

101 Homosexuality – the jury’s out

Last time, I took a personal approach, and thought about our attitudes to our gay brothers and sisters, but today I want to take a more impersonal approach: I’m putting *homosexual action* in the dock and saying, ‘Members of the jury, how do you find the defendant?’

But I’m taking it as read that sexual actions – whether gay or straight – that are non-consensual or the result of unfaithfulness are damaging to human relationships and are therefore wrong. So we’re only talking here about sexual actions within the context of a *loving and committed relationship*.

The first question in this trial is who should be allowed on the jury? Well, I suppose it will have to be Christians, right? And I guess it will have to be Christians who take the Bible seriously – whatever that means!

The second question is what legal jurisdiction are we going to use? My suggestion is to use Scottish law. Why? Well, they have three verdicts: ‘guilty’, ‘not guilty’ and ‘not proven’.

And this the point to which my thinking has taken me in [96–100]. I didn’t start with ‘the issue of homosexuality’; I started with Romans, trying to look at it as a whole – although my first drone flight [97] was only up over chapters 1 to 5. And then I got distracted by those two verses: 1:26,27.

I got out my Study Bible and looked up the cross references. It just gave me two in Leviticus, but deciding on ethical behavioural matters via Leviticus is fraught with danger – it depends which bits you decide are just cultural and which bits are immutable.

So I dug around for further biblical evidence, and found 1 Cor 6:9 (which refers to male *prostitutes* and homosexual *offenders*), 1 Tim 1:10 (*perverts*) and Jude 1:7 (*perverts*), so it’s a matter of interpretation as to whether these could be applied to our case against consensual, faithful gay sex.

It seems that the strongest witness, then, is Rom 1:26,27 – and that worries me. Those two verses appear in the context of a two-chapter section in which Paul’s main purpose is to accuse the Romans of being judgemental towards other people.

Can you see how shaky this Romans witness now becomes? We are wanting to use those two verses to decide (= make a judgement upon) whether certain other people’s private actions are right or wrong in God’s sight. Paul would see that as ironic to say the very least: a couple of verses in a long list aimed at telling the Romans not to be judgemental are later used as evidence for making a judgement.

But I’m not arguing for a ‘not guilty’ verdict; rather I’m saying that the evidence is not what I would call ‘conclusive’, and so we ought rather to bring in a verdict of ‘not proven’.

And finally let’s just ask, what would be the consequences of making the wrong decision?

If you are someone who thinks that the verdict should be 'guilty', what damage do you think that I am causing by trying to insist on 'not proven'? Am I sweeping away God's standards? Remember, I'm not talking about non-consensual or unfaithful acts.

I don't know the history, but somebody in the UK put forward a motion to Parliament to enact the law that made homosexual actions illegal; was that mainly Christians? Whoever it was, it most certainly caused a great deal of harm. And even now, Christians in gay relationships are sometimes on the receiving end of harmful comments and attitudes from other Christians.

And the other thing that suffers if we insist on a 'guilty' verdict is our witness to the truth of the gospel – and Paul would be quick to condemn us if that happened. Many people simply will not take us seriously if we insist that we know that God condemns *all* homosexual actions per se. Can we not allow gay Christians to make their own mind up?

Since Paul is the chief witness in this case, I am bold to think that if he were alive in the 21st century, he would have said: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, gay nor straight, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* Gal 3:28.

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