

EPHESIANS: THE CHURCH FROM START TO FINISH
"Part X: Ordering Our Lives In God's TRUE Selfless Love"
(Ephesians 5:1-14)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Bob Davies (May, '94 Moody Monthly, p. 19) stated that a growing number of denominations challenge the Bible's view that sexual intimacy is only for a married male and female couple. Note the following observations that support his claim:

- (1) If one turns to any television talk show on relations, you will see the host eventually condone the view that **any** two people may become sexually intimate providing they "care" for each other!
- (2) In a letter to the editor in the Rep.-Am., this **alleged Biblical sanction** of homosexuality appeared: 'Since Jesus said that we should love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 19:19b), then we must accept two men expressing their love by becoming physically intimate.'
- (3) Bob Davies (Ibid., MM) reports that some scholars explain away Leviticus 18:22 which reads: "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." The feeling goes that since "Christians are no longer under the law" they may **disobey** this taboo!
- (4) Others have concluded that the Bible condemns the **acts** of homosexual or lesbian relations, but not the **orientations**, Ibid., Davies.
- (5) Peter J. Gomes, Harvard Divinity School's Plummer Professor of Christian Morals, is an openly Gay minister who has written a book defending homosexuality for Christians. To top it off, the Archbishop of Canterbury calls this book by Gomes "the best contemporary book on the Bible . . ." (Rep.-American, 1/4/97)
- (6) As Davies reports, some say scientific findings support a genetic cause for sexual orientation, making it a **morally neutral** issue!
- (7) After writing the points above, I heard Peter Jennings on the ABC Evening News state that a heated conflict raged over a Tuesday USA Today ad paid for by 15 pro-family Christian groups. The ad urged gays to call and get help in changing their sexual orientation!
- (8) Steve Smith of Denver responded in a letter to the editor in the Wednesday USA Today issue, relating that he had "committed my life to God" to turn heterosexual but was unsuccessful. He claimed that many other gays he knows are in his same boat so that programs to change such orientation are "spiritually and psychologically **abusive**"!

Well, does God want us to relax the old Puritan views that only male husbands and their female wives can be intimate?

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Since even JESUS tells us to love one's neighbor as himself, why should any two people who LOVE each other NOT be allowed to be physically intimate whether or not they are spouses or of the same gender?! How can somebody call such LOVE a 'SIN'?!"

- I. **The Apostle Paul commanded Christians to order their lives in love as followers of God who are His dear children, Eph. 5:1-2a.**
- II. **However, Paul revealed that this KIND of "love" CONTRASTED with the WORLD'S view and practice of "love", Eph. 5:2b-5:**
 - A. **Positively**, the Christian is to love with the **unselfishness** of Jesus Who gave Himself to die for our sin, Eph. 5:2b; 1 Cor. 15:3.
 - B. **Negatively**, the Christian is to **avoid selfishness** expressed in the world's **false** expressions of a **false "love"** as follows (Eph. 5:3-5):
 1. Christians are to **avoid** all sexual sins condemned in the Bible:
 - a. The word **porneia** rendered "fornication" (KJV) or "sexual immorality" (NIV) refers to "every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse" acc. to Arndt & Gingrich, Grk.-Eng. Lex., p. 699.
 - b. As Paul adds the words "and all uncleanness" (KJV) or "any kind of impurity" (NIV) to **porneia** here, and in viewing other Bible verses, we know Paul condemned all sexual intercourse **and orientations*** except physical intimacy between a married male and female who are wed for life (See Rom. 1:24-27; Gen. 2:24, Lev. 18:1-30, 1 Cor. 6:9-11*, 1 Pet. 2:13 & Mt. 19:6).
 - c. Thus, as Christians are to **avoid** all sexual orientations or acts of intercourse except what occurs with their **Biblically** wedded spouse in a permanent, heterosexual, monogamous union, sex is **not** to be a means to fulfill **selfish lust**, but to express **selfless devotion** to one's beloved **spouse**.
 2. Christians are to **avoid** the **selfish** vice of greed for possessions, 3b.
 3. Christians are to **avoid** the **selfish** vices of obscene speech (**aischrotays**, Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 24), jesting (**morologia**, Ibid., p. 533) or coarse jesting (**eu trapelia**, Ibid., p. 327) that derives pleasure at the expense of hurting others which is just the opposite of thanking others to edify them, Eph. 5:3c-4.

4. Paul reminded believers that such vices are done by those who lack eternal life, so Christians should **not** practice them, Eph. 5:5!

III. **Just WHY the Christian's "love" is the DISTINCT OPPOSITE of the world's form of "love" is explained as follows, Eph. 5:6-14:**

- A. The Christian must realize that the **world** functions in the *darkness* of being **deceived** with a **condemned, FALSE, selfish** love, 5:6a, 8a, b.
 1. The Ephesians at one time were a part of the world and operated by its value system, an errant one of spiritual blindness, Eph. 5:8a, b.
 2. Yet, now that Christians have the light of God's **truth**, they are not to be **deceived** into affirming the world's erroneous, *selfish* view of love, but see that those with its **false** love will be **judged**, Eph. 5:6.
- B. Consequently, believers are to live in God's will by having **no part** with the **practice** of these above-named vices (Eph. 5:9-10), but even to **expose** these vices as the **sin** of a **false, selfish** love, Eph. 5:11-12.
- C. In fact, when a believer **lives** uprightly **opposite** these vices, his **life** will act to **reveal** the *evil* of these false love expressions, Eph. 5:13.
- D. Thus, Christ calls Christians to awaken to the **difference** their lives are to have in contrast to the world's darkness so as to **live** as "light" that convicts others of their need for Christ's *selfless* love, 5:14 with 5:13!

Application: *As there is a FALSE, SELFISH love of the deceived world to SHUN and a TRUE, SELFLESS love of God to ADOPT, (1) TRULY believe on Christ for salvation from sin and darkness to be spiritually REBORN of God, Jn. 1:11ff; 2 Cor. 5:17. (2) As a TRUE, beloved child of God, (a) confess any sins that break our rapport with God (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) depend upon His indwelling Spirit for the power and motivation to live holy lives, Gal. 5:16-23. (3) Then, (a) live God's TRUE, SELFLESS love by practicing fidelity in our God-sanctioned marital role. (b) Live God's TRUE, SELFLESS love by sharing of possessions with those in need. (c) Live God's TRUE, SELFLESS love by edifying others with words that thank them for their value. (4) In so doing, we will act as "lights" of God's TRUE, SELFLESS love to a world deceived with a FALSE view; then people can desire to come to CHRIST!*

Lesson: *The Christian is INDEED to love his neighbor, but not with the FALSE, SELFISH love of the WORLD system. Rather, Christians must love others SELFLESSLY by upholding the value of their life partner in directing sexual orientation and expression to edify the spouse alone, by sharing of his possessions with others in need and by replacing obscene speech given at the expense of others with edifying words of thankfulness to them. That TRUE love stands OUT as a "light" of truth to a deceived world, pointing people to the TRUE, SELFLESS love of GOD in Christ.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

We now address questions raised in our introduction as follows:

(1) Even if two people know Christ and care for each other, Hebrews 13:4 **NIV** as supported by the Greek N.T. mss clearly teaches that they may not be physically intimate unless they are married!

(2) When Jesus commanded that we love our neighbor as ourselves in Matthew 19:19b, He did not condone the expression of that love by way of all forms of sexual behavior. Jesus loved the world by **selflessly** laying down His life to save our souls, John 3:16.

(3) Though the Christian is not under the Law's Leviticus 18:22 prohibition of gay and lesbian acts, this activity is identified as sin in Romans 1:26f. The **New** Testament writers **repeat** the Leviticus rule.

(4) The **New** Testament condemns not only immoral acts, but **orientations**. 1 Cor. 6:9-11 has **nouns** which identify the **orientations** of catamites (*malakoi*) & hermaphrodites (*arsenokoitai*). These are they of the respective female and male roles in gay unions, Ryrie St. Bib., KJV fn. These **orientations** are seen as **sin** in the context.

(5) Of Peter J. Gomes' book promoting homosexuality, professor David Wells of Gordon-Conwell said: "Gomes' need for self-justification is producing precisely the abuse of the Biblical text which he is claiming the...conservatives are doing." (Ibid., Rep.-Am.)

(6) In response to the man's claim in the 7/15/98 USA Today letter to the editor that his "turning to God" did **not** help him, we can respond by using 2 Pet. 2:1: there false (pretending to be true) teachers deny the Lord that bought them. We can also use Rom. 1:21, 24-27 where **after** one has a **head** knowledge of God and **rejects** it, **God gives** him or her **over** to a **gay or lesbian lifestyle** in divine **discipline**!

(7) To face claims that sexual **orientations** are **genetically** caused, **besides** citing Davies' report on scientific studies countering genetics as a cause for orientations (Ibid.), we quote testimonies of former gays and lesbians. The March, '94 (p. 2-4) Focus on the Family shares testimonies of 2 former lesbians and a former gay. They each witness Christ's power exchanged their past orientations to upright, **fulfilling** ones. This would be **impossible** were orientations **genetic**!