

Sin, Homosexuality, and personhood

Christian teaching on Homosexuality.

A Christian has only one identity.

Sin means to fall short of the mark. This mark would include having no desire for anything that is unclean, unlawful, or in any way not worthy of who God is. In our fallen world, desires that are natural and common are not thought of as being sin. This is a lie. Anything (other than of course, human needs such as sleep, eating, drinking, etc.) that is not like God is sin, because we are called to become like Him, and share in His energies, because "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God". Things that seem normal to many, such as pride, being very opinionated, being irritable, etc., are not like God and are sin. Common to our anti-dogmatic and self-absorbed day is the opinion that many kinds of sexual sin are not sin. This is a very dangerous lie. All lust, and unlawful sexual desire, whether it is acted on or not, is sin.

Christianity is growth towards perfection - of knowledge, appetite and will. If any of these are short of the mark, it is sin. If we are humble and acknowledge that we fall short of the mark in many ways, and desire to change, we will be saved.

Certainly, acting upon a sinful inclination, whether by thought or action, is much worse for the soul than having the inclination, which is also sin.

We get better in stages. For example, a person may be prone to anger. When he becomes angry, he may curse, say unkind things, have hateful thoughts and be violent. If he can control any of these things, he will make progress. He may sometimes be able to bite his tongue or not curse. He may be able to cut off hateful thoughts. He may make amends for his outbursts, ask forgiveness, fast, and pray. Eventually, after great labor and humility, he will no longer have angry thoughts. This (thoughts, inclinations, attractions to sin) is the last thing to be cured in the soul.

This same process occurs in conquering sexual impurity. At the very least, a person must acknowledge that his thoughts and conduct resulting from those thoughts is not God pleasing, and is destructive to his soul. He must struggle against the thoughts and arrange his life to avoid occasions of sin, by striving not to do some things, and to do other things.

For instance, someone addicted to pornography and the unclean thoughts that always accompany it and unclean actions that usually result from the consumption of it should be sure to not possess any, and not join any pornography websites. He should read the prayers for purity when he falls into sin, and confess his sin as close as when it happens as possible. If the sin is associated with alcohol, he should moderate his drinking, especially when alone. He should meditate upon the scriptures and add prayers that address his addiction (or pray the Jesus prayer regularly with this addiction in mind). A person with same sex attraction should not go to gay bars. All of the other "positive" actions just mentioned apply to the person with

SSA (same sex attraction). For any sin, if we really want to stop the sin, we will learn what our triggers are - the Holy Spirit will reveal them.

When there are sinful thoughts and actions which came from the thoughts, there must be active repentance. Confession is important, and saying the prayers for purity (a book that I have handed out to many). If a person is not fasting, confessing, attending services, praying at home regularly, and reading the Scriptures, they are not being serious about their addiction to sin, and their tears are crocodile tears.

A serious problem in our society is that sexual sin is being referred to as orientation and completely natural and an expected part of full and normal human life. This is a lie. It is replacing an equally pernicious lie - that we either will not be forgiven of our sins or cannot change. There are many other lies in our society regarding sexual sin. Much of these lies should remind us of children taunting in a playground - they have no substance but are designed to embarrass and make us feel that something is wrong with us. Therefore, epithets like "homophobe", "right wing", "hater" (or "hate speech"), "unscientific" and "ignorant", "fundamentalist", etc. get thrown around. There is also a concerted effort to reinterpret Scripture and 2000 years of Christian understanding, faith and practice.

Do not listen to what the world says about sin. They will never get it right and will always caricature the true Christian position - that all sin is to fall short of the mark, and injures the soul, and because God loves us, He has given us a way to eradicate all sin through His son.

We can change. This is the Gospel message. Since the last thing to be healed in the soul is our thoughts, even unclean sexual orientations or any unclean sexual thoughts can be changed, after much labor and humility.

One should not expect the total healing of thoughts to be a quick or easy thing, or even something that is completed in our earthly life.

Therefore, for many God-fearing homosexuals, their orientation will never be completely expunged, but they will lead God pleasing lives and be saved, and have perfection in the next life. As an aside, the demise of Exodus International (an organization that believed that people with SSA could change their sexual orientation) was because they did not understand this process, since their doctrinal underpinnings were not in the true church of Christ. It is possible to eradicate all sin - and the last part of sin to eradicate is orientation - orientation to anger, selfishness, pride, or SSA. The process is long, and takes great humility and effort. It cannot be "boiler plated" into a system.

We must strive to fight sin, and beg God to help us, and respond the groanings of the Holy Spirit within us. Over time, we will begin to have some control of the sin, and as our control increases, we will be able to avoid acting on our sinful impulses, and gradually, the desire to sin will fade, and in some cases, disappear. Some of us, with some of our sins, will

reach this perfect state in our mortal lives, but most of us will struggle against most sins till our last breath. It is in this context that we can say that any orientation to sin can be "cured".

Many misunderstand temptation. Christ was tempted - He was presented with things He could possibly do or think that would be sinful, but since He had no inclination towards these things (His appetites, knowledge and will were in perfect harmony), He freely chose not to do them. We may choose to not do something that we know is wrong, or choose to do right with difficulty, but we must often expend great effort because the three attributes of our soul are not in harmony. This could often be the case for a person who has the sexual temptation, but because he knows that indulging this temptation is a sin, he struggles against it, sometimes with great effort. Perhaps sometimes he is not successful, but he is always struggling.

Therefore, homosexual inclination, unlawful heterosexual desire and the inclination to be irritable, proud, lazy, dishonest, etc. - is sin. If we battle against these sins, we will be perfected, our sins will be remitted - not just forgiven, but banished from our personhood. Acting upon homosexual desires is destructive to the soul. Acting upon any type of impure sexual desires is destructive to the soul. Heterosexuals must also fight against sin. Cohabitation without marriage, "hooking up", "serial monogamy", "living together because we cannot afford separate residences" (with carnal knowledge as part of the lifestyle) – all these things are sins against the body and soul, not matter what genders the partners have. All sin is destructive to the soul. We must never make excuses for sin, but must fight against it.

It is not technically accurate to say homosexual orientation is not sin, no matter what its genesis is, or whether or not it is innate. This is immaterial. We have many sinful inclinations that are innate, and we will triumph over these if we call sin *sin* and struggle. Clearly, a person who struggles against his sin with faith will be saved.

It is also not technically accurate to link our sinful inclinations to our personhood. Christ came to heal our personhood, so that we would be as He is, with our soul's three attributes (knowledge, appetite and will) in perfect agreement with one another. It is common for homosexuals to link their sinful inclinations to their personhood, and this is understandable, since many or most have been degraded by others because of their orientation, but this is not accurate theologically.

We are fully persons when we become like Christ - this is our goal. Until that blessed day, we should consider all of our sinful passions, whether they are innate or learned, to be things that obscure our true personhood.

All a person need do to be saved is desire to change and act upon that desire with faith. God will help him, although there may be many falls. I tell my parish this very often: you must repent, don't be worried about how competent you are in changing, God will help in that. You must try, and God will help you. If we know our purpose in life, we will not define it by our actions, but by who we are and who we are becoming. We will attempt, with our weak wills, to follow the way of life, and desire the pure knowledge of God and peace in our hearts, and God

will help us. We will desire to and make efforts to cast off from our lives any passions that lead away from God.

The mortality of sin rests not in its committal but in commitment to it. It takes courage to be a Christian. It takes honesty to be a Christian. It takes humility to be a Christian. It takes effort to be a Christian. The true Christian knows his purpose; it is perfection and union with God. He knows and orders his life, conduct, priorities according to: "To the pure all things are pure" and "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Any person who considers themselves to be pure is living a fool's errand. The world does not like to criticize itself, but a Christian, who is humble, and honest, and seeks after God, sees his faults daily, and even moment by moment.

On the most important level (that we must fight against impurity and sin), it is unimportant why this orientation arises - whether it is innate or comes about because of life experiences. Acting upon homosexual desires is destructive to the soul. Acting upon any type of impure sexual desires is destructive to the soul. Heterosexuals must also fight against sin. All sin is destructive to the soul. We must never make excuses for sin, but must fight against it.

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If we know our purpose in life, we will not define it by our actions, thoughts, or "orientations", but by who we are and who we are becoming. We will attempt, with our weak wills, to follow the "way of life", and desire the pure knowledge of God and peace in our hearts, and God will help us. We will desire to and make efforts to cast off from our lives any passions that lead away from God.

If anything, I have said "hits close to home", you have a choice. You always have a choice (until bad choices make it impossible to choose – that is another matter, and a subject of another essay). It does not matter if you have same sex desires, or desire for the opposite sex, married or unmarried, or whatever sexual desire the world touts as normal and natural. Sexual purity is absolutely essential for all people. Sexual purity encompasses our whole being – the things we think, the things we value, our priorities, our desire for pleasure, the things we say, watch and listen to, and our sexual conduct in the bedroom. Some of what I said you may reject out of hand, but I pray that you give it some thought. None of God's commands are arbitrary, or even "fundamentalist". All His commandments reflect who He is, and what we must become.

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