

Transgenderism and Truth in Love on Sexuality and Gender Identity vs. Gospel Identity

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This past month much news been focused in the United States on gender identity. There's always been confusion on the *roles* of genders as male and female, but today there's confusion on the *reality* of genders, as the facts of biology have been replaced by feelings of identity. What gender you perceive yourself to be and what pronouns you want to be referred to as and which restroom you want to go to has now become a defining issue and gender confusion issues will only keep growing on the news.¹

Not only is it all over the media, the revolution overtook social media when Facebook began in 2014 offering gender selections other than Male or Female for users. There were over 50 gender options listed for Facebook users,² I understand it was initially 51, then 56, then 58, then in 2015 I understand they stopped listing the growing options and just have a “custom” field where you can type your own along with an option to be referred to as “them” rather than “her” or “him.”

In news headlines, what used to be universal practice of having people go to a bathroom of their biological gender is now labeled discrimination. States or schools trying to keep separate restrooms, changing rooms, keeping guys (who say they don't feel like guys) from girls shower rooms are under fire from political correctness cannons. The U.S. Dept. of Education and a high U.S. Appeals court (4th circuit) so far agrees.³ Ironically and irrationally, some voices that claim they defend 'women's rights' don't seem to want to even consider discussing the right to privacy of vulnerable females from males in sensitive places. Laws for the confused others can abuse, and already have in some cases,⁴ which many fear will increase with easier access. Efforts to not hurt feelings of a few may hurt more than intended.

Moving from the bathroom to the womb, the hurt can be deadlier over 'the wrong gender' in cases where unborn babies are killed if they're not deemed the 'right' sex, often wanting a boy instead of the girl God formed in the womb. After birth, gender-selection moves from parents to their school children who can decide God got their gender wrong, so they get to select the gender they want to be after birth, not the boy or girl God made them to be. In some cases, adults or even kids are encouraged to be on hormone-altering drugs or get operations to change the way God created them, because they perceive they're not that. If we go back 3 years the American Psychiatric Association called it 'gender identity disorder' but now it's called 'gender dysphoria' (changed in 2013), a distress over the sex of their birth, treated by hormone suppression, hormone therapy, surgery. To the confused we need compassion as well as clarity.

Genesis 1 says '*God created...in His own image...male and female*' but chapter 3 shows sin entered the world, and with it people 're-create' self in the image he or she desires instead of God's design. That's true in many areas, as our thinking is affected, including sex perception and sexual preferences that people make their identity; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgender (LGBT). We have people who want to be known as a 'Gay Christian' as their identity. Rosaria Butterfield writes of these evolving ideas: 'Sexuality moved from verb (practice) to noun (people), and with this grammatical move, a new concept of humanity was born – the idea that we are *oriented* or framed by our sexual desires ... and that self-representation and identity rooted now in sexual orientation and not in the purposes of God for his image-bearers.'⁵ But a Christian identity isn't in gender, it's in Jesus, and our relationship to Him.

How are we to look at the news in focus of the gospel, the good news? To a world in gender confusion comes God's Word in gospel clarity. God's Word gives hope and help for any temptation or tendency. The world is changing, genders are changing, but my hope isn't dependent on laws changing, my hope is in the life-changing power of the cross. This was Paul's hope in 1 Corinthians and the gospel speaks to each issue the Corinthian church was facing, and this is a timely study for what the modern church faces. In our changing world, we have an unchanging Word. Our hope must be in nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. This is the solid rock we can stand on when culture all around is sinking sand. In the gospel all who reject Jesus' righteousness, all who live in unrighteousness, not just sexual sin but unrepentant greed and gossip are equally sins that can keep us from God, but Jesus can save any of us!

1 Corinthians 6:9 (ESV) *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, **nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.**¹¹ And such **were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God***

The Gospel Gives Hope for ALL Sin

Our identity isn't in sin or sexuality. It's in our salvation. All of us are in this list. All of us have sinned in our hearts some sin in v. 9, most in lust, all idolatry (something above God). In v. 10 we've taken what isn't ours, coveted, spoken evil of others, manipulated things to our benefit. But v. 11 gives hope for all, the homosexual who wants to be free as well as those hurtful in their words, the covetous and the confused about gender, wretched or respectable sins, if we accept not only that God is love but that God speaks the truth in love about faith *and repentance*. Grace and truth come through Jesus (John 1:17), not just grace. People need kindness and God's kindness in Romans 2:4 leads to repentance (from 1:26-32).

Kevin DeYoung: 'love is throwing...arms around the prodigal son when he sees his sin, comes to his senses, and heads for home (Luke 15:17-24). The God we worship is a God of love. Which...make[s] every one of our sexual sins changeable, redeemable, and wondrously forgivable. As Jean Lloyd, a former lesbian puts it, "Continue to love me, but ... it isn't mercy to affirm same-sex acts...don't compromise truth, help me live in harmony with it."⁶

In 1 Corinthians 6:9 *sexual immorality*, includes *fornication* (premarital), incest or lesbian intimacy or any sex outside/before marriage. This Greek root *pornos* is still used today for visual immorality with the eye that is also serious sin in God's eyes, unrepentant lust Jesus said can send to hell as well, Mt 5:28. In v. 9 *idolaters* is in a context where words in v. 9 involve sexual sin, and in the context of Corinth where idolatry and immorality were linked with temple prostitutes, the idolatry in v. 9 is probably especially related to sex (see v. 15-16, 19). Corinth in Greece was the original 'sin city' of Rome, its immoral night life a temptation to travelers away from family on business trips. Maybe they'd rationalize 'what happens in Corinth stays in Corinth.' We know the motto 'to Corinthianize' became a phrase for immorality and drunken debauchery.

My former pastor Phil Johnson explains the historical background well: 'Corinth was situated at a strategic place, between two key seaports. It was a resort town, always crowded and always busy, always filled with travelers ... the city was filled with brothels—you can see them to this day, row after row ... in the ruins ... Corinth was to the first-century Mediterranean culture what Las Vegas is to our culture today —except that the chief attractions were temples [for sin] rather than casinos.'⁷

That was their context of idolatry related to immorality, but this is relevant to our day as well, in any city or small community. An idol is anything you make more important than God.

In our culture, sexuality is more important than God and what His Word has to say about it. Another past lesbian said⁸ in her testimony, idolatry was the key issue for her far more than sexual sin. In v. 9 Paul moves from idolatry to adultery in any form, a term specifically for sexual sin by a married person. Pre-marital fornication and extra-marital adultery are included in v. 9, heterosexual and homosexual sin

The ESV footnote at end of v. 9 says: 'The two Greek terms translated by this phrase refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts.' That helpful note makes clear it's not just attraction, it's acting out those desires, including between consensual partners; there's abundant Greek evidence for that interpretation of these words.⁹ NIV has 'practicing homosexuals' but the term isn't limited to prostitution, pederasty, abusive or exploitative activity. The most recent scholarly study of these terms in Greek literature concludes 'primary sources leave no alternative but to understand...Paul is addressing primarily adult homosexuality with the two terms...those performing...acts (emphasizing behavior)...men living as women (emphasizing orientation).'¹⁰

One translation has men 'who make women of themselves' (Darby 1890). OT Law forbade men dressing like women or vice-versa, and changing the body to remove the male genitalia was equally forbidden (Deuteronomy 22:5, 23:1). Robert Gagnon's scholarly study *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, says the Greek word in 1 Corinthians 6:9 includes 'males who play the sexual role of females' and he cites ancient sources including a type of transgenderism: 'another first-century Jew, Philo ... twice uses the word ... [for men] who cultivate feminine features. He describes men who braid their hair and who use makeup...Some of these...Philo says, have mutilated their [bodies] in a desire to be permanently transformed "into women"...deliberate effacement of the masculine...taking the further step of feminizing their appearance.'¹¹

Within 5 years or so of Paul writing this letter a young man surgically made like a girl and dressed like a bride with veil and all was in a public same-sex wedding to Nero himself. I can't read some of the details, but this is the era of history that Paul wrote this passage to! We have a president who 4 years ago said he 'evolved' his views on same-sex marriage, but the Roman Empire had an Emperor who was personally *involved* in his own same-sex marriages.¹² This isn't new.

For Christians who take a high view of scripture, what's the solution? Are political protests the strategy Paul recommends in this context? There were Jews called Zealots who though radical political activism was the key in a pagan Roman world? Paul knew Corinth thought the conservative Christian message was foolish and unenlightened and behind the times, but notice what he says in 1 Corinthians 1:18: *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* The word of the cross is where the power is, not politics, but preaching '*Christ and him crucified.*'

He says in 2:2 he resolved to know nothing among this pagan city above Christ and Him crucified. Paul kept the cross central. Sexual desires can be powerful in man, but the gospel is '*the power of God.*' Paul began his letter to the Romans the same way, chapter 1 to the pagan Roman empire talks even more about homosexual sin, and right in the heart of it: '*I am eager to preach the gospel to you...in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe ...*'

Christ Gives a New Identity in Him

1 Corinthians 6:11 says of these lifestyles: *such were some of you. But you were washed...* People in this church have been saved, washed of past lifestyles. Christ redeemed their past, and gave a new identity. The arms of Christ and His church are open to any who turn from any sin in faith. v. 11 says they once *were* those people but in Christ it's no longer who they *are*. The *New English Translation* says 'Some of you once lived this way.' These were your former lifestyles. It doesn't say you're no longer tempted in these ways, but that's not what defines you or marks your life now most fundamentally. This speaks to the 'Gay Christian' idea, or making sexuality one's identity. Even for *non*-Christians, identity isn't a preferred sex, identity is found first not in one's feelings, but in the fact we're all created in the image of God. And identity is deeper in Christ, it's who we are in Him not what we do or did.

God made man and woman in His image but by Gen 3 sin entered the world as Satan asked Eve '*did God really say?*' Satan implied there was a better way than the one way God had commanded. Today the same old questions and insinuations arise about relationships outside of man and woman and what God really said in His commands vs. 'enlightened' knowledge of good and evil. One of the results of Adam and Eve's sin in Gen 3:16 is God said woman's desire would be to usurp the role of the man. So the confusion or corruption of gender roles isn't new, it's been around since the fall into sin in Gen 3, and the distortions of biblical marriage by chapter 4 had devolved into polygamy, violence in chapter 6, homosexuality in chapter 18, incest in chapter 19, etc. That's just the early chapters of the Bible! Since man's fall into sin, desires have fallen, gender roles have been corrupted, confused, but that's not the essence of our personality or identity, bearing God's image is.

For gender confused young people, the American College of Pediatrics says: 'Human sexuality is an objective biological binary trait: "XY" and "XX"...sense of oneself as male or female is a sociological and psychological concept...[thinking] he or she is something they are not is, at best, a sign of confused thinking ... as high as 98% of gender confused boys and 88% of gender confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty...Rates of suicide are 20 times greater among adults who use cross-sex hormones and undergo sex reassignment surgery, even in Sweden which is among the most LGBTQ – affirming countries ... Conditioning children into believing a lifetime of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex is normal and healthful is child abuse.'"¹³

Mohler: 'Pastorally, Christians should be heartbroken over anyone of any age who experiences what's described here as 'gender dysphoria.' They deserve our care and our concern, indeed, the Christian worldview demands it. But we also have to understand that that care and concern and compassion must be based in truth. And, as the Bible and the biblical worldview make abundantly clear, we do not love people by telling them something other than the truth. These doctors have spoken the truth.'¹⁴

Jesus said if you abide in His Word and know '*the truth...the truth will set you free... Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin...So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*' (John 8:32, 34, 36). Not free of temptation, but free of enslavement to sin. Christ breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free. When a prisoner is set free, he doesn't go around introducing himself as 'I'm Joe, a prisoner' (even though his years as a prisoner may impact how he thinks daily)

1 Corinthians 6:10 mentions drunkards, but those with that inclination aren't 'Drunkard Christians' as their identity. v. 11 doesn't say 'that's what some of you *are*.' It's not 'you *are* alcoholics who've been sober x amount of time.' It doesn't say 'once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.' That's not your identity

The good news of Jesus says we're not defined by past sin, we're defined by a Person who saves from sin including enslaving addictive outward sin, or inward sins like greed in v. 10. Every bitter thought, every evil deed - this is the power of the cross, as Keith and Kristyn Getty so wonderfully sing.

And for any past sexual sins a believer repents of, there's no scarlet A (or L, B, G, or T) to be worn with God's people. The Lord says to believers *'though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow'* (Isa 1:18). That's the washing of v. 11 by *'the Lord Jesus Christ,'* if you surrender your sinful ways to His lordship over all of life, not just sexually but inwardly, your sins are washed away by His blood. Repenting at the foot of the cross, you 'lose all your guilty stains'

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide, what can avail to wash it away
 Look there is flowing a crimson tide, whiter than snow you may be today!
 Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within... greater than all sin¹⁵

In Christ, God doesn't see us as the wickedness of v. 9-10, He sees us as the washed in v. 11 in His Son, the forgiven, cleansed of our former lifestyles. The end of the verse mentions the Holy Spirit, so this is probably the same washing of regeneration by the Spirit Paul talks about in other places, God's giving us life so we can be born again to a new lifestyle with a new Master. Human physicians can't transform our identity, but Christ the Great Physician can transform our identity truly from the inside out.

Paul says *'such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified ...'* Regeneration naturally comes first but sanctification also inevitably follows. With new life comes new living. He washes us so we walk as sanctified or set apart, different than the world and different than we were before. God's forgiving and saving us also involves His changing us starting at conversion.

For some, change can be radical, like Jackie Hill-Perry¹⁶ who had same-sex attraction as a 5-year-old girl that never went away from her childhood into her young adulthood, but is now a saved wife and mother and Reformed rapper. Or in Ron Citlau's case, his early life was filled with promiscuous gay sin but he's now a husband, father, and pastor.¹⁷ For others like Sam Allberry,¹⁸ change wasn't living as a heterosexual spouse and losing all same-sex attractions, in his case the change meant a grace to not act out those desires he still battles. Sam is a faithful pastor who has embraced a life of hope-filled celibacy and is able to minister to those whose salvation didn't erase all temptations.¹⁹

Rosaria Butterfield: 'Please, to the Christians who...do not struggle with homosexual desires, do not add weight to the burden by thinking that homo-sexuality is the biggest of all sins, or that its solution is heterosexuality. The solution to all sin is Christ's atoning blood. In Christ, we are new creatures...redeemed...no longer slaves to the sin that once defined us, although likely it still knows our names...I am a fifty-two-year-old pastor's wife... But no matter how many years tick away, I am and will always be a Rahab - a woman with a past. So what does a person like me do with such a past? I have not forgotten. Body memories know my name. Details intrude into my world unpredictably, like when I am kneading the communion bread or homeschooling my children. I take each...to the cross, for prayer, for more repentance, for thanksgiving...Christ redeems your struggle by giving you greater union with him...[and] a new identity...of one who overcomes.'²⁰

Many don't feel they chose homosexual feelings, and none of us can choose to make our temptations go away, but in Christ we can choose not to obey our flesh. In Him we choose to walk by faith not feelings.

In Him we need to be willing to walk with those whose struggles are different than ours. We all in our flesh have lusts, longings we're not to live in. 2 Cor 5:15 says Christ died for all, so we'd no longer live for ourselves. ¹⁶ *From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh* [our old fleshly identities and ways of identifying ourselves with labels, that's not the way we regard ourselves or others anymore, LGBT or any fleshly category] ¹⁷ *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation ...*

In the original language of 1 Corinthians 6:11, this new creation is described using the strongest Greek contrast word is used for all 3 phrases: ***but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified...*** It couldn't be more emphatic. v. 11 is your new identity, not v. 9-10 anymore. We have new life, new living, and a new legal standing and identity in Him. A new creation brings new desires or new power to resist old ones.

Even those who have undergone a sex change aren't beyond soul change by God's grace. Salvation is a greater transfer from one domain to another (Col 1:13). It's a more radical surgery on the inside, spiritual circumcision of the heart, cutting out the old heart, replacing it with a new heart (Eze 36:26).

Owen Strachan writes in an article [A Gospel Approach to Transgenderism](#): 'To people caught in such sin, there is hope — Christ crucified and [risen] for our salvation. Jesus takes our sin, our disorder, on himself. This good news of grace promises to save our souls, but in saving our souls, it also reorders our depraved understanding... We must approach the transgendered with conviction and compassion. We shouldn't shake our fingers... and tell them, "Make yourself right!" We may not know what all led a person to adopt this behavior... We do know this is the result of the brokenness of sin, a brokenness we have all experienced in different ways. That's why we should approach them with both conviction and compassion... speak truth to them... with genuine warmth and love, because we are them and they are us — sinners in need of grace ... They believe that change will save them. In this sense, we agree with them. But the change that saves will not be a distortion of the body, however deep the scalpel goes, however powerful the hormone therapy. The change that saves is something much, much stronger: it is a transformation of the heart and a promise of a resurrection body... a summons to submission and the acceptance of God's good design.'²¹

Praise God His gospel gives hope to all and a new identity to all in Christ.

¹ <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/trevinwax/2016/05/03/7-questions-transgender-theories/>

² <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/02/15/the-complete-glossary-of-facebook-s-51-gender-options.html>

³ <http://www.albertmohler.com/2016/04/21/the-briefing-04-21-16/>

⁴ http://www.redstate.com/brandon_morse/2016/04/11/need-transgender-bathroom-laws/

⁵ Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ* (Crown and Covenant, 2015), p. 97

⁶ Kevin DeYoung, *What the Bible Really Teaches About Homosexuality*, (Crossway, 2015), p. 127.

⁷ <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=2151118523510>

⁸ Butterfield, p. 24: 'I was a jumble of emotions, because according to the Bible, what I called community, God called idolatry.'

⁹ S. Donald Fortson and Rollin G. Grams, *Unchanging Witness: The Consistent Christian Teaching on Homosexuality in Scripture and Tradition*, B&H Academic, 2016.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 300-301.

¹¹ Robert Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, p. 306-309.

¹² Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves (on Nero, 28).

¹³ "Gender Ideology Harms Children," <http://www.acpeds.org/the-college-speaks/position-statements/gender-ideology-harms-children>

It can be noted that one of the drafters of this document, Paul McHugh, was Psychiatrist in Chief at John Hopkins, where sex change surgeries were pioneered but later abandoned in light of post-surgery psychiatric problems:

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120>

¹⁴ <http://www.albertmohler.com/2016/04/08/the-briefing-04-08-16/>

¹⁵ Julia Johnston, "Grace Greater Than Our Sin."

¹⁶ <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/love-letter-to-a-lesbian>

¹⁷ Ron Citlau and Adam T. Barr, *Compassion Without Compromise: How the Gospel Frees Us to Love Our Gay Friends Without Losing the Truth* (Bethany House, 2014).

¹⁸ Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay? And Other Questions Christians Ask About Homosexuality, the Bible, and Same-Sex Attraction*, The Good Book Company, 2013.

¹⁹ DeYoung, p. 112-13.

²⁰ Butterfield, p. 33-34.

²¹ <https://stream.org/bruce-jenner-gospel-approach-transgenderism/>