

The COVID pandemic was the reason for cancelling many events recently. The LGBTQIA movement was unable to hold their usual events where they voice their position and fight against discrimination. One of their parades – the Vienna Pride - was able to place on June 11 of this year. You may not remember but on a previous occasion even Bill Clinton was their guest. Another one was the Europride in Belgrade on September 18. These events and other discussions in smaller circles led me to investigate the topic of homosexuality and what God has to say about it.

Homosexuality in the Bible

God created the Universe in literally six days. He created mankind with two genders, male and female. At the end of this process he called everything very good.

With the disobedience of man the situation changed drastically. Physical death was introduced and all of creation from that point onward had an expiration date. Features in creation that were not seen before the fall cannot be labelled as very good. Mutations of the gene pool shortened the lifespan of man and diseases surfaced, to name a couple.

The LGBTQIA movement nowadays demands its place in society with a large volume of voices. Traditional churches open their doors and see them as part of creation on the same level as the man and woman God created in the beginning. Homosexuality was not part of the initial creation, only male (Adam) and female (Eve) were the humans populating paradise. It appeared sometime after the Fall and therefore could not be seen as very good.

It is not known from the Bible when the first homosexual features in man occurred, but the first mention of it in the Bible is in Leviticus 18. God speaks of customs in Egypt and Canaan from which the Israelites are to abstain from (vv.3-5).

³You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes. ⁴You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God. ⁵So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD.

This chapter deals with incest (vv.6-19) and other intimate relationships (vv.20-23, 29).

²⁰You shall not have intercourse with your neighbor's wife, to be defiled with her. ²¹You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD. ²²You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination. ²³Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.

²⁹For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people.

That means that violators will not be part of society anymore.

The statements in Leviticus are very clear. The question is now: Are they also applicable in the NT? Morals decayed after the Fall (due to the Second Law of Thermodynamics which says that order is decreasing in a closed system. It can be applied to any closed system). An explanation to this question is given¹.

1. Ceremonial Law

The ceremonial law related specifically to Israel's worship (see Lev. 1:2-3, for example). Its primary purpose was to point forward to Jesus Christ; these laws, therefore, were no longer necessary after Jesus' death and resurrection. While ceremonial law no longer binds us, the principles behind them—to worship and love a holy God—still apply. The Pharisees often accused Jesus of violating ceremonial law.

2. Civil Law

The civil law applied to daily living in Israel (see Deut. 24:10-11, for example). Because modern society and culture are so radically different from that time and setting, all of these guidelines cannot be followed specifically. But the principles behind the commands are timeless and should guide our conduct. Jesus demonstrated these principles by example.

3. Moral Law

The moral law (such as the Ten Commandments) is the direct command of God, and it requires strict obedience (see Exod. 20:13, for example). The moral law reveals the nature and will of God, and it still applies today. Jesus obeyed the moral law completely. The moral commands of the Ten Commandments are all repeated in the various moral exhortations of the New Testament.

You will not find these divisions in scripture. Some theologians created these categories. Jesus stated in Mt. 5:17 that He came to fulfill the Law. Fulfillment of the Law requires works, which He Himself did by His ministry unto the death on the cross. We as believers are no longer required to fulfill the Law by works². An important verse in this respect is Gal. 2:16. It talks about justification by faith and not by works.

In the NT, believers who fail to obey the Law (sin) are not condemned. In the case of sexual sin they will not face capital punishment. Homosexuality though, continued to exist also during and after Jesus' presence on earth. That He did not comment on it, may be due to the fact that it was already labeled as an abomination in Leviticus. That homosexuality was not taken off the list and still was prevalent in the NT is seen in Paul's comments in Rom. 1:24-28:

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. ²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. ²⁸Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.

¹ https://www.olivetree.com/blog/old_testament_law_still_apply

² Romans 3:20

Paul describes here how far morals decayed, sexual activities included. People did not stop, although they knew God's decree, that people who participate in such activities deserve death as any sin, including homosexuality, deserves death. This aspect was not abolished in the NT.

In a second passage, Paul gets more specific by writing about this topic to a church. A community that was infested with immoral behavior was the one in Corinth. Paul launched a longer attempt to address this. K. E. Bailey in *Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes* (pp.153-226) sees this topic dealt with in 1Cor. 4:17-7:40. The heart of it is found in 1 Cor. 5:1-11:

1 Cor. 5:1: *It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.*

The existence of immorality suggests that they tolerated it. Otherwise they would have dealt with it. Paul instantly advises them to do so.

1 Cor. 5:2: *You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.*

1 Cor. 5:5: *I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*

What Paul is saying is that the Corinthians should not have fellowship with immoral people. He illustrates his point with the picture of leaven (1 Cor. 12:1).

1 Cor. 5:6b-8: *Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? ⁷Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. ⁸Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

Not to associate with sexually immoral people, is then repeated.

1Cor. 5:9-11: ⁹*I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; ¹⁰I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. ¹¹But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler -not even to eat with such a one.*

A third passage deserves attention. It is found in 1 Tim. 1:6-10. Paul warns against false teachers who teach the Law but do not understand it:

⁶*For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, ⁷wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. ⁸But 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,*

The righteous are also committing sinful deeds. If they turn from them and confess, they will be forgiven because of the shed blood of Christ ³. The unrighteous, however, still fall under the Law,

³ 1 John 1:9

where the consequence for not following the Law is (spiritual) death. Some may interject that nowhere in the NT do we read about the unrighteous (lawbreakers) being executed (physical death as in the OT). Nowhere in the NT is capital punishment connected with sin, except for Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 for their sin against the Holy Spirit. Both Paul and John also speak of the possibility of a sin unto death⁴.

The issues arising in the area of sexuality belong in my opinion to the group of moral laws. Although the Law is not binding for the believers in the NT⁵, the moral law serves as a basis for our moral behavior. Therefore, we should observe it. Having become righteous by faith frees us from the consequences of sin. This on the other hand does not give us the freedom to sin as we want and live a life according to our own moral standards.

God sees homosexuality in the OT as sin, Paul repeats this standpoint in the NT, his words are very direct. Why should we suddenly not see it as sin and tolerate it? We should reach out to homosexuals and bring them the Good News. Jesus came to earth as a manifestation of God's love to mankind, for all kinds of sinners. Once they are aware of their sin they should repent. Their sins are forgiven on the basis of faith in what Jesus did on the cross. We are therefore exhorted to show love to them and restore them.

Jesus was asked in Matthew 22:34–40: What is the greatest commandment? Jesus condensed the Ten Commandments into two groups of love: first to love the Lord (1-5) and secondly to love your neighbor (6-10).

Starting from this passage, some teachers conclude that love covers all (see 1Cor. 13:1-13). In Paul's exultation of the virtue of love many things are mentioned that love does and does not cover. I do not see that love alone tolerates sin. It can cover sin. Jesus' death was offered to us out of His love and covers all sins under the assumption that the person is aware of his sin and therefore confesses it. Faith is the critical ingredient.

The idea of a union between man and woman was the world mandate in Genesis, namely, to fill the earth. This is physically not possible for homosexuals. But they fill the earth with their philosophy. And that is not a God given mandate.

We see nowhere in the NT capital punishment connected with sin. Therefore it is difficult to understand what Paul had in mind in 1 Cor. 5:5. Jesus came to earth as a manifestation of God's love to mankind. This includes all kinds of sinners. Their sins are forgiven on the basis of faith in Him and a change of mindset. Sinners should be aware of their sins and therefore change. And we are therefore exhorted to show them love.

Klaus

In but not of the field.

⁴ 1 Corinthians 11:29-30; 1 John 5:16-17

⁵ Galatians 5:16-18