



## Biblical Teaching on Homosexual Activity

Recently, homosexuality has been very much in the news: The DC City Council has introduced a Same-sex "Marriage" Bill. This weekend in Washington there will also be a large Gay Pride event which will, among other things, celebrate this fact. It seems on many fronts the gay lifestyle is gaining wider acceptance. And thus the question is increasingly asked, even by Catholics, "Why does the Catholic Church continue to oppose Gay marriage and homosexual activity?" The answer can be made on the basis of three pillars: Scripture, Tradition and Natural Law. In this post I would like to explore the Scriptural roots of the Catholic teaching against homosexual activity.

**An Important Distinction Between Activity and Orientation:** The Bible is very clear: it unambiguously, and in an uncompromising way, condemns homosexual activity as a serious sin. I want to share a few of these Biblical texts with you. But before I do, let me make a very important clarification. In the first place, note it is homosexual *activity* that is condemned, not all persons of homosexual *orientation*. It is a fact that some individuals are attracted to members of the same sex. Why this is or how it comes to be is not fully understood, but it is, nonetheless, simply a fact for some individuals. Since sexual orientation is not usually a matter of direct choice or immediate control, it is not itself an object of moral condemnation. Merely to be tempted to commit a certain sin does not make one evil or bad, or even guilty for that temptation. Rather, it is when one gives way to the temptation and commits the sin that one becomes a sinner. Many homosexual persons live chaste lives, and, although tempted to commit homosexual acts, they do not in fact do so. This is courageous, holy and praiseworthy. Sadly, though, some with a homosexual orientation not only commit the sin of homosexual activity, but they openly flaunt this fact, and dismiss or attempt to reinterpret Biblical texts that clearly forbid such activity. For these people, we can only hope and pray for conversion. I hope you can see, however, why we must distinguish between homosexual orientation and homosexual activity.

**Homosexuality is not being singled out** - A second clarification that we must make is that we should be careful not to single out homosexual activity as though it were the only sexual sin God condemns. Clearly, all who are heterosexual are also called to sexual purity. The same Bible which condemns homosexual activity also clearly condemns acts of fornication (a Bible word for premarital sex) and acts of adultery. The Bible describes these as serious sins, which can and do exclude people from the Kingdom of God and from the hope of Heaven (cf Eph 5:5-7; Gal 5:16-21; Rev 21:5-8; Rev. 22:14-16; Mt. 15:19-20; 1 Cor 6:9-20; Col 3:5-6; 1 Thess 4:1-8; 1 Tim 1:8-11; Heb 13:4). To be excluded from the Kingdom of God means that one is in mortal sin and will not go to heaven if they die unrepentant. Sadly, many people today live in open violation of Biblical teaching. Many engage in premarital sex (fornicate) and say it is alright because "everyone's doing it." Many live together without benefit of marriage. This, like homosexual activity, is sinful. It is wrong, and should be repented of immediately. Hence, homosexual activity is not singled out by the Bible or by Christians. Every human being, without exception, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is called to sexual purity, to chastity, and to self-control. Any violation of

this is a sin. Put more positively, God's command of chastity means that sexual purity is possible for everyone with God's grace. God empowers us to do what he commands!

**The Biblical Data on Homosexual Activity:** As stated above, the Bible clearly and unambiguously condemns homosexual activity. For example, "*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination*" (Leviticus 18: 22) and "*If a man lies with a male as with a female, both of them have committed an abomination*" (Lev 20:13). Likewise, the story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah depicts, among other things, the sinfulness of homosexual activity. It is too lengthy to reproduce here in its entirety, but you can read about it in [Genesis 19](#). The New Testament as well contains a number of texts on homosexuality. Here is one, 1 Corinthians 6-9: "*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*" There are other texts, as well: for example [1 Timothy 1 8-11](#). Note that, in many of these texts, homosexual activity is listed among other sexual offenses a person can commit. Again, it is not merely singled out. Here then, is what the Bible teaches: homosexual activity is wrong as are other sexual sins such as fornication and adultery. It is true that there are not a huge number of texts regarding homosexual activity. But, whenever it is mentioned, it is clearly and uncompromisingly condemned. The final text I would like to explore is one about which we should be careful and respectful. It is written in strong language to be sure but we must be careful to understand it in a way that is inclusive of all, not just the Gay community. Here is the text and some commentary to follow:

*"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them...in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools...For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct." (Romans 1:18ff)*

Please note that the sinners condemned in this passage are those who "suppress the truth." The context in which Paul speaks here is the Gentile world which, although it did not have scripture, nonetheless had the Natural Law. They can know that God exists and the fundamental things he expects because he has "*shown it to them in the things he has made.*" Nevertheless, though they can know the truth they suppress it and their minds thus become darkened, that is, incapable of accepting or understanding what God demands. Because they reject what is natural (Natural Law) they descend into what is unnatural (the Greek word that Paul uses is *paraphysin* meaning "contrary to or beside nature"). So the Scripture here is clear enough, homosexual activity is "*paraphysin*" contrary to nature. Here too Paul does not single out Homosexual activity as the only issue that comes from "suppressing the truth." He goes on to list in the same chapter many other sins that proceed from those who suppress the truth:

*God handed them over to their undiscerning mind to do what is improper. They are filled with every form of wickedness, evil, greed, and malice; full of envy, murder, rivalry, treachery, and spite. They are gossips and scandalmongers and they hate God. They are insolent, haughty, boastful, ingenious in their wickedness, and rebellious toward their parents. They are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know the just decree of God that all who practice such things deserve death, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*  
(Rom 1:28-32)

The truth be told, our whole society is recognizable in these verses. This is what happens to a society that kicks God to the curb and suppresses the truth. So here again, homosexuality is not singled out but it is listed among the sins that proceed from the suppression of the truth. Further, the approval of it like the other sins listed (to include heterosexual sins) are also the symptoms of a darkened intellect poisoned by the suppression of the truth. Strong words to be sure but inclusive of us all to one degree or another.

So there is the Scriptural data. Sadly, today, many have set aside Biblical teachings on homosexual activity. They not only declare that it is not sinful, but they even celebrate it as though it were good. It is bad enough when non-believers do this, but it is even more tragic when people who call themselves "Christians" do such things. A number of the no-Catholic but Christian denominations have begun celebrating and blessing homosexual unions and promoting clergy who are actively and publicly engaging in homosexual activity. In effect they sanction such behavior and are setting aside the Word of God, or reinterpreting its clear meaning. They mislead many by this: "*Take heed that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying I am he! and they will lead many astray*" (Mark 13:5). St. Paul also knew that some would distort the Christian faith. And so he said: "*and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them*" (Acts 20: 29).

**Conclusion** - As seen above, we live an era where there is often deep confusion about moral issues. In the area of sexual morality, the confusion is especially deep today. This confusion has touched many, heterosexual and homosexual who are living and promoting unbiblical lifestyles. In such a climate, we must speak the truth that comes from God and live it. Suppressing the truth leads to great distortions, confusion, and suffering. The sexual promiscuity of our own day has led to great suffering: Sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS, abortion, teenage pregnancy, broken marriages, divorce, single parenthood. The confusion about homosexual activity is just one more symptom of the general sexual confusion of our day. In suppressing the truth from God, many among us call good that which God has taught as sinful. As Christians we must proclaim the Word and Wisdom of God, in season and out of season, whether popular or unpopular. We do this with respect and love but also with insistence on the truth which comes from God. *Caritatem in veritate!*

Rev. Msgr. Charles Pope