

## 361 Gay sex – more issues

Many thanks for two feedback emails, which have given me more issues to discuss.

**General point** – First is to say that I’ve changed my views over these past few years because (a) I’ve challenged any and every teaching I’ve ever been given(!), and (b) I think (hope) I’ve taken more of an ‘aerial view’ of scripture.<sup>[360]</sup> So instead of just studying ‘the verses about gay sex’, I’ve looked more widely at Romans 1 and 2 and now at 1 Corinthians 5–7.

**My mistake** – When I first read Tom Wright’s translation of 1 Cor 6:9 as ‘practising homosexuals of whichever type’, I reacted strongly because I misread him as referring to both male and female gay sex. This just shows how slippery language is, and how easy it is to jump to the wrong conclusions when you ‘know what he thinks’. Sorry!

From the range of different Bible versions on, say Bible Hub, you can see that the Greek mentions two types of sin, but that some translations concatenate them, as for example, the phrase ‘men who have sex with men’. But ‘nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders’ is what’s behind Tom’s ‘both types’. So easy to misunderstand, sorry!

But they are definitely sins; they are (as I said last time) in a list of blindingly obvious sins.

**Translators’ assumptions** – As I’ve reminded us before, whenever someone translates a passage, they have – to some extent – to interpret it before they can translate it. To convey the author’s intended meaning, as expressed in the Greek, you have to decide what the author was actually trying to get across, and then work out how best to express that meaning in another language.

Tom’s overall view is that the Bible sees *any* gay sexual behaviour as sinful (i.e. the traditional interpretation), and so his ‘practising homosexuals’ conveys that meaning – anyone who puts their gay sexual desire into action, in whatever context.

Indeed, the three obvious NT passages are all very clear (Rom 1:26-27, 1 Cor 6:9-10, and 1 Tim 1:9-10), because each passage parallels gay sex with murder, greed, depravity, shameful lust, prostitution – the list is endless, and all obviously sinful, and the interpretive argument runs that therefore *any* form of gay sex is sinful.

**Author’s assumptions** – I can’t prove it, but my guess is that Paul did indeed see all gay sex as sinful because I doubt that any gay men he met would have had the courage to admit it; certainly, they wouldn’t have chatted over a pint with Paul about their experience of a loving, committed, gay relationship.

But, realising the assumptions of the Bible authors and the translators, we have to decide what Jesus would say to people who love him and want to serve him with their lives, and yet are gay. The Bible doesn’t speak directly into that context, so it’s difficult to decide.

(My copy of Tom’s commentary on 1 Corinthians has just arrived, so I’ll be back!)

Paul Bev. 31.12.24