

***THE BIBLE AND SEX***  
***SELECTED SCRIPTURES***

Years ago I preached a series of sermons on marriage and family issues. Near the end of the series, I preached a sermon on a biblical perspective of sexuality from 1 Corinthians 7. And I talked pretty plainly about the topic. When we got home from church that afternoon, the sermon topic came up and our girls were pretty quiet about it. So I asked them a couple leading questions, and they stayed quiet. Finally, after more prodding, one of them said (rather loudly), “Dad! You can’t talk about that in church!”

In a similar way, sometime in my seminary years I realized that my father had been in seminary when the Supreme Court made the Roe v. Wade decision. And we were in Dallas at that time, where the case was initially filed. Since I was too young to remember specifics about church life from those days, I asked my dad, “What did the church say? Who was speaking against abortion and what did they say?” And my dad sadly said, “Virtually no one said anything; you didn’t talk about those kinds of things in church back then.”

Well, we may be somewhat uncomfortable to talk about sexuality and abortion and homosexuality, yet the Lord is not. He has spoken clearly about these issues and more. For instance, He not only wrote Song of Solomon, but He put it in the Bible right there where anyone can read it!

So as we find ourselves in the middle of the wrath of God section of Romans 1, I thought it would be helpful to pull back for two weeks to give some background perspective so that we can understand this chapter more fully and clearly. So this week I want to do a biblical overview of sexuality — what is God’s purpose in our sexuality and what is our purpose in using our sexuality? And then next week I want to overview what the Scriptures say about homosexuality. And then with that background, I want us to come back to Romans 1 to see how the wrath of God is manifested against idolaters and how that wrath relates to what God says about homosexuals there.

*A word to the unmarried* (the unmarried, and the unmarried again):

- ✓ This season in life is a gift of God’s grace to you so that you might have undistracted devotion and service to the Lord (1 Cor. 7:35). While marriage is good and a gift from the Lord, it is distracting (and God has designed it that way). It limits ministry opportunities because of the need to care for a spouse and children. If you are single, you do not have those restraints, so use them to serve.
- ✓ This is an opportunity to glorify God with your sexual purity. In 1 Cor. 6:20, Paul says, “For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” That applies to both married and single. The way you glorify God with your sexuality is by remaining pure and unstained by sin. There is much in this message that will help you do that.

*A word to all of us about the corruption of sexuality in our culture:*

- What we see in our world is nothing new. Early Christian thought about sexuality was greatly influenced by Greek thought — that the body was the prison of the soul, resulting in two divergent ideas — that what I do with my body doesn't matter (licentiousness), or that my body is to be punished and dealt with harshly (asceticism and legalism).
- That influence was seen in the Roman Empire where four kinds of marriages were common —
  - ✓ “Tent companionship” between a man and a woman slave — but only as long as owner wanted.
  - ✓ “Common law marriage” — recognized as married after 1 year of cohabitating.
  - ✓ “Purchased marriage” — a father would sell his daughter to a man.
  - ✓ “Traditional marriage” — the ceremony looked much like our wedding ceremonies, yet even here divorce was common (some were married 20+ times!).

*“The early church had members that had lived together, and were still living together, under all four marriage arrangements. It also had those who had multiple marriages and divorces. Not only that, but some believers had gotten the notion that being single and celibate was more spiritual than being married, and they disparaged marriage entirely. Perhaps someone was teaching that sex was ‘unspiritual’ and should be altogether forsaken.” [MacArthur, 1 Corinthians, p. 154.]*

- All of this produced a slogan that had apparently been quoted in the Corinthian letter to Paul — “it is good for a man not to touch a woman” (7:1). This was proposed even for those who were married. “If angels do not have sexual relationships (Lk. 20:35), then that’s good for us too” was the idea.
- Paul was writing to correct that faulty thinking — external pressures had left the church confused. The same kinds of things are occurring in the church today.
  - ✓ Some are abusing spiritual liberty and physical desires into a cornucopia of sexual indulgence.
  - ✓ Some withhold from God-given, God-approved marital love for a variety of reasons.
  - ✓ Both have distorted views of sexuality. The libertine needs to understand (and act on) the real path to sexual joy (6:18a). The legalist needs to understand (and act on) God’s gift of sexuality in marriage.
  - ✓ If this is the way it was in the early church, we should take encouragement that there is hope for us!
- So here is where we are going today:

***SEX IS A GIFT FROM GOD TO BE USED IN MARRIAGE ALONE TO REFLECT GOD’S GLORY.***

## **1. God’s PURPOSES in Our Gender and Sexuality**

- ✓ God created ALL mankind to reflect His image (Gen. 1:27a)
- ✓ God created us GENDER-specific to reflect His image (Gen. 1:27b)
- ✓ God created marriage as the SINGLE expression of our sexuality (Gen. 2:24-25; Mt. 19:5-6)
- ✓ God created marital sex for procreation and enjoyment (Gen. 2:24-25; Prov. 5:15-19)
- ✓ God created sexual parameters for our PROTECTION and His GLORY (Gen. 1:27; 1 Th. 4:3-5; Prov. 5-7)

## **2. Our PURPOSES in the Use of Our Sexuality**

- ✓ Our sexuality is a reflection of what we DESIRE (Lk. 6:45; Mt. 5:27-30)
- ✓ Our sexuality in marriage is a GIFT to give, not a RIGHT to take (1 Cor. 7:3-5)
- ✓ Our sexuality in marriage is a reflection of our union with CHRIST (Eph. 5:1-2, 32-33)

## 1. God's PURPOSES in Our Gender and Sexuality

- God created ALL mankind to reflect His image (Gen. 1:27a)

✓ A few things to notice about this verse:

- **God created.** That means exactly what it sounds like it means. God planned and designed and created all of mankind. Whatever man is, he is by the exact purpose and intention of God. There is purpose in every part of us; God has intentionally made us just as we are.
- The entire triune God (v. 26) is involved in the process of creation. There is agreement in the godhead about what man would be.
- Mankind is differentiated from the rest of creation. No other living being is created the way man is (cf. 2:7-25); there is no detail given about the rest of creation like the creation of man and there is no other living being that has sovereignty (*subdue* the earth) like man has (v. 28).
- When Moses used the term **man** in v. 27, it is a term that means, "mankind." That is, all mankind was made in the image and likeness of God.

✓ Now the question is, "what does Moses mean by **image and likeness**?"

- He is using the two words synonymously — **likeness** is used in case **image** isn't understood.
- There is something different about man from the rest of creation. While all creation declares the glory of God (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:20), nothing else in creation is said to have God's likeness. This is to say that man is distinctly different from animals. "Mankind has the highest possible spiritual, transcendent reference: likeness to God Himself." [Douglas Kelly]
- To have the **image of God** suggests at least three ideas:
  - ... *Mankind is personal* — he has personality. He thinks, reasons, he has a will and intent. God is the pattern for the personhood of man.
  - ... *Mankind is responsible* — man's responsibility to rule over creation (vv. 26, 28) reflects the sovereign nature of God who is over all things.
  - ... *Mankind is relational* — like the members of the Trinity, man is designed for relationship. We are designed for fellowship — both with each other and particularly with God. Our capacity to be relational is a reflection of the image of God. So we speak and listen and communicate and have friendships and empathize and sympathize and comfort and exhort and share life with one another because we are made in the image of God.
- To be made in the **image of God** also indicates what we *do* and how we function but also indicates that what we *are* reflects and demonstrates what God is. We "mirror and represent God" (Hoekema). Mankind is made to reflect who God is and how He functions. We might say, "We live for the glory of God." We are magnificently created, but we are secondary (Ps. 8:4-8). Our bodies and how we live are to manifest that God is primary.

- God created us GENDER-specific to reflect His image (Gen. 1:27b)

- ✓ God did not just make mankind — notice that He made them **male and female**.
- ✓ We know from verses 26, 28 that all mankind (both men and women) —
  - has dominion (**rule**) over creation
  - has responsibility to be fruitful (v. 28), which means our sexuality is to be used for procreation.
  - has superiority to the rest of creation — creation is for (to be used by) mankind; mankind is not for creation (to be used by creation) (v. 29-30).
- ✓ So if it is true that all mankind has these privileges, why the distinction about **male and female**?
  - It is a recognition of the separate sexes — that God intentionally and purposefully created mankind as sexual beings. Our gender and sexuality is not accidental. God has designed and planned us to be the way we are.
  - The sexuality of mankind fits under the evaluation of God as being **very good** (v. 31).

*“...the creation of mankind as both male and female is reflective of the rich relational life of the personal God, and thus that marital sexuality contributes to the fullness of what it means to be created in the image of God...by their own inter-personal relationship, [men and women] would experience some reflection of the interior relational life of the personal God Himself. This ever deepening knowledge of Who God is would enrich their life together, all the better equipping them to be God’s image, as well as to do His will on earth in their own generation.”*

*[Douglas Kelly, Creation and Change, 227-8.]*

- This means that gender is not a conception of the mind (or a mindset or idea or adaptable). Gender is set and established in creation; it is a fixed biological reality.
- We have said it this way in our constitution:

Gender is a spiritual/biological aspect of a person, established by God in a person’s creation, revealed most fundamentally in a person’s biological sex and rooted in the reality that God made both male and female in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:27)....

Gender is a static, objective, fixed spiritual and biological reality. A person’s gender remains permanently fixed in the fundamental doctrine of creation as an image-bearer made as either male or female, revealed in the person’s biological sex at birth. Gender is not subjective, fluid, user-selectable, or based upon the feelings or perceptions of the individual.

- God created marriage as the SINGLE expression of our sexuality (Gen. 2:24-25; Mt. 19:5-6)

- ✓ In Gen. 1:27 it is clear that we are sexual beings. In 2:24-25 it is clear how and where that sexuality is to be used. Our sexuality is to be used in the context of marriage. Alone.
- ✓ A man leaves his **father and mother** and he is **joined** to his wife and they are **one**.

- ✓ His primary relationship is no longer with his parental home but with his wife. But it's more than that; it is to sever a relationship with one and be enact a new loyalty with another.
  - The sense is that one covenantal commitment supersedes another. Marriage is not just a convenient arrangement; it is a covenant commitment. Cf. Prov. 2:17; Mal. 2:14.
  - "A covenant is not like a human contract that can be dissolved with little or no sanction. The covenant of marriage is a union which God Himself witnesses and ratifies." [Denny Burk]
- ✓ He is **joined** to her. The KJV says, "cleave," which the thesaurus says, "slice, cut, slash, smite, hew, chop." The word "join" (NASB) or "hold fast" (ESV) means to adhere to someone or something. It has the idea of loyalty and affection. The noun is used for "welding" together. Cf. **Ruth 2:23**.
- ✓ And they are **one**. This is God's commentary on the marriage (cf. also Mt. 19:5-6). And it is also a fact. They may not always feel like they are one, but they *are* one.
  - That means more than they are sexually one (they are companions and they are permanently joined together, which is how Jesus particularly applied it in Mt. 19). But it *does* also mean that they are sexually united (which is how Paul understood it, 1 Cor. 6:16). "...sexual intercourse cannot be understood merely as a momentary act that satisfies a transient natural urge. Instead, it creates a mysterious but real and enduring union between man and woman." [Hays, quoted by Burk, *What is the Meaning of Sex?* 95.]
  - Since they are one, their sexual intimacy is not something to be shared with another (1 Cor. 6:15). To share one's body with someone else is **strange** (foreign) (Prov. 5:20; 6:25; 7:5).
- ✓ The oneness of the marriage relationship is that there is one and only one place for us to use our sexuality — in the covenant of the marriage.

• God created marital sex for procreation AND enjoyment (Gen. 2:24-25; Prov. 5:15-19)

- ✓ Part of our sexuality is for the purpose of procreation — allowing for further generations to exist and inhabit the earth (1:28; 9:1-2; Ps. 127:3-5). Is that all it is?
- ✓ Our sexuality is for more than procreation (2:25) — it is also for our enjoyment and pleasure. When Moses says, **they were not ashamed** it means that there was no dishonor or shame or guilt attached to their nakedness. And that is an understated way of saying that their nakedness (and sexuality) was a delight to them.
- ✓ When my father was teaching me about the facts of life one of the things he said was, "It's a little bit of Heaven on earth." He was exactly right. There's no shame; there is great joy.
- ✓ And the writer of Proverbs makes that even clearer (Prov. 5:15-19).
- ✓ The context makes it clear that this is restricted to marriage and not illicit sexual relation (5:17).
  - **Rejoice** (v. 18) is a command — be happy and find joy in your wife. Cultivate happiness with her (you are always cultivating one of two things, either satisfaction or dissatisfaction). Be purposeful to be happy with her (sexually and otherwise). As one mentor said, "You won't be attracted by a VW if you have a Corvette."
  - **Satisfy** (v. 19) has the idea of thirst being quenched — being completely satisfied.

- **Exhilarated** (v. 19) means literally, “intoxicated” — filled and overwhelmed with satisfaction.

*“The gigantic secret about the joy of sex is this: sex is good because the God who created sex is good and God is glorified greatly when we receive His gift with thanksgiving and enjoy it the way He meant for it to be enjoyed.”*

*[Ben Patterson, “The Goodness of Sex and the Glory of God.”]*

- ✓ God is not “scandalized” when married couples are physically intimate. He created them for that and created the act so that they would find enjoyment in it.

- **God created sexual parameters for our PROTECTION and His GLORY (Gen. 1:27; 1 Th. 4:3-5; Prov. 5-7)**

- ✓ It hasn’t been explicit in the passages we’ve seen so far, but there are restrictions for our sexuality. Genesis 2 makes clear it is only to be practiced in the context of a heterosexual marriage. Other passages state the kinds of sex that are illegitimate:
  - Adultery (extra-marital sexual relations; Lev. 20:10, Heb. 13:4; Prov. 6:30-35)
  - Immorality or fornication (pre-marital sexual relations; 1 Cor. 6:15; Deut. 22:21; 23:17)
  - Homosexuality (Gen. 19:1-29, Rom. 1:24-32)
  - Incest (Lev. 18:6-17, 20:14)
  - Bestiality (Ex. 22:19, Lev. 18:23)
  - Mental immorality (voyeurism, pornography, masturbation) (**Matt. 5:28**; 1 Cor. 6:9; Phil. 2:3)
  - Exhibitionism (Gen. 9:22)
  - Sexual child abuse (Deut. 22:24)
  - Rape (Deut. 22:24, Judges 19:24; 20:3-4, 12)
  - Prostitution (Lev. 19:29; 20:5-6; 1 Cor. 6:9)
  - Transvestitism and transgenderism (Deut. 22:5)
- ✓ God is not limiting us because He’s a cosmic “kill-joy,” but to protect us, as Prov. 5 teaches:
  - Ignoring God’s standard is foolishness (v. 1)
  - Indulging in sexual sin will destroy our reputations (v. 2)
  - Indulging the foreigner (**adulteress**) will produce bitterness, heartache, and not joy (vv. 3-4)
  - Indulging in sexual sin is deadly (vv. 5-6); cf. also **7:21-27**.
  - Indulging in sexual sin will drain life from our lives (vv. 7-10)
  - Indulging in sexual sin will only produce regret (vv. 11-14).
- ✓ Even more importantly, when we adhere to God’s standards, we reveal His image (more below); it is the means of our sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3-5). It glorifies and honors God and gives us joy.

## 2. Our PURPOSES in the Use of Our Sexuality

- Our sexuality is a reflection of what we DESIRE (Lk. 6:45; Mt. 5:27-30)

- ✓ What we do with our bodies sexually reflects what we want in our hearts (Lk. 6:45).
  - If we indulge sexual sins, it is a reflection of the spiritual condition of our hearts.
  - If we fight against and resist and battle and hate (even when we sometimes lose the battle), that also demonstrates the fruit of righteousness.
- ✓ That is why Jesus said that it is sin to lust after a woman — the physical act hasn't been committed but the mental act has (Mt. 5). And that is enough to condemn us. Denny Burk explained this well:
  - How do I know the difference between a sinful sexual desire and a morally harmless sexual desire? Some will say it is the *intensity* of the desire — it's only a high level of desire that Jesus is talking about. But is that what Jesus is talking about? Is it ok to desire someone else's spouse at a low level of desire? No! Zero amount of desire is ok. It's not the intensity that is the issue.
  - What about the *chosenness* of it — is it only sin if someone chooses to feel the desire? Jesus is reinforcing what the OT already teaches — ***you shall not covet...your neighbor's wife*** (the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, Ex. 20:17). It's not just chosen desire that is prohibited; it's *any* desire that is prohibited — chosen or unchosen.
  - The issue for Jesus is the *object* of the desire. What determines whether a desire is good or not is what we desire. If we desire something sinful, the desire itself is sinful. If we desire something good, the desire itself is good.
  - Jesus is giving us a standard about all sexual desires, not just adulterous desire. If you desire sex outside of the marriage covenant, that desire is sinful. Anything that is not aimed at the covenant of marriage is sinful. And that means that we are probably more sinful than we think we are. This is standard for homosexuals and heterosexuals alike. This principle is for all of our desires.
- ✓ And if our sexuality and our purity flows out of our desires, then the place to start fighting against ungodly sexuality is at the level of the mind. We begin by renewing our mind, replacing ungodly, covetous, greedy desires with godly desires. (And a good place to begin is with gratitude, as Paul exhorts the Ephesians to do in their fight against sexual sin, Eph. 5:3-4.)

- Our sexuality in marriage is a GIFT to give, not a RIGHT to take (1 Cor. 7:3-5)

- ✓ Paul is responding to the question the Corinthians asked (v. 1).
- ✓ The word ***fulfill*** is a command to “give fully, completely, without reluctance, hesitation, or inhibition.”
- ✓ The word ***duty*** refers to a duty “with the idea of doing good to the other person.” Joy is implied.
- ✓ The command is the same for both husbands and wives.
- ✓ These principles mean that our right to sexuality is only our right to give it to our spouse, not to take it from her or anyone else. (And when we both see it as a gift to give, there will be joy.)

- ✓ When we cultivate sexual desires only for our spouse in the marital union, then we will be pleasing to the Lord and we can anticipate joy. When we cultivate ungodly, worldly desires, the end will only be disappointment, bitterness, resentment, and condemnation (wrath) from God.
- ✓ Sexual licentiousness is enslavement, not freedom. Giving ourselves only to our spouses is freedom and joy, not bondage. This is the new thought that we need to begin to think.

• **Our sexuality in marriage is a reflection of our union with CHRIST (Eph. 5:1-2, 32-33)**

- ✓ In 5:1, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be imitators of God by loving each other (v. 2). And the first place that he applies that is to their sexuality (vv. 3-4). Our sexual lives reflect the kind of fellowship and imitation we have of God and Christ.
- ✓ Later in the chapter Paul talks about the imitation of Christ in relation to being filled by the Spirit in our marriages (vv. 22-33). And Paul also quotes Gen. 2:24; notice how he applies it (v. 32): ***This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.***
  - Paul means that the union of Christ to the church is in the meaning of Gen. 2:24 — Paul means that *my marriage* is a picture of the marriage of Christ and the church! Our marriage is a type of the marriage between Christ and the church. The marriage of Christ and the church is the model for what our marriage should and can be — and that is part of what was intended in Gen. 2:24.
  - Here is the point Paul is making: Your marriage is about more than your marriage; it is about *Christ's* marriage. So how we treat our spouses and the way we practice our sexuality reveals what we think about Christ's marriage to the church. Our marriage is a living testimony to the work of Christ in redeeming and loving His people so that He and His redeemed bride become one entity. It's not just about sex; it's about the glory of God (which is where we began this message). God has made us sexual beings to enable us to reflect the intimacy, closeness, and fellowship that we can experience with God Himself and that the Triune God experiences.

**CONCLUSION:** One writer has noted: "Between the third and tenth centuries, church authorities issued edicts forbidding sex on Saturdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and also during the forty-day fast periods before Easter, Christmas, and [Pentecost], all for religious reasons. They kept adding feast days and the days of the apostles to the proscription, as well as the days of female impurity, until it reached the point that, as historian John Boswell has estimated, only forty-four days a year remained for marital sex. Human nature being what it is, the church's proscriptions were enthusiastically ignored." [Yancey, *Finding God in Unexpected Places*, 13-14.]

We might giggle at that account, but underlying those ecclesiastical edicts is the supposition that sex is inherently bad. It is not. It is a gift from God — but it is only to be used in marital union, so God is glorified.

**BENEDICTION:** Romans 16:25-27