impurities of vv 9-10 again; in our situation the impurity of being a passive or active partner in a homosexual relationship. The third one, "but you were justified" refers to their being "declared righteous" at the moment they believed the gospel. Having been declared righteous they have a perfect standing before God. Now that they were cleansed, set apart and declared perfectly righteous they are now being called to live new lives. All of this Paul says, was done "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," meaning in His authority because He accomplished the work of satisfying the Father and "in the Spirit of our God" because He is the one who applies the work to all who believe.

Being homosexual, therefore, is not an immutable orientation any more than being a thief, a swindler, a drunkard or covetous, other things mentioned in the vice list. Paul himself said in Romans 7 that when the Law came he discovered that he was covetous. But when He believed he too was washed, sanctified and justified. Even with this firm basis he learned that we cannot live the Christian life in our own strength but that we must learn to live by the Spirit. When he did he was able to put off being covetous. This did not mean that he did not struggle with being covetous or that he woke up one day and miraculously didn't covet anymore, but that he learned that he could not control it and that the only thing he could do was depend upon the Spirit and walk in tune with Him. The more consistently he learned to do this the less he coveted.

The lesson is that only the Spirit of God is powerful enough to master our sin patterns. Sexual sin patterns are perhaps the strongest and some of us are beset with them, but they are not unconquerable. The Spirit of God is infinite in power and if we learn to depend upon Him He will conquer them for us. The more continually we depend upon Him the more those patterns will be conquered. But as long as we try to conquer them it is not Christ who lives in us but we who live. When it is we who live we only face defeat. It is my contention that those who claim to be homosexually oriented and that they cannot change and that when they have tried to change it has been even more damaging are saying in essence that they are the ones who have been trying to effect the change. Of course the end of that road is always defeat. Paul came to the end of that road in Romans 7:24 when he said, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" Defeat was not foreign to Paul's life. However, the difference between Paul and those Christians who are claiming to be same-sex oriented is that Paul moved into Romans 8, life by the Spirit, whereas they have re-interpreted the text so that it does not speak to their specific brand of SSR.²¹ The truth is they are living in bondage to their sin nature. It is no different than someone who claims to be thief oriented because they have tried to defeat it but only faced defeat and so concluded that that is just the way I am and I am going to re-interpret the text to say that the Scriptures are condemning certain kinds of theft but not my theft.

Finally, 1 Tim 1:8-11. This passage is another vice list and it uses only *αρσενικοιται* but there are some interesting observations that connect this passage back to the OT Law so that there is an ethical bridge between the OT ethics of Leviticus and the NT ethics. The general conclusion reached before, that this word refers to the active partner in a homosexual relationship remains but connects it back to the Law. Watch the progression, "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, ⁹realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers ¹⁰and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, ¹¹according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." Three observations. First, the movement in the passage is from the Mosaic Law to the gospel. This shows that Paul has in mind the right use of the Law as well as who the Law is made for, that is, lawbreakers, in order to lead them to the gospel. Second, the specific commandments in verse 9-10 relate directly to several of the Ten Commandments. "killing your father and killing your mother" are contrary to the fifth commandment to "honor your father and mother." "murdering" is contrary to the sixth commandment "you shall not murder." "immoral men and homosexuals" both relate to the seventh commandment which was concerned with adultery and by extension other sexual sins. It's safe to say that the Biblical testimony from beginning to end is one opposed to SSR regardless of their form or shape. As mentioned before, the way of victory is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ so that one is washed, sanctified and justified and then learn to live the Christian life, not by me trying to stop sinning but by depending upon the Spirit so that as I do He conquers the sin and produces His righteous fruit.

¹ Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, p 128.

² Ibid., 129

³ Ibid., 129.

⁴ Ibid., 129.

⁵ Ibid., 130.

⁶ Ibid., 130.

⁷ Ibid., 130.

⁸ Liddell, H.G. *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996, p 486.

⁹ Moulton, James Hope, and George Milligan. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930, p 387.

¹⁰ Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, fn. 4, p 164.

¹¹ Moulton, James Hope, and George Milligan. *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930, p 387.

¹² William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 613

¹³ Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*, p 130.

¹⁴ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 135.

¹⁵ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 135.

¹⁶ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 135.

¹⁷ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 135.

¹⁸ James B. De Young, "The Source and NT Meaning of Arsenokoitai, with Implications for Christian Ethics and Ministry, *TMSJ* 3/2 (Fall 1992), 215-216.

¹⁹ James B. De Young, "The Source and NT Meaning of Arsenokoitai, with Implications for Christian Ethics and Ministry, *TMSJ* 3/2 (Fall 1992), 217.

²⁰ Kevin DeYoung, *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* p 67.

²¹ See Vines, p 128.