

## CONCERNING GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

There is much talk in modern society concerning gender identity and sexual orientation. If we are going to represent the Lord as luminaries shining in a dark world (Phil. 2:15), it is important that we have a biblical understanding of God's heart and His ways concerning these subjects. It is easy to impose our own biases and predispositions on the subject, refashioning God according to our own image, rather than vice versa. If we are overly sympathetic, we may compromise God's righteousness and His testimony (Psa. 89:14; cf. Rom. 1:32). If we are rigidly judgmental, we may preclude some from receiving the Lord's marvelous salvation (Matt. 23:13). On the one hand, God is absolutely and uncompromisingly righteous; on the other hand, He is compassionate and tenderhearted. To uphold the Lord's testimony in these matters, we first need to see the biblical standard according to God's creation and His ordination for humanity. We can then look at what our attitude and standing should be in the midst of today's darkness and confusion.

### Male and Female in God's Creation

The Bible is consistent. It recognizes no distinction between the sex and gender of a person. God created humanity with only two genders—male and female. The very first mention of man says unequivocally, "And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen. 1:27). Genesis 5:2a confirms this, saying, "Male and female He created them." In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus affirmed this fact, saying, "And He answered and said, Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4; cf. Mark 10:6). Thus, the testimony of Scripture in both the Old and New Testaments is that God created man with only two genders—male and female. There is no third gender, no hybrid genders, no gender spectrum, and no changing of one's birth gender. Everything else, including any form of gender confusion, is a product of the fall of man, even in the small number of cases of biological ambiguity (cf. Matt. 19:12).

### Marriage and Sex According to God's Ordination

Moreover, the Bible only recognizes one man joined to one woman as marriage. Every time marriage according to God's ordination is mentioned, it is between a man and a woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-5; Mark 10:6-7; 1 Cor. 7:2). The Bible explicitly refers to homosexual activity as "an abomination" (Lev. 18:22; 20:13a). In Paul's account of man being under God's condemnation, he refers to such activity as "contrary to nature" (Rom. 1:26-27). The Bible is also clear that fornication, that is, any sexual activity—homosexual or heterosexual—outside of marriage is contrary to God's righteousness and, therefore, is sin and causes the participant to come under God's righteous judgment (Exo. 20:14; Heb. 13:4; 1 Tim. 1:8-10). Believers are charged to "abstain from fornication" (1 Thes. 4:3; cf. 1 Pet. 2:11). Any form of fornication is a work of the flesh and is antithetical to the sanctifying work of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19; 1 Cor. 6:9, 11; 1 Thes. 4:3; 2 Thes. 2:13).

### What Our Attitude Should Be

Two portions of the New Testament are particularly significant in showing what our attitude should be. First Corinthians 6:9-11 says:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be led astray; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor effeminate nor homosexuals nor thieves nor the covetous, not drunkards, not revilers, not the rapacious will inherit the kingdom of God. And these things 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.

There are four key points here. First, the phrase "such were some of you" indicates that the gospel reaches those who are in a fallen state, including fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, the effeminate, and homosexuals. This means that we should not discriminate regarding to whom we present the good news of Jesus Christ. Second, the same words—"such were"—indicate that though this was their past condition, it was not their present condition or practice. Third, these verses show the means by which this change occurred—"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." Fourth, verse 9 shows that those who continue in such practices "will not inherit the kingdom of God." In this verse, as well as

Ephesians 5:5, to inherit the kingdom of God is something in addition to a believer's initial salvation. It points to the [reward of participating as an overcomer in the millennial kingdom](#) that the Lord will establish at His second coming.

The second passage is 1 Corinthians 5:11: "But now I have written to you not to mingle with anyone who is called a brother, if he is a fornicator or a covetous man or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or a rapacious man, with such a one not even to eat." Here those believers who continue in such practices lose the fellowship of the church. This is seen in this chapter in the case of a brother living in gross immorality, which elicited the Apostle Paul's charge to "remove the evil man from among yourselves" (v. 13b).

The church is the kingdom of God on the earth today (compare Matt. 16: 18 and 19; 1 Cor. 4:17 and 20; Rom. 14:17). Thus, the church must come fully under the ruling of God in Christ, which includes being governed by God's ordination, not man's opinion, as the standard of conduct. The church testifies of the proper order under God's administration. The church takes Christ as her Head (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18) and takes the lead in all of God's creation to be headed up in Him (Eph. 1:10; cf. 4:15). For that reason, the church cannot allow those who continue to rebel against God's ordination to remain in her fellowship. Otherwise, the church will lose its function and testimony. Just as participation in the millennial kingdom is conditional, so participation in the church's fellowship is likewise conditional.

It is significant that in speaking of the forfeiture of the church's fellowship and of the kingdom reward, the emphasis is on the person and not on the act. In other words, it is not a matter of a single lapse but of an ongoing practice such that the sinful behavior becomes characteristic of what that person is. As Brother Lee explained regarding 1 Corinthians 6:11:

Paul does not simply deal with a certain sin; he deals with the person who lives in that kind of sin. There is an important distinction here. For example, to commit fornication is different from being a fornicator, one who lives in that sin and remains in it. A fornicator is not merely one who commits fornication as David did in the Old Testament; he is a person who lives in that sin. That sin becomes his living. Thus, such a person becomes a fornicator. (*Life-study of 1 Corinthians*, 325)

To accommodate their approval of immorality, some attempt to circumvent the Bible's full revelation of the character of God by refashioning Him according to their own tastes, speaking of God being only a loving God full of compassion and tenderheartedness. This is surely an aspect of God's nature, but He is also absolutely holy and righteous (Rev. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 15:3). Those who remake God after the likeness of fallen man according to their own preferences are actually committing idolatry (Rom. 1:21-23). According to Romans 2:4, the kindness, forbearance, and long-suffering of God all aim to lead sinners to repentance (see also 2 Pet. 3:9, 15). To invoke such divine attributes to imply that God approves immoral activities is deceitful. To the contrary, genuine repentance among those who have come to know the love of God includes forsaking the immoral practices described in Romans 1 (cf. 2 Cor. 12:21).

One further word is needed. The churches, as shining golden lampstands, bear witness to Christ and His salvation in the midst of this perverse age (Rev. 1:12, 20; Phil. 2:15). No matter what our personal feelings may be, there is no ground in the Scripture for churches to become involved in social movements promoting "biblical mores." In this matter the churches should follow the pattern of the Lord Jesus and of the apostle Paul. Even though sexual perversions were not uncommon in the Roman Empire, neither the Lord nor the apostles ever initiated or participated in social campaigns against those perversions lest the significance of the gospel and of the Lord's salvation be obscured.

Our God is a merciful and compassionate God. He "desires all men to be saved and to come to the full knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Thus, Jesus declared that "every one who believes into Him would not perish, but would have eternal life" (John 3:16). However, God is also a God of purpose (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:11). His salvation is to deliver us out of the authority of darkness and transfer us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13). His mercy reached us with the gospel in our pitiful state as fallen sinners in rebellion against God's authority. Now He is saving us to the uttermost in and by His indestructible life (Rom. 5:10; Heb. 7:25) to fully sanctify us to be "holy and without blemish" as His bride (1 Thes. 5:23; Eph. 5:27; cf. 1:4). We must not compromise such a high and glorious calling to accommodate the fashion of this age (Eph. 4:1; Rom. 12:2; Titus 2:12). May the Lord find us faithful to keep His word (Rev. 3:8, 10).