

Comments

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“Hope for Homosexuals”

by Dennis Pollock of Lion and Lamb Ministries

It seems that wherever we turn these days, we hear the cries of the homosexuals, wailing: “Accept us as we are. We were born this way. Let us be true to ourselves.” Some scientists and physicians are echoing the cry. Virtually all of Hollywood has jumped on the bandwagon, and mainstream Americans are beginning to show signs that they are willing to accommodate themselves to this new morality.

The only major holdouts are, of course, the evangelical, Bible-believing Christians, who are proving to be rather troublesome and stubborn in this regard. Homosexual playwright Jonathan Tolins, expressing his frustration that the conservative Christians did not immediately endorse homosexuality after a study (later shown to be deeply flawed) suggested that the disorder might have genetic origins, wrote, “It seems that those who have a fundamental hatred of homosexuals will not be swayed.”

A Tragic Story

A writer for our local Dallas newspaper recently told the story of a young man named Tim who had struggled with homosexual feelings since childhood and finally surrendered to them. Tim’s father was vice president of a major Baptist seminary, and his mother taught music there and had toured with Billy Graham. As Tim laughingly told the reporter, “My Baptist pedigree is flawless.”

While a student at Oklahoma University, Tim saw a counselor about the secret feelings he had been dealing with for years. At his first session he blurted out, “I think I’m a homosexual.” The counselor worked with him for six months, and at the end of that time Tim came to think maybe he wasn’t, and felt relieved. He began pursuing a girl and ultimately married her — a girl he described as “the prettiest one on campus.”

Tim plunged into a life of music and ministry. He and his wife had two children, spent two years as Baptist missionaries in Austria, and eventually moved to Houston where Tim became associate music minister at First Baptist Church and taught at Houston Baptist University. Still, he struggled with homosexual desires. “I could not begin to tell you the countless times I found myself at the altar during the invitation, weeping and begging God to make my ‘choice’ of heterosexuality a reality.”

Finally Tim came out of the closet. It was not pretty. His wife was devastated, he was fired from the church, and he was barred for a time from seeing his children. Today, over nine years later, Tim has lived for the last six years with what he describes as a “wonderful Christian man” and feels that he has at last been honest with himself. He sums up the false conclusion he has come to by declaring, “They can’t ever convince me that God didn’t make me this way. Never.”

The Dilemma

The dilemma which homosexuals like Tim are facing is one which the church has often failed to address. On the one hand they know the Bible’s plain admonitions against sexual immorality and homosexuality. The Scriptures are too explicit, and try as they might, the homosexual “theologians” are forced to perform logical and ethical gymnastics in order to try to get the Scriptures to somehow endorse any form of homosexuality. But on the other hand, they know that the feelings that they have felt are real and not imagined. They did not just wake up one day and decide that they would rebel against God and become a homosexual. Many of them can trace their homosexual urges back to their childhood, coming at a price of great personal discomfort to them.

The Church has too often failed to realize the depth and complexity of the problem. We have stood with Moses on Mount Sinai and hurled the commandments at them (along with a little lightning and thunder thrown in for good measure), but have seldom shown them any hope for freedom. How Should We Respond?

The Church must reach out to homosexuals with a heart of love and a message of hope. There are men sitting in our congregations every Sunday that have been exposed in some very real way to homosexuality, and it would be criminal for us to remain silent or to respond only with condemnation. Here are some starting points for Christians as we attempt to proclaim the truth in love:

1. **Declare the truth.** With all the world proclaiming that we must accept the lifestyle of the homosexuals, the church must declare the truth. With love, yes. With compassion, absolutely. But still the truth. And the truth is that homosexuality has been, is now, and

always will be a sin and an abomination in the sight of God. In both the Old and New Testament, from the mount of Sinai to the pen of Paul, Scripture makes it plain that homosexuals will not turn up in heaven. In Romans this sin is called: uncleanness (1:24), vile passions (1:26), shameful (1:27), and not fitting (1:28). In 1 Corinthians we are warned: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals ... will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6: 9,10)

2. **Acknowledge the struggle.** Part of the reason that Christians have been largely ineffective in ministering to homosexuals is that we have been unwilling to admit that they may actually have a struggle with these desires, and that saying a “sinner’s prayer” may not make this struggle go away. The homosexual knows that these feelings are real, they are deep-seated, and that no amount of pretending is going to make them instantly disappear. Too often we have engaged in a kind of “bootstrap theology” which gives a cheerful, “Go in peace, be warmed and filled” kind of answer to real life and death issues that will never be resolved by artificial cheerfulness and a few platitudes.
3. **Refute the lie.** Jesus tells us that Satan is a liar and the father of all lies. One of his greatest lies, one that he has gotten great mileage out of, is the notion that whatever you feel, you are. Many a young man has succumbed to this, and especially in this generation when this lie is being echoed and affirmed by nearly all our society.

Take, for example, a young man who knows nothing about spiritual warfare. He goes through a period in his life when he finds, to his great dismay, that he is starting to feel an attraction for men. He has no idea what to do with these feelings. Satan comes along and tells him, “Don’t fight it. Be true to yourself. Give in to these feelings. If you feel homosexual feelings, it’s because you are a homosexual. Drop your false notions of morality and be honest with yourself. Be the homosexual that you obviously already are!” The young man recalls all he has heard about homosexuals being born that way, and finds himself falling headlong into a lifestyle that both attracts and repels him at the same time. Satan has caught another victim, and goes about looking for others to beguile.

The problem with this lie is that it ignores the fallen state of man. Because of the grace of Christ, we do not have to be everything that we feel. Everyone of us is born with a sinful nature. This nature contains all sorts of evil desires which, if yielded to, would make us into moral Frankensteins. One of the cardinal virtues of the New Testament is self-control. We dare not give vent to every desire that comes into our hearts and minds. Paul writes that the grace of God teaches us that, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11,12).

What the world has failed to understand is that just because feelings may surface early in life, they are not necessarily legitimate. Some young children have to deal with feelings of rage. Does this mean that parents are to encourage those angry children to “be true to themselves” and express their rage whenever they feel it? Those children would turn out to be monsters. Many boys are caught in the grip of pornography by their early teens. Does this mean that they must accept themselves as voyeurs and make no attempts to put away their dirty magazines? Is it being true to oneself to yield to every ungodly lust that attempts to dominate our lives? While some might call it freedom, the Scriptures call it bondage.

Consider the man who gets married under the naive assumption that, since he is now legally joined to his wife, he will never again feel any attraction for other women. A month later a beautiful woman is hired where he works and he finds himself admiring her. To his dismay he comes to realize that he finds her very attractive. What shall he do? Does he get a divorce on the grounds of being “honest” with himself. Does he say, “I guess I’ll have to commit adultery. I have these feelings of desire and therefore I must have been born an adulterer. I’m sure I have an adultery gene somewhere in my genetic code.” What a lot of nonsense! There is no need for divorce or a doctor’s examination for an adultery gene. He just needs to do what men (and women) have been doing for thousands of years — saying ‘no’ to an unlawful desire and getting on with his life. A vital part of spiritual maturity is being able to distinguish between what our flesh desires and what our hearts know to be lawful — and to allow God’s moral law to have priority over our wicked desires.

4. **Proclaim the power of the cross.** Just telling the homosexual to refuse to yield to sinful desires is not enough. Homosexuals that have a respect for God usually realize that there is something unnatural about their feelings, and dread the thought of living the rest of their lives being constantly bombarded with them. If there was a button to push or a pill to take that would change their feelings, many of them would push the button or take the pill in a moment. The truth is, it’s not that simple.

In order to be free, it is necessary to gain a certain understanding about the nature of sin. The Bible presents two different perspectives concerning sin and sinners. The first one is the more familiar one. This is the notion that sin is a deliberate rebelling against the laws of God. This was frequently the perspective of the Old Testament prophets as they raised their voices against Israel and her rebellion against God. Isaiah gives us a good example of this: “Woe to the rebellious children, says the LORD, who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin...” (Isaiah 30:1).

There is another view which is equally Biblical, however. It is one that Jesus and Paul both referred to. In this perspective the sinner is not looked upon so much as a rebel as he is a captive. Jesus said, “He that sins is a slave of sin.” And Paul wrote, “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice ... O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:19, 24). In this view, there is a recognition that the sinner is beyond all efforts of self-help. He is needing a Savior, not only from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. The Bible gloriously reveals that Jesus is that Savior!

The book of Romans proclaims some incredible things about what Jesus has done for us through His death on the cross. We read that, “Having been set free from sin, and having become servants unto God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end is everlasting life.” Likewise we are told, “Knowing this, that our old man (the sinful nature we were born with) was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” Once again we read that “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.” In light of these incredible promises, we have something very, very positive to say to those trapped in the “gay” lifestyle (who really do want help).

Appropriating the Victory

It is vital to understand that the victory over all dominating sins was won by Jesus at the cross. By basing our faith on Jesus’ death and resurrection we are on good solid Biblical grounds. The trouble is that too many times we have given people the wrong impression when we have suggested that God’s deliverance can only come in an instantaneous fashion, or that when we receive Christ all struggle with sin will be over. It may be that in the bliss of a post-conversion high we temporarily find ourselves out of the range of temptation, but normally when things begin to settle down in our lives, our old enemy will be there lurking in the shadows and scheming to drag us down into the same old sins that ruled us before. It is at that point that the fight of faith really begins.

Our enemy is powerful, clever, and experienced — and he has a great ally in what the Bible calls our “flesh” — that conglomeration of ungodly lusts and selfishness which we will have to endure until our death. But our weapons are awesome: The Holy Spirit within us, the Word of God in our hearts and on our lips, the blood of Christ speaking for our justification and cleansing, and Christian brothers and sisters to stand with us. We find that the promises of God are often made real in our lives gradually. As our faith ripens and our understanding increases, the failures come less often and those sins that used to rule begin to lose their grip on us. As we keep our eyes on Jesus, the victory becomes ours. Unlawful desires lose their potency and are replaced with godly ones.

To those homosexuals who are defiantly reveling in their immorality, we have little to say. Perhaps to them would apply that terrifying declaration, “He that is filthy, let him be filthy still” (Revelation 22:11). Enjoy your sin as best you can, but know that you will one day stand before Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire and whose countenance shines like the sun. But to those who have begun to glimpse the guilt and ugliness of their lifestyle, who are looking for a way out, but aren’t sure that there is one — know that there is a Savior who cares for you, who loved you so much He went to the cross to take your sins upon Himself, and who waits to deliver you not only from sin’s penalty, but from its power. The angel declared His name to be Jesus “for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

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