

4 More Sins That Are Also OK If You Ignore the Bible on Homosexuality

In my article earlier this month titled “4 Sins That Are Also Okay If You Ignore Leviticus on Homosexuality,” I described the “Leviticus game” tactic used by individuals such as Matthew Vines. Pick the most absurd-sounding commandments in the Mosaic Law (to our ears, that is) and use them to undermine Leviticus 18:22’s clear prohibition of homosexuality. Works like a charm, right?

One of the problems with this argument is if you look at Leviticus 18, you will notice that it also prohibits other sins including incest, bestiality, adultery and child sacrifice. Of course, Leviticus is not exactly an instruction manual on Christian life under the New Covenant, but it is clear that this portion of the book is teaching universal moral principles—reflecting the heart of a holy God.

What I neglected to mention in my earlier article is that there is another game at play among the common “gay Christian” arguments.

For those who think Leviticus has nothing to say to modern society, Romans 1 is a bit of a problem passage, because it is post-Jesus. Paul traces human sin from its birth to full maturity, explaining why God’s wrath is against all humanity—thus, the way of forgiveness is faith in Christ’s righteous sacrifice for us, not morally fixing ourselves up so God will like us (see Romans 1:16-17).

Understood in its context, Romans 1 is abundantly clear: homosexuality is one of several sins that necessitated Christ’s death to purchase righteousness for you and me.

But the “gay Christian” approach to Romans 1 is to say that it speaks of “excess.” As Vines claimed in a recent debate:

[Paul] is talking about people who become so inflamed with their lusts and passions, and go off—they were having sex with people of the opposite sex, now they’re even having sex with people of the same sex. It’s a sign of their excess, their wantonness.

So, Paul’s point is: all things in moderation? With all respect for the intelligent person Vines is, there are several problems with the argument—one being, namely, that his interpretation seems to tacitly condemn bisexuality (which I assume it was not his intention to do).

Using *consistency* as the measure of good biblical theology, pardon me as I engage in a bit more necessary satire—a round of the “Romans game,” if you will—and see: are the other sins listed in Romans 1 also okay “in moderation”?

1. Lying

Just as verse 20 describes the sinful passion that manifests itself in homosexual behavior, verse 29 describes sinful passion manifesting as “deceit.”

Vines is partially right: there is *an* excess being described here. But it is not “excessive” homosexual lust, it’s excessive *sinful desire* (of which *any* amount is too much). And the overflow of sinful *desire* is always sinful *actions*, not “excess” in general.

That same sinful passion from the heart, which every human being shares, pops up in a variety of different forms. But deceit is not acceptable in even the smallest amount.

Have you ever lied? Then you are by definition a liar. That is why Christ had to die for you.

The passage continues....

2. Murder

"They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness," Paul writes in verse 29, using the same "they" as he did in the verses on homosexuality, describing all of humanity at varying levels.

Not all people are murderers, nor is everyone homosexual (obviously). But Paul's point is that both sins stem from the same root for sinfulness inside every person's heart. As proof, 1 John 3:15 says, "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." And in regard to lust—including heterosexual lust—Jesus himself said, "I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

So if you have ever hated someone or glanced at a woman walking by, you are a murderer and adulterer in your heart. That is, again, why Christ died in your place.

No one is without sin in their hearts. We all express that sin in different ways, but the root is the same. That is why, through the death and resurrection of Christ for our sakes, God promises, "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26).

3. Gossip

I will admit, this one steps on a lot of toes (including my own, at times). But Paul, referring to the same "they" (all of sinful humanity), again writes in verses 29-30: "They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless."

And as much as it goes against this culture's grain to say it, not even gossip is acceptable to Christ, our judge, in moderation. Only his blood can cover your guilt and free you from the punishment you deserve.

But at the root of all these sins, the underlying culprit is...

4. Idolatry

Unlike Leviticus 18, Romans 1 is far more than a list of dos and don'ts. It makes an incredible statement: since all of God's "invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made," then every human being who has ever lived—even the pygmy who has never heard of Jesus Christ—is "without excuse" (v. 20).

So picture this: God makes a world where all of nature—stars, forests, sunsets and the human conscience—screams at the top of its lungs: "*There is a God!*" So for man to disobey (remember Adam and Eve?), he has to start by doing one thing: suppressing that knowledge.

That's why verse 21 says, "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened."

And once man suppressed the fact of God *speaking through* his creation, only one "god" remains for man to worship instead: creation *itself*. Verse 23 outlines it. Man "exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things." Or, in 21st century terms, cars, sex, money, power, entertainment, popularity and career.

From the beginning, man has been forgetting God and loves the blessing more than the benefactor. He worships the creation instead of the Creator (see v. 25).

Idolatry.

God's response to us? *Have it your way.*

God allowed people to be controlled by their own sinful desires once they stop worshipping him and acknowledging him. The example Paul uses here is homosexuality: "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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 themselves the due penalty for their error" (v. 26-27).

Urgent: Heart Transplant Needed

This is not some convoluted philosophical argument from the first century. The pattern still happens today: man forgets God, God gives him over to sin.

Earlier this week, I was watching a World Cup game with a friend of mine who is Hindu by birth. He made a comment about people who "worship" sports—screaming their heads off, painting their faces up, etc. "It's true; everyone worships something," I replied.

Then, the Holy Spirit stirred me to follow up: "What do *you* worship in your life?" I asked. He paused and began to choke up. His "god," he admitted instantly, is his mother. He began to share how his mother died of a brain hemorrhage after his family's gods failed to heal her of her health difficulties. That day, my friend lost faith in his Hindu deities—as well as in the true God of the Bible—and made his mother his idol, literally. He now prays to her each day and is absolutely convinced that she hears him and answers him.

This example may sound silly, but it represents what we *all* do without God. We take God off the throne in our hearts and put something far lesser there instead. God judges us, in

response, by letting us be ruled by that lesser thing we love so much—no matter how ridiculous it is.

It boggles my mind that my friend doesn't realize: *his "god," his mother, could not ever heal herself on earth—how could she be worthy of worship?* Yet at the same time, the rest of us have idols that are ever dumber—material possessions, food, body image and more. Paul's point is that we *all* trade God for something stupid in comparison.

This chapter teaches us that the carnal, fleshly desire for sex outside of heterosexual marriage is another one of those idols, a form of creation-worship. Unlike my friend's mother-idol, the idol of homosexuality is *enormously* popular among those who are *not* engaged in it themselves. But Paul has a warning for those who endorse the sins listed in Romans 1: "Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them"! And death here is not some Old Testament stoning; it is the fact that we all die (because we are all imperfect sinners, mortal by nature) and then have to face "spiritual death": God's judgment in Hell.

We have all forgotten God. We have all worshipped lesser things with our time and money. And we have all been given over to sinful desires that manifest outwardly in various ways—some of which are in vogue, others not.

John Calvin referred to the human heart as an idol-making factory. And it is.

That is why the message of Christ is not about being a "good person." Being a good person is impossible without a heart transplant—receiving heart loved by God and is actually capable of loving God in return.

By dying to take our punishment, making us "dead" to sin, and rising from the dead to make us alive to truly know God, Jesus *gave us* that heart. His heart.

His blood will atone for every wrong thing you have ever done—from gossiping to sexual sin—and his Spirit placed inside you tears out the root of sinful desire, replacing it with a desire for God... of which no excess is ever enough.

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